

Church History (58): Baptist Missionaries

In this lesson, we want to consider two Particular Baptist Missionaries: one from England (William Carey) and the other from America (Adoniram Judson).

I. Baptist Missionaries

1. *William Carey* (1761-1845). "William Carey, the first of five children, was born on August 17, 1761. The year before, George III had begun his sixty-year reign over England. Carey's father, Edmund, was a weaver; but by 1767, through personal initiative and trustworthiness, he had gained an appointment to the united offices of schoolmaster and parish clerk. When twelve years old, his father apprenticed him to Clarke Nichols, a shoemaker in Piddington, and, like Carey's father, a strict English Churchman. In this providential circumstance, he first confronted the claims of the gospel" (Nettles).¹ Here Carey would meet another apprentice by the name of John Warr, who came from nonconformist stock. After becoming a Christian for himself, he then began to evangelize Carey. "Though resistant for a while, Carey soon developed a relish for 'evangelical sentiments' through books loaned him by Warr. He sought to reform himself, leaving off 'lying, swearing, and other sins' and attended three parish church services on Sunday and the Dissenters' prayer meeting in the evening. This surely would make him acceptable to God" (Nettles).² "Eventually, though, Carey, experienced a complete change of heart and was brought, as he put it, 'to depend on a crucified Savior for pardon and salvation, and to seek a system of doctrines in the Word of God'" (George).³ Carey became a member of the Congregational Church, and soon, "through his own study of the Scriptures, became convinced of the necessity of believers' baptism by immersion. Acting on his newfound conviction, Carey sought such baptism for himself. Early on Sunday morning in October 1783, Carey was baptized by the Baptist pastor, John Ryland, Jr." (George).⁴

"Two years earlier, in 1781, Carey had married Dorothy Plachett (1756-1807), a woman five years his senior. From the beginning their marriage was plagued with difficulties and distress. Their firstborn child, a little girl named Ann, died in her second year. Eventually there would be six other children: Felix, William, Lucy (who died in her second year while they were still in England), Peter (who died at age five in India), Jabez, and Jonathan" (George).⁵ Soon after his baptism, Carey's interest in evangelism and missions grew. "In his shoeshop near the church building in Moulton, Carey constructed a large homemade map of the world that consisted of several sheets pasted together, showing the population and religion of every country written on the map along with the facts" (George).⁶ It was at this time that Carey began preaching in his local church and reading and studying theology. "In 1785, an opportunity arose for him to move to Moulton to be the preacher to a small Baptist community there. The church had been without a minister for ten years, services had become infrequent and the building had fallen into disrepair" (Webber).⁷ It was at this point, Carey became influenced by Andrew Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1784). "As a result of reading this work, it became immediately clear to him that if it was the duty of all men to believe the gospel, then it was equally the duty of those who had been entrusted with the gospel to endeavor to make it known to all nations" (Webber).⁸ In 1786, Carey was present at a ministers' meeting in Northampton. "Towards evening, when the public

¹ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:280-281

² Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:282

³ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:144

⁴ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:144

⁵ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:144-145

⁶ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:145

⁷ Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 13

⁸ Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 14

services were over and some were sitting in discussion, Mr. Ryland Sr, invited one of the younger men to propose a subject for discussion. Carey suggested the following motion: Whether the command given to the apostles to teach all nations was not obligatory on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent. The reply from the older man came like a thunderbolt: 'Young man, sit down: when God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine'" (Webber).⁹ On May 7, 1789, Carey accepted a call from the Baptist church at Harvey Lane in Leicester.

On May 1791, Andrew Fuller and other Baptist ministers, met to discuss their burden of missions. At this meeting, Carey read to them a good deal of a manuscript he had been working on. "It won their approval and within a year it was published under the title, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens, in which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the world, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the Practicability of Further Undertakings, are Considered*" (Webber).¹⁰ After proving the necessity of missions from Scripture, and surveying the needs of the world (Europe, Asia, Africa, and America), Carey then addressed five "impediments in the way of carrying the gospel among the heathen: their distance from us, their barbarous and savage manner of living, the danger of being killed by them, the difficulty of procuring the necessaries of life, and the unintelligibility of their language." The final section of Carey's treatise addressed "the Christian's duty to promote the cause of missions." (1) We must pray. "One of the first, and most important of those duties which are incumbent upon us, is fervent and united prayer." (2) We must plan. "Suppose a company of serious Christians, ministers and private persons, were to form themselves into a society, and make a number of rules respecting the regulation of the plan, and the persons who are to be employed as missionaries." (3) We must give. "In respect to the contributions for defraying the expenses, money will doubtless be wanting. Thus, if all Christians, the rich and persons in more moderate circumstances, were to devote a portion, suppose a tenth of their annual increase to the Lord, there would not only be enough to support the ministry of the gospel at home, but to defray the expenses of carrying the gospel into the heathen world."

