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## THE SPIRIT AND LETTER OF CAREY'S CATALYTIC WATCHWORD

### A Study in the Transmission of Baptist Tradition

#### The Context

Two hundred years ago, in the spring of 1791, the Baptist ministers of Northamptonshire were confronted with a mission vision, the implications of which quite took their breath away. They were all too aware that the times were unpropitious for 'launching out into the deep' - into costly, high-risk enterprises overseas. The nation was in a state of profound unrest and church-leaders, particularly nonconformists, had more than enough to keep them occupied on the home front. Surely, then was a time to *preserve* church-life rather than to risk meagre resources on fantastic schemes?

The vision was compelling, however; its truth incontrovertible. Thus the Rev. Andrew Fuller of Kettering could not but preach, refusing to allow mere expediency to hold him back. After all, it was Eastertide, the time for rising above doom, gloom and timidity. The local Baptist association fraternal, met at Clipstone on 27th April, consequently witnessed him unburden himself. His text was Haggai 1.2, and the sermon title no less than 'The Instances, The Evil Nature, and the Dangerous Tendency of Delay, in the Concerns of Religion'. In courageous terms he declared what one might only have expected of William Carey at that juncture:

Instead of waiting for the removal of difficulties, we ought, in many cases, to consider them as purposely laid in our way, in order to try the sincerity of our religion... When the Lord Jesus commissioned his apostles, he commanded them to go and teach *all nations*, to preach the gospel to *every creature*; and that, notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions that would lie in the way. The apostles executed their commission with assiduity and fidelity; but, since their days, we seem to sit down half contented that the greater part of the world should still remain in ignorance and idolatry... Are there no opportunities for societies, or individuals in Christian nations, to convey the gospel to the Heathens? This cannot be pleaded, so long as opportunities are found to trade with them, yea, and, (what is a disgrace to the name of Christians,) to buy them, and sell them, and treat them with worse than savage barbarity. We have opportunities in abundance: the improvement of navigation, and the maritime and commercial turn of this country furnish us with these; and it deserves to be considered, whether this is not a circumstance that renders it a duty peculiarly binding on us.

The truth is, if I am not mistaken, we wait for we know not what;... We *pray* for the conversion and salvation of the world, and yet *neglect the ordinary means* by which those ends have been used to be accomplished... Ought we not, then, at least try, by some means, to convey more of the good news of salvation to the world around us, than has hitherto been conveyed?<sup>1</sup>

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Carey could hardly have put it better. Imagine, then, his consternation when he submitted a practical proposal to begin to implement the vision, only to discover, ironically, that even Fuller was unready for such a step. It would have been enough to make him wonder who, in his denomination at that point in time, really was ready to do something concrete to spread the Gospel among the heathen overseas.

Twelve months were to pass before he was able to take his mission motion any further. In that time, he had his small *Enquiry* published, on 'the Obligations [sic] of Christians, to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens'. This was ready for sale on the day scheduled for his address to Northamptonshire's Baptist Association at the end of May 1792, in Nottingham's Friar Lane Chapel. Basing his thoughts on Isaiah 54.2-3, the energetic young minister poured his heart out for the sake of Christ's mission, in keeping with the contents of Fuller's notable sermon at Clipstone. Once again the world vision made itself felt in unmistakable terms. That is why Carey's Kettering colleague still hailed the May proclamation as 'a noble sermon' years later. John Ryland, the Northampton Baptist minister of similar theological distinction, agreed, declaring that Carey delivered 'a most impressive discourse' then, even though it so clearly proved 'the criminality of our supineness in the cause of God'.<sup>2</sup> And they were right, for nothing less than a grand, God-glorifying, mission-oriented 'theology of hope' was entrusted to the Church that day.

But what did Carey actually say at that juncture in the history of English Midlands' nonconformity? What were the actual headings that he used in his sermon? Popular tradition has it, and virtually all his biographers have repeated it, that

He packed his message into two brief biddings - 'two plain, practical, pungent, quotable watchwords', as Dr Clifford has called them:

'Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.'<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, however, we have neither the manuscript nor anyone's notes of that sermon by which to establish the *ipsissima verba*. We must consequently look for other evidence to check on the accuracy of that mission motto, maxim or galvanising slogan.

