

Key Document

THE BAPTIST MISSION IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCE OF CEYLON

Charles Carter, 1882

Introduction

Charles Carter (1828-1914) had just a brief period of ministry in New Zealand. His pastoral work was limited to two short pastorates - at Ponsonby in Auckland (1882-1884) and Caversham in Dunedin (1885-1887). In this short time he was hardly shy. Indeed he was never far from controversy and dispute. In 1884, he objected to a perceived public slur on him by Thomas Spurgeon¹ and later resigned the Ponsonby charge after falling out with key lay leaders.² His Union Sermon of the same year had the title 'The Royalty of Christ'. This address drew a riposte from the Dispensationalist Rev. J.D. Gilmore, to which Carter made vigorous response in the pages of the *N.Z. Baptist*.³ In 1887 he was again in polemical print as a major protagonist against the conditional immortality views of the Rev C.C. Brown.⁴

Yet Carter was an immensely respected figure. Within a year of his arrival he was elected as the first President of the New Zealand Baptist Union, at the inaugural conference of 1882. On his death in 1914 he was remembered fondly with three long tributes in the

¹ New Zealand Baptist (NZB) July 1884, 103.

² P. Tonson, *A Handful of Grain: The Centenary History of the Baptist Union of N.Z.* Vol 1 – 1851-1882 (Wellington: NZBRHS, 1982), 94.

³ See NZB Dec 1884, 177-180; Jan 1885, 1- ; Feb 1885, 30-31; Mar 1885, 38-39; May 1885, 77.

⁴ See NZB October 1887 146-149.

denominational magazine.⁵ This high regard grew primarily from his distinguished missionary career. From 1853-1881 he was a lead figure in the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) mission in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). He returned independently for a second period in 1888-91. His life work was the rendering and translating of Sinhalese. He completed the New Testament in 1862 and the Old Testament in 1876, both fresh translations from the Greek and Hebrew. He would make two further revisions. In addition to this massive work, he produced a Sinhalese Grammar in 1862, an English-Sinhalese Dictionary in 1891 and, published posthumously in 1894, a Sinhalese-English Dictionary. With fluency also in Tamil and Pali, as a linguist he was (as Alfred North suggested in his obituary tribute) 'altogether exceptional'.

In 1884 Carter wrote a series of articles in the *N.Z. Baptist* giving a 'Brief Sketch' of the BMS mission in Ceylon. This account is important in a number of ways. The version of the early years is standard and adds little to other reports. However the first-hand record of Carter's own years in Ceylon is much more significant. There were few BMS missionaries in this field (no more than four at a time in Carter's first period). He was the sole representative from 1858 to 1862.⁶ Carter's description of the endeavours, style of work and challenges of the mission are illustrative of its ultimately intractable problems.

Brian Stanley has identified three principal reasons for the demise of the Baptist Mission in Ceylon: lack of resources, a failure to train local pastors and other workers and increasingly aggressive opposition from Buddhism.⁷ Of these factors, confirmation of the first and third are found in Carter's 'Brief Sketch'. He notes out-stations and projects which were closed for lack of funds. The account closes with a somewhat rueful note that Baptist commitment to Ceylon has been much smaller than that of other Christian agencies. Carter also has some typically direct comments to make on the nature of Buddhism and the intrusion of Western Theosophy.⁸

⁵ NZB August 1914, 151-155.

⁶ See the List of Missionaries in J.B. Myers (ed) *The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1892* (London: Baptist Missionary Society, 1892), 319.

⁷ B. Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 168-174.

⁸ In 1885 Carter published a more detailed description of Buddhism. See NZB Sep 1885; Oct 1885.