"In May of 1792, Carey was asked to preach at the annual meeting of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association. On this occasion ministers and messengers from the twenty-four associated churches gathered in Nottingham at the Baptist chapel in Friar Lane. Carey took his text from Isaiah 54:2-3. The burden of the sermon came to a climax in two exhortations, 'Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.'" (George).¹¹ "The following morning the ministers met alone for their usual conference and Carey's proposal that they form a society came up for discussion. The minutes record the resolution: 'A plan be prepared against the next ministers' meeting for forming a Baptist Society for propagating the gospel among the heathens'" (Webber).¹² "On October 2 1792, the autumn meeting of the Association was held in Fuller's chapel in Kettering, Northamptonshire. In the evening, twelve ministers, a student, and a layman met to discuss the missionary scheme" (Webber).¹³ This led to the formation of *The Particular Baptist Society of Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen* (later called Baptist Missionary Society). "Andrew Fuller was elected secretary of the society and William Carey volunteered, on January 10, 1793, to go to India" (Nettles).¹⁴ "On June 13, 1793, William Carey, his wife, Dorothy, their four children, including a nursing infant, and Dorothy's sister, sailed from England on a Danish ship headed for India. After a stormy sea voyage of five months, Carey and his party

⁹ Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 14-15

¹⁰ Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 20

¹¹ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:146-147

¹² Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 31

¹³ Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 31

¹⁴ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:293

arrived in Calcutta. In those days India was under the control of the British East India Company which banned missionaries from the country for fear that the company's investments would be jeopardized by evangelistic work among the nationals. The anti-missionary policy was eventually changed in 1813 when Parliament passed the India Bill at the urging of William Wilberforce. But for many years Carey lived under the threat of being arrested and deported for his defiance of this rule" (George).¹⁵

"In the early years of his ministry in India, Carey faced many trials. His five-year-old son, Peter, contracted a fever and died. Dorothy never recovered from Peter's death and eventually lost her mind. Dorothy Carey has been called a 'reluctant missionary' because, unlike her husband, she never experienced the compelling call of overseas service. After many years of suffering, she died in 1807" (George).¹⁶ For the first eight years, Carey gave himself to translating "the book of Genesis, the first twenty chapters of Exodus, Messianic predications from the Psalms and the Prophets, and the whole of the New Testament," into the local language (Bengali). "For seven years Carey worked in India without seeing a single convert from Hinduism to the Christian faith. He prayed, preached, taught, translated the Scriptures into Bengali but with no visible results to show for his efforts. There were times when he was discouraged and depressed, but he kept 'plodding on' as he put it, toward the goal of establishing a vibrant Christian witness in India" (George).¹⁷ Things would change in 1800, when he was joined by other missionaries from England. Together, they established schools and the newly formed church began to grow. "There were three fundamentals in Carey's plan to evangelize India: preach the Gospel, translate the Bible, and establish schools. Proclamation, translation, education—this three-pronged strategy was itself an expression of Carey's confidence in the Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura*" (George).¹⁸ After forty years as a missionary in India, Carey died on June 9, 1834, in his seventy-third year. He directed that "the following inscription, and nothing more, may be cut on the stone. 'William Carey, born August 17th, 1761; died June 9th, 1834. A wretched, poor, and helpless worm, On Thy kind arms I fall.'"¹⁹

2. *Adoniram Judson* (1788-1850). "Judson's father, also named Adoniram, was a Congregational minister, born in Woodbury, Connecticut, in June, 1752. He was married November 23, 1786, to Abigail Brown, who was born at Tiverton, Rhode Island, December 15, 1759. Soon after his marriage he settled in Maiden, Massachusetts, and here his eldest son, Adoniram, was born" (Judson).²⁰ "In January, 1793, the family removed to Wenham, Massachusetts, a village about twenty miles northeast of Boston, where Adoniram lived until he was twelve years old. In the year 1800, the family removed to Braintree, Mass., and two years later, when Adoniram was fourteen years old, took up their abode in the old historic town of Plymouth. In 1804 he entered Rhode Island College — now Brown University — one year in advance. During his college course he was a hard student; and in 1807, at the age of nineteen, was graduated the valedictorian of his class, in spite of the fact that for six weeks of the senior year he was absent, engaged in teaching school in Plymouth" (Judson).²¹ "In October of 1808, he entered the Theological Institution at Andover. As he was neither a professor of religion nor a candidate for the ministry, he was admitted only by special favor. On the 2d of December, 1808, he made a solemn dedication of himself to God, and on the 28th of May, 1809 at the age of twenty-one, he joined the

