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John Dyer's Memoir of Carey

THROUGH the kindness of the Rev. G. W. Rusling, the Baptist Union Library has recently received a copy of *The Christian Keepsake and Missionary Annual* for 1837, found among a number of old books put out for salvage. Edited by the Rev. William Ellis and published by Fisher, Son and Co., of London, Paris and America, this volume contains, besides poems by James Montgomery and others and sketches of Thomas Clarkson and Bishop Heber, a fourteen-page article on "The Rev. Doctor Carey", by John Dyer, secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society from 1817 to 1841.

In "Carey and his Biographers" (BAPTIST QUARTERLY, Vol. XIX, No. 1) and in a supplementary note (Vol. XXI, No. 7) I listed the various memorial sermons on Carey and the biographies, beginning with that of his nephew, Eustace Carey, published in 1836.

The article by John Dyer is not listed by W. T. Whitley in his *Baptist Bibliography*, but it is noted by the lynx-eyed Dr. E. C. Starr in Vol. 6 of the massive bibliography on which he is currently engaged.

It cannot have been easy for Dyer to write his article, for he was involved in the controversies which separated Carey from the Baptist Missionary Society during his last years. The rift between London and Serampore was not bridged until after the death of Joshua Marshman. This no doubt explains Dyer's otherwise strange statement "from the year 1815 . . . few incidents occurred in the life of Dr. Carey, of a nature requiring notice in this brief memoir". Fuller died in 1815 and thereafter, particularly after the breach, Carey's letters to any but his home circle and to Christopher Anderson, were few. Nor had he ever found Dyer a very congenial correspondent.

There are a number of minor inaccuracies in Dyer's account of Carey's early years. The call from Moulton to Leicester came in 1789, not 1787. The valediction in Leicester was on 20th March, 1793, not the 20th May. Nevertheless, there are a number of incidental references which may well be authentic and which do not seem to have been gathered from this or any other source by Dr. S. Pearce Carey.

For example, Carey is said to have answered, when asked whether he was ready himself to go as a missionary: "Brethren, if you send me among cannibals, I will go!" When invited to become Professor at Fort William College, he is said to have begged to be styled

“teacher” rather than “the more dignified appellation of Professor”. Pearce Carey (*William Carey*, 1934, p. 217) says: “To override the difficulty of a Nonconformist being a professor in a Government College, it was suggested that he should be named tutor.” Dyer states that Carey’s *Universal Dictionary of the Oriental Languages derived from the Sanskrit*, the materials for which were lost in the fire at Serampore in 1813, was conceived “on the plan of Johnson’s *Lexicon*”.

It is to be noted that the headings of Carey’s Nottingham sermon are given by Dyer as “Expect great things” and “Attempt great things”. This may perhaps be accepted as decisive support for the view that the familiar words “from God” were a later addition.

Dyer had ample opportunities of learning about Carey from those who had actually been in his company both in England and in India. He lists as the five principal features of Carey’s character: self-denying consecration, he walked by faith, humility, humanity, and disinterestedness and generosity. The memoir as a whole is restrained and somewhat colourless, but Dyer, as we know, was rather frightened of any great display of emotion, either in speech or writing. It is fair to note, however, that the editor of this *Annual* states that some abridgement of the memoir had been necessary. The one or two quotations from Carey’s letters deepen one’s feeling that an annotated calendar of these is a real desideratum.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

Ministers in Need. R. W. Thomson. London. Society for Relief of Aged and Infirm Dissenting Ministers. 1967. Pp. 18. 2s. 6d.

Since the society was founded in 1818—and this monograph was written by the secretary to commemorate the ter-jubilee—over £100,000 has been disbursed in grants to ministers of the three denominations. With state pensions unknown until 1908, those grants must often have brought a smile where worried frowns had been. Names familiar for work in other compassionate concerns bespatter these pages, hinting at the cross fertilization of ideas which prompted the rise of many voluntary societies in the nineteenth century. Perhaps sometime Mr. Thomson will be able to tell the human story behind the statistics, for here is a study in social history of some fascination.

DOUGLAS C. SPARKES.