The suggested factor of a failure to provide for adequate local training is not as clear. Carter refers to trusted local assistants and had a history of assisting with preparing workers. Nevertheless a systemic problem may be implied from two aspects of the mission activities he describes. The first is location. Carter was based inland at Kandy. The earlier Baptist efforts at training academies had been in the coastal settlement of Colombo which had a much longer colonial history and therefore a more developed infrastructure. The shift of focus to Kandy might well have made sense in terms of mission outreach, but may also have limited the available resources for serious training. Secondly, Carter's personal focus was on matters other than education. This was the period of his intense work on the translations and dictionaries. If Carter, as senior missionary, was taken up with that complex work for so long it would not be surprising that other major initiatives languished. Interpreted in this way, Charles Carter's account provides an important glimpse into the operation and limitations of one of the BMS's less spectacular stories.

A Brief Sketch of the Operations of the Baptist Mission in the Central Province of Ceylon⁹

The Baptist Missionary Society was the first of modern societies to begin the work of the Gospel in the Island of Ceylon. The first missionary to Ceylon was a Mr Chater, who had been driven away from Calcutta, and failing also to gain a footing in Burmah, came to Colombo in the year 1812. He immediately began his work there and in the villages around. He was before long joined by other labourers, and an English speaking Baptist Church was gathered in Colombo. In the course of years, and after arduous toils and much opposition, native churches were formed in Colombo, and in the district around to the distance of about twenty miles, and many schools established. But it was not until 24 years had elapsed that anything was done by

⁹ Originally published in four parts in the *N.Z. Baptist*, March 1882: 33-34; April 1882: 49-50; June 1882: 84-85; August 1882: 124-125.

our missionaries for the enlightenment of the central Province of Ceylon—the mountainous Kandian region.

Kandy is the ancient native capital of Ceylon, and, to Buddhists, the most sacred place in the island, having a temple which contains a relic of Buddha, said to be one of his teeth; though persons who have seen it aver that it is a piece of discoloured ivory, and not at all the shape of a human tooth. This worthless relic is kept in superb state, being enclosed in seven most valuable caskets, the outer one of which is of solid gold, about 2½ feet high, hung about with most costly jewellery, including large and magnificent rubies, sapphires, and other precious stones. The tooth, in its caskets, is kept in a small upper chamber of the temple, protected by strong iron grating, is never taken out of the caskets for exhibition except on special occasions; but it is carried about in a grand torch-light procession, for eight successive nights in the month of August; the inner casket, containing ‘His Excellency my Lord’s Tooth,’ so called, being placed in state on the back of the largest of the elephants, of which from twelve to sixteen are employed in the procession. Morning and evening ‘His Excellency,’ is visited in his cell, and fresh offerings of flowers are laid on a table before him by the priests; and eager worshippers crowd the narrow stairs into the ante-chamber, and step to the front, a few at a time, to present themselves and their offerings, and to bow down before the sacred shrine.

The town is about the centre of the island and 72 miles east from Colombo. Sixteen miles to the north of Kandy there is a small town called Mátalè. In the year 1836 a member of the Colombo church, formerly a scholar under Mr Chater, having gone to reside at Mátalè, had commenced preaching to his neighbours, and was anxious to be made useful among the Kandians of that district, who till then had never heard of the true God and the Saviour of mankind. Being a man of influence, talent, and energy, Mr Daniel, one of our missionaries in Colombo, was induced to comply with his request to have some schools established in the surrounding villages. Two schools were at once commenced, and placed under his superintendence. He was not then employed by the Mission, but gratuitously devoted his leisure time to missionary work.

At the request of the Governor, the Right Hon. Stewart Mackenzie, Mr Daniel sent an intelligent native to the Teddah (archer) country, to ascertain and report upon the condition of the wild men of the forest, and the scarcely less degraded outcasts called Rodiyas. The result was that a school was opened among the latter

near Mátalè, which the Hon. Mrs Mackenzie supported till her departure from the island in 1841.

In the year 1839 another Baptist missionary, Mr Harris, paid a visit to Mátalè, with which he was so much gratified that he deemed an increase of labour in that direction indispensable. On that occasion he baptised twenty-nine persons, among whom were a Buddhist priest, and several outcast Rodiyas.

