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## HEALING THE BREACH

### Benjamin Godwin and the Serampore 'Schism'

The first meeting of the 'Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen' at the Kettering home of Mrs. Beeby Wallis, on October 2nd, 1792, was that of friends united in a common concern. There seemed no need for those friends to formalise the relationship between those who would work at home, and those who would eventually work abroad. United in a shared passion they had no need or wish for a legal definition of committee powers, beyond saying that it would be made up of the Revds John Ryland, Reynold Hogg, William Carey, John Sutcliff, and Andrew Fuller, and that three of these 'shall be empowered to act in carrying into effect the purpose of this society.'<sup>1</sup> This lack of a definition of the relationship between the home base and the missionaries was at the root of a series of disagreements which stretched the relationship between those responsible for home support and those working overseas beyond breaking point.

Carey's conception of the missionary community was of an economically self-supporting colony. This at first functioned well: in 1800 it was agreed that the missionary 'family' at Serampore should have 'all things in common', and that all private income should be devoted to the common cause. In 1805 Ward drew up a written affirmation of this system, which was signed by a further six young missionaries sent out by the Society. In this larger and more dispersed community the system proved to be unworkable, and by 1807 the missionaries not resident at Serampore were funded by BMS funds rather than from the common purse, although still under the authority of the Serampore trio. This arrangement created its own problems, and clashes between Joshua Marshman and the newer missionaries did not help.

The Serampore three (Carey, Marshman, and Ward) were the trustees for a complex of buildings funded by their hard work and some loans from the home committee. After Fuller's death in 1815 there was a feeling in that committee that the trust arrangements should be adjusted so that there was no doubt that the property belonged to the Society. This seemed to the Serampore missionaries to imply a lack of trust, and provoked a forceful letter from Marshman. The younger missionaries took the committee line, and had their own disagreements with their elder brethren.

The dispute was still unresolved when Marshman came to England to arrange a charter for Serampore College and to seek further financial aid. A financial collapse in Calcutta made the need for funds from the committee more urgent. At the same time the Serampore missionaries were arguing for the Serampore College Council to have control of the missionary stations. From the committee's point of view they were being asked to give money to a body over which they had no real control. To the missionaries it seemed obvious that if the college was going to provide the missionaries it should also have the control of them.

Joshua Marshman refused to accept the demands of the committee, and the breach was complete. The Fen Court<sup>2</sup> declaration of 23 March 1827 announced that from that date the Baptist Missionary Society at home and the missionaries at Serampore were to be regarded as two distinct and independent missionary bodies. Thus was

made public the sad fact that relations between 'the Serampore three' and the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society, had deteriorated to a point where there was no purpose in preserving the link. It was ten years before the division was to be healed, and that ten year period was not a happy one.

Denominational histories, perhaps rightly, do not usually relate the events in detail. Dr Brian Stanley's recent work gives a balanced account of the affair. Of earlier writers, Dr Cox provides an account of the event with a leaning towards the home committee's interpretation of events, and the continuing BMS efforts in India.<sup>3</sup> G. Smith's account of the life of Carey supports the Serampore position,<sup>4</sup> and J. C. Marshman presents the story as it appeared to those at Serampore and tells of their continuing progress.<sup>5</sup>

Marshman's work acknowledges the support which the Serampore Mission continued to receive from home, but little has been written of those who provided that support for the Serampore mission. Among them was Benjamin Godwin, who held pastorates at Dartmouth, Great Missenden, Bradford, and Oxford, and was for a time Classical tutor at the Horton academy. Material on the schism and its subsequent healing is to be found in a series of autobiographical letters he wrote to his son John. In those letters he reflects on the causes and results of the split, gives an account of a preaching tour in support of the Serampore Mission, and tells of his own part in re-uniting the two groups.

Godwin was a supporter of the BMS and had once been interviewed by an elder of the Bath church as to the possibility of his becoming a missionary, on the somewhat dubious grounds that he did not have the talents required for the home ministry!<sup>6</sup> He was active on behalf of the mission when he did become a minister.

While at Great Missenden he formed, with the vicar, a missionary society in the village, the proceeds of which were divided equally between the BMS and the CMS.<sup>7</sup> There was at least one missionary among his students at Horton, for he twice mentions a Mr. Phillips,<sup>8</sup> who was to be a missionary in the West Indies, and gave the introductory discourse at his recognition service.<sup>9</sup> At Dartmouth he developed a friendship with John Dyer (d.1841), who had then just entered the ministry. That friendship was to have some importance in subsequent events, for John Dyer was to become the long serving secretary of the BMS.<sup>10</sup>

Godwin describes the division as a most unhappy schism, and says that although the declaration provides the appearance of amicable disagreement, that spirit was not evident in what was to follow. His account reveals little about the causes of the original dispute between the senior missionaries at Serampore and the committee of the BMS or an earlier dispute between William Johns and Marshman (Johns felt that Marshman could have given him more support when he was being forced to leave India), but provides an interesting light on what was to follow.

