



Currier, Charles Warren (22 Mar. 1857-23 Sept. 1918), bishop and author, was born on St. Thomas, West Indies, and raised on St. Eustatius and St. Kitts, the son of Warren Green Currier of New York City and Deborah Heyliger of the Netherlands. At fourteen he sailed to the Netherlands to attend Assumption College in Roermond. Professed a Redemptorist in 1875, he taught from 1876 to 1877 and pursued advanced studies to a Ph.D. in religious philosophy at the Redemptorist seminary at Wittem. He was ordained a Catholic priest by Bishop Henry Schaap (vicar apostolic of Dutch Guiana) in Amsterdam on 22 November 1880. Currier knew Greek and Hebrew and was fluent in Latin, English, Dutch, Spanish, French, German, and Italian.

In January 1881 he arrived in Surinam for his first missionary assignment. In February 1882 he sailed to the United States. His preaching drew crowds in Boston, New York, and Baltimore, and he began to publish. "The History of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succor in Boston," his 1888 lecture before the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, was printed in the second volume of the society's journal. In 1935 Philip H. Frohman, architect of the National Episcopal Cathedral in Washington, began plans for the restoration of the first Carmelite foundation in the English colonies, near Port Tobacco, Maryland. His most valuable source, for its sketch of the 1800 "Monastery," was Currier's *Carmel in America* (1890). Currier noted the "encouragement and aid" of historian [John Gilmary Shea](#) and on assignments in southern Maryland explored sites, recorded recollections, and consulted materials in private hands. For the Carmelite bicentennial in 1990, a facsimile of *Carmel* was published as the inaugural volume of the Carmelite Sources series.

In November 1891 Currier was released from his Redemptorist obligations and thereafter served the Baltimore Archdiocese in a variety of capacities. His contributions to a wide range of periodicals proliferated, and he acted as foreign correspondent, both while in the United States and abroad. Reissued six times in twenty years, *History of Religious Orders* (1894) was the most popular of his eight books. His first novel, *Dimitrios and Irene* (1894), drew an unsubstantiated charge of plagiarism

from [Lew Wallace](#); the author of *Ben Hur* had just published *Prince of India* (1893), a romance also unfolding during the fall of Byzantium. *The Rose of Alhama* (1897) was Currier's second and last novel.

Currier promoted education. His Maryland Catholic Summer School, founded in 1900, was later absorbed into the Cliff Haven Summer School at Plattsburgh, New York. As pastor of St. Mary's Church in the U.S. capital from 1900 to 1905, he worked for better understanding between the Americas and among Spanish-speaking nations. He often presented papers at the International Congress of Americanists, in Europe and in the Americas, representing the United States government, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Catholic University of America. He was commissioned by the State Department to be U.S. delegate at congresses held during the centennial celebrations of independence in Argentina and Mexico in 1910. His *Lands of the Southern Cross* (1911) was issued by the Spanish-American Publication Society. Published articles on writers from several Spanish-speaking countries indicate that his unfinished *History of Spanish Literature* would have included Latin American authors.

"Indian Languages in the United States" was Currier's 1904 presentation before the Americanists in Stuttgart, and in 1905 he was named assistant director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. His lectures and publications raised consciousness, consciences, and money as he recalled the "blood-stained pages" of history from the Arctic to the Antarctic circle and drew attention to conditions--particularly of the schools--on North American reservations. He collaborated with Secretary of the Navy [Charles J. Bonaparte](#), who as legal counsel to the U.S. Board of Indian Commissioners (by appointment of President [Theodore Roosevelt](#)) had tried to eradicate corruption among government field agents and had advocated federal funds for missions. At Currier's suggestion, Bonaparte in Washington, Francis J. Kirby in Baltimore, and prominent citizens in other cities and locales helped establish branches of the Marquette League for Indian support. Currier's eulogy of Chief [Hollow Horn Bear](#) (whose image appeared on U.S. postage stamps in 1923 and 1931 and on the \$10 Military Payment Certificate 1970-1973), given at St. Paul's Church in Washington, D.C., is printed in *The Indian Sentinel* (1914). In the presence of officials such as Secretary of the Interior [Franklin K. Lane](#) and Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs F. H. Abbott, Currier summarized his views on the plight of the Indians and government obligations to them.

Unfamiliar with the Philippines, Currier in 1910 had declined the nomination by Pope Pius X to become bishop of Zamboanga, writing to [James Cardinal Gibbons](#) that it would be "a calamity." But he had published articles on Cuban history, and in Rome, on 6 July 1913 he was consecrated first bishop of Matanzas, Cuba. He held his first diocesan synod in January 1915 but resigned his bishopric the following month for reasons of health. Named titular bishop of Hetalonia, he assisted Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore until his death on a train nearing Baltimore. Currier was buried from the Baltimore cathedral with Cardinal Gibbons presiding.

Praised as an outstanding orator and a scholar of international reputation, Currier held progressive views on education and global relations that helped further Pan-American understanding and cooperation as well as the crusade to improve the situation of American Indians. His religious and fictional works are of less interest than his historical investigations, for he had an eye for gaps in published records and a knack for finding unpublished manuscripts.

Bibliography

Currier's papers are scattered. Some are in the archives of the Baltimore Archdiocese and of the Redemptorist Order, Brooklyn, N.Y., in the Marquette University Archives, and in the possession of Francis F. Burch. An incomplete bibliography fills a page in the *National Union Catalog*. Obituaries are in the *New York Times* and the *Baltimore Sun*, both 24 Sept. 1918, and in the *Bulletin of the Pan-American Union*, Oct. 1918.

Francis F. Burch