



THE FOUR CALLINGS OF WILLIAM CAREY

The Father of Modern
Missions

ROGER D. DUKE

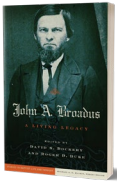
About the Author

Dr. Roger D. Duke is an author, theologian, educator, itinerant preacher, published scholar, and professor at several institutions of higher learning including: Union University, Baptist College of Health Sciences, Liberty University, Memphis Theological Seminary, and Columbia Evangelical Seminary.

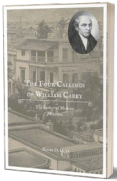
He earned his D.Min from The University of the South (Sewanee) School of Theology, performed post-graduate Ph.D studies at the University of Memphis, completed his M.A. at Harding University, and attained a M.Div at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

www.DrRogerDDuke.com

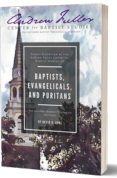
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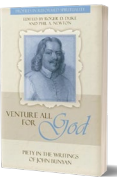
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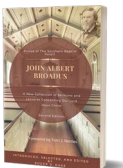
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William Carey

“William Carey’s Call to Missions”

Scripture Portion

Paul Hears the Macedonian Call

Acts 16: 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go to Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

Early Work as a Voluntary Preacher¹

Just a few years before Carey’s conversion the Particular Baptist ministers of Northamptonshire and surrounding areas organized their churches into an association for fellowship and Christian service.² This is probably the forerunner of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Associational method that is employed today. These devoted men drew spiritual strength from others of the Evangelical movement—not from their fellow countrymen but from Americans such as Jonathan Edwards.³ In his quest for spiritual light and guidance Cary came to know John Sutcliff who was one of the stalwarts of the Baptist movement⁴ and one who would prove to be an influence on the budding minister. But we will speak more of him later.

And “On one occasion, in the summer of 1782 Carey walked over to [the little town of] Olney⁵ to attend the annual public meetings of the Baptist Association. Here he was brought into [closer] contact with three men whose lives were henceforth to be strangely knit with his own—

¹ F. Deaville Walker, *William Carey: Father of Modern Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press Edition, 1980), 40.

² Walker, *William Carey*, 40.

³ Walker, *William Carey*, 40.

⁴ Walker, *William Carey*, 40.

⁵ A citation in F. Deaville Walkers notes on p. 40 states: “William Cowper was living there at the time: he had just published his first volume of poems, and was then busy writing *John Gilpin*. It is possible that on this or subsequent visits to Olney, Carey may have seen the poet. Cowper lived at Olney from 1767 to 1786, and here wrote most of his works.”

[besides] Sutcliff [there was] John Ryland, and Andrew Fuller.”⁶ They will greatly impact him spiritually as he develops into a mature minister. On that day, he had no money, and could not even afford to buy himself a meal. And as he was walking about he met a certain Mr. Chater from a village named Earls Barton. Chater invited him to join in the repast⁷ with them. A fortnight, or fourteen days later, the group invited Carey to preach for them because they lacked a permanent pastor. Carey confessed, “I cannot tell why I complied” but believes “it was because I had not a sufficient degree of confidence to refuse.”⁸

The Barton folk were so very pleased with him, they extended him an invitation to come and minister as their pastor and preacher. The arrangement became what we would consider as a bi-weekly—bi-vocational call. His appointment lasted three and a half years. “He regularly walked the six miles on Sunday morning, returning at night to his . . . ‘cottage’ in Hackleton.”⁹ This is where “the twenty-one-year old shoemaker served his apprenticeship in . . . preaching the gospel.”¹⁰ “It was also . . . [his] first step to public work [of ministry].”¹¹

Early on in his first pastorate, Carey was a perpetual student with an ever-hungry appetite for any book he could acquire. When Dr. Ryland sold his library Carey bought what he could by “starving himself to provide the money.”¹² That brings to mind a quote of Desiderius Erasmus,

⁶ Walker, *William Carey*, 40.