Godwin claims that little was known of the controversy over the financing and control of the Serampore station outside the committee and a few of its friends. The committee was 'a self elected body, maintaining a studied secrecy in their deliberations and allowing the public to know as much as they thought expedient and

no more,<sup>11</sup> and 'as secret and mysterious as a freemason's lodge.'<sup>12</sup>

It was not until the arrival of Dr Marshman in England that the argument became more widely known, but once it did, Godwin saw a remarkable change in the attitude of individual members of the committee. Up to that time, he says, the great and self-denying generosity of the missionaries, and their efforts to produce the scriptures in the languages of the east, figured constantly in the appeals for public support made by the committee and its agents. Once the affair was more widely known, although the committee as a body did not exhibit a hostile attitude towards the Serampore missionaries, several members of the committee became exceedingly concerned to deprecate not only Dr Marshman, but all the Serampore brethren. Godwin suggests that the committee were fearful of losing public support, 'and therefore, by its members individually, were feverishly anxious to justify themselves by criminating Dr Marshman and his coadjutors.'<sup>13</sup>

The committee had a major advantage in presenting its side of the story, for it controlled the *Missionary Herald*, and the *Baptist Magazine* was under the guidance of its friends. Shortly after the article of separation was signed, a very severe article appeared in these, followed by subsequent attacks. When Dr Marshman published his *Brief Memoir*,<sup>14</sup> and made an appeal for public support in what Godwin describes as 'the mildest manner, controversy being carefully avoided',<sup>15</sup> there was a long and unfriendly review in the *Magazine*. Godwin admits that the *Brief Memoir* could not help but give the impression that all that had been achieved in Bengal had been achieved by the Serampore missionaries alone, and that 'this circumstance could not fail to annoy men, however good, who like others, were subject to the infirmities of human nature.'<sup>16</sup>

The committee of the BMS did attempt to distance itself from some of the criticisms of Dr Marshman contained in the *Baptist Magazine*, informing a correspondent that even though the magazines were bound together, 'the *Missionary Herald* has contained everything in reference to the affairs of the Baptist Missionary Society, that has been published with the sanction and by the authority of the committee.'<sup>17</sup>

By 1828 pamphlets and memoirs were flying thick and fast. Dr Marshman produced his *Statement relative to Serampore*,<sup>18</sup> John Dyer, secretary of the BMS replied with *A letter to John Broadley Wilson, Esq. Treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society*.<sup>19</sup> Eustace Carey, nephew of William, and William Yates, another of the 'younger missionaries' based at Calcutta, weighed in with *Vindication of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries*,<sup>20</sup> and William Johns, still bitter at Marshman's supposed failure to prevent his deportation from India, added fuel to the fire with *The Spirit of the Serampore System as it existed in 1812 and 1813*.<sup>21</sup>

One of the less pleasant aspects of the controversy was the publishing of private letters. Some of William Carey's strictures on Joshua Marshman were published in this way. There were, quite properly, complaints that the whole text of the letter had not been given. That text contained some comments which were extremely favourable to Dr Marshman, a fact acknowledged by the editors of the *Baptist Magazine*.<sup>22</sup>

They stated that they should have printed the whole letter, not because it would have been fairer to do so, but because Dr Carey's adverse comments would be, 'invested with a tenfold weight, from the very fact that they are the reluctant and constrained confessions of *an ardent and devoted admirer*.'<sup>23</sup>

The *Baptist Magazine* also brings to its readers attention the favouritism which Dr Marshman was accused of exhibiting towards his son John. John, along with Mack and Swan, did not share the management of the Serampore station. This, says the *Magazine*, was because he was not a missionary. The other two were, but were excluded by the committee, because to have allowed them to share in the management and to have excluded John, 'would have been exceedingly wounding to Dr Marshman as a parent.'<sup>24</sup>

Apart from such printed attacks, The Serampore missionaries were the victims of the most exaggerated stories 'respecting the ambition, the wealth, the splendid establishments, the personal aggrandisement, the worldly mindedness, the selfishness of the Serampore Brethren.'<sup>25</sup> Marshman was a particular target of such stories. S. P. Carey suggests that some of this stemmed from William Johns, who, bitter at his expulsion from India, 'sowed the dragon's teeth of suspicion of Marshman, whose harvest was tragic.'<sup>26</sup> He suggests that new missionaries could not help but hear of these stories, and that the autocratic manner which Marshman (along with the other senior missionaries) could exhibit added to his unpopularity.

