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# The Life and Significance of Ann Hasseltine Judson (1789-1826)

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**T**wo hundred years ago in 1810, a young man named Adoniram Judson composed an extraordinary letter to the father of the young woman he wanted to marry. He wrote as follows:

I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure for a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God?<sup>1</sup>

The father gave his consent, and, subsequently, Adoniram and Ann Judson took their place among the first group of American missionaries to go overseas. Ann served with her husband Adoniram in Burma from 1813 until her death at the early age of thirty-seven, in 1826. Ann Judson, through years of faithful and sacrificial service, served as a spearhead for the modern mission movement and the spread of the Gospel in Asia.

## ANN JUDSON'S LIFE

### *Childhood and Conversion*

Ann, affectionately known as “Nancy,” was born just before the Christmas of 1789 in Bradford (Massachusetts). The youngest of five children, she was doted on by the family, and was an especial favourite of her warm-hearted father, John Hasseltine. Lively, adventurous, cheerful, determined, and highly

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intelligent, she was not in the least overshadowed by her four older siblings—John, Rebecca, Abigail and Mary. She had a wonderfully happy childhood, and by her early teens she was sparkling, popular, and very attractive: always in demand for parties and other social events. In her youth her main concerns were friends and socialising. Her father had constructed a special dance hall attached to their house, and this was the centre of social life for the Bradford young people. Like most families in the town, the Hasseltines attended the Congregational Church that stood at the centre of the community both geographically and socially. But religion was fairly undemanding; at present the main business of life was enjoyment.

**A time of revival.** In May 1805, a new teacher named Abraham Burnham arrived at Bradford Academy. He was intensely serious. He believed in Heaven and Hell. He taught that without a true conversion one would be eternally lost in Hell. As a result, Ann began to find the assumptions upon which she had based her life challenged. By the spring of 1806 a number of the eighty or so lively young people at the Academy had professed conversion to Christianity. The depth of their inner experiences was profound. Many recorded these experiences in private journals, and some exchanged lengthy and serious letters with other young people who had been similarly changed. Parents too were converted. A revival was taking place.

Events that summer in the quiet New England town were just a cameo of what was taking place through towns and villages up and down America. To later generations the great number of conversions and the huge increase in people formally joining the church would become known as the “Second Great Awakening”. The Second Great Awakening lasted up until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Revivals of religion occurred in many states and in all Protestant denominations. Without lacking in force, in towns such as Bradford the movement was relatively undramatic when compared with the charismatic overtones of much of the revival. For in Bradford conversions often occurred in a “calm and

ordinary manner”.<sup>2</sup> This great revival set the stage for Ann’s own spiritual formation.

**Ann’s conversion.** Consumed with earthly vanities and constrained by peer pressure, Ann described in her diary her understanding of faith before conversion:

During the first sixteen years of my life, I very seldom felt any serious impressions... I was early taught by my mother (though she was then ignorant of the nature of true religion) the importance of abstaining from those vices to which children are liable—as telling falsehoods, disobeying my parents, taking what was not my own, etc. She also taught me, that if I were a good child, I should, at death, escape that dreadful hell, the thought of which sometimes filled me with alarm and terror. I therefore made it a matter of conscience to avoid the above-mentioned sins, to say my prayers night and morning, and to abstain from my usual play on the Sabbath, not doubting but that such a course of conduct would ensure my salvation. At the age of twelve or thirteen, I attended the academy at Bradford, where I was exposed to many more temptations than before... I now began to attend balls and parties of pleasure, and found my mind completely occupied with what I daily heard were “innocent amusements”... For two or three years I scarcely felt an anxious thought relative to the salvation of my soul, though I was rapidly verging towards eternal ruin... I was surrounded with associates, wild and volatile like myself, and often thought myself one of the happiest creatures on earth... From December 1805 to April 1806... my time was mostly occupied in preparing my dress, and in contriving amusements for the evenings, which portion of my time was wholly spent in vanity and trifling. I so far surpassed my friends in gaiety and mirth, that some of them were apprehensive that I had but a short time to continue in my career of folly, and should be suddenly cut off...<sup>3</sup>