In the year 1841 Mr Harris, with his family, removed from Colombo to Kandy, for the purpose of commencing a mission in that town. Among the reasons given by Mr Harris for this step is this, 'that this part of the island is now almost in a state of spiritual destitution. At Kandy one Church of England missionary resides, but I am not aware of any other direct influence of a similar kind.' The mission was further re-inforced by the arrival at Colombo, in February, 1841, of Mr and Mrs Dawson, who proceeded at once to Kandy. In a very short time tracts and school books in the Singhalese language were printed by thousands, and sent to the various stations, where the want of them had been deeply felt. To the Kandians the press was an object of wonder and admiration. Priests occasionally came to see it, and evidently dreaded what to them appeared its almost miraculous power; though they have now for many years learnt to use its power, both for attack and defence. In the same year village stations were formed at Iriagama and Utuwan Kandy—villages about eighteen miles west from Kandy—the latter being supplied with a native preacher, and the former dependent upon the weekly and occasional visits of the Kandy missionaries. From both these places a few members were received into the Church by baptism.

A new station was also commenced at Gampola—a large village twelve miles south of Kandy -where a school was opened and a native preacher located. A substantial chapel that had been built during the year in Kandy was opened on the 25th of December, on which occasion several persons were admitted to the church by baptism.

In the early part of the year 1842 Mr Daniel visited Kandy, having had his attention directed by some gentlemen connected with the planting operations then becoming so extensive in the interior, to the lamentable condition of the Tamil coolies employed on the estate, who were sunk in gross idolatry and immorality, and utterly ignorant of the truths of Christianity. Having obtained permission from the owners of several estates to have their coolies assembled in their working time for an hour on each visit, Mr Daniel and Mr Dawson

entered upon this interesting branch of missionary operations. A native assistant was sent up from Colombo, named Thomas Gamier, a Tamil man, who had a ready command of his native language, and who soon became thoroughly devoted to his work. On an average 2000 persons were preached to monthly on estates in the neighbourhood of Kandy.

In the year 1843 the town of Kurunegalla—twenty-four miles north-west from Kandy—which had for many years been left destitute of Christian teachers of any kind, was, at the urgent request of some of the inhabitants, supplied with a missionary. The same year several were baptised there, schools established, and thousands of tracts distributed. Service was conducted in Portuguese also, there being many Portuguese descendants in the town as well as Singhalese.

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In the year 1844, two other labourers—Mr Solomon Ambrose and Philip Pulla, natives of Ceylon and India—were added to the number of those who were preaching to the coolies on the estates. In the year 1846, Mr Allen gave up a pastorate in which he was settled in England, and joined the mission at Kandy; he afterwards removed to Colombo, and died there about the year 1865. The school at Iriagamma was given up, and one begun at Mahagamma—four miles north of Kandy—and in the following year, the stations of Gampola and Utuwankandy were relinquished, as Iriagamma had been, through the necessity of reducing the expenditure of the Mission.

Between the years 1810 and 1850, there were issued by the Baptist Mission 305,800 tracts and books, the greater part of them being in Singhalese, and the rest in English and Portuguese. These were nearly all the produce of the Mission press. In 1840 the press was resigned in favour and for the use of the Kandy Tract Society, which was then formed, and placed under the supervision of Mr Murdock, now Dr Murdock, Indian secretary of the Christian Vernacular Education Society.¹⁰

¹⁰ Stanley notes the financial problems of the BMS in the 1840s. The effect was such that 'by 1849 the mission had only two principal stations – Colombo and Kandy.' Stanley, 170.

From 1852 to March, 1855, Mr John Davis - late of Thames, New Zealand - laboured in Kandy and the district around very earnestly and very acceptably, when, on his removal for the sake of his health to Colombo on the sea coast, he was succeeded by the writer of this sketch, who had then been one year and a half in the island, acquiring the language and preaching at Colombo.

