

William Carey: By Trade a Cobbler by Kellsye Finnie, OM Publishing, Baptist Missionary Society, Didcot, Oxon, England: Revised edition 1992 (33 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Chapter 3 Shoemaker and Schoolmaster

1. I Can Persevere

With determination William Carey mastered each difficulty and obstacle, and when he looked back in old age he said: 'If anyone should think it worth his while to write my life, if he give me credit for being a plodder he will describe me justly. I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything.' [Page 25]

2. Often Ill and Overworked

Life was not easy. The fever which caused the death of William Carey's child had attacked him also, and left a legacy of weariness and a distressing cough. Then his employer, Mr. Old, became ill and died, leaving William to continue the business alone. He trudged from place to place, selling the shoes he had made and then carrying home a fresh supply of leather for the new ones he must start to make as soon as possible. It left little time for leisure or rest. [Page 26]

3. An Insatiable Appetite for Learning

Though circumstances were difficult, they were not allowed to interfere with William Carey's personal study, and in the light of his rush lamp Carey would sit for many late hours plodding at his books, a student with an insatiable appetite for learning as well as teaching. [Pages 26-27]

Chapter 4 The Missionary Call

4. Constructing a Globe Caused Grief over the Lost

One day William Carey saw an advertisement in the *Northampton Mercury* for a world globe. What a help one of these would be to his boys! Alas, the price was far beyond his means so the idea had to be scrapped. But it had taken root in his mind, so he decided to try and make one himself with some of the leather from his shop. On the leather he painstakingly drew the various countries of the world, adding details from time to time, making his lessons glow with the enthusiasm and lively interest of his own heart. The facts that came to light in his endless search enlarged his own world vision, too. Sometimes, his pupils would see their teacher in tea over a geography lesson as he pointed out continents and islands: 'These people are pagans! They have never heard the gospel of saving grace!' he would cry out in deep distress. [Pages 29-30]

5. The World Map, A Prayer Chart

The map on William Carey's schoolroom wall began to serve a further purpose. Every nation in the known world was marked on it, with its population, religion, and anything else he could discover. Where he could not afford to buy he found means of borrowing books from others, and day by day the missionary map was extended.

He read the lives of David Brainerd and John Eliot who worked among the Indian people of North America, teaching and translating the Bible into their language. His spirit was stirred afresh, and the Bible came alive with new meaning, seeing in the Old Testament missionary prophecy, and in the New the achievement of missionary adventure.

The map became his prayer-chart, and as he realized the desperate need of the world he became more and more conscious of the riches in Christ that were available, not only to him, but to all who would believe. [Page 31]

6. Reading a Pamphlet, He Received the Missionary Call

William Carey read a pamphlet written by Andrew Fuller: 'It is the duty of those who are entrusted with the Gospel to endeavour to make it known among all nations.' He reread these words again and again as he sat making shoes in his workshop until, at last, he took them to be a direct call from God. In the quietness he answered: 'Here am I, Lord. Send me.' And he meant it. [Page 31]

7. Wait on the Lord's Timing

As the ministers chatted together after the service old Dr Ryland invited one of the younger men to suggest a subject for discussion. This was Carey's cue and he asked them to consider 'whether the command given to the apostles to teach all nations was not obligatory on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent'.

The proposition was promptly denounced by Ryland.

It has been said that he rebuked Carey with such words as: 'Sit down young man! When God chooses to convert the heathen he will do it without your aid or mine!' But we do not know this for certain.

The harsh words are not easily believed to be those of the established preacher whom Carey had oft walked five miles to hear, or to whom the young convert had appealed for instruction in understanding the need and reason for baptism.

It seems obvious that Dr Ryland was greatly moved by the impassioned plea of this enthusiastic pioneer but he was also concerned that enthusiasm did not hide the enormity of the undertaking. There would be financial difficulties, language barriers and translation problems to face; long and weary voyages to daunt the stoutest heart.

The older man had doubtless come up against more of the unexpected trials of life which he knew William had not yet experienced.

The desire of Dr Ryland was to seek to guide his younger brother in the ministry, and he was desperately anxious for Carey to learn to wait for God's definite timing. Even Andrew Fuller was tempted to think 'If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be.'

