

**SEMINAR ORGANIZED JOINTLY BY THE NCCI AND THE SERAMPORE  
COLLEGE ON THE 250<sup>TH</sup> BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF WILLIAM CAREY  
5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2011.**

**MESSAGE BY RT.REV.ASHOKE BISWAS: BISHOP OF CALCUTTA**

Greetings...

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you and join along with both the NCCI and the Serampore College family to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of the renowned missionary Dr. William Carey. As we celebrate his life and give thanks to God for his mission and vision, work and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, let us begin our devotion today by briefly reflecting on his ministry and later the gospel passage read today, with thanksgiving in our hearts.

William Carey has been called "The Father of Modern Missions". From his work and example, modern missions began. In 1793 he set out for India, where he was to spend the rest of his life spreading the news of Jesus. This slowly led to the building of an indigenous church, and reaching out to the Indian community with compassion and care that saw social reforms, advances in science and establishment of a college. He faced considerable opposition and difficulty at times. Yet his faith and perseverance was undeterred. His motto was, "Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God." Not only did William Carey start numerous schools in India, he did so in a way that challenged oppressive practices. After spending about seven years in North Bengal, Carey, along with Joshua Marshman and William Ward established the Serampore Mission of the Baptist Missionary Society on January 10, 1800. They started the Serampore College in 1818. They desired to have the College opening its doors to all students irrespective of their caste, colour and creed.

William Carey loved God's creation very much. He was the first to publish books on natural history as well as a range of science books. In botany, he introduced the Linnaean classification to India and began the monumental task of recording and classifying Indian plants. He introduced the study of astronomy as a science and pioneered the reform of land usage, encouraging forestry conservation and founding an Agricultural and Horticultural Society that stimulated improved management of resources.

William Carey's faith in Jesus compelled him to do all he could to care for people in need. He was appalled by the abuse and suppression of women, minorities and the suffering in traditional Indian society. The gospel of Jesus that he proclaimed included the message that men and women had equal standing before God, and all had a dignity as the image bearers of God. Among the reforms he successfully promoted were: The abolition of polygamy, infanticide, child marriage and *Sati*, the practice of widow burning. His 30 year campaign to protect widows exemplifies his perseverance. He campaigned tirelessly for the humane treatment of lepers. Carey was so distressed by the way in which girls were kept illiterate that he opened dozens of schools for girls and launched a new era of literacy for women. He unstintingly opposed the British East India Company's exploitation of India, persuading the Government to establish a civil service that not only protected Indian interests but established the foundation of self-

administration still operating today. He introduced savings banking system in India. Even before he came to India, Carey was active in calling for the reform of prisons, more compassionate care of the mentally ill, and the abolition of the slave-trade.

William Carey knew that for the gospel of Jesus to have the greatest possible impact, Indians had to be able to read it for themselves. Accordingly, he learnt and translated the Bible into many languages including Sanskrit and Bengali. He set up his own printing press from which poured not only Bibles but numerous works of science, literature and social reform. Carey also believed that it was essential that others learn of the richness of Indian culture and translated significant Indian classics into English. So his faith in Christ motivated him not only to preach the gospel in his pioneering Mission to India, but to live it out as an outstanding Scientist, Engineer, Medical Pioneer, Horticulturalist, Astronomer, Librarian, Conservationist, Social Reformer, Educator, Economist, Linguist and Publisher. Recently, the Indian Government honoured him by the issue of a postage stamp, in his name, with the salutation, "The Department of Posts is privileged to issue a stamp on Dr William Carey, who adopted India as his country and strived to serve her people." We are proud to have the opportunity to reflect on him today at this auspicious occasion.

Our Scripture reading for today i.e. Matthew 9:35-38 shows Jesus to have a deep compassion for the people. Some believe that compassion was the most compelling force in Jesus' life. It enabled him to see what others ignored and act while others stood idle. This was because he felt the pain of those that were sick, sorrowful, hurt, hungry, lonely, poor, weak and confused. He could not abandon them as so many others had even if it meant making costly sacrifices.

So deep was Jesus' compassion that he never wavered even in the midst of stiff opposition. This was because; he was as courageous as he was compassionate. When faced with the choice of running away and saving his own life or staying with sheep that needed a shepherd, he stayed.

When confronted with the choice of focusing entirely upon his needs and pain or comforting the thief to his side, he turned his attention to the other cross. When presented with the choice of hating his enemies or forgiving them, he forgave.

Like Jesus, therefore, we must respond to evil with good and pain with empathy. We must listen to those suffering from injustice and speak truth to power. We must be willing to use our time, talents, energy, influence and resources to build bridges to people, not walls between them. We must even be willing to suffer and die out of love rather than retaliate or seek revenge out of hate.

All these were exemplified in the life and ministry of William Carey. We better draw inspiration and instruction from this tireless labourer of God, with his labour of love and compassion that he showed. So, on his 250<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary, we pay homage to this great soul remembering his virtues and his famous quote once again **"Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God"**

May God continue to bless us and enable us to do likewise. Amen