⁷ Reader’s note: This preacher’s first encounter with the word “repast” was when I pastored an inner-city church. The church had a goodly number of Black people and I held a funeral for one of these dear folk—a particularly godly leader—a lady. One of the members had all of us come back to the church house for the “repast”—a scrumptious feast honoring the dearly departed.

⁸ Walker, *William Carey*, 40-41.

⁹ Walker, *William Carey*, 41.

¹⁰ Walker, *William Carey*, 41.

¹¹ Walker, *William Carey*, 41.

¹² Walker, *William Carey*, 14.

the great humanist scholar of the Reformation who declared: “When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes.”¹³

One particular volume providentially came to Carey as a gift from a ministerial friend—Robert Hall’s *Help to Zion’s Travelers*. He later confessed how significant this treatise was in framing his theology of missions and evangelism:

I do not remember ever to have read any book with such raptures as I did that. If it was poison (as some then said) it was so sweet to me that I drank it greedily to the bottom of the cup; and I rejoice to say that those doctrines are the choice of my heart to this day.¹⁴

Some historical light needs to be shed on the issue: In those days there were certain controversies amongst the Particular Baptists or British Baptist Calvinists. These were: *First*, can a sinner who may not be numbered among the elect be commanded to repent and believe the Gospel? *Secondly*, should a believer freely proclaim the Gospel to everyone knowing full well that not all will come to salvation? Hall’s view was; sinners can be commanded to repent and believe in Christ *and* that every believer should testify to the saving grace of Christ to sinners. These two theological points of Hall’s were whole-heartedly embraced by Carey.

Carey’s first preaching assignment had set his soul afire in a new way to pursue the study of the Bible alongside that of foreign languages. “Beyond question he had very exceptional linguistic gifts, and with amazing diligence under most unhelpful circumstances he strove to develop these gifts.”¹⁵ By the time of his appointment he had already mastered “Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Italian.” Now more than ever, “The motive that impelled . . . [his academic and linguistic study] was . . . [his] service to Jesus Christ.”¹⁶

¹³ Quote taken from, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1896-when-i-have-a-little-money-i-buy-books-and>, retrieved 23 November 2015.

¹⁴ Walker, *William Carey*, 41.

¹⁵ Walker, *William Carey*, 40-43.

¹⁶ Walker, *William Carey*, 42.

He never sat at his [shoemaker's] work without a book before him; and as he carried his stock of newmade shoes to the neighboring towns or returned with a supply of leather, he went over the subject he was studying, making it forever his own.¹⁷

He related to Eustace, his nephew, much later,

. . . [I]f after my removal anyone should think it worth his while to write of my life, I will give a criterion by which you may judge of its correctness. If he give me credit for being a plodder he will describe me justly. Anything beyond this will be too much. *I can plod*. I can persevere in any definitive pursuit. *To this I owe everything* (italics added).¹⁸

“Those great words ‘*I can plod*’ are the master-key of his life—and he place that master-key in hands of Christ.”¹⁹

The Church Awakes²⁰

Carey always had the heart of a pastor. Despite his work future work as preacher, linguist, evangelist, social reformer, and missionary statesman; he never lost his love for people.²¹ This focus is seen when he later related how;

[The minister] should keep up the character of a teacher, an overlooker, at all times; and in the chimney corner, as well as the pulpit. . . . The importance of those things that we have to do with, ought to impress our minds, in our private studies, our addresses to God, and out labours in the pulpit. The word of God! . . . The souls of men! Eternal things! All of the utmost moment, their value beyond estimation, their danger beyond conception, and their duration equal with eternity. These, my dear friend, we have to do with; these we must give account of. . . . Pray for me and God help me to pray for you.²²

Carey labored for four years at his first small church. “Then a call came to a new sphere of service.”²³ In February 1789 he received an invitation to a pastorate in Leicester. Six weeks later he told the little church he would be leaving and going to another pastorate. But he had not taken the new position to better himself! No indeed! For “The task offered to him was one of

¹⁷ Walker, *William Carey*, 42.

¹⁸ Walker, *William Carey*, 42.

¹⁹ Walker, *William Carey*, 42.

²⁰ Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1991), 47.

