

Who Was William Carey?: Missionary Encounters in Britain and Bengal Revisited

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In 1864, John Clark Marshman, legal scholar and son of Christian missionaries to India, agreed to a popular reissue of his 1859 book, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*.¹ Marshman's book told the story of how "Serampore," a small Danish-controlled community north of Calcutta, became synonymous with the project to Christianize India, home to millions of Hindus and Muslims. Marshman's introduction noted with a mixture of apology and pride that this edition deleted all of the controversial material surrounding the Serampore Trio of British missionaries, William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward. Material on the controversy (in which Marshman had participated) had originally taken up one-half of the second volume of the work.² Deletion of that material signals the difficulties of evaluating the Baptist Mission in Serampore.³ If the reality of controversy could be effaced in latter days of agreement, it demonstrates the extent to which historical consciousness regarding a key movement in the history of Christianity is a prisoner of the occasion. It suggests, too, that William Carey, whom biographies, children's books, sermons and internet sites present as the

¹ J. C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward. Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (2 vols., London: Longman, 1859).

² "Baptist Magazine. [Review of] *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward. Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (2 vols., Longman, Green and C., 1859)," *The Oriental Baptist* 13, no. 149 (May, 1859): 146. Marshman had also been involved in the controversy. See John C. Marshman, *Review of Two Pamphlets, by the Rev. John Dyer, and the Rev. E. Carey and W. Yates. In Twelve Letters to the Rev. John Foster* (London: Parbury and Allen, 1830).

³ John Clark Marshman, *The Story of CAREY MARSHMAN & WARD, the Serampore Missionaries* (London: J. Heaton and Son, 1864), p. v.

“Father of Modern Missions,”⁴ has, from the very beginning, proved difficult to understand.

This lecture will consider whether, amid a growing weight of admirable books and articles on William Carey, British Baptist missionary to India, we understand who Carey was either historically or theologically. Study of Carey occasions challenges and opportunities, as my colleague and MC graduate Bennie Crockett, Jr. and I have noted since we took on the project of developing a web-site and scholarly center devoted to Carey last year. As we gather material ranging from two rare botanical works edited by Carey to copies of India’s first periodical publication, we consider how much work has been done on Carey. That consideration, in turn, makes us aware of how much still needs to be done if we are to understand Carey. For the moment, we are left with an intriguing but confusing picture. Historians of Britain and British India have credited Carey with contributing to the Bengali Renaissance of the early nineteenth century,⁵ but they have generally slighted him with a brief mention or footnote. Evangelicals, meanwhile, have treated Carey as an icon, Bible translator (a veritable Tyndale of India), forefather, saint, and even a possession of sorts. The history of Carey’s reputation is compartmentalized, placing parrot-like versions of Carey in a series of gilded cages. Before those treatments can be assessed, however, it is necessary to introduce features of Carey’s life that give him claim to importance for Baptists and for the ages.

⁴ Sam Wellman, *William Carey: Father of Modern Missions* (Ulrichsville, Ohio: Barbour, 1997); Margaret T. Applegarth, *Lamplighters Across the Sea: A Story Study Book for Juniors* (West Medford, Mass.: Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1920); Saxon Rowe Carver, *The Shoe-Leather Globe: A Life of William Carey*, illus. by Paul Granger (Nashville: Broadman Press, c. 1965); Iris Clinton, *Young Man in a Hurry* (Cambridge, England: Lutterworth Press, c. 1961); L. H. Dalton, "Young Man--Sit Down!" Carey of India, 1761-1834," in *On Trail with the Redskins and Other True Stories. Eagle Omnibus Number 3* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1956).

⁵ Ghosh, J. C. "Vernacular Literatures," in *The Legacy of India*, ed. G. T. Garratt. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1938. pp. 369-393; David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1834*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

Carey Introduced

William Carey, son of a parish clerk in the Church of England, was born in Paulerspury, Northamptonshire in 1761. He died 73 years later in 1834 in Serampore, Bengal, a flood-prone Danish protectorate on the Hooghly River, fifteen miles north of Calcutta, India. Carey's origins were humble. He was, by turns, a cobbler, a schoolteacher, and a Baptist pastor. His appearance was alternately comical and sincere. As a schoolteacher he wore an ill-fitting wig that would be thrown overboard in his passage to India; as a missionary his bald dome accentuated his prominent nose and staid mouth. He, like other missionaries who carried their culture on their backs, wore wool suits even in steamy India. Carey's story exhibits radical self-transformation. In early mid-career he could barely get a hearing as a preacher in the English midlands. His ordination was delayed because he could not satisfy congregants or ministerial colleagues of his worthiness. Though theologically orthodox concerning the doctrine of the Trinity and on Protestant understandings of salvation by faith, Carey was surrounded by radical influences. His family, in a fit of what would today seem like social activism, boycotted West Indian sugar because the blood and sweat of slave laboring Africans in the Caribbean produced it. Carey also displayed an eccentric interest in science. Though poor, he was an Orientalist before he realized the means to achieve it. He sought to control his status-poor world through classification of plants and insects.

