

A CENTURY OF
BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSIONS.

AN OUTLINE SKETCH.

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PHILADELPHIA :
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
1420 Chestnut Street.

11683

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CHAPTER I.

THE DAWN IN ENGLAND.

THE darkest hour is just before the dawn. In England, the period of Baptist history immediately preceding the earliest beginning of missionary interest was one of deep gloom.

Many things conspired to produce this result. The Baptists were, in a measure, paralyzed by the frown of the Established Church; false doctrines had weakened their spiritual power, and the great body of their membership were poor and humble people. With the exception of Andrew Fuller, John Ryland, Jr., and some of the London pastors, the ministry were mostly uneducated, and unable to cope with the problems of the time.

Through what small instrumentalities does God work out his blessed results! The condition of the Baptist cause seemed desperate, but Faith suggested a remedy, and this remedy proved the seed-germ of modern mis-

sions. The ministers of the Northamptonshire Association drew up a resolution, beseeching all Baptist churches in England to spend one stated hour a month in earnest, united prayer for the promotion of pure and undefiled religion. Surely they were inspired to add the exhortation, "*Let the spread of the gospel to the most distant parts of the habitable globe be the object of your most fervent requests.*"

Thus, in August, 1774, was instituted the monthly concert of prayer, the origin of all subsequent missionary concerts, and the starting point of our glorious missionary achievements. "It was a spark dropped from heaven, and it has set the world in a blaze." Of all missionary centennials, this comes truly the first; as the Jerusalem prayer meeting preceded Pentecost, and Pentecost the missions of the early church.

These good men did not dream of the significance of their action. When the churches began to pray for conquests in heathen lands, God was ready for fulfillment. Even before they asked, he had called William Carey from the humblest walks of life, and was fitting him to be a chosen vessel to begin the work in heathen lands.

All through the years, events had been ripening, and in the fullness of time this glorious enterprise sprang into being.

William Carey was born at Paulerspury, near Northampton, England, August 17, 1761. His earliest child-

hood was marked by an intense thirst for knowledge. One special trait of his character was the resolve always to finish what he had once begun, no matter what difficulties were in the way. This was highly important to him in later life. He was a close observer, and this proved helpful to the future missionary.

At fourteen, he was bound out to a shoemaker. After this, he led a wild and wayward life; but was converted and baptized October 5, 1783. Immediately he began preaching in a humble way, cobbling shoes to eke out his scanty support. On the walls of his shop hung a map of the world, which he had drawn upon sheets of paper pasted together, and on which he had entered all the information he could gather regarding the condition, population, and religion of every country on the globe. Upon the cobbler's bench beside him was always a book; sometimes in a language he was learning, or a book of travels. (He allowed no time to run to waste. As he studied, the needs of a perishing world wrung his heart. Within nine years from his baptism, he was the motive power in the organization of the first missionary society.

Carey did not study and pray in vain. He rapidly rose from his humble station to a position of eminence and power. His linguistic talent had already shown itself in the remarkable facility with which he acquired a new language. It is altogether probable, that he might have become one of the foremost men in England. But

the call from the perishing millions was like fire in his bones. His zeal and fervor were contagious, and resulted in the establishment at Kettering, October 2, 1792, of "The Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen." The subscriptions at the time of its organization amounted to £13 2s 6d. A small deposit in the Bank of Faith, but how royal have been the returns!

The new undertaking was begun in fear and trembling. God forced his people onward; they dared not go back, and how could they go forward? Such an enterprise demanded large outlay. The London ministers turned a cold shoulder, for they had little faith in a movement beginning among country pastors. But they were soon drawn into the work by the irresistible enthusiasm the scheme inspired; and after trials and troubles innumerable, Carey was ready to set sail for his work. A companion had been found in Dr. Thomas, formerly a surgeon in Bengal. He was Carey's opposite in many respects, and perhaps this was well in the outset of the undertaking. But Carey's piety and perseverance proved the best qualities in the long run.

The East India Company was a trading organization which ruled India. It was unfavorable to missionary labor, lest it might interfere with its money-making schemes. It refused to carry the missionaries upon its ships, and, at last, passage was secured upon a Danish

East Indiaman, and the party sailed from Dover, June 13, 1793.

The voyage was a long, weary one of five months. Carey spent the time in studying Bengali with Dr. Thomas, and beginning a translation of the Bible into that language.

The story of Carey's success in later years is that of triumph over stupendous difficulties. The lack of funds caused Carey and Thomas to don the white jackets of indigo planters, thus also giving an excuse for their stay in the country to the jealous East India Company. We may be sure Carey was faithful in this temporal matter ; but every moment not claimed by business was spent in study of the various languages, or in direct missionary labor.

