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Carey and his Biographers

A POSTSCRIPT*

WHEN William Carey died in June 1834, his funeral sermon was preached at the Danish Church, Serampore, by his friend and colleague, Joshua Marshman. It included a number of important facts and was published shortly afterwards by the Serampore Press. Some of the material in this sermon was quoted by Christopher Anderson in the memorial address he delivered in Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh, in November 1834, and this in its published form, became the earliest sketch of the great missionary published in Britain.

It now appears that in addition to Marshman's sermon, there was one by John Mack (1797-1845), one of the younger men at Serampore. He preached it first in the Mission Chapel, the Sunday after Carey's death, and a week later in Union Chapel, Calcutta. This also was published by the Serampore Press. It is not recorded in Whitley's *Baptist Bibliography*. My attention has been called by my friend Mr. Soren Melkar, of Töllöse, Denmark, to the fact that in the Royal Library of Copenhagen copies of Mack's and Marshman's sermons are bound together. Mack's sermon does not appear to have been noticed by Carey's biographers. It has interest of its own as coming from a younger man, who was of scientific aptitude.

Mack's text was *Acts 13 : 36*. "David after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep." What follows are quotations from the sermon.

"Dr. Carey's life was eminently the *service of his own generation*." "He served his generation as a member of human society, in the private exhibition of Christian principle."

"As a spiritually minded Christian, he differed from many of the same class, in his peculiar devotedness to natural knowledge, and the promotion of men's temporal interests. There are excellent persons, upon whom the supreme importance of spiritual subjects has an undue influence; inasmuch as instead of teaching them to give their attention to everything placed before them by God in proportion to its intrinsic value, it causes them to exclude altogether from their regard a multitude of its proper objects, and concentrate it almost singly upon what is spiritual. They seem to forget that God, of whom we are commanded to be followers, although spiritual in the highest conceivable sense both in his nature and his employments, yet thinks fit to occupy himself with material things, and

* See *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XIX (1961-62), p. 4.

lavish upon them his divine perfections and care, and make them show forth his glory to all his intelligent creatures both in heaven and earth : and that, although to man, it is in spiritual things, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, that the grace of God is most richly displayed, yet he is at the same time so considerate, so tender, and so bounteous to us in temporal things, that it is sinful either to neglect our own obligations to him in that respect, or to be careless of imitating his example in our conduct to others. With this defective piety Dr. Carey did not hold fellowship. He seemed to take into his habitual contemplation the whole of God's nature and works; and in his conceptions of them, no one part was allowed to jostle another out of its place. God whom he feared, whom he loved, to whom he humbly and obediently submitted himself, was the God of nature as well as of grace.

All true knowledge, therefore, was to Dr. Carey genuine gold for which he found a direct use in the attainment of divine wisdom and grace. He looked upon the world, and all it contains of animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic being, with a sanctified understanding and devout affections. When therefore he walked abroad, he found himself surrounded with continual and ever varying memorials of God. Not only his being, but his sovereign rule in the world, and all his attributes employed in that rule, were thus, as it were, palpably before his senses; and knowing himself a part of the manifold works of God, he connected himself with all of God he saw around him; and thus, with an intensity which few men realise, he felt in sympathy with the Psalmist : "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and know me . . . Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." (Psalm 139.) It was therefore in the midst of God's works, that his heart rose most freely in devout communing with him as the Father of his spirit; and it was long his constant practice to make his garden the place of his morning devotions, where every flower seemed to serve him for a hymn to excite, and give him expression for, his adoration and praise of Jehovah. He felt, however, that his contemplations of nature, which were thus sacred, sweet, and profitable to him, were not the fruit of mere indolent gazing at creation. It was because he was a diligent and painstaking student of every form of created being, and had treasured up in his mind a boundless store of knowledge respecting the whole, that the smallest part was to him so full of meaning, and so linked with endless associations of wise reflection. He therefore valued education and study respecting natural things in proportion as he delighted in the refined and holy joys which they had brought him : and what he had found to be so profitable to himself, he never scrupled to think would be profitable to everyone else. Hence he was an ardent friend and promoter of general education, of a common as well as of a religious kind.