Three events saved Carey from becoming an unsung cobbler with scientific hobbies. First, he passed off a brass shilling on his employer. The resultant guilt, compounded by continued poverty, was too much for him. On February 10, 1779, he decided that he had tired of the "cold" services of the established Church of England and

resolved to seek union with dissenting nonconformists, Baptists who rejected infant baptism and viewed churches as voluntary communities of faith. His family never accepted this decision, which squandered even the small status into which Carey had been born. Second, on May 30, 1792, Carey preached his “deathless” sermon to the Northampton Baptist Association. Third, Carey wrote a missionary manifesto, his *Enquiry* published in 1792. It was an audacious combination of attenuated Calvinism, religious demography, geography, anthropology and social statistics.⁶ Like the missionary gazetteers for which it formed a tentative model, it was designed for use rather than ostentation.⁷

In 1793, true to plan but floating on a sea of contingency, Carey journeyed to India with support of thirteen people who had initially contributed sixteen pounds to establish the Baptist Missionary Society. Carey entered India with bare legality by the standards of the British East India Company, which prohibited missionary activity because of their fear that the attendant political incorrectness would lead angry Hindus and Muslims to disturb their profits. For Carey’s first six years there, a time during which he could not claim a single Indian convert, he labored as an indigo farmer, a profession that exposed workers to dangers that would today bring on a massive OSHA investigation. After arriving at Serampore in 1800 Carey began to translate the Bible into dozens of local

⁶ Brian Stanley, “Christianity and Civilization in English Evangelical Mission Thought,” in Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 174.

⁷ Walter Chapin, *The Missionary Gazetteer COMPRISING A VIEW OF THE INHABITANTS AND A GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRIES AND PLACES, WHERE PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES HAVE LABORED; ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED, AND SO CONSTRUCTED AS TO GIVE A PARTICULAR AND GENERAL HISTORY OF MISSIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD; WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING AN ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MISSIONARIES, THEIR STATIONS, THE TIME OF ENTERING, REMOVAL, OR DECEASE* (Woodstock, Vermont: Printed by David Watson, 1825); Edwards, B. B. *The Missionary Gazetteer; Comprising a Geographical and Statistical Account of the Various Stations of the American and Foreign Protestant Missionary Societies of All Denominations, with Their Progress in Evangelization and Civilization. Illustrated by Engravings.* (Boston: William Hyde and Co., 1832).

dialects,⁸ published Bengali and Sanskrit grammars, lectured at government-sponsored Fort William College, founded Serampore College and the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India.⁹ He also invented Indian savings banks, and published the first periodicals in India and a couple of technical botanical works. Eventually, he and his colleagues and pundits would translate portions of the Bible into dozens of languages, including, incidentally, Pushtoo, one of the dialects spoken in modern Afghanistan. Carey fought to destroy caste privileges by promoting conversion to Christianity and crusaded against child marriage. He worked to see widow burning, *sati*, abolished, and enjoyed the satisfaction of translating the government edict abolishing it.¹⁰ Brown University awarded him a Doctor of Divinity degree for his Bengali grammar.¹¹ He would henceforth be “Dr. Carey,” a poor nonconformist’s version of that brilliant High Anglican lexicographer “Dr. Samuel “Dictionary” Johnson. Carey was, in old age, a man of principle, a retiring oracle to be consulted by Indians, Evangelicals and East India Company officials, many of whom had earlier opposed his designs. Carey had outlasted and absorbed the ambitions of friend and foe alike.

But trouble followed Carey. Two wives predeceased him. The first, Dorothy Plackett, was mentally unstable, illiterate, did not want to journey to India, and was given

⁸ “Translations of the Scriptures. From the London Missionary Register, Sept. 1821. Serampore. Baptist Missionary Society,” *The Boston Recorder* VI, no. 50, December 8, 1821, p. 1; “biblical literature” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. <http://search.eb.com/bol/topic?eu=119705&sctn=57>; Herbert G. Grether, “Versions, Modern Era,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, gen. ed., (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1992), VI: 846-47; Eric Fenn, “The Bible and the Missionary,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. S. L. Greenslade (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1963), pp. 383-406; Baptist Missionary Society. *Brief Narrative of the Baptist Mission in India* (2nd ed., enlarged, Edinburgh: Greig and Walker, 1810); *Brief Narrative of the Baptist Mission in India Including an Account of Translations of the Sacred Scriptures into the Various Languages of the East* (4th ed., London: E. W. Morris, 1813).

⁹ For this last, see William Carey, “Appendix: Prospectus for an Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India,” *Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India* Volume 1(1829).