These five years were God's training school for the future work. Then the owners of the factories failed, and the East India Company, which had tolerated them as indigo merchants, was ready to persecute them as missionaries. A refuge was offered at Serampore, a small tract, twenty acres in extent, fifteen miles from Calcutta, held by Denmark as a trading station. With the beginning of 1800, this became the headquarters of the English Baptist Mission, with printing press, and a reinforcement of missionaries from England. It was soon a centre of gospel light, whose beams penetrated far into the interior. Dr. Carey's "gift of tongues" enabled

him to send out portions of the Scriptures in many languages. His translations are, even now, his most enduring monument.

British authorities had denied to Carey a landing-place on his arrival in India; but when he died, the Government dropped all its flags to half-mast in honor of a man who had done more for India than all her generals.

QUESTIONS.

1. What was the religious state of England preceding the dawn of foreign mission work?
2. When, where, and how did the monthly Concert of Prayer for Missions originate?
3. To what has it been likened?
4. How was God preparing to answer these prayers?
5. Tell the story of William Carey's childhood and youth.
6. How was he influential in the formation of the first English Baptist Missionary Society?
7. With what amount of capital did it begin?
8. What difficulties beset this first missionary work?
9. Who went with Carey? What trials did they meet before sailing?
10. How did they improve the time of their voyage?
11. Give account of their first years in India.
12. When and where were they permanently located?
13. What was the final tribute of respect paid to Carey by the British Government?

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS.

BOOKS.

Life of William Carey: American Baptist Publication Society. Our Gold Mine, pages 41-51. Gammel's History of American Baptist Missions. Kindling the Light. (Sketch of Carey, Marshman, and Ward.)

CHAPTER II.

BEGINNINGS IN AMERICA.

WHILE Carey was concentrating all eyes upon Serampore, the New World was being made ready for its missionary crisis. The Revolutionary War was ended, the Declaration of Independence sustained at the point of the sword. The white wings of peace hovered over the infant nation, and the great principles of fraternity and equality were receiving their triumphal test.

Carey's work enkindled enthusiasm, and missionary societies sprang up all through New England for its aid. Thus far, Christians of all denominations united in the support of the Baptist mission at Serampore. Dr. Carey gratefully acknowledged the receipt of six thousand dollars from American churches in the years 1806 and 1807. This is notable as the first money raised in America for foreign mission work.

These funds were largely sent from Presbyterian and Congregational churches. The same spirit animated the Baptists, but their numbers and means were small. The Baptist Missionary Society of Massachusetts was formed before 1803, but it did not look for

heathen outside of America. This year, Dr. Baldwin began the publication of "The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine." Its pages were made thrillingly attractive by letters from Carey, Marshman, and Ward, of Serampore. This fanned the spark of foreign mission interest, until it became a steady flame, and prepared the churches for the greater things in store.

It bore fruit in 1812, in the formation of the Salem Translation and Foreign Society, to aid the English mission already existing at Serampore. All organizations at this time were local. It was not as easy to form general organizations then as now. It was not yet the day of steam and electricity, linking the earth into one grand whole. The missionary sentiment needed some crisis to force it into action.

As we must go to the cobbler's shop in Hackleton for the beginning of English Baptist missions, so we are taken to a haystack for the initial point of American foreign missions. Three earnest Christian young men, students at Williams College, were fired with the same zeal that had inspired Carey; and in a retired spot, beside a sheltering haystack, they communed, and prayed, and planned.

A little later, an ardent youth, with intellectual power that promised a brilliant career, was reading in his room at Andover Theological Seminary, Buchanan's "Star in the East." Adoniram Judson's consecration to God was

in its earliest glow ; and now he consecrated himself also to the work of foreign missions.

These four Congregational young men soon made known their life purpose ; and from the thrill of this impulse sprang the “ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,”—the noble mother of all American foreign missionary societies. She accepted the service offered, but distrusting the ability of the churches to support a mission alone, sent Judson to confer with the London Missionary Society in reference to a co-operative relation.

Judson’s trip to England was fraught with strange adventures. His vessel was captured by a French privateer, and he had an unpleasant taste of French prison life. But God brought him safely out of all his distresses, and he was at last enabled to lay his message before the London Congregational Board. The English brethren were willing to accept Judson and his associates as their own missionaries, but wisely concluded that, with the Atlantic rolling between, it was better that the two societies should act independently. They advised the American churches to establish a mission of their own.

Upon Judson’s return, he found that this view of the subject prevailed ; and accordingly Messrs. Judson, Newell, Nott, and Mills, were appointed. Luther Rice was soon added, on condition that he raise the money for his own outfit and passage, which he did in six days.