¹⁵ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:155-156

¹⁶ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:156

¹⁷ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:156

¹⁸ Timothy George, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:158

¹⁹ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:312

²⁰ Edward Judson, *Adoniram Judson: A Biography*, 3-4

²¹ Edward Judson, *Adoniram Judson: A Biography*, 4-5

Third Congregational Church in Plymouth. His conversion involved in itself a consecration to the Christian ministry" (Judson).²²

In the calm retirement of Andover, guided in his studies by men the praise of whose learning and piety is in all the churches, with nothing to distract his attention from the great concerns of eternity, light gradually dawned upon his mind, and he was enabled to surrender his whole soul to Christ as his atoning Savior. This event occurred in November, about six weeks after his removal to Andover. On the 2d of December, 1808, as he has recorded, he made a solemn dedication of himself to God. On the 28th of May, 1809, he made a public profession of religion, and joined the Third Congregational Church in Plymouth, of which his father was then pastor.²³

Judson felt a call to missions from the start. "Soon he joined company with several other students of equal passion for Christ. This led them to elicit the mature advice and support of New England Congregationalism" (Nettles).²⁴ It was at this time, Judson met Ann Hasseltine. "Ann Hasseltine was born December 22, 1789, into a socially prominent Congregational family in Bradford, Massachusetts. Her parents were John and Rebecca Hasseltine. After a period of great conviction, she experienced the saving grace of God and on September 14, 1806, she became a communing member of the Congregational church in Bradford" (Nettles).²⁵ He met Ann in 1810, and married her on February 5, 1812. Adoniram was ordained as a missionary the next day and on the 19th, they sailed for Calcutta, India (they eventually settled in Burma). "The night before leaving, Ann wrote these lines: 'Took leave of my friends and native land, and embarked on board the brig Caravan, for India. Had so long anticipated the trying scene of parting, that I found it more tolerable than I had feared. Still my heart bleeds. O America, my native land, must I leave thee! Must I leave my parents, my sisters and brother, my friends beloved, and all the scenes of my early youth. Yes, I must leave you all, for a heathen land, a disagreeable region.'"²⁶ Ann fell sick in 1821, and returned to America, where she died on October 24, 1826 (all three of their children died in infancy). "In 1834 he married Sarah Boardman, a widow of another missionary in Burma. They had six children together, only one of which died in infancy. After she died in 1845, he married Emily Chubbuck in 1846, a young woman of great charm and literary talent. In 1849, Judson became ill when caring for one of his children. His congestion and cough became so painful, that he had to go on a sea voyage for an atmosphere in which he might recover. He died at sea in April, 1850" (Nettles).²⁷

While Judson left America for India (and eventually Burma) a paedobaptists (Congregationalists), he became a Baptist during the four-month journey. "Now they were in a predicament. Sent by the newly formed mission organization of the Congregational churches, they found themselves conscience bound to reveal their newly formed theological convictions. This led the Congregationalists to end their support. There they were, Baptist missionaries, in India without support from America" (Nettles).²⁸ Judson had learned, that a friend from school, Luther Rice, a fellow mission appointee, had also become a Baptist. "The Baptists soon were asked to do something. Letters from Judson, Rice, and Carey, all proposed that Baptists in America take these events as the sure guidance of Providence that they were to become directly involved in the support of foreign missionaries. In 1814 the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination of the United States of America was formed. Ann and

²² Edward Judson, *Adoniram Judson: A Biography*, 11

²³ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:194

²⁴ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:194

²⁵ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:189

²⁶ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:198

²⁷ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:216-217

²⁸ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:201

Adoniram Judson became its first appointees. This newly established relationship transformed Baptist life in America" (Nettles).²⁹

"Mr. Judson devoted himself to the study of the Burmese language for three years; and, though he was obliged to study without grammar, dictionary, or a teacher speaking English, he so thoroughly mastered the language that even a native would scarcely have suspected that it was not his mother tongue" (Sprague).³⁰ "The first Burmese convert (1819) gave a deep sense of gratitude and purpose to the Judsons and served as palpable evidence that the doctrinal truths which governed their work operated the same way in every culture" (Nettles).³¹ "Adoniram completed his translation of Scripture on January 31, 1834. He prayed God would use it as the 'grand instrument of filling all Burma with songs of praise to our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.' By 1836, Judson has performed, 1,000 baptisms and preached regularly to a Burmese congregation" (Nettles).³²

Wonderful was the change which he was permitted to witness on the field of his labors. He who baptized, by twilight, the first Burman convert, lived to see twenty-six churches gathered, with nearly five thousand communicants, the entire Bible in one language and the New Testament in others; a native ministry actively engaged, and the Gospel extending on every side. Well might the venerable man, as his dying eye fastened upon the monuments of his own activity, and self-denial, and suffering in his Master's cause, bless God that he had been permitted to spend his life among the heathen!³³