There were no supporters for Carey and he sat down, disappointed and dejected, but only for a moment. He was not going to allow himself to be discouraged. He knew the depth of human need and his colleagues had yet to catch the vision. However, he was fully determined that they *should* catch it. [Pages 32-33]

Chapter 5 A Move to Leicester

8. God Was Carey's Employer

William Carey worked hard at his cobbling, making sure he was giving his best service to his customers. When this was finished for the day he made time to study languages, science, history; to lecture when invited and weekly to preach. It was a busy life but a contented one. In a letter to his father written at this time he said: 'I am not my own, nor would I choose for myself. Let God employ me where he thinks fit. [Page 42]

9. Praying for the Conversion of the World

Fuller spoke from Haggai 1:2, and warned: 'It becomes us to beware lest we account that impossible which only requires such a degree of exertion as we are not inclined to give. We pray for the conversion of the world and yet we neglect the ordinary means by which it can be brought about. . . . How shall they hear without a preacher?' [Page 43]

10. The *Enquiry*

Enquiry contained five chapters on practical Christian obligation, the needs of the world, the opportunities, and proposals for the formation of a Society. Obedience and

obligation were the two words that set the theme, and the whole work throbbed with the heartbeats of its author. It was a masterpiece.

Years later Dr George Smith wrote: ‘The *Enquiry* has a literary interest of its own, as a contribution to the statistics and geography of the world, written in cultured and almost finished style such as few, if any university men of that day could have produced, for none were impelled by such a motive as Carey had.’ [Pages 43-44]

Chapter 6 The Birth of the Missionary Society

11. Form a Society!

To William Carey’s dismay, he found that when the ministers met next morning for their conference the fire had died out of their eagerness. The Tempter had been busy reminding them of the tremendous difficulties in the path suggested, overpowering them with cold, calculating reason.

Once more they were asking themselves: ‘What can a mere handful of preachers accomplish?’ It was true they had been inspired by Carey’s sermon yesterday and his proposals were good enough. For the time being, however, they were not practical.

But this time Carey was adamant. He refused allow the matter to be completely put aside and forgotten. He pleaded with them. In great distress he begged his brother ministers not to separate before finite plan was formed. They still doubted, but by sheer perseverance he so far overcame their doubts as to win from them a decision to pass a resolution for a plan to be prepared for forming a society to send the gospel to other countries. [Pages 48-49]

Chapter 7 ‘I Will Go to India’

12. Took His Son Felix to India First

‘Go to India?’ Dorothy Carey gasped. ‘No, William, never!’

She looked at him with bewildered eyes. Leave their little home and everyone they knew? It was unthinkable.

‘We cannot go, William! We have our children to think of. There is your church here, and your home. Surely God wouldn’t want you to leave everything?’

‘My dear, you don’t understand. I know God has asked me to go to India for him. He has called me. I have answered and I cannot draw back. I would not if I could,’ replied William, urgently, willing her to understand.

But Dorothy was adamant. Fuller and Sutcliff heard that she refused to go to India so they traveled to Leicester to try to persuade her to change her mind. It was of no use and she declared that if William must go, then she would remain here with her children and prepare herself for the parting.

Carey was grieved beyond telling and but for his firm faith and devotion to Christ he might even yet have given up the project. However, during the following week he wrote to his father at Paulerspury: ‘... I hope, dear father, you may be enabled to surrender me up to the Lord for the most arduous, honourable, and important work that ever any of the sons of men were called to engage in. I have many sacrifices to make. I must part with a beloved family and a number of most affectionate friends.... But I have set my hand to the plough.’

‘Is William mad?’ shouted his father when he read the letter.

The following Sunday William broke the news to his large congregation at Harvey Lane. At first they were dumb with grief at the thought of losing such a pastor whose faithful ministry had been a source of such blessing. Some even refused to give him up, maintaining that it was not right for him to leave a work when God was using his ministry so remarkably.

But gradually they came to see that this was in fact God answering their prayer for the spread of Christ’s kingdom among the heathen, and that he was asking them to join in the first sacrifice. When they realized this they were not only prepared to let him go, but were ready to back him in every way possible, rejoicing in the fact that they were the church that was sending him. Even so, they wrote in the church minute book: ‘Though it is at the expense of losing one whom we love as our own souls.’

In the end it was arranged that Carey should take his eldest son, Felix, with him to India, and return in a year or two for his wife and the other children.