She later recalled one Sunday morning picking up a book and spotting the phrase: “*She that liveth in*

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*pleasure is dead while she liveth.*" She was convicted of her sin. She made some good resolutions, but soon broke them. At the age of fifteen she read *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. Again she was convicted of her sin. Again she made resolutions. And again she broke them. Because of peer pressure she was embarrassed to be too open about any desires to be godly. She writes further of her growing conviction of sin and desire for godliness:

In the spring of 1806, there appeared a little attention to religion in the upper parish of Bradford. Religious conferences had been appointed, during the winter, and I now began to attend them regularly. I often used to weep, when hearing the minister, and others, press the importance of improving the present favourable season, to obtain an interest in Christ, lest we should have to say, The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. I thought I should be one of that number, for though I now deeply felt the importance of being strictly religious, it appeared to me impossible I could be so...<sup>4</sup>

In this bewildered frame of mind, Ann visited an aunt, whom she had known to be a godly woman. She had not intended to discuss her own feelings, but in response to the woman's kindly enquiries she burst into tears. Ann's aunt urged the need for her repentance. Concerning their encounter, Ann wrote:

I began to discover a beauty in the way of salvation by Christ. He appeared to be just such a Saviour as I needed. I saw how God could be just, saving sinners through him. I committed my soul into his hands... I now began to hope, that I had passed from death unto life... I had sweet communion with the blessed God, from day to day; my heart was drawn out in love to Christians of whatever denomination; the sacred Scriptures were sweet to my taste; and such was my thirst for religious knowledge that I frequently spent a great part of the night reading religious books. O how different were my views of myself and of God, from what they were, when I first began to enquire what I

should do to be saved! I felt myself to be a poor lost sinner... This view of myself humbled me in the dust, melted me into sorrow and contrition for my sins, induced me to lay my soul at the feet of Christ, and plead his merits alone, as the ground of my acceptance.<sup>5</sup>

In 1806 sixteen-year old Ann Hasseltine publically professed a saving faith in Jesus Christ. During the same revival her parents, brother and sisters were all converted and formally joined the Congregational Church.

### ***An inward change toward missions.***

Ann's conversion seems to be typical of the experience of many in the days of powerful revival. She had an acute sense of the majesty and holiness of God, a sense of her own sinfulness before such a God, and a great desire for the glory of God. She writes:

My chief happiness now consisted in contemplating the moral perfections of the glorious God. I longed to have all intelligent creatures love him and felt, that even fallen spirits could never be released from their obligation to love a Being possessed of such glorious perfections. I felt happy in the consideration, that so benevolent a Being governed the world, and ordered every passing event. I lost all disposition to murmur at any providence, assured that such a Being could not err in any dispensation. Sin, in myself and others, appeared as that abominable thing, which a holy God hates, and I earnestly strove to avoid sinning, not merely because I was afraid of hell, but because I feared to displease God, and grieve his Holy Spirit. I attended my studies in school with far different feelings and motives from what I had ever done before. I felt my obligation to improve all I had to the glory of God; and since he in his providence had favoured me with advantages for improving my mind, I felt that I should be like the slothful servant, if I neglected them. I, therefore, diligently employed all hours in school, in acquiring useful knowledge, and spent my evenings and part of the night in spiritual enjoyments.<sup>6</sup>

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She now worked hard at her studies. And at the age of seventeen, she began teaching school with the primary aim of seeing the conversion of those in her charge. In her diary she writes how she began each day with prayer, and that the “little creatures seemed astonished at such a beginning.”<sup>7</sup> Her journal from this young age records a private and yet increasingly overwhelming desire that God should be glorified in the conversion of the unreached nations. It is clear that God was preparing her for a missionary vocation even before she met her future husband.