### The Content

The earliest written reference extant appears to be in a letter, dated 30th August 1793, from Andrew Fuller to the Rev. John Fawcett of Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire. Here the 'evangelical Calvinist' theologian recorded that 'the heads' of Carey's sermon:

... were comprised in two exhortations to his brethren: I. Let us *expect* great things; II. Let us *attempt* great things. This was lengthening our cords, and strengthening our stakes. I feel the use of his sermon to this day. Let us pray much, hope much, expect much, labour much; an eternal weight of glory awaits us!<sup>4</sup>

The next surviving report to surface is to be found in the opening pages of the first issue (1794) of the *Periodical Accounts relative to A Society formed among the Particular Baptists, for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen* [sic]. Written most probably by the Rev. Samuel Pearce of Birmingham, who was the journal's first editor and a close friend to both Fuller and Carey, it records that:

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brother Carey preached a very animating discourse from Isai. liv. 2, in which he pressed two things in particular, as expository of 'lengthening our cords, and strengthening our stakes', viz. - (1.) That we should *expect* great things - (2.) That we should *attempt* great things.<sup>5</sup>

This narrative record is from the earliest official publication of the missionary society founded five months later due to Carey's representations. In it, we do not find the phrases 'from God', 'of God', or 'for God' being used at all, even though it might well have been more theologically respectable in Calvinistic circles to have included them. The same holds true in the case of the *Brief Narrative of the Baptist Mission in India*, which was 'a brief and connected Narrative of the leading facts' concerning the Bengal mission, based on the pages of the *Periodical Accounts*. Its earliest editions were written by Fuller. After 1809 it was in the hands of the Rev. Christopher Anderson of Edinburgh. During that period, its first chapter, which covered the mission's formative phase, never changed. Thus Carey's six basic words - expect great things; attempt great things - were preserved officially (though not formally) for the first three decades of the society's history, as follows:

... he [Carey] took up what he conceived to be the spirit of the passage [Isa. liv. 2, 3] in two exhortations, viz. EXPECT GREAT THINGS - ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS. The effect of this discourse was considerable. A resolution was passed, that a *plan should be prepared against the next minister's* [sic] meeting at Kettering, for forming a society for propagating the gospel among the heathen...<sup>6</sup>

The first appearance of any significant divergence in print appeared shortly after Fuller's death in 1815. The occasion was Ryland's biography of the great Secretary. This memoir was an edifying narrative which would appeal to the Christian public; its author was not particularly anxious to produce an especially precise record of historical details. Thus he referred to the event of the 1792 sermon in simple terms: this was the means by which 'Brother Carey' endeavoured 'to enforce our obligations [sic] to expect great things from God, and to attempt great things for God'.<sup>7</sup> Such a rendering appears to have been a bland paraphrase of Carey's original *dictum*. Whether it was deliberate theological embellishment, or a fair attempt to capture the spirit of Carey's sermon, one cannot tell. There certainly was, nonetheless, adequate precedent among Particular Baptists for anticipating 'great things' without explicitly adding the phrase 'from God'. No less than Fuller had declared in a 1784 sermon:

If we compare the present state of things, or even the past, with the glorious prophecies of the word of God, we cannot think, surely, that all is yet accomplished. By these prophecies, the Christian church is encouraged to *look for great things*, at some period or other of her existence. She is taught to look for a time when 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea...'. But surely, for the present, through *great things*, upon the whole, have been done in the world, yet nothing like this has ever come to pass.<sup>8</sup>

In keeping with this, Ryland himself reminded the Northamptonshire Baptist

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gathering at which Carey preached with such effect for the sake of Christ's mission:

God has promised to do *great things* before the end of time, and we know not how soon the happy period will commence. The present age seems pregnant with great events... If the days we hope for are at hand, the question concerning the present race of professors [i.e. believers] is this, Shall we be among those who will be employed in bringing forward the glorious period...?<sup>9</sup>

For the theological doctor and his ministerial colleagues, the phrase 'great things' had distinct, Calvinistic, millennial connotations. That is why he declared to the annual meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1812:

... the zeal of the Lord of hosts must perform all that is achieved in future... *from* the infinite ardour of His zeal, we confidently *expect* to see all the earth enlightened with His glory, all nations submitting to His government, all the tribes of mankind rejoicing in His salvation.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, it does not appear that Ryland was yet under any particular pressure to embellish the first half of Carey's *dictum* in order to make it appear theologically orthodox. There is no evidence to suggest that he wished to re-write history by asserting that Carey used qualifying phrases in order to make his challenge more unexceptionable, or less susceptible to distortion. The contents of that sermon were sufficient *per se* to disavow any such manipulation of his message.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that Ryland, however innocently, was the first person to appear responsible for embellishing Carey's 'watchword'.

### Interpretations

Let us move on to consider what became of Carey's motto in the remaining twenty years of the pre-Victorian period.

The next public reference to his original sermon-headings was made in another annual meeting of the BMS in London. It subsequently appeared in print. The preacher on that occasion in June 1824 was the Revd Christopher Anderson of Edinburgh (1782-1852), a devoted admirer of Carey, even though they never met or heard each other speak. He was a close friend of Andrew Fuller during the last ten years of the noble secretary's life (1806-1815) and would have been his successor in leading the BMS if Fuller and the Serampore Trio could have had their way. Not surprisingly, he was well informed of the early history of the Baptist mission to Bengal. Besides that, he was on intimate terms with William Ward and to a certain extent filled the gap in the Serampore triumvirate caused by the latter's death in 1823.<sup>12</sup> His public pronouncement in 1824 is therefore worthy of attention.