It would occupy too much space to give you an account in detail of all the various operations and changes since then. The missionary's time was occupied with much open-air work, preaching and speaking in Singhalese to Buddhists, with the training of students, and with Sunday and week-day services both in Singhalese and English, besides visiting, from time to time, the various stations of the Mission and making evangelistic tours. But some particulars must be given to convey some accurate idea of the work done and doing. A school for Tamil children was established at Mátalè, and one for Singhalese children at Kadugannawa—ten miles to the west of Kandy. Gampola was also visited, and much evangelistic work done in the neighbourhood. In this town a site was bought and money collected for building a chapel, for the use of Christians already there, and as a centre of operations. A native preacher was settled there, where he still continues, and after a short time, a neat and sufficiently large chapel was erected, and opened with great joy and spirit, quite clear of debt; services being conducted on that day in both Singhalese and English, and many friends being present from various quarters. An interesting congregation has continued to meet there ever since, and additions from time to time have been made to the membership, some from the ranks of nominal Christians, and others from amongst the Buddhists. The pastor of the church is also an evangelist in the whole district around. Just recently a promising school has been opened by our mission in another part of the town, and there, as in all our schools, the truths of Christianity are taught to the children from day to day besides their secular lessons. At Kadugannawa, above mentioned, a native preacher has been settled and working for years, and a small girls' school conducted under the superintendence of his wife. Here, too, a chapel, similar to that at Gampola, has been recently built, and the writer had the pleasure of opening it by conducting service in Singhalese a few days before leaving Ceylon for New Zealand last July, service in English being conducted by a brother missionary in the after part of the day. At a distance of about fourteen miles west of this place or about fifty miles east of Colombo, we have had a small congregation of Christians for some years. A neat shed, of mud walls and floor and roofed with platted cocoanut

branches, serves both for worship and for teaching the children of the neighbourhood. This is a place amongst high hills, in the midst of rice swamps on the low ground, and jungle on the higher, and at certain seasons of the year exceedingly feverish.

About eighteen years ago, a native doctor living there met with a copy of the Bible at a village he was visiting, became interested in it, borrowed it and took it home with him to read. He was not only led thereby to see the truth of Christianity, but heartily to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, having invited some of our native brethren to come and explain the truth to him and others. In this way, and by his efforts to exhibit to others the treasure he had found, a few others of the village were led to accept the Gospel, and, in due time, they were baptised and united in Christian fellowship. They erected a shed, as already stated, and the native doctor assembled the children of their families, and the children of any others who were willing to send them, and taught them day by day. Under the influence of this change in a number of the people, cattle stealing, gambling and other evils which had been rife there have become almost unknown, and, in that rude uncultivated district, a sudden and marked advance in civilization and decency has been made.

From that little band two have already been gathered home to Christ: an old man who died a few years ago in wonderful triumph, exulting in the thought of going to be with Christ, and in the full assurance of eternal life in Heaven, instead of annihilation, which Buddhism teaches is the best portion we can attain to; and also the doctor, a middle aged, most excellent and intelligent man, who died more recently, in calm but full confidence of safety in Christ; both of them having testified by their pure and earnest lives the reality of their faith in the Lord Jesus. But others have been baptised into their places; amongst them, a younger brother of the doctor, who has taken up the work of teaching the children. The children and members of the Christian families are growing up with no attachment to Buddhism, and their minds fortified against it, by a good knowledge of the truths of Christianity. Clearly God is working by His Word and Spirit, and means to triumph over Buddhism, a system of fatalism, and one quite inoperative for good.

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Reference has been made to a substantial chapel which was opened in Kandy on December 25th, 1841.