## MARRIAGE AND MISSION

***A zeal and commitment for missions.*** A little older than Ann, Adoniram was born in 1788 as the first son of a Congregational minister in Massachusetts. A brilliant young man, he excelled in everything he did. After some time of rebellion while in his teens, he was powerfully converted. And, like Ann, he was converted almost simultaneously to the cause of the Gospel overseas. He became absolutely single-minded about his commitment to take the Gospel to the unreached. A small group of his seminary friends matched his zeal and commitment. Though young and without reputation in their denomination, this group of young men lobbied tirelessly for the Congregationalists to establish a mission agency. On June 28, 1810, four students appeared before the General Association of Congregational ministers in Bradford, and volunteered to go overseas for missionary work. This was unprecedented in American church history, and the beginning of the American mission movement. Up to this point, American protestants had sent missionaries to the American Indians, but not overseas.

The obstacles were great. Sea travellers at the beginning of the nineteenth century were dependent on the wind for power and the stars for direction. The journey, using sail, from America to England could take just over a month; the journey to India would take about four months. Without refrigeration, live animals and poultry were kept on board for meat, and the problem of carrying suf-

ficient fresh food and water for the long journey was immense. Conditions on board were unpleasant, and the ocean itself was hazardous. Many Christians genuinely thought that the suggestion of leaving for overseas mission was fanatical and misguided. But Adoniram presented the proposal on behalf of the group, and then at the conclusion of the meeting, with the other delegates, the four students went to lunch at the home of Ann’s parents. Ann, then aged twenty-one, was present, and Adoniram was instantly enthralled.

### ***The choice to leave everything behind.***

Just a month later Adoniram wrote the letter to her father quoted above. Her parents left the choice to Ann. She decided to marry Adoniram and to leave everything behind for the unknown. She knew she would probably never see her family again: the voyage was far too long, perilous and expensive for the possibility of any visit from relatives or friends. Letters took months, and might well never arrive. There was no established mission network to give support or counsel. There was no American Embassy in Asia to give protection. There was no certainty that these pioneer missionaries would even find a place in which they could safely minister. Nothing was guaranteed: neither safety, health, toleration, and least of all success. But Adoniram, Ann, and the other young people with them understood that Christ did not issue the Great Commission on the condition that health, comfort and safety could be guaranteed. Christ had said simply, “GO.” Ann’s journal expressed the momentous nature of the choice she was making and her faith in Christ which made such a decision possible:

I have at length come to the conclusion, that if nothing in providence appears to prevent, I must spend my days in a heathen land. I am a creature of God, and he has an undoubted right to do with me, as seemeth good in his sight. I rejoice, that I am in his hands – that he is everywhere present, and can protect me in one place as well as in another. He has my heart in his hands, and when I am called to face danger, to pass through scenes of terror and distress,

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he can inspire me with fortitude, and enable me to trust in him. Jesus is faithful; his promises are precious. Were it not for these considerations, I should with my present prospects sink down in despair, especially as no female has, to my knowledge, ever left the shores of America, to spend her life among the heathen; nor do I yet know, that I shall have a single female companion. But . . . whether I spend my days in India or America, I desire to spend them in the service of God, and be prepared to spend an eternity in his presence.<sup>8</sup>

***The voyage East.*** At the beginning of 1812, war was imminent between Britain and America, and a naval blockade seemed likely. When news came of two ships due to sail to India, places were booked for the missionaries at just a couple of weeks notice. The risks of sea travel were such that it seemed sensible to divide the group between the ships. Ann and Adoniram would go in ‘the Caravan’, along with Samuel Newell and his new wife (one of Ann’s school friends, Harriet). Two single young men, plus another young couple, would sail in ‘the Harmony’.

In just two weeks, the weddings, the ordinations, the farewells, the packing and the fund-raising all had to be fitted in. On Wednesday February 5<sup>th</sup>, Adoniram and Ann were married in the room in Ann’s home where they had first met. Parson Allen, who had known Ann since she was a small girl, conducted the small ceremony. The same day there was a farewell service for Ann and her friend Harriet, who was shortly to marry Samuel Newell. Ann was twenty-one, Harriet just eighteen. The Congregational Church was packed with their family and friends, who had seen the girls grow up as part of their close-knit community. Parson Allen addressed them as though he were their father: “My dear children,” he told them, “You are now engaged in the best of causes. It is that cause for which Jesus the Son of God came into the world and suffered and died. You literally forsake father and mother, brothers and sisters for the sake of the Kingdom.”<sup>9</sup> He had words for their parents, and a charge for the whole congregation. “To the care of the great Head of the church I now commit them,” he concluded – by

which time many were weeping unashamedly.