That Marshman could be an abrasive and uncompromising character is made clear by William Carey, who says of him,

his regard for the feelings of others [is] very little, when the cause of God is in question. His memory is uncommonly retentive, his reading has been, and still is, extensive and general; in short, his diligence reproaches the indolence of some; his acquirements reproach their ignorance, and his unaccommodating mind not infrequently excites sentiments of resentment and dislike . . . These things, I suppose, lie at the bottom of all the dislike which our younger brethren have felt for him.<sup>27</sup>

Whatever the reasons, criticism of Marshman continued over a long period. William Carey gives examples of such stories as early as 1819 in a letter to John Dyer:

The charge of profusion against Dr Marshman is more extensive than you have stated in your letter. He is charged with keeping his house *superbly furnished*, with keeping *several vehicles for the use of his family*, and with *labouring to bring them into public notice* to a culpable extent . . . Some person, we know not whom, told someone, we know not whom, 'that he had often been at Lord Hasting's table, but that brother Marshman's table far exceeded his.'<sup>28</sup>

Carey gives short shrift to such accusations.

Carey was equally dismissive of attempts to separate him from Marshman. Writing to Christopher Anderson, he was scathing about attempts by some writers to suggest such a separation. Their unworthy attempts to do so are:

truly contemptible. In plain English, they amount to this much - 'The Serampore Missionaries, Carey, Marshman and Ward, have acted a dishonest part, alias are rogues. But we do not include Dr. Carey in the charge of dishonesty; he is an easy sort of a man who will agree to anything for the sake of peace, or in other words, he is a fool.'<sup>29</sup>

Marshman complained of slanderous accusations that he had used funds of the Serampore station to set up his second son in a law business.<sup>30</sup> A Calcutta journal accused him of embezzling funds.<sup>31</sup> Not everyone believed these stories, says Godwin, but they caused surprise and consternation. Godwin goes to some lengths to rebut such accusations, reporting a conversation he had with the Revd W. Moreton, a missionary of the LMS, who knew both elder and junior brethren at Serampore. Moreton spoke of the Serampore three with unqualified admiration, and remarked that: 'Slanderers accused them of ostentatious magnificence, I can bear witness to the truly Christian manner in which they lived and the apostolic zeal with which they laboured.'<sup>32</sup> Asked about Dr Marshman, 'he said that his piety was of the most elevated kind, and he had far more of what might have been termed genius than any of the three. He was a man of constant activity, unwearied energy, and vast resources.'<sup>33</sup>

Godwin's own impression of Marshman was very favourable. He met with him at several public meetings, and saw much of him during his stay in Bradford: 'I never knew a man of more fervant piety and devotedness to God. And this I found was the uniform conviction of every person at whose house he stayed, or had any opportunity of becoming acquainted with him.'<sup>34</sup> If Marshman had his detractors, there were still many who admired and respected him. Godwin describes Marshman's arrival at a public dinner, and the spontaneous burst of cheering which gave him welcome. 'All present were anxious to see and shake hands with him as soon as it was known who had entered the room.'<sup>35</sup>

Godwin was by no means so impressed with Eustace Carey, nephew of William, and one of the 'junior' missionaries<sup>36</sup> who had removed themselves from the Serampore station. He returned home just before Marshman's visit, ostensibly for the benefit of his health, but, 'it was supposed by some friends of Serampore, to furnish a counteracting agency.'<sup>37</sup> Whether that was his intent or not, Eustace, says Godwin, was a most effective auxiliary tool of the committee. He had the prestige of the Carey name, and a close relationship to the great man, and was not afraid to use it. 'He was by no means sparing in introducing the phrase "my uncle Carey."<sup>38</sup> Godwin's description of him is worth quoting in full:

He was an interesting looking young man, with a mild countenance but a most piercing eye; and at that time his style was beautifully chaste, his words and sentences flowed on like a limpid brook, he had the most perfect self possession and his voice was clear and musical. In his address there was a courtesy carried to its utmost limits and a manner so soft and mild and bland that but for the eye, he might have been taken for the meekest man alive.<sup>39</sup>

Despite this apparent meekness he lost no opportunity to give voice to his dislike of Dr Marshman. He was a popular speaker, and travelled the country preaching and holding meetings to collect funds for the society. He was usually effective in his vindications of the committee and his condemnation of the Serampore Brethren. This description of Eustace's activity supports that of S. Pearce Carey, who says that through such efforts 'even Robert Hall's trust in them was shaken, as well as that of Carey's own sisters, and that *Ryland* roughened towards Marshman.'<sup>40</sup>

Part of Eustace's opposition to Marshman seems to have stemmed from his dislike of what he saw as the 'literary part' of the Serampore College. He believed that the society should support the college in so far as its members prepared themselves to become preachers of the Gospel, but not for purposes of general education.<sup>41</sup> J. C. Marshman described Eustace Carey as having an unqualified aversion towards Serampore and everything connected with it.<sup>42</sup> Godwin supports that description, saying that he very much disliked the 'extreme bitterness which Eustace Carey discovered in my interviews with him,'<sup>43</sup> and the violence of some members of the committee. Both, he felt, compared unfavourably with the truly Christian meekness, forbearance and patience of Dr Marshman.