¹⁰ Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1998), p. 85.

to hurling shocking insults against Carey's sexual honesty. Carey's work habits may be taken in part to reflect a retreat from the problems that Dorothy's dispiriting condition embodied. Carey's second wife, Charlotte Rumohr, was a physically handicapped, multi-lingual Dane of decidedly higher social status than Dorothy. She was as close to a trophy wife as Carey's morals and humility would permit. Carey's third wife, Grace Hughes, survived him, but some of the prophetic anger of the first wife survived in the form of two maladjusted sons. Although they turned out well as adults, preaching the Gospel and learning Indian languages faster and better than any other European, the Carey sons were for years veritable poster children for the "Missionary Kid Gone Awry." Their sexual indiscretions, hinted at the time, have received extensive treatment in a recent and allusive biographical work by longtime Carey librarian, Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *A Tiger Tamed*.¹²

A fire damaged the Serampore Press in 1812, and controversy troubled the mission thereafter. The learned and witty Anglican, the Reverend Sydney Smith lampooned Carey and his colleagues, using words published in the *Periodical Accounts* of the BMS, as "a nest of consecrated cobblers."¹³ Hindu Brahmins asserted that the destruction of Carey's house in a flood was revenge of the river against one who had polluted its sacredness with Christian baptisms.¹⁴ To add cultural insult to natural injury, some Bengalis accused Carey and his colleagues of speaking "Serampore Bengali," taking this

¹¹ John Hay Library, Brown University Archives, A 21404, Samuel Stillman to Pres. Asa Messer, September 1, 1806.

¹² Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *Felix Carey: A Tiger Tamed* (Hooghly, West Bengal: S. K. Chatterjee, 1991).

¹³ [Smith, Sydney]. "Art. IX.," *Edinburgh Review*, 12, no. 23 (1808): 151-181; Sydney Smith, "Indian Missions," *The Works of the Rev. Sydney Smith. Three Volumes Complete in One* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1845), pp. 48-57; John Styles, *Strictures on Two Critiques in the Edinburgh Review, on the Subject of Methodism and Missions; with Remarks on the Influence of Reviews, in General, on Morals and Happiness* (London: , 1809)..

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term as synonymous with unintelligible and incorrect.¹⁵ There were insinuations that the pundits upon whom the translation process depended were either unacknowledged authors or confidence tricksters.

Political shifts were as daunting for Carey as changes in the course of the Hooghly River. In 1813, Carey and his colleagues won an enormous parliamentary victory, when the East India Company's charter was renewed to allow for legal missionary activity in India.¹⁶ Yet this triumph brought problems. Not only was there now less of an excuse for low numbers of converts, there was a change in the constitution of Serampore itself. When Carey's friend and contact in England, Andrew Fuller, died in 1815, power in the Baptist Missionary Society shifted from Northamptonshire to London. Carey and his colleagues were accused of enriching themselves as missionaries and asked to turn control of mission assets over to the Society in London. Near the end of his career, Carey found himself outflanked politically by a young generation of missionaries, including his own nephew Eustace, who insisted that their seniors, primarily Joshua Marshman, were a detriment and adopted another missionary strategy and headquarters in Calcutta.¹⁷ The result was a duality of barely cooperating missionary societies. At Carey's death the Serampore Mission had only recently returned to cooperation with the Baptist Missionary

¹⁵ American Baptist Board for Foreign Missions

¹⁶ Karen Chancey, "The Star in the East: The Controversy over Christian Missions to India, 1805-1813," *The Historian: A Journal of History* 60 (1998): 507-522; Christian, A. *A Letter to a Friend on the Duty of Great Britain to Disseminate Christianity in India. Occasioned by the Proposed Renewal of the Charter of the East India Company* (London: Sold by J. Hatchard and L. B. Seeley, 1813); Claudius Buchanan, *Memoir of the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India Both as a Means of Perpetuating the Christian Religion among our own Countrymen and as a Foundation for the Ultimate Civilization of the Natives* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies by W. Bulmer, 1805); Robert Hall, *Considerations on a Most Important Subject Connected with the Question of the Renewal of the Charter of the East India Company* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Waugh, and Innes; Glasgow: Sold by W. Turnbull and M. Ogle, 1813); Indicophilus (pseud.). *An Essay on the Propagation of Christianity in India Occasioned by the Proposed Renewal of the East India Company's Charter* (Edinburgh: , 1813); Joshua Marshman, *Advantages of Christianity in Promoting the Establishment and Prosperity of the British Government in India: Containing Remarks Occasioned by Reading a Memoir on the Vellore Mutiny* (London: Printed at Smith's Printing Office, 1813).

Society. While Carey's reputation recovered, his earthly monuments eroded. In the late twentieth century Carey's grave would fall into such disrepair in mosquito-ridden Serampore that millionaire Mississippi industrialist Owen Cooper would launch an international campaign to preserve the gravestone.¹⁸ For all the twists and turns in Carey's story, one might assume that uneasy lay the head that occupied his grave.

Why is Carey important? Beyond catchphrases, there is little agreement. I propose to consider how Carey's reputation developed and to offer some commentary on those who shaped it. There has been little talking in the ranks of Carey scholars and admirers. The result was a series of multiple historical personalities, each manifested in sequence without overlay or duplication. Each version responded to the times of those who constructed it. Each contains an element of Carey or at least of the historical problems he raised. Let those versions of Carey's reputation to jostle and confront one another as they pass under our review.

Carey's Multiple Personalities I: The Eminent Victorian

Carey's legend arose out of the specific demands of the Baptist Missionary Society during the 1830's and 1840's. Obituarists, like Indian insects, made quick work of Carey.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the job of Carey's first biographer, that same nephew, Eustace Carey, who had caused Carey so much trouble, was to smooth over signs of controversy in Carey's career. At first sight, Eustace Carey's *Memoir* of his uncle is a loosely arranged set of verbatim letters from the BMS archive. In that sense Eustace's biography

¹⁷ Mrs. E. Carey, *Eustace Carey: A Missionary in India* (London, 1857).