Substantial, indeed, it was; but it could hardly be taken, from its appearance, to be a Christian place of worship at all. The Kandy of that time, though it had been the seat of native royalty, was very different from the Kandy of the present day. Under the British Government, and through the opening up of the country for the cultivation of coffee, Kandy, in the centre of the planting district, has very greatly increased in population, and the town has extended, and been specially improved in the vicinity of our chapel; so that the rough building—the barn—which forty years ago, when surrounded with gardens and trees, sufficed, had come to appear scarcely respectable; and through its exposure to the heat, and glare, and dust from the road which runs close by, was a very uncomfortable place for Christian worship. It was determined that a change should be made, and with the help of our missionary in Colombo, who is an architect by profession, very extensive alterations were made. These involved an outlay of about 5000 rupees, 3000 of which were contributed by natives and friends on the spot, the remaining 2000 being granted by the Parent Society out of a local fund supplied by mission property at Kandy. Out of the same fund, 1000 rupees were granted towards the chapel at Kadugannawa—opened last year—another 1000 being contributed by natives and friends there. The chapel at Gampola was built entirely out of donations by natives and friends in the district, and cost about 2000 rupees. The native churches and local friends contribute also about one-third of the cost of maintaining their native pastors and evangelists, besides paying all the incidental expenses of their several places of worship. The number of baptised communicants in these various places amounts to upwards of a hundred; and of persons—including children in the day and Sunday-schools—under regular Christian influence, to about six hundred. A few Sundays after the reopening of our chapel at Kandy, in the year 1880, the native pastor used the new baptistry, for the first time, to baptise three native friends; two of them from heathenism, and the other a member of one of our native Christian families—all three interesting and satisfactory cases. I was unable, through illness, to be present on the occasion, but a few Sundays after that I had the pleasure of baptising three members of our English congregation, and of receiving them into the fellowship of the Church.

That converts are being gathered from Buddhism to Christianity becomes now, as of old, an annoyance to the upholders of heathenism. The characteristic apathy of Buddhists has given way,

and many of the priests and leaders have been aroused to strenuous opposition. They search our Scriptures, and read English sceptical books for the purpose of finding objections to our religion. For example, they find it stated that no one has seen, or can see God; and, again, that he was seen on various occasions, particularly that he talked with Moses face to face. The threatenings found in the Prophets against the people of Israel, especially where God compares himself to a lion or other savage animal, they will have it, indicate that such a being is not a gracious being at all. It will be easily understood how plausible such objections must seem to the heathen, and how difficult it is to get them to look with fairness at the answer to them. A short time ago some American and European Theosophists, so-called - a Colonel Alcott,¹¹ Madame Blavatsky, and some others—came to Ceylon and professed themselves Buddhists. They were received with open arms by the Singhalese Buddhists, who in every place assembled in crowds to see and hear them. Their position was most anomalous, and could not have been an honest one. Indeed, Buddhism is not a Theosophy in any sense, but the most extreme Atheism. They objected to Christianity, that the Bible contains things not in accordance with the discoveries of modern science, and yet accepted Buddhism, in which a kosmology is taught that is simply a mass of falsehood and absurdities. The world, according to Buddhism, is like a flat, round table, with a rim of rocks round its edge, thousands of miles high, to keep the water of the sea from rolling over, &c., &c. The Buddhists have been greatly encouraged and aroused by the mere fact that some Europeans had forsaken Christianity and embraced Buddhism - not by any ability or facts which they were able to employ in elucidation or defence of their new views. The following will serve as a sample of what is doing - at least of one method of work—to advance the truth, and of the opposition met with.

A number of us met, by arrangement, at about 5 p.m., in one of the streets of Kandy. When we had taken our stand in a convenient position, the pastor of our native church opened by reading a few verses from the New Testament in Singhalese, and then gave an address to the crowd which, by that time, had collected. It was the season of the Buddhist annual festival, when a torchlight procession is made after dark, with drums, pipes, dances, 12 to 16

¹¹ Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) (known also as ‘Alcott’) and Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) were founders of the Theosophical Society which had a profound impact in Ceylon.

