

More "Carey" Letters, 1790-1808.

THREE fresh letters of Carey's have recently come to light through the kindness of R. M. Leonard, Esq., of Hampstead, whose father, Rev. H. C. Leonard, born just a century ago, held successive Baptist pastorates in Boxmoor, Bournemouth and Penzance. Of his Boxmoor Church two of the most devoted foundation-members had been Carey's sisters, and, doubtless, through their family-circle *these letters of Carey to his own father* came into H. C. Leonard's hands.

When the first was written, Carey had been associated with the "Harvey Lane" Church for almost a year, and the influence of its disloyal members had weakened. His income, as he reckons it here, was probably just his ministerial salary, apart from his shoemaking earnings. "Polly" was his paralysed sister, and "Thomas" his only brother, and lamed for life through war-service in Holland. "Kitty" was his wife's youngest and dearest sister. The letter discloses afresh his zeal in Leicester's fight for religious freedom. Here it is, slightly abridged :

Leicester,
Jany. 21, 1790.

Dear & Honoured Father,

I duly rec^d your affectionate letter, and must own that its traits of parental tenderness had a very considerable effect upon my mind. I heartily thank you, & hope that you will oftener write to me. I always esteem it among the very greatest of my pleasures to hear from you.

Your enquiries after my welfare, your solicitude for my health, & wishes for my prosperity I very sensibly feel. My health is nearly established. I was never very ill; only a cough, from which I am nearly free. My circumstances are such as will in a reasonable time free me from encumbrances, which I have hitherto laboured under. When I left Moulton, I was somewhat embarrassed, & I still am. But I suppose I may have an income of about £50 p. annum. And we are in a state of tolerable unity—some very few excepted. I wish for an interest daily in your prayers.

I hope Polly is no worse than usual. Thomas & his wife are often on my mind. May God support them, & His grace adorn their souls.

This is a time of great commotion in the world. May its kingdoms shortly become the Kingdoms of our Lord & of His Christ.

How are all my friends & relations? I wish you to remember my love & respects to them. My wife & Kitty send a share of the same to you & them.

I have sent this on a copy of our Resolutions, by which you may see what we are aiming at here for the emancipation of thousands yet unborn from that oppression, to which we have long been subject.

Your affectionate & dutiful son,

WM. CAREY.

[Note. The printed page, on the back of which part of the above was written, reported a Meeting on Dec. 9, 1789, in the Lion & Lamb Inn, Leicester, of Protestant Dissenters against the Corporation & Test Acts: when a Com^{tee} was formed, with Dr. T. Arnold as its Chairman, "to carry on the campaign." A M^r. Joseph Chamberlin" was included therein. Was he some forebear of the illustrious statesman?]

The second letter was his farewell note to his father a few hours before he and his lad Felix and his colleague, Dr. Thomas, embarked at a London Dock for the East. It must be read in the context of the subsequent collapse of all their early hopes.

London,

April 7th, 1793.

My dear & honoured Father,

I have not been able to write to you till this morning, & now can only write a few lines, being detained a little longer than we expected. This night we are going on board, & before this reaches you, shall undoubtedly be under sail. We go in the *Earl of Oxford*: Capt. White. Our voyage is expected to be about four months. Perhaps, we may not leave England these ten days yet, as our ship must go round to Portsmouth. Felix & I are both well. I left my wife in good spirits & in comfortable circumstances. May the God of all grace & love bless you & hold you in the right & true way. My love to mother & to all relations.

Your affectionate son,

W. CAREY.

The third letter is purely domestic, and none the less welcome for that. It fits in with all the news of "The Home Circle" chapter (XXI) of the *Life*.

Calcutta,

Jany. 23, 1808.

My dear Father,

I have not for a long time received a letter from you, & am in no small anxiety on that account. I hope you are well, as no one has in any letter mentioned anything to the contrary.

My nephew Peter arrived here some time ago in good health & spirits. I was much distressed to see him in such a situation, & immediately waited on Col. Hardwicke, who is my intimate friend, to see what steps could be taken to get him out of the Army. He will do what he can. I have not mentioned anything to Peter, as I wish first to see the result of my negotiation, before I raise any hope in him. He has gone to Muttra, a station about 1,000 miles north-east of this place.

Since my last I have lost my wife by death. She died Dec. 8th, 1807. Her life had been piteously destitute of every enjoyment to herself for the last twelve years or more. Her state of derangement was such as to deprive her of even those ideal pleasures, which many in that melancholy state appear to enjoy.