That was a small service compared with the formal ordination service the next day at Salem. Over two thousand crammed into the Congregational Church there for the first ever ordination of American foreign missionaries. Twelve busy days later, Ann, Adoniram, Samuel and Harriet set sail for India, soon followed by Gordon Hall, Luther Rice and Samuel and Roxana Nott. The journey to India took four months with various alarms along the way; there was then a year and a half of further travel, delays, frustrations and fear. India twice ejected the missionaries, a hazardous sea journey was made to Mauritius, where likewise they were not allowed to establish a mission. Harriet and her new born infant both died of sickness brought on by horrendous conditions at sea. So at the onset of her new life, Ann lost her companion and friend.

***Theological isolation.*** To add to their difficulties, Adoniram and Ann came to a conviction that believer’s baptism was the New Testament pattern, a conviction that would have lasting implications in their missionary work. A study of the Greek New Testament on the voyage to India had led to this conclusion, and after much heart searching, both were baptised by immersion while staying in Calcutta. This decision meant inevitable separation from the Congregational Association, which was sponsoring their mission work. Because of this separation there would be no certainty of future support, as the American Baptists had not yet entered the field of foreign missions. Perhaps more difficult, there had to be a separation from those they had gone out with, as it would be confusing to have two different teachings on baptism in the same mission. Ann wrote in her journal of the difficult decision:

It is painfully mortifying to my natural feelings, to think seriously of renouncing a system which I have been taught from infancy to believe and respect, and embrace one which I have been taught to despise . . . I have been examining the subject of baptism for some time past, and, contrary to my prejudices and my wishes, am compelled to

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believe, that believers' baptism alone is found in Scripture . . . laying aside my former prejudices and systems, and fairly appealing to the Scriptures, I feel convinced that nothing really can be said in favour of infant baptism or sprinkling. We expect soon to be baptized. As a result, we must make some very painful sacrifices. We must be separated from our dear missionary associates, and labour alone in some isolated spot. We must expect to be treated with contempt, and cast off by many of our American friends – forfeit the character we have in our native land, and probably have to labour for our own support, wherever we are stationed.<sup>10</sup>

One of their fellow missionaries, Luther Rice, came to the same conviction and was also baptised by immersion. When ill health forced him to return to America, he proved to be a tireless advocate of foreign missions among American Baptists, who did take on the Judson's support.

**The call to Burma.** Through it all it seemed God was pushing the Judsons to the place all had advised them to avoid absolutely, Burma. Now referred to as Myanmar, the country of Burma lay between India and China, isolated by mountains on both borders. It was an Empire governed by an absolute monarch who ruled by fear. Governmental corruption was endemic, and the laws were cruel.<sup>11</sup> Torture and mass executions kept the population of about seventeen million in subjection. Also the religion of Burma was Buddhism: a system of belief that arose in the sixth century BC with the enlightenment of Gautama, the Buddha. The Buddha taught that all appearance is characterised by transience, that there is not really a soul, and no eternal God. Such glaring rejection of Christianity fuelled the Judsons in their effort. Ann wrote bluntly in her journal of the emptiness of Buddhism:

The religion of Burmah, then, is, in effect, *atheism*; and the highest reward of piety, the object of earnest desire and unwearied pursuit, is annihilation. How wretched a system is this; how devoid of adequate motives to virtue; and how vacant of consolation!<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, the Burmese had no concept of an eternal God, and no means in their language to express such an idea. The government was implacably opposed to any mission to convert the inhabitants from the Buddhist religion. A few of the inhabitants were of Portuguese extraction, and they had two or three Roman Catholic priests to minister to them. Some British Baptists, William Carey and John Thomas, had arrived in India in 1793. They attempted sending a mission to Burma at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but by 1812 only William Carey's son Felix remained, living in Rangoon with his Portuguese-Burmese wife. During his time in Burma there had been no converts, and minimal translation of the Bible had been done (part of the Gospel of Matthew). Carey was able to operate more or less unhindered because of his marriage to a local woman and because his pioneer efforts were directed at language work rather than direct evangelisation of the inhabitants. He left Rangoon soon after the Judsons arrived. With his departure it seemed unlikely that the government would tolerate the work of any further missionaries. Adoniram and Ann entered these foreign and unstable conditions in 1814.