It was significant on two counts, as far as this study is concerned. First, because he quoted Carey as summing his 1792 sermon up in only six words, without any references to the Almighty; and second, because he used it to make a special point at a critical stage in the evolution of the BMS' relationship with Serampore. A third of the way through his sermon on 'The Christian Spirit which is essential to the triumph of the Kingdom of God', he pointed out that neither the Christian nor the Christian church should

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be satisfied with the most enlarged views. God has set no bounds to human exertion, and there is nothing presumptuous in that language: 'I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me'. Very naturally may you here be reminded of one of your own brethren, who said, '*Expect great things. - Attempt great things*'; - but I am not acquainted with any man, or any minister now alive, whose language and conduct have so uniformly explained to us, that neither great expectations are to be indulged, nor great things accomplished, in any other spirit than that of self-annihilation.<sup>13</sup>

Anderson's exposition reflected his own concern and the Serampore Trio's over the course of the BMS' institutional evolution, and its ramifications, in Britain and abroad. He hailed the exemplary modesty and self-effacing demeanour which he believed characterised Carey, inferring that such conduct provided the hermeneutical key for proper interpretation of the motto. Behind this serious observation, one might detect something of William Ward's insight which Marshman highlighted in the March 1823 funeral sermon he preached over him. While on furlough in Britain, his departed colleague had seen

with unspeakable regret that the *apparatus* of missions threatened to destroy their *genuine spirit*; that Public meetings, and Societies, and Committees, had so filled the minds even of good men, as to risk the danger of displeasing [the Lord]...; and that men were ready to conclude, that since wise and good men had established Societies, created funds, and formed Committees and Boards of Direction, the heathen must be converted to God almost as a matter of course...<sup>14</sup>

Such a warning against dependence on human structures or a tendency to self-confidence was certainly in place; but were the Serampore mission leaders themselves beyond reproach at this point?<sup>15</sup>

Consideration of the next instance in which Carey's watchword was quoted in print surely justifies the query. It was significant because the six words were cited in the course of a critique in which the Serampore leaders were censured for the way they had applied the 'motto' in the preceding decade. Shortly after the rift occurred between the BMS and Serampore, two of the younger Baptist missionaries who had settled in Calcutta independently of Carey and Marshman published a pamphlet accusing them, their elders, of malpractice. Eustace Carey, nephew of William Carey, and William Yates were the authors. Their publication went under the title: *Vindication of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries: in answer to 'A Statement relative to Serampore, by J. Marshman, D.D....'*. In this, they not only cited Carey's well-known words, 'Expect great things, and attempt great things', but went on to argue that although 'the sentiment' behind it

was in itself noble, and befitting the occasion;... it soon became a motto, was repeated almost with the same veneration as an inspired proverb, and in process of time, every thing to be acceptable must be great.<sup>16</sup>

What worried 'the junior missionaries' so much was that it now appeared that 'in every pursuit, prosecuted at Serampore, vastness and sublimity were the predominant

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characters'. In short, they could no longer

resist the conviction that the efforts attempted' [by the senior personnel] were by far too diffusive to be ultimately successful; and that what they now obtained in grandeur would involve a subsequent sacrifice of equal if not greater amount by their unavoidable inefficacy.<sup>17</sup>

*Inter alia*, in the critics' opinion, the scale of the Trio's translation and construction projects involved huge expenses far beyond the mission's means. William Carey and his colleagues were depicted as over-extending themselves and then having to pull out of important areas of mission activity, at the expense of the whole enterprise.

In so reasoning, the younger missionaries were probably not too 'wide of the mark' since it can be argued quite forcibly that a process of materialistic institutionalisation did indeed prove to be the Achilles' heel of the Serampore mission. It was a major factor in the rift that occurred between the London office and the triumvirate, which was symbolised by disagreement over the trusteeship of the properties on the mission estate. Thus one may observe how possible it was for the principle 'attempt great things' to be misconstrued or misappropriated. One could get carried away by the burgeoning spirit of the colonial age. One could be tempted, in the long run, to set too much store by human achievements, and the spirit of simplicity that characterised Carey and his early cohorts in Britain could be subtly subverted, or at least weakened. Grand projects could become attention-demanding ends in themselves. Thus one finishes up with a scenario of emphases shifting and eventually contributing to the untimely downfall of the pioneer Baptist mission.<sup>18</sup>

### Dual Tradition

After Carey's death in 1834, a new phase began in recalling the memories of the mission's hallowed past. His nephew, Eustace (1791-1855), was first in the biographical endeavour, bringing out a modest *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.* in 1836, with a second edition in 1837. From then on, one might posit, two streams of tradition became established.