²¹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 19.

²² *Biographical and Literary Notes of William Carey* (Northampton: Taylor and Son, 1886), 2, 79-80; Also published in the *Baptist Reporter* (July, 1844). Cited in George, *Faithful Witness*, 19.

²³ Walker, *William Carey*, 60.

unusual difficulty.”²⁴ The Harvey Lane Chapel at Leicester was in a deplorable moral condition.²⁵ There was,

A wave of Antinomianism²⁶—the fashionable heresy of the time—had wrought ruin and brought disgrace upon the Christian name. There were church members and even deacons who were not fit to be within the Church of Christ. But a band of faithful souls struggled nobly against the prevailing corruption, and it was largely through them that Carey was called.²⁷

PREACH WHAT Antinomianism IS AND HOW IT IS ALIVE AND WELL IN SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCHES EVEN TODAY!!!

We have already seen how Carey was called to salvation from very poor, very humble circumstances. But he is to play a major role in the coming spiritual revival and missionary awakenings.²⁸ In God’s sovereign purposes “three major factors . . . came together in just the right way and at just the right time to launch this historic missionary beginning.”²⁹ Timothy George well describes these for us:

[F]irst, a revival of prayer among the churches and people of God;
[S]econd, a theology of missions which gave a solid doctrinal foundation to the new outreach;
[T]hird, a specific plan of action to set in motion the enterprise for world evangelization.³⁰

There was a regular meeting of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association in 1784. Carey was not present at the meeting; he had just been baptized and was still considered a novice. At this particular associational meeting the addresses were delivered by John Gill (nephew and namesake of the greatest Baptist theologian of the century), John Sutcliff of Olney, and Andrew

²⁴ Walker, *William Carey*, 60.

²⁵ Walker, *William Carey*, 60.

²⁶ Reader’s note: Antinomianism is the doctrine that since or because we have grace we need not keep the Law of God. In essence since we have become Christians we are free to “sin that grace may abound.”

²⁷ Walker, *William Carey*, 60.

²⁸ George, *Faithful Witness*, 47.

²⁹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 47.

³⁰ George, *Faithful Witness*, 47.

Fuller the newly named pastor of Kettering.³¹ “On the second day of the meeting Sutcliff arose to address the ministers and messengers. He called on them to begin a concert of prayer in their local churches, meeting on the first Monday of every month to beseech God for revival and the spread of the Gospel.”³²

This revival of prayer had far-reaching—even eternal—consequences. The concert of prayer not only flamed in Northamptonshire, but also burned among the Yorkshire Baptists and Congregationalists in Warwickshire. “The monthly Monday evening prayer meetings were *really* meetings for prayer not social occasions for singing, eating, announcements, and business.”³³ They made strong intercession as “They prayed for the state of public affairs in the nation, for revival among the churches, for the lost in their midst, and for the extension of Christ’s kingdom throughout the earth.”³⁴ EXHORT-PREACH PRAYER REVIVAL HERE

The prayer revival not only stirred the churches of the Baptist Association corporately; the Holy Spirit was stirring the heart of young Pastor Carey personally and in a profoundly deep way.

One famous incident in young Carey’s life bears repeating: As one of the younger pastors, he was trying to establish his place in the “pecking-order” of the “Baptist circles.”³⁵ It so happened that Elder minister, John Ryland Sr., called upon his colleagues to bring up a topic for the Associational meeting’s discussion time. There was a long and awkward pause of silence. Carey, as the young and novice minister, made a proposal that broke through like thunder!! He

³¹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 48.

³² George, *Faithful Witness*, 48.

³³ George, *Faithful Witness*, 48.

³⁴ George, *Faithful Witness*, 48.

