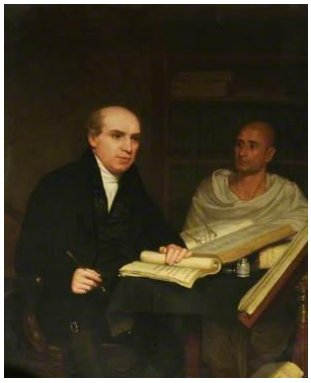
SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN THE BAPTIST WORLD
A Science for Seminaries project at the Centre for Baptist Studies

Science and Baptist History
Case Study 2



William Carey, India (1761-1834)

Pre-British empire (East India Company)

'a boy-botanist' — Samuel Carey, *William Carey* (1923), 22

'to know and grow plants was with Carey a vocation and a passion. He was not a man of one Book but of two . . . His mission-work and his horticulture were twin expressions of one aim – to enrich men with God's loveliest and best' (Samuel Carey, 389)

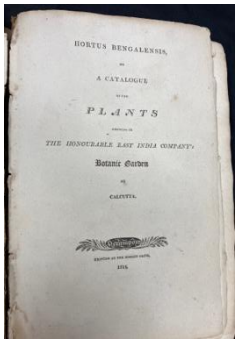
Carey was elected to the Geological Society in 1823

Pioneer in the field of agriculture (Mondal, 'Agricultural Initiatives', 426)
Botany was an interest, it was money-making, and part of school curriculum
Improve the indigenous agriculture system
All thy works praise thee (Psalm 145.10), epigraph to *Flora Indica*

'The great Author of nature has filled the world with so great a variety of objects that something presents itself, at every step, to the view of the most incurious observer, and either from its utility, its beauty, its singularity, or some other obvious property, forces itself upon his notice.' Carey, 'On the study of Nature', *The Friend of India*, August 1825

Serampore – The Baptist Mission took the initiative to spread science through textbooks, pamphlets and lectures

'The Serampore Royal Charter of 1827, bestowed by Frederick VI of Denmark, empowered the College to award its own degrees without restriction of subject. Indeed it specified that such degrees should be conferred only on those students 'that testify their proficiency in Science'. This clause reflected William Carey's personal conviction of the unique apologetic value of scientific knowledge (Stanley, BQ 2020, 19)


HORTUS BENGALENSIS,
OR
A CATALOGUE
OF THE
PLANTS
GROWING IN THE
THE HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S
Botanic Garden
AT
CALCUTTA.

'Since [Marshmann] described 'the Hindoo system' as resting on 'the most absurd mistakes' in history, geography, and science, sound instruction in these disciplines could be expected to undermine the structures of the religion. Chemistry had what is, to our minds, a surprising role to play in the conceptual battle with Hindu idolatry, for it would demonstrate that even sacred venerated matter was no more than

matter: as all their objects of worship are formed of matter, the very experiments of this science will tend to shake belief in them altogether. Thus it is, in India especially, that knowledge may be made a most powerful auxiliary to religion, in the gradual dissolution of such a system of idolatry. It should be noted that chemistry – along with botany and agriculture (both taught by Carey) and geography – was duly an integral feature of the first curriculum of Serampore College.' (Stanley, *Baptist Quarterly*, 2020, 21)

'I must confess I have never heard anything more illiberal. Pray can youth be trained up for the Christian ministry without science?' William Carey, quoted in Smith, *The Life of William Carey*, 1885 referenced in Farrer, *William Carey*, 110.

References

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Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (T & T Clark, 1992)

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