Describing the effect of the split Godwin says that it was some time before the relative strength of support for the two parties became clear. Each had its fervent supporters, but there were many who did not know what to do. Some of these supported both groups, a few withheld their support from either. Godwin was shocked by the accusations against the Serampore three, and although not in a position to deny or refute them, felt that 'men who had done so much, and sacrificed so much, could not be capable of such conduct as they were accused of.'<sup>44</sup> He continued to lend some support to the BMS, preaching one of the annual missionary sermons at the Surrey Chapel in 1835,<sup>45</sup> and in 1836 travelling as a member of a deputation to parts of Devonshire and Cornwall on behalf of that society.<sup>46</sup> However, he gradually 'became more warmly interested in favour of Serampore.'<sup>47</sup> This he attributed to his admiration for the zeal and devotion of the elder missionaries and his sympathy for their difficulties.

At a meeting at Hebden Bridge in 1827, held in support of the Serampore Mission, Godwin argued the necessity of some organisation to ensure a regular and dependable supply of funds. Marshman, given his recent dealings with the BMS committee, understandably preferred to rely on individual and spontaneous efforts. Godwin felt that in view of the opposition this would not be enough. There were a number of influential individuals from different areas who were willing to allow their names to appear as receiving contributions for Serampore, among them Godwin himself. He comments favourably on the support the mission received from other denominations, especially in Scotland, but regrets the new schism in a denomination already too much divided. Local societies in support of Serampore were formed, amongst them one at Bath in 1828,<sup>48</sup> and a larger one embracing the West Riding of Yorkshire, in 1831,<sup>49</sup> but there appears to have been no attempt to form a national society.

In 1837 Godwin resigned from the pastorate at Bradford, after experiencing a

worrying degree of dissension amongst the membership, and suffering a period of ill health. He was now fifty years old, with no pastorate, and no clear idea of what the future might bring. His friends in Bradford sought to induce him to stay, suggesting that he might become Superintendent Registrar, but he felt that he could not abandon the ministry. He was approached about the possibility of forming a church and training students in Aberdeen, but felt that he was too old for such a venture.

If Godwin's future looked bleak, so did that of the Serampore mission, which was going through something of a financial crisis. The collapse of several Calcutta trading houses<sup>50</sup> was a fearful blow, taking most of the funds of both Carey and Marshman, along with a legacy for work at Dinajpur, and funds for schools at Jessore and Delhi. It was essential that support from the home church was as generous as possible, and sterling work was done by supporters at home, but in 1837 collections were £1,200 short of the £2,800 required.

The moving force behind much of the work at home was Samuel Hope,<sup>51</sup> a Liverpool banker noted for his philanthropic activities, active in the anti-slavery campaign, and described by John Dyer as, 'the great stay of the Serampore mission.'<sup>52</sup> He acted as treasurer for funds collected, and had organized in connection with the local association, a general society in aid of Serampore. Through that society an approach was made to Godwin, inviting him to become Secretary for the Serampore Mission. He travelled to Liverpool to meet the committee, and agreed to take the post and to travel when necessary for the collection of funds. For his efforts he was to be paid a salary of £150 a year. On 30 March he and his wife moved into a house in Finch Street, where he used one room as an office for the society.

He quickly discovered that there was little of the machinery which most religious societies relying on public support used. Nor was there time for the setting up of any such machinery, for the depressed state of the mission's funds meant that he had very quickly to set out on a fund-raising excursion in Scotland. Along with a Mr Gibbs, he began his journey on 6 April, arriving in Newcastle on the following day. He preached three times on the Sunday, and took a collection on behalf of the mission after each service. On Monday he addressed a public meeting, although he was somewhat weighed down by the realisation of the difficulties facing the mission. He preached again on Tuesday, and on Wednesday morning spoke to the young people of Mr Pengilly's church. He then travelled to Irvine, where he met Mr George Barclay, another long time supporter of the mission. Barclay had tried to arrange places for collections, but had met with only limited success. Godwin spent the Saturday visiting the ministers of the town, and on the Sunday preached for Mr Barclay in the afternoon, and at the Kirk in the evening, where a collection was taken from a large congregation. Although his concern was for the mission; he also kept in mind the 'state of religion' in the churches which he visited, hoping that although he was without a church he might thus be useful to many.<sup>53</sup>

Godwin's peace of mind, already disturbed by the difficulties of his task, was further disturbed by frightening news from Liverpool. His son wrote to tell him that



the Finch Street house had caught fire, but that his wife and servant had escaped unharmed. This news did not prevent him from preaching to a group of young people, but his diary entry reveals how upset he was: 'Very little sleep last night - much shaken with the intelligence - what an escape! How great the peril - two or three hours earlier had the fire broken out it might have destroyed all my books, & papers and furniture, and left me a forlorn and broken hearted widower! O for a thankful heart.'<sup>54</sup>