No overt opposition was encountered at first because the Judsons could not begin any evangelisation until some of the language had been learned. Both were gifted linguists, but Burmese proved to be a totally different experience from anything they had encountered before: they were working without dictionaries or grammars to help them understand the exceptionally complex circular script. With no punctuation, and no word, sentence or paragraph divisions, the language flowed in a seemingly identical stream. Two years of study for twelve hours a day was needed before real Gospel work could begin. Soon after that, Adoniram produced the first Burmese tract and began work on translating the New Testament while Ann produced a Catechism, which summarised Christian teaching. Three years of difficult relational work passed before they saw their first conversion. During this time they learned to adopt a culturally appropriate means of communicating with the local people in hopes to bridge the

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despairing cultural gap: they constructed a ‘zayat’, a shelter by the side of the road where people could rest, discuss and listen to various teachings and the Gospel presentation. The idea worked, and those who would never have visited the mission house began visiting the zayat. Six years after their arrival in Burma there was a nucleus of a church—ten baptised Burmese believers who had chosen conversion knowing that the consequence could be persecution or even death. What is more, despite the risks, these new converts proved to have a genuine desire to evangelise others.

**Personal hardships.** Though not without fruit, the Judson’ service in Burma was marked by years of toil and hardship, loneliness and grief. The year after their arrival, the Judsons rejoiced at the birth of a baby boy, whom they named Roger. Before his first birthday the infant succumbed to one of the diseases so common in the native climate. The loss was the more appalling, as Ann and Adoniram were totally alone in a foreign land without the fellowship of their friends and family. Ann wrote in a letter home of their grief and enduring faith:

... [The child] had so completely entwined himself around his parents’ hearts, that his existence seemed necessary to their own. But God has taught us by afflictions what we would not learn by mercies—that our hearts are his exclusive property, and whatever rival intrudes, he will tear it away... But what shall I say about the improvement we are to make of this heavy affliction? We do not feel a disposition to murmur, or to enquire of our Sovereign why he has done this. We wish, rather, to sit down submissively under the rod and bear the smart, till the end for which the affliction was sent shall be accomplished. Our hearts were bound up in this child; we felt he was an earthly all, our only source of innocent recreation in this heathen land. But God saw it was necessary to remind us of our error, and to strip us of our only little all. O may it not be in vain that he has done it.<sup>13</sup>

They had no option but to throw themselves into the work and back onto the promises of God. These were also years of physical hardship as the unrelenting climate took its toll. By 1820, six years after their arrival, Ann was so seriously ill that she had to seek medical help in Calcutta. Two years later she was told that unless she returned either to Europe or America for treatment, she would die. She had previously consented to her husband accompanying her to Calcutta, but the longer voyage to England and a possible further trip to America would take at the least two years, and she refused to consider Adoniram abandoning the infant church and the crucial Bible translation for that long. As a result, she made the long and difficult journey alone. She sailed first for England, and Christians there raised funds for her passage to America. Back at home, she received skilled medical care and was reunited with her family and that of Adoniram.

The whole trip took two years, and of this separation Adoniram said that it felt like cutting off his right arm and gouging out his right eye. The delay in communication only made the separation worse. At one stage Adoniram lamented that he had not received any letters from Ann for ten months. Perhaps it was also that Ann did not know of the turmoil through which the mission passed during her absence. Though Adoniram managed to achieve the completion of the New Testament into Burmese and a summary of key portions of the Old Testament, he and the fellow missionary who had joined them, Dr Price, were summoned to the Emperor’s Court and detained in the capital, Ava. The political situation grew more and more ominous as war was drawing near between England and Burma.