¹⁸ *The Thought Occurred to Me*

¹⁹ THE BENGAL OBITUARY, or a Record to Perpetuate the Memory of Departed Worth, Being a Compilation of Tablets and Monumental Inscriptions from Various Parts of the Bengal and Agra Presidencies. To which is Added Biographical Sketches and Memoirs of Such as Have Pre-Eminently Distinguished Themselves in the History of British India, since the Formation of the European Settlement to the Present Time. (Calcutta: J. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press, 1848), pp. 334-340; Carey, W. H.

stands as a precursor to double decker Victorian biography as parodied by Lytton

Strachey in 1914:

Those two fat volumes, with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead—who does not know them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design? They are as familiar as the *cortege* of the undertaker, and wear the same air of slow funereal barbarism. One is tempted to suppose of some of them, that they were composed by that functionary, as the final item of his job.²⁰

Eustace Carey's single volume appeared in 1836, one year before Queen Victoria gave her name to an epoch. He came to praise his uncle in order to bury with him the taint of the controversies that had created a Baptist saint. Eustace's oversights, often attributed to mere negligence, were purposeful. Determined to exhibit "the Christian and the missionary, rather than the philosopher and the scholar,"²¹ he becomes reticent about the years of controversy. After Carey's death in 1834 the Baptist Missionary Society seems almost to have come under the curse of the Ganges itself. Its secretary, John Dyer, who attempted to place the society on a sound business footing, was implicated in financial scandal and drowned himself. The Society responded by issuing alongside Eustace's biography a series of inexpensive medals popularizing the history of the mission.

Beyond motivation to cover muddy tracks of the Baptist Missionary Society, Eustace dithered between presenting Carey as a classical Augustan worthy from the reign of George III, like the celebrated "Dr. Johnson" immortalized by James Boswell, or to present him as a Victorian hero of eclipsing moral earnestness. In the introduction to Eustace's volume, Francis Wayland, President of Brown University, reported that "the

Oriental Christian Biography. Containing Biographical Sketches and Death-Bed Scenes of Distinguished Christians Who Have Lived and Died in the East (2 vols., Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1849).

²⁰ Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, n. d.), pp. viii-ix.

cornerstone” of Indian missions “was laid by [Carey’s] hand.”²² Yet, according to Eustace, this achievement was not the result of a prodigious genius for languages that some commentators have touted. Instead, Carey was no genius but a plodder, a man of “childlike simplicity of character” and a “stern and uncompromising moral integrity.”²³ Eustace added authenticity by portraying his uncle from verbal recollections, and provided testimonials from authorities in theology and Sanskrit, but nearly ignored printed works. The availability of documents declines after 1815, when Andrew Fuller’s died and controversy began over mission property and financial management. One is left with the impression of Carey’s eminent piety, of his protestant sainthood.

Later nineteenth century biographers of Carey addressed audiences with new concerns. Baptists in America, riven by a dispute over ordination of a slave-owning missionary, could rally around Carey. They seem indeed to have relished the Parson Weems approach to foundational figures more ardently than their British cousins did. Joseph Belcher treated Carey as another in a line of historical personages that included the poet John Milton, revivalist George Whitefield and, inevitably perhaps, George Washington.²⁴ Like Parson Weems, Belcher preferred the ring of authenticity to the letter of accuracy. Belcher was first to recount the melodramatic, staid Calvinistic and oft-quoted remark of Pastor John Ryland to Carey in 1785: “Young man, sit down.

²¹ Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D. D., Late Missionary to Bengal; Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta. With an Introductory Essay by Francis Wayland, D. D. Pres. Of Brown University* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836), p. iii.

²² Eustace Carey, p. xii.

²³ Eustace Carey, pp. xiv, xv.

²⁴ Joseph Belcher, *William Carey: A Biography* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853), p. 6.

When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help or mine.”²⁵

These unuttered words have found their way into titles of modern books about Carey!²⁶

Although, as noted earlier, J. C. Marshman disavowed controversy after he had disarmed it, his task was to remove Carey from the historical and polemical context in which he had lived most of his life. Marshman had personal reasons for conducting this operation. As the talented son of Carey’s controversial colleague Joshua Marshman, John Marshman wished to eradicate tensions in an age of Victorian consensus. By doing so he silently restored Marshman and Ward and created the notion of a Serampore Trio that Eustace Carey had tried to efface. Victorian notions of Carey, who died three years before the Queen’s reign began, were complete.

Carey’s Multiple Personalities II: The Orientalist Polymath

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British Empire, with India as the jewel in the crown, reached the zenith of its power. Industry and empire made it possible for English notions of gentility to encompass not merely a landed elite but the professions as well. Carey’s reputation followed in step. He was no longer an exile or refugee. Rather, the centennial of his passage to India brought new appreciation from the Baptist Missionary Society.²⁷ George Smith’s 1887 biography gained admission in 1909 to the popular series, Everyman’s Library.²⁸ By the 1920’s it was time to fashion a thoroughly modern Carey and that is what Carey’s great-grandson, S. Pearce

²⁵ Belcher, p. 19. Cf. Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: , 1992), p. 7, no. 14.