He made further trips to Kilmarnock and Stewarton. In Greenock and Paisley he found expressions of sympathy for the mission from all denominations, but collected little, because of the depressed state of trade in those areas. He stayed at the home of Christopher Anderson in Edinburgh. Godwin says that Anderson's efforts on behalf of Serampore made him 'a most useful man, not only in Edinburgh, but very extensively in Scotland.'<sup>55</sup> Perhaps because of Anderson's efforts, Godwin did rather better there, receiving over £100 for the society after one sermon, and between £20 and £30 after another. From there he moved on to Aberdeen, visiting Cupor, Dundee, Arbroath and Montrose on the way. At Aberdeen he was grieved to find exaggerated reports and misrepresentations respecting Serampore had been spread. He continued to preach, address public meetings and to visit, moving on to Perth, Dunfermline, and finally Sterling, where he, 'Preached and collected morning Baptist church - evening Secession Church afternoon at St Ninians.'<sup>56</sup> He returned to Liverpool on 7 June, having spent two hectic months in work for the society.

The following months saw shorter excursions into Yorkshire and Lancashire, along with preparations for the monthly distribution of the *Friend of India*, and intensive correspondence in preparation for the visit of the Serampore missionaries Mack and Leechman.

Godwin took on a number of preaching engagements on behalf of the society, including one to Oxford, where he was given leave to collect privately if he filled the vacant pulpit for two Sundays. It was this visit that led to a later invitation to minister there, but although his preaching was to that degree successful, 'Such were the misconceptions and prejudices respecting the good old men of Serampore' that he succeeded but poorly in his primary object.<sup>57</sup>

John Mack had arrived in England in April, and was later joined by John Leechman. The two of them travelled widely, seeking support for the mission, and lending their support to the efforts of the newly formed society.

In September a meeting of the friends of the society took place in Liverpool but, despite serious deliberation on the measures which should be pursued, led to no result. Godwin drew up a list of topics which might be considered by the committee and on the following day, he, along with Mr Jackson of Bath, met with the two missionaries at his home.

The first item on this list effectively raised the question of re-uniting the Serampore mission and the BMS. Praying for divine guidance, they earnestly considered the matter, and met again with a few others in the evening. Although they passed no formal resolutions, they did arrive at a number of conclusions:

- 1 That if a union could be effected in an honourable and Christian manner, it would be an important object accomplished.
- 2 That if any negotiations were entered into, it should be in an open and candid manner, and conducted in such a way as, whether it succeeded or not, might be published to the whole world.
- 3 That nothing could be finally decided on till the sense of the friends of Serampore in different parts of the Kingdom were taken.
- 4 That a special committee should be called with speed, to determine whether a circular should be addressed to the friends of Serampore at a distance, to ascertain their sentiments.<sup>58</sup>

Godwin drew up a suitable circular for consideration, but had then to leave Liverpool because of the illness of his mother, arriving at Bradford to discover that she had died on the previous Sunday. He returned to Liverpool the day after the funeral. The circular, and a letter calling a general meeting of the friends of the society were approved, and the replies presented at the resulting general meetings of 8 and 9 November. There were 31 replies to the circular, 'of which 26 including 43 signatures and two resolutions passed at church meetings strongly recommended the object - 3 including 5 signatures considered it impracticable or "chimerical" [fantastic, as a chimera] and two, one of which was from a committee referred it to the missionaries.'<sup>59</sup> The meeting then decided that an approach should be made to the committee of the BMS and that, if favourably received, a deputation should go to London to confer with the committee there. Godwin wrote to inform his old friend, John Dyer, the BMS secretary, of these proposals.

Negotiations opened at Fen Court on the morning of 7 December, the first hour being spent in devotional exercises. The deputation were then invited to state their object in whatever manner, and at whatever length they chose, after which remarks or enquiries were to be made by the committee. The Revd George Barclay opened by stating what appeared to the deputation to be the leadings of providence in the matter at hand. Godwin describes his own part in the meeting: 'I then went fully into the business with much simplicity of statement and in a candid and good humoured manner, after which the other gentlemen of the deputation expressed their concurrence and made some remarks.'<sup>60</sup>

The remarks and enquiries of the BMS committee revealed that old animosities had not completely disappeared, and some of its members appeared very suspicious, 'but through Divine assistance and an unusual placidity of mind arising from a full consciousness of integrity and right motives, I was enabled to sustain throughout the whole of the proceedings an imperturbable self possession, and a benign and Christian feeling.'<sup>61</sup> Godwin gives much credit to Mr W. B. Gurney (1777-1855), the treasurer of the BMS, who by the tone of his remarks and the spirit which he manifested, helped to bring a feeling of kindness and brotherly affection into the meeting.