During the last 150 years, virtually all the biographies of 'the Father of the Mission' [sic] have treated the watchword's embellished form as being the norm.<sup>19</sup> This tradition was started formally by Eustace Carey, even though it diverged from his 1828 quotation and from the terms preserved in the BMS's publications. Perhaps this departure occurred because of the hermeneutical concern he and Yates emphasised in their earlier critique of Serampore. If so, his purpose probably was to steer Christians away from the unfortunate ambiguity inherent in a pragmatic, theologically-uninformed reading of his uncle's exhortation. That would have entailed re-phrasing of the *dictum* in order to 'sanctify' the tradition for posterity. It is possible that he could have justified taking such liberty by referring to Ryland's 1816 paraphrase, but there is nothing to suggest that Eustace did so.<sup>20</sup> Following this lead, the 1842 medal, 'struck in commemoration of the Jubilee' of the BMS was inscribed with the words; 'Expect great things from God. ... Attempt great things for God.' These two sentences encompassed another line of interpretation, expressed in the form of mission statistics:

Baptist Mission Formed Oct<sup>r</sup>.2nd 1792.[sic] Commenced in E. Indies 1793. W. Indies 1813. W. Africa 1840. Stations 157. Missionaries 71. Teachers & Native Preachers 127. Members

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upwards of 30,000. Scholars about 18,000. Scriptures Translated into 40 Languages and Dialects. Copies issued in the Year 1841 85,000. Slavery Abolished Aug<sup>t</sup>.1st 1838.<sup>21</sup>

In many circles, this may well have been considered to be an appropriate way to explain how the mission-leader's words were fulfilled - to the glory of God, with whom Baptist men and women co-operated.

In spite of the popular practice of publicising the embellished form of Carey's axiom-motto after 1836, it is noteworthy that 'the six-word tradition' survived until the mid-twentieth century due to the unassuming diligence of certain BMS officials. Pride of place may go to the Revd John Dyer, the first full-time, long-term successor to Andrew Fuller. In 1837, he went on public record with the following report:

Carey himself was chosen to preach... at Nottingham, where he poured forth all the energy of his soul in a discourse from Isaiah liv.2, from which he enforced on his brethren the duty, first to *expect* great things; and, secondly, to *attempt* great things. The effect was decisive: ...<sup>22</sup>

In keeping with the lead of that meticulous official, John Fenwick declared in 1843: 'Dr Carey's motto, "Expect great things; attempt great things" became the watchword of the three'.<sup>23</sup> A hundred years then passed and well over a dozen biographies were written before the BMS' ter-jubilee celebrations in 1942-44. All the more significant is it, then, that the official commemorative volume, published in 1945, maintained the six-word form of Carey's *dictum*, even though the BMS jubilee medals bore the embellished version.<sup>24</sup> In line with this, we find Ernest A. Payne, the distinguished Baptist mission-historian who was deeply committed to the work of the BMS for some fifty years, asserting in 1968 that the suffixed phrases referring to God surely were a later addition to Carey's famous watchword.<sup>25</sup> This judgment he was ready to take simply on the strength of the six-word core that Dyer accepted as being authentic. Would it not cause the recent historiographer to rejoice today, then, to know that much more evidence has come to light to substantiate his conclusion and to expound its *traditionsgeschichtliche* significance?

### Mission Theology

How well, then, did the spirit and truth of Carey's six-word challenge work out in his own mission experience? Does his pilgrimage shed realistic light on the dynamics behind that grand, concise agenda? Did the course of his life in Bengal over forty years demonstrate what one might expect to encounter as one seeks to be 'obedient to the heavenly vision'? Orientation towards an appropriate answer can come, I believe, from considering the 1792 theological scene in which the catalytic watchword was born.

The Calvinistically-minded Baptists of Northamptonshire whom Carey esteemed highly, and whose fellowship he treasured, were ready by then to 'expect great things' *from* God. It was, however, quite another matter, a very considerable step to take, to proceed to attempt great things *for* God. Hyper-Calvinists would have denounced the notion as Arminian,<sup>26</sup> even though Carey carefully gave priority to expecting the great things that God Himself had promised to accomplish. But the young pastor would not be deterred; he insisted on moving beyond the emerging view that 'there was no reason why the Gospel should not be preached to everyone'. Sustained reflection had brought him to the conviction that *means* must be used to



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ensure that the Gospel actually did get preached to everyone.<sup>27</sup> In his *Enquiry*, he pointed out that Christians are under obligation to attempt great things they have never done before, in the process of obeying 'the Commission given by our Lord to his Disciples' [sic] which is 'still binding on us'.<sup>28</sup> His emphasis on attempting to 'use every lawful method', or legitimate means, so that 'great things' might result, was biblically based.<sup>29</sup> Surely the agenda of the missionary vocation was governed by prophetic promises and commands in the Scriptures, which made no room for men or women attempting great things conjured up by their own imaginations - 'pleasing dreams', if you will. The word of the Lord and the testimony of history thus led Carey to conclude: 'all Christians ought heartily to concur with God in promoting his glorious designs, for *he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit*'.<sup>30</sup> On such biblical, theological ground he took his stand: he could do no other. But it was enough; with such arguments the last obstacles were removed out of the way for founding the society that would become known as the BMS. Thus the so-called 'modern missionary movement' was born.