²⁶ L. H. Dalton, “*Young Man-sit down!*” *William Carey of India* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938).

²⁷ Myers, John Brown, ed. *The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1892*. (London: The Baptist Missionary Society, 1892); *The Centenary Celebration of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1892-1893. Reports of the Commemoration Services Held at Nottingham, Leicester, Kettering, London, and Northampton, and List of the Contributions to Thanksgiving Fund*. (London: The Baptist Missionary Society, 1893).

Carey, sought to do. S. Pearce's best-selling biography went through eight editions in its first eleven years of publication. It is no mere criticism to say that it is easier to read than to comprehend. It is my favorite book about Carey, but it is a challenge. S. Pearce began each chapter of his book with a series of attributed but citation-less quotations. His text is littered with interesting but untraceable information. He alludes to the Roman poet Horace, the "Historian of the Roman Empire," Edward Gibbon, and the Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society, with equal facility and obscurity. His Carey is an unprepossessing visionary who tends his garden, makes botanical discoveries in jaunts to Nepal, and founds modern Bengali society. He is a polite agent of civilization. The very title of the book, *William Carey, D. D., Fellow of the Linnaean Society* suggests the need to make divinity of secular use in the twilight of empire.²⁹

Carey's Multiple Personalities III: The Radical

Carey's reputation reflected political unrest during the middle of the twentieth century. Carey's *Enquiry*, his rare missions pamphlet published in 1792, went through editions in 1818, 1891, 1934, 1942 and 1961. The 1961 edition included an introduction by the then dean of Baptist historians in Britain, Ernest A. Payne. Payne's introduction was no routine textual exercise. Instead, Payne located Carey in a nest, not of cobblers, but of radicals. The radicalism of Carey's informal associations proved considerable and worthy of connection with earth-changing secular movements. As it turns out, the printer

²⁸ George Smith, *The Life of William Carey, Shoemaker and Missionary* (London: Murray, 1887; J. M. Dent, 1909).

²⁹ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey, D. D., Fellow of the Linnaean Society* (London: , 1923). See also popularized condensations: S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey. With Portrait*. Torch-Bearer Booklets, no. 6. (London: Carey Press, [1924]); *William Carey. Life Stories of Great Baptists*, no. 2 (London: Carey Press; Kingsgate Press, [1932]); *Carey* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Ltd., [1936]). See also David Kopf, "European Enlightenment, Hindu Resistance and the Enrichment of the Human Spirit: A History of Historical Writings on British Orientalism," in Nancy G. Cassels, ed., *Orientalism, Evangelicalism and the Military Cantonment in Early Nineteenth-Century India: A Historiographical Overview* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 19-54.

and publisher of Carey's *Enquiry* was also the publisher of the radical Thomas Paine, author of *Common Sense*. The publisher of the *Leicester Herald*, the midlands newspaper in which Carey's *Enquiry* was advertised for 1s. 6d., suffered government prosecution for printing Paine's *Rights of Man*. The *Enquiry*'s printer, John Ireland, edited a newspaper forced to suspend publication in 1793 at the height of the French Revolution, for radical activities. The London booksellers who sold the *Enquiry* also published the pantheist William Blake's poetry on the French Revolution and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*.³⁰

Carey was a republican who believed that monarchy should be abolished. Payne hints that Carey's departure for India was a radical exile prompted by diminishing prospects for activity in England. Carey the radical had burned his candle at both ends and saw the logic of flight. In Britain he cooperated with radicals whose theology differed from his own, but whose concerns about morality, the power of the state, and freedom of religious expression dovetailed with his. When his Indian mission produced a more accommodationist stance, it was merely the result of radicalism ripening into reform and mellowing into legend on the periphery of the British Empire. No one would now confuse Carey's with S. Pearce Carey's gentleman of eminence who must be on every civilized visitor's itinerary.

Carey's Multiple Personalities IV: The Double-Talking *Sahib*

The post World War II period has revealed a post-colonial Carey. Post-colonial scholars have rejected the categories imposed by imperial colonizers and insisted that imperial domination must be analyzed as a form of rhetoric. Lata Mani, a feminist scholar from California, "tracks" and "excavates" the "private" writings of the Baptist

missionaries in early nineteenth century India. She hopes to reconstitute missionary epistemology and to show how “subaltern” audiences subverted the missionary message.³¹ Mani interrogates Baptist diaries and letters regarding street preaching. She points out that the missionaries contrasted their own knowledge of Christian scriptures with the inability of Indians to defend cultural practices such as *sati* or caste based upon their own Hindu scriptures, or *shastras*. The missionaries attacked the authority of caste and of Muslim imams and Hindu priests. Mani views the missionary’s response as a flexible attempt to establish a dominant discourse by reducing Indian understanding of religion to a textual basis.³² Indian responses, which included spurning the missionaries or adopting a kind of relativism, only complicated the hegemony of these outsiders.³³ The missionaries, accordingly, were guilty of a “fundamental cognitive failure.” They sought to enforce their categories of textuality, sin and the supremacy of the spiritual over the material upon a society with autonomous concerns. The result was a series of excusable contradictions in their own discourse and a poor record of thirty-one conversions in ten years.³⁴

By contrast, according to Mani, missionary narratives were not hindered by legal or cultural concerns as they projected back to Britain and America, the two main sources of support and fund raising.³⁵ Instead they said one thing in India, where they needed legalization of their activities, and another in Britain and America, where they needed to raise money. The problem with this approach is that it reduces Carey’s existence to discourse and leads to misunderstanding of missionary motives. In short, Mani’s version

³⁰ Ed. E. A. Payne, pp. vi-vii.