Felix, with his wife & youngest child, left us for Rangoon, a seaport in the Burman Empire, on Dec. 2. At least that was the day they left the pilot. They are, with Bro. & Sister Chater, going to begin a new Mission there. The Gospel has never yet been made known in that Country, except the preaching of the Roman Catholic Missionaries can be so called. Many prayers follow them, and I entertain a hope that their Mission may be successful. William, I expect, will soon go to Chittagong, a town on the east border of Bengal, to begin a Mission in that part. Jabez & Jonathan are fine lads, but, at present, I fear, unacquainted with the grace of God. Jabez is a tolerably good Chinese pupil, for the two years he has been learning the language. He & Bro. Marshman's eldest son are to dispute in a few days publicly in Chinese.¹ He is also studying Latin, Greek & Persian. Jonathan also studies Latin. When I see the distress which many suffer through the disobedience of their children, I ought to be very thankful.

I have determined upon a second marriage, with Charlotte Emilia Rumohr as my partner, to which she has agreed. She is about my own age, and daughter to a German nobleman. Her mother was the Countess of Alfeldt. But she has none of the pride of nobility, but accounts it her highest honour to devote herself to God's Cause. Chevalier Wornstadt, Master of the Royal Forests of the King of Denmark, married one of her sisters, & a French nobleman at Marseilles another. Her

¹ At the Speech Day of Fort William College in the Government House, Calcutta.

brother, who inherited the paternal estate, is dead, & has left a large family but well-provided for.

As she has some little property, with her wish I mean to bid Mr. Fuller, as soon as we are married, to pay you £30 a year as long as you live,² & should my mother³ survive you, to pay it to her as long as she lives. I have also told my sisters that we shall help them. I hope, my dear Father, that you will receive this as a small testimony of my love. Had it been earlier in my power, I should not have delayed till now.⁴

Let us, my dear Father, assiduously labour that we may be found in Christ—our sins forgiven for His Name's sake, and our souls sanctified by His grace. Give my dutiful regards to Uncle & Aunt Byfield,⁵ & to all my kinsfolk & acquaintance. My Mother³ will always consider herself included in my assurance that I am

Your dutiful & affectionate son,

WM. CAREY.

² Later increased to £50.

³ Stepmother.

⁴ But cf. my "Carey," p. 206: (Centenary Edition, 218) for former gifts.

⁵ Father of William Byfield, p. 392, my "Carey": (Centenary Edition, p. 399.)

S. PEARCE CAREY.

A "John Thomas" Letter, 1790.

AMONG a collection of old letters recently purchased by me was the following lengthy epistle from Carey's missionary colleague, John Thomas, to an unknown correspondent. Quotations from the letter appear in the *Life of John Thomas*, by C. B. Lewis, but apparently it has never been printed in full. It is therefore a pleasure to make it available in this issue of the *Baptist Quarterly* which contains three new Carey letters. In speaking of John Thomas in *William Carey*, S. Pearce Carey says "His letters read like Rutherford's", and again "God's Word Thomas loved like the nineteenth Psalmist, as sunshine, honey and gold. His letters were shot through with its light". This letter aptly illustrates those comments. The original has been placed in the library of the Baptist Missionary Society.

S. J. P.

July 26th, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 7th of June came to hand in due time, & afforded me much pleasure, partly because I shall now have the pleasure of your Correspondence, & more especially the Candor & seriousness with which you touch upon your own Case & Experience, gave me very considerable hope, that future Communications will be mutually desirable & useful.

What a Mercy it is, that we have had a religious Education: let us be thankfull for this: had you been without it, perhaps the Stream of Depravity that runs thro' this Country would have carried away every serious thought for ever, & it might have been impossible to have assisted you out of the labarinths of Deism & profligacy but a pious Education prevented, & you count it a blessing. You acknowledge however, "an entire neglect of whatever your conscience & knowledge dictated". Still bless God, that conscience is not silent, knowledge still remains, & you are not insensible & harden'd: I beseech you, to thank the Lord, for these things, while I tell you also, some of my own Experience. I also was Educated as you was, by worthy & good Parents: I also had many serious convictions from my Childhood, which were stifled by various Cares, pleasures, & Scenes of Dissipation & Wickedness: too horrid to remember, without deep abasement of Soul, & detestation of myself: I was quite sensible all the while, of the truth & reality of the Word of God, the certainty of future Judgement, & the Danger of my utter perishing which I was