***Faithfulness throughout imprisonment.***

When Ann returned to Burma in 1824 Adoniram’s detention forced them to meet in the capital rather than at their home in Rangoon. They built a small wooden temporary home where the heat was unbearable, reaching 180 degrees in the shade. Even here, Ann in characteristic fashion insisted on starting a girls’ school. Her reunion with her husband, though joyful, was pitifully brief. When the war began all foreigners fell under suspicion

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of being English spies, and Adoniram and Price were thrown into the notorious death prison from which few ever emerged alive. While in prison they awaited execution in the most filthy and sordid of conditions, weighed down with fetters so that they could not walk. Daily they observed the torture and execution of their fellow prisoners, not knowing when their time would come. Nightly they were placed in the stocks, and their legs and bodies raised so that only their head and shoulders remained on the ground. They remained incarcerated for one and a half years, during which time they were never able to wash, were often ill with no access to medical help, and had little contact with the outside world. Dr Price's wife had died of disease in 1822, and Adoniram's agony was worsened by fear for what would befall Ann in his absence.

During her husband's imprisonment, Ann petitioned tirelessly on the prisoners' behalf with no regard for personal risk. Daily she walked the two miles from their small home to the prison in hopes of supplying them with food and drink. Sometimes she was allowed to see them, but often they were forbidden to speak. She also visited every person of influence to whom she could gain access, trying to explain that as missionaries they had nothing to do with the English war effort. She was quite alone through this ordeal, and she was pregnant. Eight months after Adoniram had been arrested, in February 1825, she gave birth to little Maria, and was able to visit the prison with the infant, whom the father could only observe from afar. Their first baby had been stillborn, their second had died at eight months, and this child's chances of survival seemed even more slender. Even while nursing the baby, Ann continued her efforts to visit her husband and to secure his release. Of this terrible time she wrote:

Sometimes for days and days together, I could not go into the prison, till after dark, when I had two miles to walk, in returning to the house. O how many, many times, have I returned from that dreary prison at nine o'clock at night, solitary and worn out with fatigue and anxiety . . . and endeavoured to invent some new scheme for the release of

the prisoners . . . the acme of my distress, consisted in the awful uncertainty of our final fate. My prevailing opinion was, that my husband would suffer violent death; and that I should, of course become a slave, and languish out a miserable though short existence in the tyrannic hands of some unfeeling monster. But the consolations of religion, in these trying circumstances, were neither 'few nor small.' It taught me to look beyond this world, to that rest, that peaceful happy rest, where Jesus reigns, and oppression never enters.<sup>14</sup>

Eventually she had to set up a little shelter near the prison as the daily four mile round trip proved too much to walk in the blazing heat. As the weather brought unbearable heat, the conditions in the prison only worsened. Of this time her memoirs record:

The situation of the prisoners was now distressing beyond description. It was at the commencement of the hot season. There were above a hundred prisoners shut up in one room, without a breath of air excepting from the cracks in the boards. I sometimes obtained permission to go to the door for five minutes, when my heart sickened at the wretchedness exhibited. The white prisoners, from incessant perspiration and loss of appetite, looked more like the dead than the living . . .<sup>15</sup>

It would seem that things could not get worse. But with the British troops advancing to the capital Ava, the foreign prisoners were removed on a death march to a remote spot in the country some miles north of the capital, where rumour had it they were to be buried alive as an offering to the gods in the path of the advancing troops. Their sufferings on the march were indescribable, their survival remarkable. Even more remarkable was the determination of Ann to follow them. With her three-month-old infant, plus two little girls she was looking after and a faithful Burmese helper, she immediately set out by boat, and then by rough cart, in pursuit of the prisoners. For the duration of their imprisonment outside of the capital she persuaded their jailer to

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let her and the children share his two-room hut. From there she continued to try to minister such help as she could to her husband and Price. During this appalling period she became so ill that she had no milk for the baby, and the only way Maria survived was by bribing the jailer to allow Adoniram out of prison to carry the baby round the local village, begging nursing mothers to let Maria have a little of their milk.