Eventually the deputation, at the request of the committee, withdrew to draw up (with the assistance of Mack and Leechman) a statement about the several stations in

India and other matters. When this statement had been presented, and some further questions answered, the committee retired for further thought. The deputation were invited to re-join them, and the proposals for re-union were read. After mutual expressions of goodwill and thankfulness to God the meeting closed. Next morning some details were cleared up, and the committee, the deputation, and the two missionaries, all dined together with great cordiality.

The proceedings were ratified by the London committee on 11 December and the Serampore committee at Liverpool four days later. The union was not total, in that the college at Serampore remained a separate institution and, according to Godwin, Mack and Leechman were, for the present, to remain unconnected with the BMS. Dr Marshman was to remain in charge of the Serampore station until his death.

Godwin does not mention any reluctance of the missionaries to support these moves, as suggested by J. C. Marshman, who presents Mack and Leechman as unwilling partners, agreeing only so that the remaining missionary stations could be saved.<sup>62</sup> Godwin sums up his feelings of the atmosphere of the meetings by referring to the minute book's statement that 'Throughout the whole of these meetings . . . a complete and cordial unanimity prevailed.'<sup>63</sup> Nor does Godwin fully support Marshman's claim that Mack and Leechman were originally to be part of the deputation, but that the BMS committee refused to meet them, and that they were kept in an adjoining room during the conference, although admitted to the meal which followed. Godwin says that Mack and Leechman were not a constituent part of the deputation, but were to be ready to give their opinions or advice if required. He does say that the deputation proceeded to London, 'after some little difficulties had been obviated.'<sup>64</sup> Perhaps their presence was that 'little difficulty.'

A letter from Godwin appeared in the *Baptist Magazine* for January 1838,<sup>65</sup> in which he gave brief details of the negotiations, and appealed for the continued support of the Serampore mission until the formal unification took place on 1 May. He also called for the friends of both societies to combine in their support for the BMS after that date. (He records, somewhat sadly, that he wrote a subsequent letter, in which he requested that accounts from the Serampore mission stations might now be included among the articles of intelligence in the *Baptist Magazine*. The request was refused.) Godwin felt that his work as secretary was now completed, and resigned his position, receiving the thanks of the committee.

The *Missionary Herald* of January 1838 took pleasure in announcing that 'the division of missionary effort which has existed in the denomination since 1827' had come to an end. 'No compromise of principle was made or required,' and the Serampore stations would henceforth be managed in the same way as the other stations of the BMS.<sup>66</sup> The Notice in which this information was given paid tribute to the efforts of the representatives of the 'Society in Support of the Serampore mission', saying that their efforts had won for them the esteem and gratitude of all those concerned. The reunion of the two societies was largely due to the frankness, urbanity, and candour exhibited by these gentleman.<sup>67</sup> The negotiations were conducted with 'entire and cordial unanimity.'

On 3 May 1838, Godwin moved the first resolution at the Annual Meeting of the BMS, alluded to the union of the two societies, and expressed the wish that the Christian spirit which had been present in the negotiations might also be found abroad, and that 'all past recollections would be buried in oblivion.'<sup>68</sup>

The Revd C. M. Birrell (1811-1880), addressing the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society, gave it as his opinion that the appointment of Benjamin Godwin to be secretary of the 'Society in Aid of the Serampore Mission,' was an act of Divine Providence, and that if the members of that committee had sought to engage a secretary for the purpose of re-uniting the two societies, they could not have found a more suitable candidate.<sup>69</sup> He continued his description of Godwin's efforts, describing Godwin as the helmsman of a ship, and extending the metaphor at considerable length. He described the sighting of the the sails of another splendid ship, manned by their friends, going to the same port, and for the same object. Godwin, after consulting the crew: 'put the helm hard-a-port, the ship wore round, and in a few minutes down she dashed to their side, as soon as they saw them, they took them all on board, and here they were all that day together.'<sup>70</sup> Godwin says that this address met with a hearty response from the large and interested audience.<sup>71</sup>

Despite Birrell's eulogy, Godwin's part in bringing the breach to an end seems to have been quickly forgotten. That might have been because he was of the Serampore party, a party which of necessity passed out of existence; it might have been because of a desire to forget the whole sorry chapter. Writing in 1855, he says that these events will have been forgotten by many and be unknown to more.<sup>72</sup> For him, despite the short period for which he was formally engaged as secretary to the Society in Aid of the Serampore Mission, it was one of the great works of his life, giving him the same feeling of divine leading which he felt when engaged in the anti-slavery movement. In both causes he felt that he was raised above himself: he felt a confidence in the righteousness of the cause and a courage which enabled him to face all difficulties.