caparisoned elephants—one of them carrying on his back, in a golden casket, the sacred tooth relic—chiefs of the people in full dress, and a crowd of some thousands, who have come in from the whole surrounding region, and from distant parts of the island. Whilst our brother is speaking, an elephant is led past to get ready for the evening. One of the men on its back, a young, bold, and impudent looking fellow, makes some jeering remarks, slaps the elephant with his hand, and points to it as an illustration of the strength of his religion. Our brother finishes his address, and I take his place, and whilst I am speaking the young man returns on foot, makes his way to the front of the crowd, and stands with a bold, smirking face right in front of me. He begins to talk, and, after bearing it for some time, I beg him to be quiet, and allow the people to hear what I have to say. I try to make it clear to the people that Buddhism is not a system of salvation, but one of condemnation; but that according to Christianity, the vilest sinner, though not whilst he loves sin—thereby meeting their objection that our religion encourages sin— but when he repents, &c., and applies to the only and true God and Governor of the world may be saved, and saved now.

The young man, and some of the leading Buddhists there, finding no way of stopping our preaching by making objections and getting up controversy, call aloud upon all the Buddhists there to retire, and not listen to us any longer; they make some commotion thereby, but on our calling out to them not to be over-ruled, but to do as they like in the matter, most of them stay, and a missionary of the Church Missionary Society present next addresses the crowd. Whilst he is speaking, our opponents return with a man prepared to speak and denounce Christianity at the opposite corner of the street. A company gathers there, too, within a few yards of us; but in the noisy street it does not disturb us, as the voice is not loud enough to reach across. After our missionary brother has spoken about half an hour, setting forth the love, compassion, and power of Christ, he descends from the bench on which he had been standing, and, being urgently requested, I take his place, but only to find that my previous shouting has deprived me of my voice, and after vainly trying to recover it sufficiently, I give place to a member of our native church, and so the work of proclaiming the Gospel is carried on until dark, when the crowd peacefully disperses. During times of more than usual excitement, we announce a lecture, or addresses on religion, in some room or chapel, where we can quietly set forth the truth, and clearly, yet kindly, show that Buddhism is of no use to man, whereas Christianity exactly meets his case.

It is amusing to see how wonderfully competent some English writers are to give advice to missionaries, as to the best way of dealing with Buddhists and heathens in general—writers especially on comparative theology. They are quite sure that Christianity would gain ground much more rapidly, if, instead of denouncing other religious as false, missionaries would admit that they are true so far as they go, and that we have come, not to overthrow them, but to build upon them, to advance beyond them, and to supersede them only in the same sense as Christianity superseded Judaism. Now, if these writers had a little more common sense and a little more modesty, they would take it for granted that missionaries—whom they would instruct, though they have probably never had any intercourse with heathens—have the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ at heart at least as much as themselves, and are wise enough not to lose the advantage of laying hold of any portion of truth already lodged in the heathen mind. But when such writers talk about admitting that those systems are good and true, though, defective, they simply show their own ignorance of the real facts of the case, and of this—which every missionary or native evangelist knows—that no Buddhist would regard with favour any of the doctrines of Christianity until he is convinced that Buddhism is false; and that the admission that the fundamental doctrines of his religion are good and sound—an admission which must be made if it is true—would be his warrant for holding faster than ever the religion of his forefathers, and to which he is bound by so many and such strong ties.

Fancy such a writer speaking to Buddhists thus, according to his own suggestion: - 'Friends, I am glad to believe that Buddhism is true, so far as it goes, and I do not wish you to give up its doctrines, only to build upon them the farther and higher truths of Christianity. For example, to begin with the most important, Buddhism teaches that there is no creator God, and that all which exists is the result of the merit or demerit of finite beings such as we, and of the self-working of Nature. It must be admitted that this is very profound and admirable teaching, and I am not going to ask you to reject it, but only to advance a step and receive an additional and higher teaching, which, by a very natural process, may even be said to grow out of that—that there is a creator God, by whom we and all things have been originated. And then there is the further profound truth and glorious prospect which your religion holds out: that no being can, by any possibility, escape the consequences of his actions until he has paid the uttermost farthing, and attains the sweet relief of nirwana - non-existence. I shall not deny the truth of this, but only suggest that

you build upon it the further truth that sins *can* be forgiven, and all their consequences escaped, and the sinner attain, at the close of this life, a conscious and eternal existence of happiness.’