No other cause would have made him give up his family and he did not falter. Only if God himself provided a ‘ram in the thicket’, as he did for Abraham, could there be any deviation in the sacrifice. [Pages 56-57]

Chapter 8 Farewell England For Ever

13. Interest in the Mission Became Evident

Carey, Thomas and Fuller toured the country for three months seeking to rouse Christians from their sleep of indifference. They pleaded for prayer backing, vital for the success of the mission. Gradually the great things they were expecting began to

happen, with first just a sprinkling of small amounts of money which grew bigger as people began to realize their responsibilities. The money was coming in, but even more important was the interest in the mission which was becoming evident. [Page 59]

14. Embarrassed by Little Giving

In the city of Bath Thomas spoke to a crowded meeting, explaining the need for missionaries, seeking interest and prayer from the people at home, and asking for generous giving to enable the work to be started.

His appeal in this instance appeared to fall on deaf ears, and the resultant contribution was one penny. But Thomas understood people, even if they didn't always understand him! He got up to thank the meeting for their interest, casually mentioning the fact that all results were being recorded in the Mission book. He would enter theirs. 'Bath: one penny.' As he expected, they were embarrassed into action and the final result was a gift of twenty-two pounds! [Pages 59-60]

15. William Ward, a Printer, to India

Carey thought of that young man he met recently, William Ward, an earnest Christian who had mentioned the fact that he was a printer by trade. He was so interested in the proposed mission that Carey had talked of the plans he had in mind. When they parted he said to Ward: 'I hope, with God's blessing, to have the Bible translated and ready for the press in four or five years. You must come out and print it for us!'

It was in actual fact seven years before the translation was ready, but by that time Ward was with Carey in Bengal. [Page 61]

16. In 1793 Carey and Wife Embarked for India

Early in the morning of June 13th, 1793, the whole family went aboard the sailing ship *Kron Princessa Maria* and all hundred and thirty feet of her length seemed to Carey as pure gold. This was the ship that was to take not only himself, but his wife and children, across the vast ocean to an unknown land. He was at last on his way to a people he already loved because of their need, and to a work that was dearer to him than life itself.

The England that had given him birth, and taught him much of life and its meaning, became smaller as he and Dorothy stood on deck and watched its coastline grow blurred, before passing for ever from their view. They never returned to this country. [Pages 64-65]

17. A Very Stormy Crossing

It was all of five months after leaving England before the hazardous voyage came to an end. Storms had battered and tossed the ship, sun in the tropics scorched and becalmed her, violent currents had tantalized and kept her for a whole month within two hundred miles of Bengal.

William spent much time on the voyage in study of Bengali language, helped by Thomas. In return, Carey used his knowledge of Hebrew to assist his colleague in completing a translation of the book of Genesis. [Page 67]

Chapter 10 Early Days

18. I Roll My Cares upon God

Carey knew he would not be able to stay permanently in Calcutta as a missionary even had he been able to afford to do so. The climate, the unaccustomed food and the tropical life, coming after the strain of the long voyage, did nothing to help his family to settle. Dorothy and the two older boys were ill with dysentery and this added to their inevitable homesickness.

Everything was conspiring to make Carey feel dejected and alone, harassed and perplexed. To his dismay he learnt from Thomas that the whole year's allowance had been spent, although they had been in India for less than ten weeks. This was alarming for they could not hope for more money to be sent out till the following Autumn.

It seemed that the city of sunshine had nothing to offer but gloom and despondency. As Carey reviewed his life during these days of trial it looked as if circumstances had indeed torn it into worthless fragments. As yet he was not able to see these shreds through God's kaleidoscope where every piece fitted to make a perfect pattern. A movement of the hand holding the instrument was sufficient to change the pattern but this did not mar it or dull its beauty. Gradually he came to realize this and even as he brooded, something of the peace of God came through to him.