³¹ Mani, p. 86.

³² Mani, p. 100.

³³ Mani, p. 102, 103.

³⁴ Mani, p. 111.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

of Carey is one that neither he nor his Indian contemporaries would have recognized.³⁶ Mani does not take the activities of the missionaries seriously and screens their Indian friends, converts and even antagonists behind a wall of rhetorical silence.

Carey's Multiple Personalities V: The Protestant Reformer

Modern evangelicalism has adopted Carey as a figure of intense interest. Popular biographies of Carey make much of his moderate Calvinism. Timothy George of Samford's Beeson Divinity School, has described Carey as a *Faithful Witness* whose determination was "to seek a system of doctrines in the Word of God."³⁷ George's Carey demonstrates that a staunch Calvinist could be a missionary. For George, the "turning point in Carey's ministry" occurred at Leicester when he re-started the Baptist church there, with the result that some " 'loose characters' ... refused to go along with the new covenantal charter."³⁸ George soberly notes that the motto derived from Carey's now lost "Deathless Sermon" of May 30, 1792, originally read only "Expect great things; attempt great things. Others, the first likely being fellow pastor John Ryland in 1815,³⁹ would add "from God" and "for God" to make the watchword read in full "Expect Great Things from God; Attempt Great Things For God."⁴⁰ Still others, like S. Pearce Carey writing in 1923, would reverse the order of the words "expect" and "attempt," an operation that George rejects. Such a procedure misses "the spirit of his original intention."⁴¹ According to George,

³⁶ For the impact of this procedure on popular works, see Editors of Time-Life Books, *What Life was Like in the Jewel in the Crown: British India AD 1600-1905* (Alexandria, Va.: Time-Life Books, 1999).

³⁷ Timothy George, *Faithful Witness*, p. 8:

³⁸ George, p. 28.

³⁹ John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of Andrew Fuller* (Bristol, 1815), pp. 241-242.

⁴⁰ A. Christopher Smith, "The Spirit and Letter of Carey's Catalytic Watchword," *Baptist Quarterly* 33 (1989-1990): 226-237.

⁴¹ George, p. 32.

from first to last he was keenly aware of God's Sovereignty in awakening the church from its slumber to accomplish His eternal purpose in bringing the lost to a saving knowledge of the Redeemer. In this sense, both the "expecting" and the "attempting" were from God. It was His mission, His spirit, His call.⁴²

George's biography is, in the absence of a comprehensive analysis of Carey's theology, a rather a highly informed Calvinist reading of Carey's activities. It raises the question of the relationship of fact to interpretation absent context. George's approach possesses the virtue of placing Carey in the theological context of the Reformation.⁴³ But it carries the danger of pigeonholing Carey, or treating his social conscience, radicalism, and Indian experience as tangents, asides, or extravagances. It promises, to be sure, the prospect of connecting Carey with David Brainerd, the pioneer American missionary to tribes of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and with Jonathan Edwards, the great American revivalist.⁴⁴ But it affords little time to the social context of the Indian mission and treats its theological context as a static exercise. To what extent was Carey's Calvinism the theology of choice for those who resisted the forceful blandishments of France and the Papacy, a real geo-political fear even on the margins of Empire?⁴⁵ To emphasize Carey's Calvinism treats what Carey took for granted as a revelation and takes the novel features of his practical theology as read. What mattered for Carey was the developing nature of theological understanding. The question of how his theology developed in India, a land of Hindus, Muslims, Deists, Arminian Anglicans, and Unitarians, all capable of controverting Calvinist Christianity has not been probed. Nor has the way in which

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ George, pp. 35-42.

⁴⁴ George, pp. 47-53. David Brainerd, *An Abridgment of Mr. David Brainerd's Journal Among a Number of the Indians in the Provinces of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania* (London: Printed for John Oswald, 1748).

⁴⁵ See David Hopkins, *The Danger to British India from French Invasion and Missionary Establishments. To Which are Added, Some Account of the Countries between the Caspian Sea and the Ganges; a Narrative of the Revolutions Which They Have Experienced Subsequent to the Expedit of Alexander the Great; and a Few Hints respecting the Defence of the British Frontiers in Hindustan* (2nd ed., London: Black, Parry, and Kingsbury, 1809).

Carey applied his moderate Calvinism to diverse circumstances. Carey the diarist who avowed an intense sense of sin and substitutionary atonement of Christ has yet to be reconciled with Carey the missionary who practiced open communion and cooperated in India quite pragmatically with Anglicans whom he had fought and General Baptists whom he had ignored back home.