sure of, in Case of Death: Still I went on, in paths of Sin & forgetfulness of God: Sometimes after a Sharp Sermon, I wou'd get up stated prayer, & continue it a little while, with reading the Scripture & other good Books, determining never to leave it off: but the first Temptation proved, that the Change was only founded on brittle resolutions, & not the work of the blessed Spirit, who only can change the heart: We may move out of our common Course, when shook, like the needle of a Compass; but when the violence is over, we turn to our own track again: but when we are thoroughly convinced, of the evil propensity of our own hearts, & our utter inability to change them, or escape Wrath, & brought by the SPIRIT of GOD, to see an able Saviour, calling us to look to HIM & be saved, & grounded & settled in Love of HIM, & his ways then we are still like the Compass, effectually & chiefly inclined, not to that which is evil, but that which is good: Yet, notwithstanding this good bias of the mind & will, we are mov'd to evil, by the shock of Temptation, but return, bent in the main, to that which is holy, just & good. But to go on—I sometimes was brought low thro' oppression, affliction, & sorrow: Poverty & other difficulties, drove me at last out to sea: & being in a man of war, I learnt to swear & curse, but not without this aggravation, my Conscience continually smote me: Being in pursuit of Paul Jones the American, we were overtaken with a terrible storm, which damag'd our Squadron of 6 Ships, & separated them all, far out of sight of each other: The ship I was in sprung a leak, & the Chain Pumps going night & day, we were just able to keep above water: but at last, the water got ground apace, & I shall never forget what happen'd to me: All given over for lost, I heard the Boatswain say, we were like men under Sentence of Death: My terror was exceeding great within, tho' outwardly, I calmly begged the Captains Clerk to lend me his Cabin: there I went, & kneeling down, I protested to God to live a new life, if he wou'd spare me this once: & if the ship was to be lost, to save me. I cried out, & feared exceedingly, being well enough acquainted with the Truth to know assuredly, that if I died, I shou'd die in my Sins, & so perish for ever & ever: I knew I shou'd die unconverted, & accursed. I believe 'twas the same day, the wind chang'd, the storm abated, we set sail for England: but behold, just as our hopes were risen, the mainmast went: however, we got safe into Port, & there I was too base at heart to think much of the tender Mercy of God, to my poor perishing Soul. Ps. 107. 23. I harden'd in harbour, into my old Sins, & forgot the God of my mercies: I soon felt the

truth of that observation "*If they hear not Moses & the Prophets, neither wou'd they hear tho' one rose from the Dead*". So soon after, I was visited with a fever, & carried to Haslar Hospital, insensible, there brought down to the Gates of Death, but once more, spared; I now began to pray & read again, very regularly, so that I thought myself quite converted, but falling into the Company & Conversation of a Deist, I was carried away by him, & fell into all my old Sins, with more eagerness than ever. About a Year after this, I married, & my religious Education had still influence enough over me, to command my attendance on public worship: nay I rather liked to hear Dr. Stennet: but in 1781, I think, I heard him effectually, from these words: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting Life, which the Son of man *shall* give unto you: for him hath God the father sealed"—John 6, 27. The word *shall* struck me to the Soul: & it said & this be the word of a true God, I labouring shall receive, all the things necessary for my everlasting Life—my two days following, was entirely spent in such lively reflections on what I had heard, & on the Tuesday after the Lord's Day, about noon, I was so clearly, satisfactorily, wonderfully & Delightfully taught, that the Blood of J. C. was sufficient for my Sins, that I wept Tears of transport and joy, for several days: & God who thus deliver'd a most flagrant sinner from his sins, has till this very day never forsaken me: & having obtained help in God, I continue still, hoping & looking for his kingdom & Glory: My daily offences, are still my grief & burden, but I hope, & my Hope is in his good word.

I have given you my dear Sir this sketch of my Life, that you may know what a Saviour I have found, to save me! & be encouraged to call upon him, & look to him, to ripen the effects of a pious Education, in you also, & more abundantly than in me: & also, I write thus, that you may know, that the sinner you write to ought to sympathize with you, in the mention of your failings, & ought with alacrity of mind, to get his Soul to your case hoping for the Sufficiency of God, who is able to bless the smallest means, & the weakest Instruments. Be more explicit then, my dear Sir, & be assured of my very hearty acquiescence in any request, that shall require me in as much as in me lies, to direct you to your blessed Friend and able Redeemer.

Yours sincerely,

J. THOMAS.