Our philosopher would certainly not proceed beyond this point before his dreams would be all put to flight by his hearers asking him if he was insane, or if he had come there to deride them, or thought them so senseless as to be deceived by such talk as asking them to believe a thing to be white and at the same time not deny that it is black?

It will thus be seen that no compromise or admission of the truth, or partial truth, of their religion as a scheme for man’s salvation, is possible. We treat them respectfully and kindly, avoid harsh expressions and all calling of names, and show them that we are deeply and tenderly concerned for their welfare, and that this, as well as honesty, leaves us no alternative but to try to show that the teaching which denies the existence of a Creator is mischievously false; and that which denies the possibility of pardon, utterly useless to sinful men. The evidence for the existence of God must show the former, and the truth as it is in Jesus annihilate the latter doctrine.

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Missionaries in Ceylon, as in other heathen lands, have had the toilsome, but necessary and glorious, work of preparing Christian literature for the use of their native converts, and especially translations of the Scriptures, as the source of spiritual sustenance, and as the standard of truth to which appeal could be made at all times. It was the writer’s lot to take a considerable share in such work. In 1850, a new translation of the New Testament in Singhalese was begun, and, after several tentative portions had been favourably received, fully issued from the press in 1862. Since then we have made a new translation of the Old Testament Scriptures, which, together with revising and printing, occupied about fourteen years, having been begun early in 1863 and finished in December, 1876. The necessity for these new translations arose from the fact that the former versions—one of them the property of the Church Missionary Society, and the other supported by the British and Foreign Bible Society—were so seriously erroneous, that any person who really understood and thought of what he was reading, would hesitate to read a chapter in public. These versions had not been made from the

originals, nor with any such regard to consistency as even the use of an English Concordance and Harmony of the Gospels would have secured. A constant misusage of words and phrases showed that the translators had not a sufficient knowledge of the language for such a work, nor such command of the language as was required to give the logical connection of the thought in difficult passages and books. Sometimes the sense given is the opposite of, or very different from, what was intended, and even in simple sentences gross blunders are found.

Our edition of the whole of the New Testament consisted of 2000 copies, and of the four Gospels, the Book of Acts, and the Epistle to the Romans (bound in separate books), 2000 copies more. These being nearly exhausted by the time the Old Testament was issued, it was found necessary to print a fresh edition. With a view to this end, and in order to take advantage of the progress which had been made during the past twenty years in the settlement of the Greek text of the New Testament, so as to adopt the readings which are now generally approved by scholars, and in other respects do the utmost we could to perfect our Singhalese version of the Word of God and make it accurately represent the sense of the original, it was determined that, before reprinting, it should undergo a careful revision. Accordingly the work was begun about the middle of 1876, when the revision of the Old Testament was finished, and whilst the last portion of it was passing through the press. It is satisfactory that the close scrutiny which this work involved showed that our original translation was not marred by bad or erroneous Singhalese. At the same time it was found that it often admitted of improvement—in some cases considerable improvement—by a more precise rendering of the sense and emphasis of the Original Greek, and by a more careful exhibition of the connection of the thought between one sentence or verse and another. Just as the last few chapters of the Revelation were passing through the press last June, we received a copy of the New English Revision, and, on comparison, found, as indeed we expected, that we had generally arrived at the same results; and that, where ours differed from the English text, in almost every case it agreed either with the marginal alternative, or with the American suggestion. For example, in Rev. v. 9-10: 'For Thou wast slain,' &c., the new version differs from the old in five particulars, in every one of which our Singhalese version corresponds with the new renderings. Sometimes, indeed, our Singhalese is more accurate, or the sense better expressed, than the English—*e.g.*, James ii. 6-7: 'Do not the rich oppress you? and themselves drag you before the