Carey's Multiple Personalities VI: The Cultural Impresario

Understanding of Carey tends to be imaginative in the Western world from which he absented himself for the last forty-one years of his life and where his reforms are not directly felt. Contemporary engagement in the small Christian community in India has generated appreciation of Carey from those who continue his work. Ruth and Vishal Mangalwadi are a wife and husband team of authors and social reformers. They coordinate ministries to Dalits, lower caste Hindus, in India.⁴⁶ If Carey can be said to have held definitive views on anything, it was upon caste, which he despised and saw as the anti-Christian root of ignorance and oppression in India. The Mangalwadis portray Carey as a modernizer who began a process of global cultural transformation. His work in India was holistic and presented a Christianity that transcended parochialisms of continent and culture. He was, of course, a missionary and botanist. But he also introduced the steam engine and paper making to India. He challenged bribery and usury that were endemic in Indian culture by establishing savings banks in India. He was a “medical humanitarian” who campaigned for humane treatment of lepers. He was a media mogul who established the first Indian language newspaper and the first periodical magazine in India, *The Friend of India*. He founded the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, insisting on the involvement of Indian natives from the beginning, and

worked for land reform. He translated the Bible and standardized many Indian languages. He promoted astronomy to replace astrology and magic. He crusaded for women's rights and saw to it that *sati* was abolished, women were educated and that polygamy and child marriage were abolished. He was the Father of the Indian Renaissance, which featured the emergence of Bengali as a literary language. He did all of these things because of his integral understanding of Christianity as a social and cultural force.⁴⁷ For all of these reasons, "Carey is the central character in the story of India's modernization."⁴⁸

The Mangalwadis' application of Carey's understanding of Christian responsibility is comprehensive and stands in contrast to George's portrayal of theological orthodoxy as the key ingredient of Carey's success. Their work emerges from an era when India's government was secularizing and enlightened. More recently, with the advent of Hindu nationalism, the place of Christians in India becomes for them more than a matter for polemical debate.

Carey's Multiple Personalities VII: The Erstwhile Family Man

The most spectacular treatments of Carey in recent years have attended to the grave characteristics of Carey's family life. Ruth Tucker and James Beck have reminded us that the hardships of a missionary life are not least emotional and psychological. Tucker refers to Carey's "Less than Perfect Family Life."⁴⁹ Beck thoroughly examines the physiological, psychological, social and interpersonal basis for Dorothy Carey's problems. He cannot psychoanalyze Dorothy, but he offers a sensible approach to

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⁴⁷ Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for the Transformation of a Culture* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1999), pp. 17-25.

⁴⁸ Mangalwadi, p. 25.

putting her illness, and Carey's reaction to it, in context.⁵⁰ What Beck does indeed is to stress, in an act worthy of the calling of a historian, that there are limits to what we can know about this troubling matter. At least he effectively destroys the campus legends that caused one student to express surprise when I told him that there was no evidence that Carey was a wife-beater! In any event, Carey and the Serampore community confronted modern missionary problems, leading to greater acknowledgment of the strain that missions may place on family life.

Carey's Multiple Personalities VIII: The Missiological Maven

Missiology forms a relatively recent, highly specialized discipline. It focuses upon the where, how, and why of Christian missions through detailed scholarly analysis. Carey has figured prominently in recent attempts to organize it as a discipline. Daniel Potts 1967 book pioneered the modern scholarly treatment of Carey as a member of a missionary community.⁵¹ Brian Stanley's study of the Baptist Missionary Society carefully relates Carey to shifts in theological emphasis accomplished by Andrew Fuller, a veritable John the Baptist who served as secretary of the BMS. Fuller's theological writings emphasized "moral responsibility" as a component of Particular Baptist understanding of salvation.⁵² Chris Smith has reminded us that there is a difference between mythology and missiology and that Carey's colleagues Joshua and Hannah Marshman, translators and educators, and William Ward, ethnographer and printer, were

⁴⁹ Ruth Tucker, "William Carey's Less than Perfect Family Life," *Christian History* 11, no. 4 (1992): 27-30.

⁵⁰ James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey: The Tragic and Untold Story of Mrs. William Carey* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992).

⁵¹ E. D. Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India: The History of Serampore and Its Mission, 1793-1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

⁵² Brian Stanley, *A History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1992), pp. 5, 6.

as important as Carey.⁵³ Joshua Marshman the iron-principled Luther of the group, Hannah Marshman, the determined advocate of education, and William Ward, the radical printer and ethnographer, all had more experience of the larger world than the parochial Carey, who managed to be at home even while in Danish India.⁵⁴ As a result we now have the opportunity to enjoy a multi-faceted, polycentric perspective on Carey that has yet to coalesce into a coherent portrait. As with Carey's other incarnations, it is a sign that there is more work to do.

The Historical Future of William Carey

The son of a college president, I grew up on a college campus named for William Carey. For years I took it for granted that Carey's reputation was merely a form of Baptist self-assurance. I visited in the home of the millionaire shoemaker in Northamptonshire whose interest kept Carey's memory alive. But I assumed that Carey was a sub-cultural figure, a source of identification for Baptists, but no more. Then on two occasions, eminent historians, Patrick Collinson of Cambridge and Carolyn Edie of the University of Illinois Chicago, reminded me that Carey was more important than I had thought.

