

LANDMARK BAPTIST COLLEGE

BOOK REVIEW OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF ADONIRAM JUDSON

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
DR. PHIL STRINGER
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HI-101
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BOOK REVIEW OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF ADONIRAM JUDSON

A synopsis of the biographies of Baptist leaders as per required for masters students.

I. Introduction to Adoniram Judson.

II. Adoniram's Coming to Christ.

III. Adoniram's Transition to a Baptist.

IV. Adoniram's Eternal Accomplishments.

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Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2Tim 2:15)

Any Baptist Preacher reading ADONIRAM JUDSON, AMERICA'S FIRST FOREIGN

MISSIONARY by Faith Coxe Bailey will have a renewed appreciation for his flowery beds of ease.ⁱ The book published by Moody Press, Chicago in 1955 (ISBN:0-8024-0287-9) is a fascinating biography of Judson's journey from a Congregational parsonage to a declared atheist graduating valedictorian from Brown University, to being America's first foreign missionary. The riveting accounting of these transitions in Adoniram's life highlights his journey, not just to Burma, but more so into the solid truths of the Baptist distinctives and the soul searching reality of sacrificial service. Such service is called out by Christ when he said:

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26-27)

Reading Adoniram's story makes one accountable for their ill use of the resources at their fingertips, and causes one to ask Isaac Watts' question, "Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed thru bloody seas?"ⁱⁱ Indeed reading of Adoniram Judson's continual set backs, his ill health and imprisonments pushes us on to Isaac's next question, "Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, To help me on to God?"ⁱⁱⁱ

Adoniram's Coming To Christ.

*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom:
and with all thy getting get understanding. Proverbs 4:7*

Adoniram Judson at first plummeted into atheism. It seems that those who delve deepest into atheism are born in a parsonage where error is well mixed with the truth. Robert Ingersoll, (1833 - 1899) regarded as the founder of American Atheism^{iv} was born in a Presbyterian parsonage in Dresden N.Y. (Across the street from where I Pastor Good Samaritan Baptist Church.) The Calvinist concept that the majority of mankind was created by God's choosing to burn forever in the eternal flames of hell sent young intellectual Robert deep into atheism.^v Bolton Coit Brown (1864 – 1936) born in the very same parsonage, became an artist and outspoken atheist for the same reasons.^{vi} I could speak of C.S. Lewis and others, genius minds that danced on the edge of truth, but held onto error and plunged into atheism. So too, when the inquiring genius mind of Adoniram left the Congregational parsonage and entered the pit of rejection at Brown University, it took God intervening with circumstances to bring him back. Faith Coxe Baily eloquently portrays the repentance and return of this noble mind, recording his salvation in December 1808 in chapter 2 on page 17.

Adoniram's Transition to Baptist.

*Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: ... Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: ... Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.
(Prov 9:1,4,6)*

The road to truth has a multitude of beginnings but they always come to fruition in the seven Baptist distinctives. And so it was for Adoniram Judson. The unburdened pursuit of God by an agile mind will come to the seven pillars of Bible truths known as the Baptist distinctives. Burdened by too much Augustinian theology, the Congregational Church to which Adoniram Judson belonged did not hold to believers baptism by immersion. The accounting of his call to

preach the gospel and to reach India for Christ should alert Baptists that all seven pillars need not be attained before Christ indwells, calls, and uses a Christian. The accounting of Adoniram's struggle and attaining the pillar should alert all non-Baptists that all seven pillars stand predominately in the Scriptures and wholly on the Scriptures.

Adoniram Judson accepted the pillar of truth about the baptism of believers by immersion, at great cost and considerable conflict with the Augustinian trained scholars who financed his unprecedented missionary probe into India. His acceptance of all 7 baptist distinctives^{vii} mark him as a Baptist by conviction. These 7 pillars set Adoniram apart as a Baptist, but more so they are the foundation that enabled him to endure such trials of his faith and stand as such a striking example for all Christians.

Great men lean, stumble, and fall when they are missing any of these pillars. John Calvin was missing separation, individual soul liberty, and baptized believers.^{viii} He leaned hard, stumbled and fell. So too, did Zwingly.^{ix} Whitfield missed the latter. He did great things for his Lord, but never got that one area straight and he lamented “All my chickens are become ducks!”^x Because they took to water, ... baptismal water. Adoniram had all 7 pillars in place and shored up. His stand as a Baptist, was as sure as his foundation.

Adoniram's Eternal Accomplishments

*And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me,
to give every man according as his work shall be. (Rev 22:12)*

Brilliant minds have erected legacies of greatness but those that are fastened on the pillars of God's wisdom have eternal reward. Adoniram was such a man, with such a fastening. It was interesting to me that the labors of Adoniram Judson were miracles of God but the horrid trials seemed to reveal no blessings of God. Many times I expected that the persecutions would reach a crescendo and God would step in and relieve and reward Adoniram's meticulous labors. He did

not. When the King in Burma was on the brink of allowing Christian liberty, he did not. When Adoniram's wife was on the edge of recovery, she did not. Again and again defeat was followed by defeat, until one would cry out like R.G. Lee, "Where is God? Where is God?"^{xi} But Adoniram knew God. His endurance of great hardship for the cause of the Burmese people, his unending sacrifice to translate the Living Word of God into their tongue, is as great a legacy as the Holy Writ that he left in their hands.

Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me,

NOTES

- i Isaac Watts (1674-1778), Song “Am I A Soldier Of The Cross” Music by Thomas A. Arne (1710-1778), (Majesty Hymns Majesty Music Inc. @ 1997)
- ii Ibid.
- iii Ibid.
- iv Robert Ingersoll, *Ingersoll's Greatest Lectures*, Authorized Edition, (The Free Thought Press Association, New York 1, N.Y. @ 1944) p. i.
- v Ibid., p. 11 of lecture “Why I Am An Agnostic”
- vi Dresden Historical Society wall Article in Robert Ingersoll Museum, Dresden NY
- vii Bible as sole authority; Autonomous independent local churches; Priesthood of all believers; Two ordinances, believers baptism and believers receiving of the Lord's Supper; Individual soul liberty; and Total separation of Church and state authority.
- viii Dr. Phil Stringer, *The Faithful Baptist Witness* (Landmark Baptist Press: Haines City, FL, 1998) p. 122
- ix Ibid.
- x Dr. Phil Stringer, Baptist History Syllabus, Lecture 10
- xi R.G. Lee, Widely distributed taped message “Payday Someday”

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- i Isaac Watts (1674-1778), Song *AM I A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS* Music by Thomas A. Arne (1710-1778), (Majesty Hymns Majesty Music Inc. @ 1997)
- ii Ibid.
- iii Ibid.
- iv Robert Ingersoll, *INGERSOLL'S GREATEST LECTURES*, Authorized Edition, (The Free Thought Press Association, New York 1, N.Y. @ 1944) p. i.
- v Ibid., p. 11 of lecture WHY I AM AN AGNOSTIC
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- viii Dr. Phil Stringer, *The Faithful Baptist Witness* (Landmark Baptist Press: Haines City, FL, 1998) p. 122
- ix Ibid.
- x Baptist History Lecture, Lecture 10, Professor: Dr. Phil Stringer
- xi R.G. Lee, Widely distributed taped message PAYDAY SOMEDAY