³⁵ George, *Faithful Witness*, 53.

set forth the topic: “The duty of Christians to attempt the spread of the gospel among heathen nations.”³⁶

In response,

Ryland Sr. was genuinely astonished and, with a rebuking frown, thundered back, “Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mind.”³⁷

At that, “Some other topic was taken up, and Carey’s question ‘tabled’ for the time being.”³⁸

Some “later tradition says that the elder minister referred to Carey as a ‘miserable enthusiast’ for even raising the issue.”³⁹ ⁴⁰

EXPLAIN PREACH THE CONTROVERSY OF CALVINISM HERE TO SOME DEGREE

This incident serves to highlight the theological malaise of the day. Now we Southern Baptist seem to have always been arguing over one doctrine of some sort or the other. This may be because we were birthed out of doctrinal controversy as observed here. There was a strong emphasis on the so-called “Doctrines of Grace” otherwise known as “Calvinism” or Particular Redemption at this time. Under this system as preached, taught, and believed; God was absolutely sovereign in salvation and brought in all His elect, by His own means, in His own time, and in His own way! Period!!! So when young Carey put forth the idea that it was “The duty of Christians to attempt the spread of the gospel among heathen nations,”⁴¹—it was a theological scandal!!! Meanwhile, Carey’s theology of missions was germinating, growing, and being systematized in his mind. Contrary to the context of the Particular Redemption Calvinism;

³⁶ George, *Faithful Witness*, 53.

³⁷ George, *Faithful Witness*, 53.

³⁸ George, *Faithful Witness*, 53.

³⁹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 53.

⁴⁰ George notes in *Faithful Witness* on p. 183, note 14 that: “*CMW* 1:10. See also the reconstructions of this event in *Carey*, 50 and *Memoir*, 62. Ryland Jr., denied that his father ever hurled such an epithet at Carey. However, another minister who was present on the occasion, Webster Morris, gave evidence to the contrary. Carey himself verified the substance of the remark, if not the precise wording.”

⁴¹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 53.

he preached, taught, learned the foreign languages, and won those around him to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt in this preacher's mind—the second greatest influence on Carey's theology of missions was his older pastor-friend and mentor Andrew Fuller. Fuller's discovered in the writings of American Jonathan Edwards “[s]imply put, [were] that evangelism and Calvinism could be reconciled.”⁴² But the contemporary Particular Baptists of England had not yet been persuaded in that direction. Fuller sets forth his theology in the seminal volume: *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation or the Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ*. It is commonly known as *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. In it he argues for “duty faith”⁴³ and does so in six clearly stated propositions:

1. Unconverted sinners are commanded, exhorted, and invited to believe in Christ for salvation.
2. Everyone is bound to receive what God reveals.
3. The gospel, though a message of pure grace, requires the obedient response of faith.
4. The lack of faith is a heinous sin which is ascribed in the Scriptures to human depravity.
5. God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on sinners for their not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. The Bible requires of all persons certain spiritual exercises which are represented as their duty. These include repentance and faith no less that the requirement to love God, fear God, and glorify God. That no one can accomplish these things apart from the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is clear. Nonetheless the obligation remains. In this respect “man's duty and God's gift” are the same thing.⁴⁴

Carey's theology of missions seems to have matured into full flower from Fuller's *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. Both Fuller and Carey were indebted to Robert Hall of Arnesby earlier work *Help to Zion's Travelers*. It was from these seeds the theology of missions were originally planted—but from Fuller's *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* came the flower.

⁴² George, *Faithful Witness*, 55.

⁴³ George, *Faithful Witness*, 55.

⁴⁴ George, *Faithful Witness*, 56-57.

Our address so far has recounted the revival of prayer among the churches and people of God coupled with Carey’s theology of missions which gave a solid doctrinal foundation for the new outreach. “What was needed next was plan of action.”⁴⁵ A plan to “spread of the gospel among heathen nations. . . .”⁴⁶ Carey was just the man providence set aside to take up the task.

The plan is set in motion by Carey’s game-changing work *An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. “The *Enquiry* consists of an introduction and five chapters dealing . . . with the Great Commission, historical precedents, a world survey, obstacles to missions, and the Christian’s duty to promote the cause of missions.”⁴⁷ In the last five words of the first paragraph Carey declares the entire missions enterprise has a “transcendent source”⁴⁸—that of “the character of God himself”⁴⁹!!!! If one misses this thesis statement of Carey’s it would be “easy to misunderstand the motivation for missions which Carey unfolds.”⁵⁰ Here Carey confesses that he leans totally on the sovereign work of God to seek the salvation of the lost heathen around the world.

