

It is amazing that we have had to wait two hundred years for a second published biography of the pioneer missionary William Ward. While there have been literally dozens of biographical studies of Ward's close friend and companion William Carey, this is only the second book-length biography devoted solely to Ward. So, in this 200th anniversary year of Ward's stepping into eternal glory, we are thankful to God that we can hear and read again what God did in and through the life of this remarkable servant of the Lord Jesus.

Michael A.G. Haykin
Professor of church history,
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This new biography of William Ward is such a delight! It draws readers into the absorbing story of Ward's spirituality, calling, and missionary service, providing a window into pioneer missions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This book will be of interest not only to readers who love missions and church history — particularly Baptist history — but also those who want to be challenged by a moving spiritual biography of a journalist, printer, and translator who dedicated his life to the service of Christ in cross-cultural mission. Highly recommended.

Prof J. Matthew Pinson,
President, Welch College

William Ward was a member of the famed Serampore Trio. Sam Masters provides contemporary readers with an accessible but detailed survey of Ward's life and contributions.

**Dr David Rathel,
Associate Professor of Christian Theology
Director, Academic Graduate Studies Program
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The story of Carey in India is fairly well known, as is the fact that others assisted him. However, Ward and the others have remained shadowy figures for too long. Thankfully, this is beginning to change and this well crafted little book is a sign of that. Beginning with a riot in Derby, continuing with a fist fight between missionaries, a terrible fire and various deaths and conversions the work ends with death in a time of cholera in Serampore. By a missionary about a missionary, it will stir your heart as you marvel at God's grace in days gone by.

**Revd Gary Brady,
Pastor, Childs Hill Baptist Church, London**

REDEEMING LOVE
HAS BEEN MY THEME



William Ward

**“REDEEMING LOVE
HAS BEEN MY THEME”:
THE LIFE OF WILLIAM WARD**

Samuel E. Masters

~ Evangelical Lives ~

Volume 2



Ettrick Press

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Foreword

Biographies serve as windows into the lives of individuals who have left their mark on the world. They offer us the opportunity to explore the human experience — to uncover the triumphs and tribulations of those who have shaped our past and, in turn, our future. William Ward's (1769–1823) story is no exception. In the following pages, you will embark on a remarkable journey through the life of a man whose name may not be instantly recognizable but whose impact on history, society, and mission is undeniable. This biography offers an intimate glimpse into the life and times of William Ward, a figure whose legacy is woven into the tapestry of the nineteenth century and beyond.

In the following chapters, you will come to know William Ward not just as a historical figure but as a person — a missionary, a brother, a friend, a colleague, a printer, a journalist, an educationist, a scholar, and a visionary. His journey takes us from humble beginnings in England to the far reaches of the British Empire. His voyage to Bengal, India, began a missionary life characterized by perseverance, intellect, and a profound commitment

to his gospel call. Born when the world was rapidly changing, Ward navigated the challenges of his era with firm determination, steadfast vision, and unwavering faith in Jesus Christ.

This biography seeks to do justice to the complexity of William Ward's character. It explores his early years, education, career, missionary call, and the pivotal moments that shaped his worldview. Through meticulous research and a deep understanding of the historical context, the author invites us to walk alongside William Ward and grapple with the complex character of this man who left an indelible mark on Christian world missions. We will understand the challenges he faced and the legacy he left behind. It reminds us that each life is unique, and William Ward's deserves to be understood.

William Ward's story has rarely been written. His friend, Samuel Stennett, published a memoir in 1825; and E. Daniel Potts wrote a biography in the twentieth century that remains unpublished at this point. Hence, this biography, published in the bicentennial year of Ward's death, is long overdue. The author, Sam Masters, seeks to chronicle the

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events of William Ward's life and to capture the essence of the man himself — his beliefs, his passions, and his enduring impact on the world around him. I hope his story will inspire, inform, and enrich the readers' understanding of the Christian experience. With great anticipation and excitement, we invite the reader to join us on this remarkable voyage of discovery of a remarkable man.

Soli deo gloria.

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The radical journalist

In March 1797, William Ward (1769–1823) inadvertently provoked a riot at a Baptist Chapel in Derby. Ward had recently moved to another city but had attended the church when he lived in Derby. He was back in town to organize a political meeting, and he used the facilities without consulting the church's leaders. He must have thought he was doing the right thing – at first. After all, the church building sat empty on Monday night, and John Thelwall (1764–1834), the controversial social and political reformer, was in Derby to speak on matters of great urgency. As people began to gather, Ward must have been encouraged; the evening would be a success. But as the crowd increased, they grew unruly, and it soon became clear most were Tory sympathizers vehemently opposed to radical ideas of social reform.

When Thelwall began to speak, the mob in the street drowned out his oration with banging drums and blaring horns. Then, threatening to destroy the

chapel, they began throwing stones and bricks. Several people were wounded in the tumult. Fearing for his life, Thelwall drew two pistols and declared he would shoot anyone who stood in his way. The mob allowed Thelwall to pass but did not disperse immediately. We don't know how William Ward made his escape.¹

Ward's role in the Derby incident was not out of character. He had always been an intense personality with a serious bent. Ward's first biographer, Samuel Stennett, described Ward as a child as "not merely free from a predilection for the vices of youth, but he appears not to have been much addicted to their foibles and sports."² Stennett reports that his contemporaries could not remember seeing Ward at play. Though "of an active disposition," he poured

¹ The incident was reported in the *Annual Register* of March 20, 1797, page 16. This entry does not mention Ward by name. His role is described in John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859), I, 94.

² Samuel Stennett, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. William Ward*, 2nd ed. (London: Simpkin & Marshall, Holdsworth, 1825), 8.

his energies into activities that would improve his mind. This account may have been filtered through Ward's future fame as a missionary, but it is probably largely accurate.

William was born in Derby on October 20, 1769, to John and Ann Ward. John was a carpenter and house-builder. His father, Thomas Ward, had been a farmer. The three generations of Wards illustrate the migration patterns of the period produced by industrialization. While John did not work in a factory, the industrial growth in Derby created opportunities for carpenters who would settle there.

John Ward died when William was nine years old. His mother reacted to the family's hardships by seeking spiritual support. Early on, she was intrigued by the teachings of the Quakers but soon came under the influence of the local Methodists. During those years, the famous revivalist John Wesley (1703–1791) criss-crossed Derbyshire with his itinerant ministry and spoke more than once in the area. For example, on March 27, 1764, Wesley records in his journal, "Hence we rode to Derby. Mr. Dobinson believed it would be best for me to preach in the market-place, there seemed to be a general

inclination in the town, even among people of fashion, to hear me.”³ The mayor had assured his party there would be no disturbance, but he promised to suppress it if there was. A large crowd gathered at five. All were peaceful until Wesley began to preach. “Then ‘the beasts of the people’ lifted up their voice, hallooing and shouting on every side.”⁴ Wesley found it impossible to preach and so began to walk away. Many followed, “but only a few pebble-stones were thrown, and no one hurt at all.”⁵ At seven that evening, Wesley met with the Methodist society. Many visitors came who wanted to hear more from Wesley. “In the morning most of them came again, with as many more we could well make room for; and indeed they received the word gladly. God grant they may bring forth fruit!”⁶

On another occasion, years later, on March 22, 1772, Wesley reported that his visit drew a large

³ John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 3rd ed (London: John Mason, 1829), 3:164.

⁴ Wesley, *Works*, 3:164.

⁵ Wesley, *Works*, 3:164.

⁶ Wesley, *Works*, 3:164.