Such was the *Sitz im Leben* from which the six words of May 1792 emerged. After that, clarification and qualifying interpretations only became necessary when those God-honouring convictions were not clearly or consciously borne in mind. 'The text' was not to be divorced from its theological context. Thus Christopher Anderson felt it necessary to declare, some thirty years later, that Carey's maxim, or governing principle, was to be adhered to in a spirit of whole-hearted submission to Christ. That was by way of antithesis to an attitude of self-projection, self-assertion, or self-confidence, be it at an individual or group level.

Anderson was prepared to hail Carey as an exemplar of the stated guidelines. In this, I believe he was substantially on target. Carey thought much of God while he considered himself with the utmost modesty, *pace* Jonathan Edwards, believing that there was nothing in or of himself that was worthy of praise by any mortal being. He felt *honoured* to be a servant of the Almighty and obeyed Him out of a sense of *gratitude*. By way of corollary, he felt it his duty to take advantage of any opportunity to spread the Gospel, whether it was occasioned by western technology or by military means. Thus he betrayed the fact that he was affected by 'the spirit of his age', by a western world-view, not least when he praised God for 'providential' events in the course of current world history. But he was no wild-eyed visionary. To the contrary; his early years of hardship and heart-break in Bengal saw to it that he became very realistic: a sober soul who endeavoured to the utmost to incarnate the message God had given him to share with the people of India and beyond.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps more than many Christians in that era of evangelical mission beginnings, Carey knew what it was to pay handsomely, in all sorts of ways, for daring to forge ahead to 'undo the works of darkness'. For many years he had to bear acute losses and grievous set-backs, yet he persevered until in time he prevailed.<sup>32</sup> He knew full well from 'the Acts of the Apostles' how much courage and commitment were necessary for doing God's will and promoting Christ's kingdom.<sup>33</sup> Thus he went 'the way of the cross'. He 'counted the cost' again and again throughout life and paid it nobly, whenever Providence so ruled, hoping that ere long blessing would burst forth on every side. In the meanwhile, he did not seek or claim 'great things' for himself. He was only too aware of personal shortcomings in every department of life; besides, mission events in India at times had a very 'earthing' effect. His ambition was, therefore, to combine genuine modesty with unswerving faithfulness. The outcome would be at the sovereign disposal of the Saviour of sinners, who alone is wise enough to determine how, and what, 'great things' should come to pass.

The spirit of the original maxim was evident in 'the consecrated cobbler's life'

through four decades of constant service in pre-Victorian Bengal. But that was not the end of the inspiration. It surely breathed in other lives, in later years, as the following reflections suggest: reflections with which Carey would have concurred heartily, in all probability. We sense this first in the words of Dr Alexander MacLaren, addressed to the BMS in 1864:

... let us listen to His [the Lord's] voice as it speaks in that supreme hour when He beheld the vision of the cross, and beyond it that of a gathered world. 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.'...

... The whole tone of the language suggests the idea that bringing back the sheep is to take a long time, and to cost many a tedious journey into the wilderness. Not a sudden outburst, but a slow kindling of the flame, is what our Lord teaches us here to expect. But while thus calm in tone and *moderate in expectation*, the words breathe a hope as confident as it is calm, as clear as it is moderate. There will always be a response ... Be the toil longer or shorter, more or less severe, it shall not be in vain.

And to these expectations we shall do wisely if we attune ours. Omit from your hopes what your Lord has omitted from His promises; do not ask what He has not told. Do not wonder if you encounter what He met, for the disciple is not greater than his Master, and only if they have kept my saying will they keep yours also. But on the other hand, *we expect as much as He has prophesied*; accept it when it comes as the fruit of His work, not of yours, and build a firm faith that your labour shall not be in vain on these calm and prescient words...

Such are the thoughts which our Lord would teach us as to the present and as to the future of our missionary work. For the one, *moderate expectations* of success not unchequered by disappointment, and a brave patience in long toil. For the other, hopes which cannot be too glowing, and a faith which cannot be too obstinate. The one is being fulfilled in our own and our brethren's experience even now; we may therefore be all the more sure that the other shall be in due time.<sup>34</sup>

Not long afterwards, the Revd Henry Venn, distinguished secretary of the Church Missionary Society, expressed somewhat similar sentiments. This was his conclusion near the end of his life-long ministry of mission-promotion and direction: '... we entertain *very moderate expectations* of the success of all human agency, but *greatly enlarged expectations* of the working of the Spirit of God, for the conversion of the world'.<sup>35</sup> This rang true in subsequent decades when another bold watchword was coined which 'summed up the hope, zeal, breadth and urgency of the nineteenth-century missionary movement'.<sup>36</sup> It too drew inspiration from British Baptist mission-vision.<sup>37</sup> Declaring that each generation has a particular responsibility for evangelising the whole world, it 'permeated the thinking of thousands' and contributed to 'the greatest surge of student commitment to missions in the history of the Church'.<sup>38</sup> Thus the words of an anonymous verse in one of the classic biographies on William Carey proved true in mission history:

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Expect great things: attempt great things.  
Vast rivers rise from humble springs  
Great works great doubts may generate  
In feeble minds: but God is great.<sup>39</sup>

### NOTES

1. John Ryland, ed., *The Works of the Rev Andrew Fuller*, vol.8, 1824, pp.76-8. This was not the first occasion that Fuller spoke or wrote about using 'means' to carry out one's God-given obligations for the sake of the salvation of lost men and women. See his 1785 *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* and the 1785 'Circular Letter' to the Northamptonshire Baptist Association (= NBA), entitled 'An Enquiry into the Causes of Declension in Religion, with the Means of Revival'. This terminology was characteristic of 'evangelical Calvinism'. William Carey (1761-1834) was deeply influenced by Fuller's evangelical theological lead. Fuller insisted that the Gospel could be preached to all. Carey therefore proceeded to argue that it should be preached to all, and that appropriate means should be employed to effect such mission without delay; cf. Gilbert Laws, *Andrew Fuller*, 1942, p.46.
2. John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from its Commencement, in 1792*, 1816, pp.242-43 (henceforth *Memoirs of Fuller* - the publisher's choice of contraction). Cf. S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 8th edn., 1934, pp.80-86. Unanimity is lacking among historical reporters concerning the precise delivery-date of Carey's 'deathless sermon'. *Periodical Accounts*, I, p.2, edited by a prominent first-hand witness to the event (cf. *infra*, n.5), states that: 'At the ... annual meeting of the association, at Nottingham, May 31, 1792, brother Carey preached a very animating discourse.' The Revd John Rippon, who was not present on that occasion, noted in his *Baptist Annual Register*, I, p.375, that Carey so preached on 30 May 1792. 150 years later, the official volume, *BMS Ter-Jubilee Celebrations 1942-1944*, 1945, p.33, followed Rippon, declaring that Carey preached before Ryland's moderatorial address; that was in disagreement with the account of S. P. Carey's detailed biography, 1923, pp.79f.; 1934, pp.80f. Evidence remains to be brought forward to establish beyond reasonable doubt whether it was on the 30th or 31st of May 1792 that Carey preached so memorably.
3. *Ibid.*, p.84.
4. A typed transcript of this letter is in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford. [MSS for which I do not cite a location are to be found reproduced in the BMS microfilm archives, published by the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tenn., USA, n.d.]. Note the essays by E. F. Clipsham under the general title 'Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism', BQ 20 (1963-4), pp.99-114, 146-154, 214-225, 268-276.
5. P.A., I, 1, 1794, pp.2-3. This was written by October 1794. Although the first page of vol.I is dated 1800 (for the whole publication), the MS of the first number was completed by Samuel Pearce in Oct.1794 and published soon after; see Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce*, 5th edn., 1819, pp.49, 43. Pearce edited the P.A. until Fuller took over in 1798.
6. *Brief Narrative*, 2nd edn., 1810, p.7; also see the 'advertisement' at the front. The third to sixth editions were published between 1810-1824.
7. Ryland, *Memoirs of Fuller*, 1816, pp.241-242.
8. Ryland, *Fuller's Works*, vol.8, 1824, pp.35f. The sermon title was: 'The Nature and Importance of Walking by Faith'; it was preached on 2 June 1784 to the NBA at Nottingham. The emphasis given to the last phrase, 'great things' is mine.
9. BMS, *BMS Ter-Jubilee Celebrations 1942-1944*, (commemorative volume) 1943, p.33. Carey would have agreed. He wrote to Ryland in 1796: '... great things are certainly at hand' (letter dated 26 Nov.1796). A week earlier, Carey wrote to Pearce: 'everything portends ... the speedy downfall of all that oppose the dear Redeemer's reign' (letter of 19-21 Nov.1796).
10. Ryland, 'The Zeal of the Lord of Hosts', in BMS, *Missionary Sermons. A Selection from the Discourses delivered on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 1924, p.27 (emphases mine). On the significance of the 'post-millennialist' convictions of the BMS leaders, cf. J. A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea - Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640-1810*, Kampen, 1970, pp.1-3, 76-78, 187, 228-229; W. A. Saayman, 'Eschatological Models in Missionary Thinking', *Missionalia*, 15:1 April 1987, pp.11-12; and Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries 1789-1858*, Abingdon, 1984, pp.142ff. Although Carey and Fuller were moved by Jonathan Edwards' spirit of expectancy, they and the BMS carefully avoided 'the millenarian excesses that accompanies the missionary labours of others who were more strongly influenced by Edwards' eschatology': thus J. P. Wheeler, 'The Theological Justification of the Great Missionary Awakening of the late Eighteenth Century, with special reference to William Carey', Edinburgh Ph.D. dissertation 1958-9, p.265. The Serampore Trio wrote to the Society in 1808: 'We ... ought to expect much from that God, who, in his