In November of 1812, Judson published a sermon on *Christian Baptism*. He wrote in the preface: "The author of the following discourse was, by education and profession, a Pedobaptist. During his passage from America to India, in the spring of 1812, he began to doubt the truth of his former sentiments. After his arrival in this country, and before he communicated the exercises of his mind to any of the Baptist denomination, he became convinced, that the immersion of a professing believer, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is the only Christian Baptism."³⁴ Judson's treatise has two parts: Part I: What is Baptism? Part II: To Whom is Baptism to be Administered? He began Part I by examining the Greek word rendered Baptism showing that it always means "to immerse or submerge." "No instance has been produced in which the word, literally applied, does not denote immersion, or washing by immersion."³⁵ This included the Septuagint's use of *baptizo* (to baptize) in the Greek OT. "The word which denotes the act of baptizing, according to the usage of Greek writers, uniformly signifies or implies immersion. It is the word used in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, to express the action of Naaman, when he dipped himself seven times in Jordan. It is the word used of the cleansing of vessels by immersing them (Lev.11:32)."³⁶ "That baptism is by immersion is also seen in that John baptized *in the river Jordan*, and in Enon, *because there was much water there*. Christ was baptized *in the Jordan*, and after the ordinance, *came up out of the water*. Philip and the eunuch *went down both into the water*, and after baptism, *came up out of the water*. Furthermore, baptism is, by the apostle Paul, repeatedly compared to burial" (Rom.6:4; Col.2:12).³⁷ He then enlisted the testimony of prominent paedobaptists such as Luther, Beza, and Calvin, to show most (if not all) grammarians and theologians (regardless of theological convictions) have confessed this. "That

²⁹ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:205-206

³⁰ William Sprague, *Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit*, 2:612

³¹ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:211

³² Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:215-216

³³ William Sprague, *Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit*, 2:618

³⁴ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 1

³⁵ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 6

³⁶ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 10

³⁷ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 15

immersion is the exclusive signification of the word, appears from the testimonies of eminent Pedo-baptist authors, whose concessions on this subject could not have been affected by Baptist partialities, but must have resulted from conviction of truth alone."³⁸ "If the several considerations which have been presented are sufficient to show that baptism is immersion, it is equally clear that the terms, baptism and immersion, are equivalent and interchangeable, and that when Christ commanded His disciples to be baptized, He commanded them to be immersed."³⁹

Within Part II, Judson first showed that within every example of baptism (even household baptisms), those baptized are expressly described as having repented and/or believed. He further proved, the Abrahamic Covenant was not the Covenant of Grace (or promised NC), as the former was conditional and eventually broken (as God removed Abraham's physical seed from the promise land and divorced them for their moral adultery). The covenant made with Abraham had temporal and eternal promises. The first was made to his physical seed, the second to his spiritual seed. It was for this reason, Christians can be described as "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.3:29). "And thus, as the natural seed are heirs of the land of Canaan, and the temporal blessings, secured in the covenant of circumcision, ye, the spiritual seed, are heirs of the far more excellent, the spiritual blessings, secured in the covenant of grace."⁴⁰

He concluded with a lengthy historical examination of the church fathers, concluding, "like the inspired penmen of Scripture and the Apostolic Fathers that followed them (90-150), the early Church Fathers (150-200), while they frequently mention the baptism of believers, never mention infant baptism." "The first Christian writer, in the beginning of the third century, Tertullian of Carthage, the oldest Latin father, whose writings are extant, opposed the baptism of infants, which in the words of Professor Venema, 'he certainly would not have done, if it had been a tradition, and a public custom of the church, seeing he was very tenacious of traditions; nor had it been a tradition, would he have failed to mention it.' His words lead us to conclude, that infant baptism was then a novel practice, just beginning and approved by very few."⁴¹ Judson concluded the treatise by saying: "The reasons stated in both parts of this discourse, lead us to the conclusion, that *the immersion of a professing believer, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is the only Christian baptism.*"⁴²

In the case of infant baptism, it is not necessary for us to urge one argument against it; nor is it sufficient for the proposer to prove, that every objection is groundless. It is the requisite for him to prove, that it is obligatory. The question with every parent ought to be, Am I under obligation to have my child baptized? Now, on what grounds, is that obligation predicated? Has not Christ left some command, enjoining infant baptism? Not one. Have not the apostles, who were entrusted with farther communications of the will of Christ, left some command on this subject? Not one. Have they left us some example of infant baptism? Not one. Have they not spoken of baptized infants, and thus given undeniable intimation of this practice? No, in no instance. On the contrary, whenever they have spoken of baptism, or of those to whom it was administered, their language implies, that baptism was a voluntary act of worship, and the baptized, professing believers. 'As many of you,' said Paul to the Galatians, 'as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.'⁴³

³⁸ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 7

³⁹ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 26-27

⁴⁰ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 43

⁴¹ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 64-65

⁴² Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 77

⁴³ Adoniram Judson, *Christian Baptism*, 28-29