PREACH—WORLD MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM IS DONE BECAUSE OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD—AND DOES IT WITH GOD’S BLESSING

In the beginning of the *Enquiry*, “Carey answered three commonly held objections to his new missionary endeavors.”⁵¹ Listen to what was believed of the Baptists at that time:

First, there . . . [were] the advocates of a do-nothing strategy who justifi[ed] their inaction by appealing to Providence. . .

Secondly, others claim[ed] that the time is not right for such initiatives since various biblical prophecies . . . await fulfillment. . .

Third, . . . those who [would] say “we have work enough at home.”⁵²

⁴⁵ George, *Faithful Witness*, 57.

⁴⁶ George, *Faithful Witness*, 53.

⁴⁷ George, *Faithful Witness*, 58.

⁴⁸ George, *Faithful Witness*, 58.

⁴⁹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 58.

⁵⁰ George, *Faithful Witness*, 58.

⁵¹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 58.

Carey's *Enquiry*, as apologetic, took to task every contemporary objection of the day: He argued, "Wherever a new work of God is established, there is a countermovement of opposition, persecution, [and] demonic onslaught."⁵³ Sometimes these come from outside the community of faith—but many times from within the community of faith itself!!!!

Not only did Carey deal with the contemporary criticisms of his Baptist peers; but he took up possible oppositions in the *Enquiry*. "[H]is plan would be attacked by many as foolish and impracticable"⁵⁴ But, "In Section 4 he anticipated five likely objections and then answered them one by one."⁵⁵ These "had to do with distance, the barbarism of the uncivilized peoples, dangers to the missionary, the difficulties of making a living, and learning the new language so far away from home."⁵⁶ Time does not here permit us to consider each of Carey's responses to perceived negations of the new missionary enterprise. But, when you read the *Enquiry* for yourself, you can observe how he gives a reasoned and well thought-out answer to refuting possible naysayers.

As a "crescendo near the end of a great musical movement;"⁵⁷ Carey brings "all of his previous argument, his pleading, the pouring out of his soul . . . together in a concentrated appeal to action."⁵⁸ "Is nothing . . . to be done?"⁵⁹ Yes there were three things he left his readers to do:

First, *pray*. . .
Second, *plan*. . .
Third, *give*.⁶⁰

⁵² George, *Faithful Witness*, 58-59.

⁵³ George, *Faithful Witness*, 58-59.

⁵⁴ George, *Faithful Witness*, 61.

⁵⁵ George, *Faithful Witness*, 61.

⁵⁶ George, *Faithful Witness*, 61.

⁵⁷ George, *Faithful Witness*, 63.

⁵⁸ George, *Faithful Witness*, 63.

⁵⁹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 63.

⁶⁰ George, *Faithful Witness*, 63-64.

During the thought processes, development, and writing of his *Enquiry*, God was no doubt at work in Carey's heart. There was coming a time not too many days hence when he would heed the Spirit's call to put into practice what he had long advocated and preached.

It was also about this time that God began doing a new work within the Baptist ministerial association. From that group, which was originally conceived for fellowship and mutual edification, would spring a great movement amongst the new fledgling Baptists dissenters. This was "the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel."⁶¹ It was here that providence would awaken the Church of Jesus Christ from a long slumber and revived it to fulfil its true mission and purpose in the world.⁶²

⁶¹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 47.

⁶² George, *Faithful Witness*, 47.

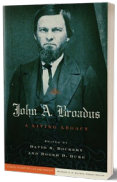
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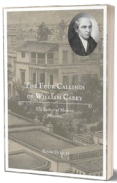
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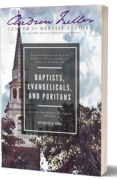
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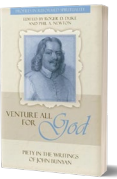
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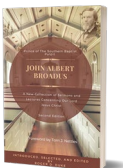
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