Having by his very success removed the necessity for his employment, he was soon invited to take the pastorate at New Road, Oxford, which he had first visited while soliciting contributions for Serampore. There he had a successful ministry, and was active in opposing the growing influence of the Oxford Movement, publishing an answer to Dr. Pusey's 1843 sermon on the eucharist. Ill-health brought premature retirement and a return to Bradford.

He continued to preach in the locality and further afield, and enjoyed the life of a scholar, writing reviews and articles. He remained active in the service of the BMS, preaching missionary sermons and serving on the committee. Among the events he records are the county missionary meetings at Oxford in 1840, where he played a major part, and where William Knibb (1803-1845) delivered such a stirring address that 'many of our young people, male and female were all on fire to go as missionaries or teachers to Jamaica.'<sup>73</sup>

Fittingly, he was invited to preach the sermon for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the BMS, held at Kettering in 1842. Despite the pain of a broken rib

caused by a fall, he was able to deliver his sermon, 'The Goodness of God regarded and the hand of God acknowledged.' Later that year he preached the farewell sermon for Knibb at the Finsbury Chapel.<sup>74</sup> In 1843 he preached for the society at Canterbury.<sup>75</sup> He attended quarterly meetings in London in 1846, and preached for the society at Shacklewell and Chelsea.<sup>76</sup>

Whether the re-uniting of the two societies was viewed with the same delight in Serampore must be questionable. If E. D. Potts' statement that the Serampore-BMS bitterness was so great that neither Carey nor Marshman cared to die on the disputed premises,<sup>77</sup> then it is not surprising that J. C. Marshman's account presents the matter as a 'surrender.' 'By a regular coincidence of time, it was the day after Dr Marshman's interment that the two deputations met in London, and the Serampore mission ceased to exist. It was emphatically buried with him.'<sup>78</sup> For Godwin, though, there were no doubts. When he concluded his autobiographical letters, and looked back upon his life and work, he took great satisfaction from three things in particular: his part in the struggle for the abolition of slavery; his efforts against atheism and irreligion; and the leading part which he took 'in healing that mischievous schism in the Baptist denomination, between the Society and the Serampore mission, of the importance of which posterity will form no conception.'<sup>79</sup> The ending of the Serampore schism, for him, 'was one of the greatest and best things which I have ever been engaged in.'<sup>80</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Minutes of the Ministers' Meeting, Kettering, 2 October 1792. See B. Amey, *The Unfinished Story: A Study-guide History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, Didcot 191991.
- 2 Headquarters of the Baptist Missionary Society at this time.
- 3 F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, From 1792 to 1842*, 1842.
- 4 G. Smith, *The Life of William Carey: Shoemaker and Missionary*, 1935 (first published 1909).
- 5 J. C. Marshman, *The Story of Carey, Marshman & Ward, The Serampore Missionaries*, 1864.
- 6 B. Godwin, Unpublished Letters to his son, J.V.Godwin, Bradford City Library Collection., Letter 28. p.10. Hereafter this collection is referred to as 'Godwin, Letters,' and identified by letter number and page number within the letter.
- 7 Godwin, Letters, Letter 35, p.39.
- 8 The 1858 report of The Committee of the Northern Education Society has no record of a Phillips in its list of 'The Names of the Ministers who have been Educated at the Bradford Academy.' This must be a reference to J.M.Phillippo, who is listed as entering the Horton Academy in 1822, and served in Jamaica from 1823.
- 9 Godwin, Letters, Letter 36, p.8, p.30. Phillippo is described as 'one of the most useful Missionaries in the Island of Jamaica.' The recognition service took place at 'Dr Steadman's Chapel,' on 24 September 1823.
- 10 Godwin, Letters, Letter 34, p.10.
- 11 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.18.
- 12 Godwin, Letters, Letter 38. p.8.
- 13 *ibid.*, p.18.
- 14 J. Marshman, *A brief Memoir, relative to the operations of the Serampore Missionaries; with an appendix including recent intelligence from India*,
- 15 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.19.
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 *Missionary Herald*, March 1828, p.144. The *Missionary Herald* was bound together with the *Baptist Magazine* and the *Irish Chronicle*.
- 18 J. Marshman, *Statement relative to Serampore, supplementary to a "Brief Memoir."* With *Introductory Observations by John Foster*, 1828.
- 19 J. Dyer, *A Letter to John Broadley Wilson, Esq. Treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society. Occasioned by "A Statement relative to Serampore, By J. Marshman, D.D, With introductory Observations by John Foster;" including original Correspondence &c.*, 1828.
- 20 Carey.E, and Yates.W, *Vindication of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries; in answer to "A*