judgment-seats? Do not they blaspheme?' &c. The English '*themselves*' here represents them as dragging the poor with their own hands—they oppress directly or indirectly, but the dragging they do themselves. It is difficult to suppose that this was the meaning of the Apostle, as it certainly is not necessarily the right force of the emphasis of the Greek; and why was not the same emphatic pronoun translated in the same way in the next sentence? Do not they themselves blaspheme? &c. The exact force of our Singhalese is, 'Do not the rich oppress you, And is it not they who drag you before the judgment seats? Is it not they who blaspheme?' &c. This is clearly what the Apostle intended, and it gives the same construction and emphasis to the second sentence as to the first. That this is the right rendering could be abundantly proved from the English revisers' own work: in Matt. i. 21 they render the same construction and pronoun—'For it is He that shall save His people from their sins.'

It is a wonderful and glorious fact that God is giving to all nations, and tribes, and peoples His Word in their own tongues—even though the gift of tongues has ceased—translations which are quite as clear and intelligible, and, in the case of the Sanscrit and Dravidian languages of India—as Singhalese, Oriza, Bengalle, Tamil, &c.—as grammatical, forcible, and elegant as our own English version. May His Word have free course and be glorified.

Mr Baynes, Secretary of the British Missionary Society, has lately been on a tour amongst our mission stations in India. Reports of his meetings in Ceylon were given in the *Ceylon Observer* of March 16 and 20 last, and I shall conclude these sketches by an abstract from the speech of the editor of the *Observer* on the occasion of Mr Baynes's visit to Colombo.

Mr Ferguson said: - During the period he had referred to, he had seen the mission rise from small beginnings. It was nothing to boast of now, but success would follow in God's own good time. Very much impatience was felt at home at the small statistical result. It would be well if those supporters of the mission who expected a great many converts would come out, and personally see the state of things here. When Mr Chater came to Colombo he took every means possible to announce to the Singhalese that he had a new message for them. At the first service of the Baptist Mission in this island there was not a human being present excepting the members of the missionary's household. After three years the converts numbered three. Considering that Ceylon was neglected for nearly eighteen centuries after Christ, did it not seem unreasonable that in 70 years

there should be such a great change as their good friends in England expected? To the speaker's mind the state of the case called for gratitude. In viewing what had been done here, account must be taken of the prevalent system of religion: a system which denied the existence of a God and denied the personal responsibility of man. Buddhism was said (even by people in Europe) to be the 'Light of Asia,' and far more beautiful than Christianity. In a letter by the last mail he read that two ladies had resolved to devote themselves to a life of purity, following the teachings of Buddha. He did not wish to say anything unkind, but he appealed to his friends present to say whether Buddhism had secured purity of life. Had it prevented murder, litigation and other evils? Buddhism had utterly failed here in Ceylon where, from the insular position, if in any part of the earth, it exists in its original form. The Rev Spence Hardy had said that if Buddhism is shaken in Ceylon it will receive a mortal blow which will be felt throughout the one-third of the human race that adhere to it. Such a work would surely be a great work. After alluding to the action of the Portuguese and Dutch in making the profession of Christianity a condition for civil employment in Ceylon, and the unhappy results, Mr Ferguson expressed his belief that the missionaries of the Baptist Mission had been faithful, and had preached the Word of Christ in and out of season; and if the statistical results were not all that their friends at home could wish, yet a good work had been done in sapping the foundations of Buddhism. Although those present had not had the privilege of hearing anything about the work in the Kandy district, he would remind them of the existence of their mission there. He believed the statistics from that district would bring up the total number of the Baptist Church in Ceylon to over 600 members, which really amounted to 4,000 or 5,000 being in some measure under the influence of the mission. He did not think there was any cause for feeling disheartened, but that they might well take courage for the future. (Applause.)

The Church of England and Wesleyan Missions have much more extensive operations in Ceylon than the Baptist Mission, and Roman Catholics outnumber all the Protestants put together.

Chas Carter
Ponsonby, Auckland, 1882.