On the 5th of February, 1812, Judson was married to Ann Hasseltine, of Bradford, Mass., a young lady of rare qualifications, in every way worthy to lead the long list of missionary heroines and martyrs. In these early days of missions, it was thought foolhardy for a woman to risk life in pagan India. It was much farther off than now, and the wildest ideas prevailed. One of Mrs. Judson's earliest trials was the general disapproval of her prospective work.

On the 19th of February, the Judsons, with Mr. Newell and wife, sailed from Boston in the ship *Caravan*. The *Harmony*, with the other missionaries, sailed the 24th; and in August they met once more, in Calcutta.

But during the voyage, strange things had happened. Mr. Judson took up the study of Scriptural teachings regarding baptism, in order that he might be able to meet the arguments of the Baptist brethren in Serampore, and also to justify himself in sprinkling the infants of the future converts. To his surprise, his investigations were far from comforting. Against his will he became convinced that the Baptist position was right; that believers were the only proper subjects, and immersion the divinely commanded act of baptism. With Mr. Judson, conviction produced action, and in company with Mrs. Judson, who reluctantly reached the same conclusion, he requested baptism at the hands of the Serampore missionaries. The ordinance was admin-

istered by Mr. Ward, September 6, 1812. Luther Rice, on the *Harmony*, had followed the same line of study, and upon his arrival, Mr. Judson had the joy of finding him a fellow Baptist.

It is well to stop a moment, and consider what these missionaries had done. Strangers in a strange land, they had, by their own act, severed the relation between themselves and the American Board. Would American Baptists take them up? Upon the answer depended their daily bread. In the true spirit of Christian brotherhood, they were bidden to draw funds from Serampore, until they could hear from Baptists at home. A collection was also taken up among the friends of missions in Calcutta. But this supply could not always last. Was it not a sublime faith that could thus launch out on the promises of God, and do the duty made plain, without heeding the consequences?

Trials and perplexities multiplied. The East India Company, nearing the end of its despotic power, was just at this time particularly incensed against missionaries. Such a party arriving in India, roused their hostility into energetic action. Judson and Newell were ordered back to America, but obtained permission to go instead to the Isle of France. A ship was about to sail, but as she could take only two passengers, the Newells embarked, leaving the Judsons to follow in the next vessel.

At last, as they were compelled to leave at all hazards,

a ship came in, bound for the Isle of France. At first, a pass was refused, but after annoyances and troubles innumerable, the Judsons and Mr. Rice secured the desired permission. January 11, 1813, they reached the Isle of France, only to find that Mrs. Newell had been buried some weeks before.

The terrible shock of this unexpected bereavement nearly prostrated Mrs. Judson. To add to their distress, the island offered no adequate opening for mission work. Mr. Rice, impaired in health, sailed for America to arouse the Baptist denomination to their great opportunity. Mr. Newell went to Ceylon, and the Judsons, left alone, saw no alternative but to leave also. What wonder that Mrs. Judson wrote in her diary, "It seems as if there was no resting place for me on earth"!

Where could they go? Must they again enter the lion's jaws? There seemed to be no other way, and on May 7 they embarked for Madras, trusting to the guiding finger of Providence.

Reaching Madras, they looked about for a vessel sailing for some port outside the jurisdiction of the East India Company. They had no time to lose; they must be away before the lion's jaws could close upon them. The only ship was a miserable, unseaworthy hulk, bound for Rangoon, in Burma. This seemed but a little better. Even then, there were mutterings of war between England and Burma, and it was not to be ex-

pected that the Burmans would make nice distinctions between English and Americans. But they were shut up to this single point. June 22, they embarked on the crazy old Georgianna. Under the circumstances, the voyage could not be a pleasant one. Mrs. Judson was taken alarmingly ill, and the rough weather almost precluded the hope of her recovery. But they were driven into a dangerous strait, with black rocks on the one hand, and a shore infested with cannibals on the other. Here God kept them, as in the hollow of his hand. The perfect stillness saved Mrs. Judson's life, and soon, with favoring breezes, they entered the harbor of Rangoon.

QUESTIONS.

1. What was the condition of the New World?
2. What enkindled the earliest missionary enthusiasm?
3. What was the first foreign missionary contribution raised in America?
4. Give account of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine.
5. What is the initial point of American foreign missions?
6. Describe Judson's call to foreign mission work.
7. What great Society resulted from the consecration of these three young men?
8. Give causes, experiences, and results of Judson's visit to England.
9. Give the names of the four young men appointed.
10. Describe Judson's marriage, and accompanying trials.
11. Give a sketch of Ann Hasseltine.
12. Describe the sailing of this first band of American missionaries.
13. What occurred during the voyage?

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS.

BOOKS.

Life of Dr. Judson. Missionary Memorials. Life of Ann H. Judson.