On January 17th he wrote in his diary: 'Towards evening felt the all-sufficiency of God and the stability of His promises... I was able to roll my cares on Him.' Later he wrote: 'Everything is known to God and He cares for the Mission. I rejoice in having undertaken this work and I shall, even if I lose my life.' [Pages 71-72]

19. Ward Helped with the Carey Household

Dorothy was missing the comfort of her sister, Katherine, and her help with the care of the children, and William needed to become general assistant and nursemaid! He

resigned himself to the situation, saying it was all part of being a missionary. 'Travelling with a family is a great hindrance to holy, spiritual meditation,' he confided to his journal, but whenever an opportunity did present itself he would snatch a few moments of quiet and persevere with his studies. [Pages 76-77]

Chapter 11 Indigo Making

20. Asked for English Shrubs for India

William Carey asked them to send out to him some tools with which to work the garden surrounding the new pukka two-storied house with large rooms and venetian windows which was to be their home. He also made a request for English flowering shrubs and fruit trees to be sent out to him each year: 'For the lasting advantage of what I now call my own country.' He longed to see an English garden growing in the heart of that land, and in the heart of her people he longed to sow the seed of love for the Christ he had come to tell them about. [Page 80]

Chapter 12 Letters from Home

21. Maintained Missionary Work with Own Income

It was a long time before William had a reply to his letter to headquarters in England. A stranger in a strange land, there was for him no twice-daily rattle of the letterbox but the frustration of waiting about eighteen months to receive an answer from home. It was all of that time before he heard from England and even then some of the news was far from encouraging. It seemed that one or two of the Committee were disturbed to know that Carey and Thomas were engaged in commerce and they felt this would detract from their true work. They spoke with solemn warning danger: 'In the deceitfulness of riches.'

He who had advocated so strongly in his *Enquiry* the desirability of a missionary being self-supporting was stunned by their unwarranted rebuke. He replied, pointing out that had they done nothing to earn a living while they waited eighteen months for the first letter from home, they would indeed have been in a sorry plight.

William reminded them he was maintaining his missionary work out of his own income: 'I am indeed poor,' he wrote, 'and shall always be so till the Bible is published in Bengali and Hindustani, and the people need no further instruction.' He emphasized that no other line of business could have afforded him more leisure nor more opportunity of service. His employer not only permitted his missionary work, he backed it with his whole heart and will.

It was true of course that the Missionary Society was still a very new venture, and its members at home had as much to learn as its pioneer missionaries. [Pages 83-84]

Chapter 16 The Settlement

22. Communal Settlement

Carey was convinced that a communal settlement was the best plan for a Mission's early years for the sake of economy, efficiency and essential fellowship. From the start he sought to knit the six families into one community, and he had good material to work on. Each person had their own particular gift to offer and the discerning leader was quick to discover what this was. [Page 100]

Chapter 17 Krishna Pal

23. Struggled with India's Caste System

Other conversions followed and there were more baptisms as the new converts became fearless in renouncing caste. They were persecuted, some even losing their life for the sake of Christ. Carey emphasized from the start that he could not tolerate the idea of new converts retaining their caste, but taught them the truth that now they were 'all one in Christ Jesus'. The caste system could no longer apply.

Early in 1803 the first Brahmin was baptized and is naturally made a profound impression on the Hindus. During the same year the first Bengali Christian wedding took place—that of Krishna's daughter the Brahmin convert. 'This,' wrote one of the missionaries in their letter home, 'was a glorious triumph over caste.' [Pages 108-109]

24. The Serampore Trio

Only three of the seven missionaries were now left to carry on the work. It became more apparent than ever that Carey had been wise in his decision to establish the settlement as a community. For twenty-three years these remaining three, Carey, Ward and Marshman, worked together as a three-fold cord, each depending on the others and drawing strength from that fellowship. They became known as the 'Serampore Trio'. [Page 110]

Chapter 20 Busy Times

25. Studied the Languages of the Orient

In such a vast, wide field of adventure into which Carey's group had plunged—the languages of the Orient—it was inevitable that mistakes would be made, but this fact was

faced with courage as Carey and Marshman pressed on, revising and improving right to the end of the chapter. [Pages 121-122]

Chapter 21 Calamity

26. After the Fire, They Thought of the Future

Carey arrived with Marshman in the evening and inspected the scene of destruction, then immediately discussed with his colleagues plans for repairing the damage, and restarting production. It was a calamity but they were not in despair. They were still eager to continue, encouraging themselves by remembering it was *after* the fire that Elijah heard the 'still small voice' and knew that God was there. [Page 129]

27. Learned Much from the Fire

Carey wrote to Fuller in England: 'The loss is heavy, but as traveling the road a second time, however painful it may be, is usually done with greater ease and certainty, so I trust the work will lose nothing in real value.... The work is already begun again in every language.'

It was natural that there was considerable concern among the people in England when they learnt of the catastrophe, and their sympathy was shown in a practical way. In less than two months a sum of £10,000 was raised toward the cost of repair.