- Calcutta Baptist Missionaries; in answer to "A Statement relative to Serampore, By J. Marshman, D.D. With introductory Observations by John Foster", 1828.*
- 21 W. Johns, *The spirit of the Serampore System as it existed in 1812 and 1813; with Strictures on some parts of Dr. Marshman's "Statement relative to Serampore," in a Series of Letters to a Friend, 1828.*
- 22 *Baptist Magazine*, October 1828, p.461.
- 23 *ibid.* The italics are in the original.
- 24 *Baptist Magazine*, November 1828, 1828, p.510.
- 25 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.20.
- 26 S. P. Carey, *William Carey*, 1823, p.299.
- 27 See F. D. Walker, *William Carey, Missionary Pioneer and Statesman*, 1926, p.297
- 28 Letter from William Carey to Dyer, 15 July 1819. See G. Smith, *The Life of William Carey, Shoemaker and Missionary*, 1935, p.262.
- 29 Letter from Carey to Christopher Anderson, 15 May 1828. See G. Smith, *op.cit.* p.269.
- 30 Joshua Marshman, *Statement relative to Serampore, Supplementary to a "Brief Memoir"*, 1828, p.99.
- 31 See J. C. Marshman, *The Story of Carey, Marshman & Ward, The Serampore Missionaries*, 1864, p.283.
- 32 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.20.
- 33 *ibid.*
- 34 Godwin, Letters, Letter 38, pp.10,11.
- 35 *ibid.* p.8
- 36 Godwin's verdict on the dispute between the 'senior' and 'junior' missionaries is even-handed. 'The junior missionaries were men of talent and vigour and perhaps, considering what human nature is it may be conceded that they were somewhat too ambitious of gaining power, and the old men too jealous of retaining it.' Letters, Letter 38, p.10.
- 37 Godwin, Letters, Letter 38, p.10.
- 38 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.18. For an example see *Missionary Herald*, July 1827, p.347, where Eustace Carey refers to 'my dear and venerated uncle, Dr Carey.'
- 39 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.18.
- 40 S. P. Carey, *op.cit.* pp.349f. S. Pearce Carey was a great grandson of William Carey.
- 41 *Missionary Herald*, July 1827, pp. 346,347.
- 42 J. C. Marshman, *op.cit.* p.282.
- 43 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.22.
- 44 *ibid.* p.21.
- 45 Godwin, Letters, Letter 47, pp.7,8.
- 46 Godwin, Letters, Letter 48, p.5.
- 47 Godwin, Letters, Letter 39, p.21.
- 48 Godwin, Letters, Letter 40, p.5.
- 49 Godwin, Letters, Letter 43, p.3.
- 50 Alexander & Co. in December 1832, Mackintosh & Co. in January 1833, and Colvin & Co. shortly afterwards.
- 51 For a brief account of his life see J. Hughes, *Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-1837*, 1906. Hope is described as 'A man of considerable strength of character and pronounced Liberal views' and as 'a sturdy Nonconformist', p.212. Hope died on 15 October 1837.
- 52 See 'The Necrologies of John Dyer,' *BQ* XXIII, No.7, April 1950, p.309.
- 53 Godwin, Letters, Letter 49, p.6.
- 54 *ibid.*
- 55 *ibid.* p.8.
- 56 *ibid.* p.9.
- 57 *ibid.* p.10.
- 58 *ibid.* p.12.
- 59 *ibid.* p.13.
- 60 *ibid.*, p.14.
- 61 *ibid.*
- 62 J. C. Marshman, *op.cit.* p.322.
- 63 Godwin, Letters, Letter 49, p.13.
- 64 *ibid.* p.14.
- 65 *Baptist Magazine* p.28.
- 66 *Missionary Herald* p.33.
- 67 The representatives of the society are listed as, 'The Rev. George Barclay, of Irvine; Rev. Benjamin Godwin, of Liverpool; C. H. Jones, Esq., of Liverpool; Henry Kelsall, Esq., of Rochdale, and J. L. Phillips, Esq., of Melksham.'
- 68 *Missionary Herald*, June 1838, p.267.
- 69 *ibid.* pp.267, 268.
- 70 *ibid.* p.268.
- 71 Godwin, Letters, Letter 50, p.10.
- 72 Godwin, Letters, Letter 49, p.16.
- 73 Godwin, Letters, Letter 52, p.6.
- 74 *ibid.*, p.7.
- 75 Godwin, Letters, Letter 55, p.7.
- 76 Godwin, Letters, Letter 58, p.15.
- 77 E. D. Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837. The History of Serampore and its Missions*, Cambridge, 1967, p.26, n.2.
- 78 J. C. Marshman, *op.cit.* p.326.
- 79 Godwin, Letters, Letter 58, p.49.
- 80 Godwin, Letters, Letter 49, p.16.

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**SOCIETY NEWS:** Congratulations to Dr Donald Meek, so active in the Scottish Baptist History Project, on his recent appointment to the Chair of Celtic at Aberdeen.