He had the same breadth of conception respecting what is incumbent on a Christian in caring for the necessities of his fellow-men. He had no thought of leaving the temporal miseries and afflictions of men to be cured by the slow progress of their universal regeneration by the gospel; although he was fully convinced that there was nothing else which could make sweet and wholesome the bitter fountains of human woe. Want, disease, and injustice, he felt to be evils in themselves, which, by specific commands to that effect, we are bound, as Christians, to relieve to the utmost of our ability. Extreme poverty he further held to be especially a parent evil, which disorganizes society by giving temptation and scope to all crime and wretchedness; and therefore he was a zealous promoter of every scheme which tended to heal the evils of poverty, by opening up channels of industry, or making the toils of the poor more profitable, or rendering their burdens lighter. In this spirit he became the founder of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society, and joined in other public undertakings of a similar tendency: and in this spirit, too, he was much amongst the poor in private.

"In one sense, he was a man of the world. The practical operation of his benevolence was, of necessity, limited to the extent of his personal influence; but the range of his sympathy for human sorrow was as wide as the world. He was an attentive observer of the affairs of men because he was deeply interested in the welfare of all nations and tribes upon the earth. For every change that boded well for men, or for any portion of them, he would both publicly and privately offer devout and thankful praise to the Giver of all good: and for the removal of every evil, whether affecting the temporal or the spiritual interest of men, he presented the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man, which, we are told, availeth much. He was desirous of the sympathy of his friends in these exercises."

"He was equally regardless of fame as of money. No one who ever saw his venerable form in the pulpit, clothed in the somewhat antique simplicity to which he had adhered from his youth, and heard his unadorned but forcible address, could for a moment suspect that he stood there to preach *himself*, or with the thought of causing his hearers to remark the acuteness or eloquence of his arguments, or the beauty of his illustrations. Self was evidently absorbed in the solemnity of higher interests."

"The inalienable right of God to man's obedience, the perfection of his character, and the benevolence of his law, were the considerations by which he laboured to convict the sinner of his great and inexcusable sinfulness. He dwelt comparatively little upon the fearful circumstances of the great judgment of the last day; for mere terror was not a state of mind which he thought of much benefit to a rational creature, whose whole fate must depend upon ques-

tions of right and wrong, in reference to his principles and practice in life."

" . . . the general style of Dr. Carey's ministry was neither alarming nor pathetic. It was chiefly expository and argumentative : and in this style he greatly excelled. His opinions were lucidly and precisely stated ; and the arguments by which he supported them were marshalled with beautiful simplicity and order. To hear him, therefore, before his powers began to fail, was always an intellectual feast. To excellence of argument, he added a natural earnestness and warmth, which both evinced his own sincerity and secured the attention and interest of his hearers. His argumentative power was the means of converting to God not a few individuals of an intellectual cast of mind who had either been led away by scepticism or who had never made religion a subject of their thoughts; and the point and force of his conclusions made deep impressions upon minds of every class : whilst the transparency of his reasoning was such that the most uninstructed felt they did what there was abundant reason for doing, when they yielded assent to his doctrines."

" He did not despise or neglect the rich. For the learned, chiefly, he prepared the Scriptures in the Sungskrit language. But he counted it a chief glory of the gospel, that it was first designed for, and addressed to the poor ; who are by far the greatest and the most necessitous part of the human race ; and to them he made it his chief business, as a Missionary, to preach. He knew that they were of all classes most open to conviction, and that their circumstances are the least prejudicial to prolonged consistency in the practice of godliness. It seems, too, as if history testified, that all great permanent, and beneficial changes grow upwards, rather than downwards, in society. But, be that as it may, the gospel recognized no privileged classes, . . . Its power is its own, and not an accident of favourable circumstances.

" He determined, (therefore), that the churches raised upon the foundation of his labours, should have the full unerring Oracles of God in their possession, from the very beginning ; and that every individual member of them should, both by doctrine and practice, have the principle wrought into his spiritual constitution, that we are all individually responsible to God, both for the opinions we adopt, and the conduct we find upon them. He himself called no man master on earth ; and he wished to be called master by none."

" Thus, then, he served his own generation . . . "

ERNEST A. PAYNE