So we have Carey in many guises: the Victorian, the Civilized Gentleman, the Radical, the Double-Talking *Sahib*, the Latter-Day Calvin or Luther, the Cultural Impresario, the Fallible Family Man and the Missiological Maven. Would Carey or any

⁵³ A. Christopher Smith, "Mythology and Missiology: A Methodological Approach to the Pre-Victorian Mission of the Serampore Trio," *International review of Mission* 83, no. 330 (1994): 451-475; "Echoes of the Protestant Reformation in Baptist Serampore, 1800-1855," *The Baptist Review of Theology* 6 (1996): 28-61; "Joshua (1768-1837) and Hannah Marshman," and "William Ward (1769-1823) in *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910, Volume II*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), pp. 237-271.

⁵⁴ A. Christopher Smith, "The Legacy of William Ward and Joshua and Hannah Marshman," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23, no. 3 (July, 1999): 120-129; "William Carey, 1761-1834: Protestant Pioneer of the Modern Mission Era" in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of the Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994),

of his entourage or even his detractors recognize him in any one of the characterizations that have issued from the presses in the nearly two centuries since his death? I think not. Treatments of Carey have been narrow, layered, and non-controversial. There is no Carey dialectic, merely a series of historical visions, and the odd dismissive note. Despite all that has been written about him, Carey has yet to be treated historically. Nor has a full revelation of his theology been presented. As my graduate supervisor, Mark Kishlansky, once said, “You have to read a lot of books regarding subjects about which there’s nothing to read.” That would be an overstatement in this case. Previous treatments, for all their research and vitality, have left Carey fragmented and isolated, a figure without peer or context. A new, integrated vision must emerge. This lecture is a preliminary manifesto for such re-vision. The Carey Center provides images and text for the task. Ideas and arguments evaluated here will also form an element of the task. Many issues must remain open.

Future students of Carey must attend to certain concerns. Was Carey’s experience in India more like the gloomy uncertainty of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* or the exotic triumph of T. E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*? How do we evaluate a process of translation that involved, in effect, cross-cultural committees of missionaries and Indian pundits?⁵⁵ There has been no comprehensive scholarly biography of Carey since S. Pearce Carey wrote and arguably there has never been an archival biography of Carey

pp. 245-254; “William Ward, Radical Reform and Missions in the 1790’s,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1991): 218-244..

⁵⁵ For an example of contemporary controversy, see William Greenfield, *A Defence of the Serampore Mahratta Version of the New Testament in Reply to Animadversions of an Anonymous Writer in Asiatic Journal, September, 1829* (London: Samuel Bagster, 1830).

because of the diversity of the archives involved and the lack of any full edition of Carey's journals, letters and works.⁵⁶

Who was William Carey? Future students of his legacy will do well to consider his role as a radical agent of Christianity and civilization. It is clear that not enough attention has been paid to the disparities between Carey's careers in Britain and Bengal. There was duality here but a unity too. Timothy George is right that we must emphasize the firmness of Carey's theology, but we must not forget its nuances and shifting historical contexts. Carey the evangelical Calvinist became Carey the communitarian social reformer. The English midlander became bi-cultural as portrayed in Carey's rather Indian features in the 1993 stamp issued by the Indian government. The republican Carey had his political theories quieted by the experience of engagement with "g_____t", a government whose values he questioned but whose indulgence he needed to complete his mission. Carey, more than most, exemplifies the possibilities inherent in the kaleidoscopic tendencies of civilization and Christianity. But he also identifies the sequential qualities of each. One built upon the other's foundation. Carey synthesized two historical projects commonly treated as thesis and antithesis, Enlightenment and Evangelicalism. Carey was a world-historical figure, but not necessarily of the sort touted in myriad works that present him. We must recapture Carey's polemical situation. He may have been in the eye of the storm of controversy but it was a storm nonetheless. We must also recapture the foundational but holistic character of his approach. For Carey,

⁵⁶ For now, see the beautifully-produced Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000). The most accurate biography is Mary Drewery, *William Carey: Shoemaker and Missionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979).

science, Biblical faith and social reform did not inhabit separate compartments of interest or even different aspects of personality.

Until some of these considerations are realized, Carey will remain a footnote for mainstream historians and an easily digested example for mythographers and sermonizers. At a time when we are reminded of the persistence of a barbaric evil, we would do well to remember our heritage of spirit, and intellect in this changeable, fallible but inspired and resiliently faithful man. Throughout his life spent in provincial backwaters, Carey occupied a redoubt near the front lines of Christianity and civilization. Nearby lay borderlands of the mind and spirit. Carey lived where conditions of Christianity and civilization were ambitious, precarious and open-ended. He brought the change back from India and spread it by example throughout the world. Not everyone can or should undertake such a task, but Carey's willingness to occupy such theological, political, and cultural territory—to bring the Gospel, printing and gardening to Bengal—deserves a comprehensive new look. May I suggest for now that you visit the Carey Center on the worldwide web to sample some of the materials from which that new vision of Carey may be constructed? Thank you for the honor of delivering the Eaves Lecture at Mississippi College.