- millenium glory [sic] appears to be coming very near to us' (letter dated 1 Nov. 1808, p.2). Unlike Ryland in May-Sept.1792, Carey went beyond merely expecting to actually attempting great things.
11. How regrettable it is that the text of that sermon has not been preserved! S. P. Carey's narrative provides an imaginary reconstruction of the flow and thrust of the sermon but cannot be accepted as an authoritative account (William Carey, 1st edn., 1923, pp.81-3); on the sometimes imaginative way in which he wrote, see E. A. Payne, 'Carey and his Biographers', BQ.19, 1961, pp.8-9.
  12. In my forthcoming essay, 'The Edinburgh Connection - between the Serampore Mission and Western Missiology', I recognize Anderson as the third member of 'the Serampore Fraternity' from 1826-7 on. The full significance of his 1824 BMS sermon is spelled out there. While on furlough, Ward stayed with Anderson in Edinburgh. [see *Missiology: An International Review*, issued early 1990]
  13. The sermon was published in 1827, with Marshman's *Thoughts on Propagating Christianity More Effectually among the Heathen*, 2nd edn., Edinburgh. The quotation, p.88, comes from a section on the need for a spirit of self-abasement and self-denial in every aspect of the Christian life.
  14. Funeral sermon over Ward, entitled 'Divine Grace the source of all Human Excellence', see pp.52-4 [in 'Serampore Pamphlets', bound vol.7, BMS archives microfilm reel no.53].
  15. Anderson may not then have been fully aware of the possible pertinence of his 1824 observations viz-à-vis the administrative operations and decision-making process of the Serampore mission under Carey and Marshman.
  16. They added the conjunction 'and' to the six plain words (p.35, published in London, 1828; 'Serampore Pamphlets', vols.6 and 10, BMS reel 53). Their critical challenge to Serampore was partially repulsed by John C. Marshman, in 'Review of two pamphlets, by the Rev. John Dyer and the Rev. E. Carey and W. Yates, in Twelve Letters to the Rev. John Foster, Serampore March 1830, 'Serampore Controversy', vol.10, reel 53. In the eighth letter J. C. Marshman made the two critics look somewhat ridiculous in view of their own mission achievements and plans. He observed rather caustically: 'Dr Carey's motto, 'attempt great things', may have become a proverb, possibly a by-word; but the Christian public is scarcely prepared to exchange it for one of an opposite character, "Expect little things, attempt little things", p.36. Notice Marshman's later concession, in *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward, embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*, (henceforth *Life and Times*) 1859, vol.II, pp.506f.: '... they attempted too much'. The Trio confessed in 'Review of the [Serampore] Mission', Dec.1817, addressed to the BMS, that they needed to '...exercise faith according to knowledge - a matter of high importance in the work of Missions; for although the desire, when it cometh, is a tree of life, it is no less a fact, that hope deferred maketh the heart sick. And, if we have suffered our expectation to rise beyond the highest ratio warranted even by a due consideration of apostolic times, we cannot complain that God or his holy word have deceived us: we have rather deceived ourselves, by not duly weighing that which his word has revealed' (P.A. VI, 33, p.295 - emphasis mine). This referred to an earlier observation: 'Relative to the work of conversion in India, perhaps all our expectations have been far wide of the mark!' (*ibid.*, p.294, my emphasis).
  17. E. Carey and Yates, *Vindication*, pp.35-9. The magnificent, if not grandiose, construction of Serampore College was a particular case in point.
  18. Cf. John C. Marshman, *Life and Times*, II, p.507.
  19. This honorific title was applied to William Carey by his younger Serampore colleagues, as a mark of veneration, by 1833, shortly before he died: see 'Latest Accounts from Serampore', Nov.1833, in *Serampore Circular*, printed with *Periodical Accounts of the Serampore Mission*, 11 (c.May 1833), p.701. Even John C. Marshman used the embellished form in *Life and Times*, I, 1859, p.15, contra his decision in favour of the six-word dictum in 1828! Cf. *supra* n.16.
  20. Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey D.D.*, 1st edn., 1836, p.75; 2nd edn. 1837, pp.84f. This biography betrayed its author's marked lack of historiographical skill.
  21. John Taylor, ed., *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey D.D.*, Northampton, 1886, p.29.
  22. Dyer held that office 1817-41. Dyer, 'The Rev. Doctor Carey', *The Christian Keepsake and Missionary Annual*, 1837, p.11; Ernest A. Payne, 'John Dyer's Memoir of Carey', BQ 22,1968, pp.326f.
  23. John Fenwick, *Biographical Sketches of Joshua Marshman*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (privately printed) p.8.
  24. Cf BMS, *Commemorative Volume*, 1945, p.32: the author did not write as if under pressure to favour the embellished tradition. F. Townley Lord favoured the embellished version in his survey, *Achievement: A Short History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1942*, 1942, p.11. The two traditions co-existed without any official attempt to regularise the situation.
  25. Payne, 'John Dyer's Memoir', p.327. Payne treated this as 'decisive support' for the authenticity of the six-word motto. He was editorial secretary of the BMS 1936-40.
  26. Dr John Ryland almost despaired of those Baptists in his Northampton congregation who, c.1787 (two years after Carey decided to have his fitness for ministry judged at far-away Olney rather than nearby Northampton, where he had been baptised), discovered in Carey 'a strange spirit ... calling him an Arminian'. Ryland wrote in his diary: 'I am almost worn out with grief at these foolish cavils against some of the best of my brethren - men of God who are

