

## *missionary heroes*

### **William Carey**

"The Consecrated Cobbler" – Missionary to India, 1793-1833

by Julia H. Johnston

There was a young man long ago in England who asked some ministers if the Church had done all it could for the heathen, and received this answer: "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen world, He will do it without your help or mine." Who was the venturesome young man? William Carey.



Who was it that said afterwards, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God"? William Carey. Who was it that later said, when some one was talking of the great mine of heathenism, asking, "Who will go down?" "I will, but remember that you must hold the ropes"? William Carey, missionary to India for forty years. Tuck into your memory these three things, and keep them there, for they are worth remembering.

William Carey is called the father of modern missions. Of course we want to know something about him. In the year 1761, he was born in a lowly cottage, in the little town of Paulerspury in England. His father was a schoolmaster. In this village the boy spent the first fourteen years of his life, and his father gave him the best education he could. But at fourteen the boy was his own master. "The bench was his seat of literature, and the shoemaker's stall his hall of learning." The boy who, when but six years old, used to repeat sums in arithmetic to his mother, which he had worked out in his own mind, was not likely to stop learning at fourteen. He finished whatever he began. He used every chance he had. The room where he worked was filled with insects in every corner, and he delighted to watch them growing. He collected birds, butterflies, and animals, and was also fond of drawing and painting. He was an active fellow, and fond of the things boys love to do. He was a great favourite with those of his own age. As a shoemaker's apprentice, William Carey did his work so well that his master kept a pair of shoes to show William's good work.

While still a youth, he gave his heart to Christ, and was sometimes asked to speak in meetings in a little Baptist chapel which he attended. Thirty years afterwards, the minister who baptized the young man said, "In 1783 I baptized a poor journeyman shoemaker, little thinking that before nine years had passed he would prove the first instrument in forming a society for sending missionaries to the heathen, but such was the case."

At length the church encouraged the young man to enter on the work of preaching, as he longed to do. But his master died, and the apprentice began work for himself to pay

expenses while preaching. He married at twenty, and had his family to support. He preached three years at Barton, walking six miles there and back. Then he had a church in Moulton, where he had a salary of seventy-five dollars a year. He could not live on this — do you wonder? — and tried to teach school. This was a failure and he went back to shoemaking. But he and his family lived very sparingly, often going without meat for a month at a time. After two or three years he moved to Leister and built up a church there. All this time he managed somehow to do much studying. He mastered the Latin grammar in six weeks, and the Dutch language in a wonderfully short time. Greek and Hebrew were learned without a teacher. In seven years he could read his Bible in six languages. He bought a French book for a few pence and in three weeks could read it. He found it so easy to learn a new language that it was an amusement to spread out a book before him and study as he worked.

By and by the shoemaker preacher was asked to preach before an association of ministers. It was then and there that he said "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." As a result of that sermon, a Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen was formed, in the little parlour of a lady named Mrs. Wallis. She loved to remember this, and her eyes glistened when it was mentioned.

Very soon Mr. Carey decided to go himself as a missionary. His wife felt that she could not go. There were four children, one of them a baby. The minister said he would take his oldest son and go, hoping the mother and the rest would follow. But before he sailed, the mother decided to go, and the whole family set out for India. It took five months for the voyage. On arriving, there were dreadful times and many hardships before a place could be found for the family, and Mr. Carey had to take what work he could get to support them. The money brought with them was gone, and the one trusted with it for the company of missionaries did not spend it wisely. Fifteen thousand miles from home, the only way to get more was to work for it. Mr. Carey said that he would not depend on the society at home, but would support himself, and sent for seeds and plants for a large garden. Soon after, the five-year-old son Robert died, and no one could be found to make or to carry the coffin. Men were afraid to touch the little body. Soon the missionary work began, though with many trials. After five years he went to Serampore, where his great work was done. After seven years in India, he baptized the first Hindu convert, who lived to preach for twenty years afterwards.

A wonderful work was done by the Mission Press. Before Dr. Carey died, 212,000 copies of the Scriptures had been sent out in forty different languages among three hundred millions of people.

After forty years' labour as missionary, professor, and translator, he fell asleep in Jesus.

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