It had been a shattering experience but from it the missionaries had learnt much. Carey found that as he rewrote the versions that had been destroyed he was able to improve on them. The Oriental type was all remade in six months and by the end of a year the Mission press was in a more efficient state than it had been before.

By 1832 complete Bibles, New Testaments, or separate books of Scripture had been issued in forty-four languages and dialects. This was a task representing team work at its highest level. [Pages 129-130]

Chapter 22 Christian College

28. The Home Base Was a Bit Skeptical with Success

As the years passed the Mission staff grew steadily larger, with something like thirty workers, Indian and European, and its twelve stations were scattered over Upper India, Bengal, Burma, Orissa, Java and Mauntius.

This expansion of the work, though a constant joy and encouragement to those actively engaged in it, was looked upon with a certain apprehension by those at the home base

in England. Expenses were naturally rising with every new project, and they suggested that it might be wiser to slow down instead of pressing ever forward.

But to Carey and his colleagues this attitude of restricting the work to fit the present income was all wrong. Their policy was to make every effort to increase finances so that they met the demands that the work of God requested from them. Results that were following the expansion movements were proving to them that this was God's way of bringing blessing. People were being converted to Christ and the number of adult baptisms was rising annually. [Pages 131-132]

29. Serampore College Approved by the King

In 1827 His Majesty, who had retained his keen interest in the work and progress of Serampore College, granted a Royal Charter which gave power to the college to confer on its students 'degrees of rank and honour according to their proficiency'. This meant that Serampore College was the first one in Asia to be able to offer degrees to its students.

During all the excitement of new ventures Carey often remembered his tiny study in the attic of the cottage in Leicester, where his ideas had been fertilized in the warm throbbing of a heart burning with enthusiasm. His determination had widened an already wide vision. He had expected, attempted, and was now experiencing the great things he had longed for. [Page 135]

Page 23 The Family Man

30. Devoted Family Man

Over the years Carey the pioneer, the lover of India and her people, never neglected his own family and their interests. He remained devoted to his wife and his sons, and when he feared his busy life might be depriving them of his personal time and attention he would write them a letter to show that he cared. These had to be written late at night after his official duties were finished and the family were all tucked up in bed. The letters assured his sons of their father's love and interest.

Like any parent he had plans for their future, and as the years went by he endeavoured to have each of them suitably trained and fitted for their chosen career.

Dorothy Carey never fully recovered from her mental illness and for twelve years Carey nursed her, giving her all the love and devotion of his heart. He never forgot the sacrifice she had made in following him, albeit fearfully, to the ends of the earth, leaving for ever her own country and kindred.

Dorothy never left the Mission settlement and in her last days she was still surrounded by her family and the many faithful friends in the Mission house. She died in 1807. [Pages 138-139]

Chapter 25 Pensioned Off

31. Life Was an Uphill Struggle

The end of one road does not necessarily see the end of all problems, and for William Carey the road wound uphill most of the way. [Page 144]

32. Sometimes Dealt with Depression

The translation work was, of course, always there. During William Carey's retirement he decided to start on yet another revision of his Bengali New Testament. The man who had been busy all his days continued to be something of a 'workaholic', albeit a contented one, refusing to allow the listlessness of the tropics to interfere with his sense of mission.

Carey had passed through deep waters of sadness in his pilgrimage and, like all men of a sensitive nature, he had his times of sheer black depression. Gradually though, the clouds would lift and his inborn optimism take over once more. Marshman wrote of Carey at this time: 'He is cheerful, and happy as the day is long!' [Page 146]

Chapter 26 An English Daisy

33. Speak Much of My Savior

Lady Bentinck and the Bishop of Calcutta were among the many friends who called to see William Carey. One of the last was Alexander Duff, who had never forgotten the kind welcome and encouragement Carey had given him when he discussed those early plans for an educational mission. He spoke glowingly of this now to the old veteran who accepted the man's appreciative remarks with his usual spirit of humility.

When the time came for his visitor to leave he said softly: 'Mr Duff, you have been talking much of Dr Carey. When I am gone, say nothing about Carey. Speak instead of Carey's Saviour.'

As the sun rose into a cloudless sky on the morning of June 9th, 1834 the pioneer reached the last rung of the ladder. As he entered into the eternal presence of the Author, in his hand was the new edition of the Bengali New Testament. [Pages 151-152]