## CAREY'S CATALYTIC WATCHWORD

- only hated because of their zeal for holiness': S. P. Carey, *William Carey*, 1st edn., p.50. Rylands' father had been a formidable hyper-Calvinist with little time for mission ideas, hence the scathing rebuke he allegedly delivered to Carey in 1786.
27. Cf. Laws, Andrew Fuller, p.55.
  28. William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, Leicester 1792 (facsimile edn., BMS 1934) p.7.
  29. *Ibid.*, p.3. Carey's reasoning was thoroughly biblical, profoundly practical and logically consistent.
  30. *Ibid.*, pp.77, 80 (Carey's emphasis).
  31. From his correspondence and early journals, one can discern a biblically-tempered realism developing in Carey during his first 25 years in Bengal. A similar process was at work in his immediate colleagues. In the 1817 'Review of the Mission', the Serampore Trio confessed, 'Relative to the work of conversion in India, perhaps all our expectations have been far wide of the mark. We have been so accustomed to fix our eyes on a Pentecost, as to account every thing short of it nothing. But have we reasoned wisely concerning this? Have we at all taken scripture for our guide herein?' (P.A. VI, 33,p.294). One of Fuller's criticisms of the ill-fated Baptist missionary, William Johns, was that he 'expected too much' (Fuller's letter to the Serampore missionaries, 14 Feb 1814, p.10).
  32. Carey learned to adjust his expectations to present circumstances: see his letter to Ryland, 17 Aug 1800. The Serampore missionaries confessed that in 1800 'we did hope, it is true, but like the patriarchs of old it was almost against hope': letter to the BMS 25 Dec.1806. In 1812, they had to hope in the face of 'disaster'. In 1813, Carey wrote to Anderson for prayer that they would go about their work 'fully expecting the accomplishment' of all God's promises, "however difficult and improbable it may appear" (letter, 30 Sep.1813). cf. E. A.Payne, *The Church Awakes: The Story of the Modern Missionary Movement*, 1942, pp.107,125, 131.
  33. Carey, *Enquiry*, pp.3, 16-21. The book closes with this appeal: 'Surely it is worth while to lay ourselves out with all our might, in promoting the cause, and kingdom of Christ' [sic] p.87. On the Puritan attitude to suffering, in the process of doing mission as Carey did, see Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*, 1971, p.235.
  34. Alexander MacLaren, D.D., 'Christ and the Heathen World', in *BMS Missionary Sermons*, pp.38-45 (emphases mine). In relation to the second paragraph, see the letter of the Serampore missionaries to the Society, 25 Dec.1806, pp.1, 8. MacLaren added, 'We have had as large results as Christ has led us to expect, and far larger than we deserved' (p.44). Carey said much the same on many occasions while at Serampore, cf. S. P. Carey, *William Carey*, 1st edn., p.368.
  35. Venn spoke thus in 1871; he died two years later. W. Knight, *The Missionary Secretariat of the Rev. Henry Venn*, 1880, p.531 (emphasis mine).
  36. Denton Lotz, 'The Watchword for World Evangelization', *International Review of Mission*, 68, no.270, Apr.1979, p.178. Fifteen years after Venn's 1871 declaration, the new motto began to be popularised in the USA and beyond: 'Evangelise the whole world in this generation!'
  37. Dana L. Robert has argued clearly that Pierson drew inspiration for coining this watchword from a sermon preached by the Rev. Dr. Joseph Angus (BMS Secretary 1840-49) before the BMS, 26 April 1871; see her essay, 'The Origin of the Student Volunteer Watchword: "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation"', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 10, no.4, Oct.1986, pp.147-8. An interesting essay could be written comparing the emergence, theology and usage of the 1792 and 1886 watchwords. Articles in the *IBMR*, July 1984 and July 1988, are suggestive in this respect.
  38. Lotz, p.178.
  39. The verse quoted by S. P. Carey, *William Carey* 1st edn., p.78, is also appropriate in view of Carey's reminder to the BMS leaders, 28 Dec. 1798: 'When the society was first established many were the doubts whether it would not be crushed in its infancy'. Note Carey's 'amplitude of vision', as delineated by David Stowe, 'Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission: A Mission Executive's Perspective', *Missiology: An International Review*, 15:4, 1987, pp.452-3.

A. CHRISTOPHER SMITH, *Research Fellow, Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, New College, University of Edinburgh*

### BOOK RECEIVED

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