***Entering into the peaceful, happy rest.*** Freedom came at last. When the Burmese realised how hopeless the struggle against England was, they decided they needed all the help they could get in negotiating the least humiliating peace settlement. Adoniram and Price were released to help with the peace negotiations, as they could speak both Burmese and English. Again Ann and Adoniram had a wonderfully happy but tragically brief reunion. They enjoyed two blissful weeks of freedom and comfort at the British base before Adoniram was summoned elsewhere for further negotiations. This was to be their final separation. Ann's health had been broken by the sufferings of the previous two years, and her body, past the point of exhaustion, finally broke and succumbed to cerebral meningitis. Her final sufferings were to be endured without her husband. She was thirty-seven. Adoniram was shattered not only by her death, but by the knowledge he had not been able to support her at that time. Shortly thereafter, Maria also died. Adoniram was left quite alone, and later wrote with the sad news to Ann's mother telling her of the burial of his daughter:

The next morning we made her last bed in the small enclosure that surrounds her mother's lonely grave. Together they rest in hope, under the hope tree, which stands at the head of the graves, and together, I trust, their spirits are rejoicing after a short separation of precisely six months. And I am left alone in the wide world. My own dear family I have buried; one in Rangoon, and two in Amhurst. What remains for me but to hold myself in readiness to follow the dear departed to that blessed

world, "Where my best friends, my kindred dwell,  
Where God my Saviour reigns."<sup>16</sup>

Adoniram was so grief-stricken at his loss that he suffered complete emotional breakdown, but already there was fruit to be seen from Ann's labours.

***First fruits of Ann's sacrifice.*** Shortly afterwards, one of the female converts Ann had disciplined also fell seriously ill and died. This woman left half of the little wealth she had to the missionaries, and before her death wrote to Adoniram, speaking of her joy at the thought of soon being with Ann, little Maria, and above all, Christ himself: "First of all I shall hasten to where my Saviour sits, and fall down, and worship him for his great love in sending me the teachers to show me the way to heaven."<sup>17</sup> Eventually Adoniram recovered and carried on the work that he and Ann had begun, finally completing the entire Bible in Burmese, as well as aids for future missionaries to learn the language. Adoniram enjoyed many more years of fruitful evangelistic and teaching work to the Burmese people.

## **ANN JUDSON'S SIGNIFICANCE**

The significance of Ann Judson's life can be seen immediately in the years after her death in the Burmese mission, but her testimony has had lasting effects on multiple generations and continents. During her life Ann worked tirelessly to promote education for girls in Burma and sought to establish a Burmese church from which the gospel of Christ could radiate throughout the country. And in her death, Ann's writings have inspired multiple generations to further advance the Gospel to unreached peoples.

### ***A Joint Ministry Effort***

Ann and Adoniram Judson were used to pioneer a church planting work in Burma. When previous missionaries had left or entered government service, they were the first to persevere. The Judsons' faithfulness resulted in seeing Burmese people converted and establishing the first native Burmese church. From the start, the Judsons engaged in a

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joint ministry effort, working alongside one another for the advance of the Gospel. Ann exemplified the importance of female missionary work. She was fully engaged in teaching and personal work in the *zayat*, and she engaged in translation work in both Burmese and Siamese. As a result, the catechism she translated became a vital tool in instructing young converts. And during the dark time of imprisonment during the war, it was only because of Ann's tireless efforts that Adoniram's life was preserved. During years of service, the Judsons effectively laid the foundation for a lasting church in a land previously unreached. The missionary zeal of the Baptist Church in Burma/Myanmar still reflects something of the spirit of the Judsons. Also, the Judsons' decision to be baptised by immersion meant that they offered themselves as missionaries to the American Baptists. The drama of the Judson mission proved an inspiration to the first generations of Baptist overseas missionaries, which went on to become the largest missionary sending force in history. Working side by side, the Judsons faithfully spearheaded a mission movement that has had a lasting impact on the Burmese people and on modern missions as a whole.

### ***A Champion for Female Education.***

Ann also was a passionate advocate of female education. On first arriving in India she was tremendously impressed with the girls' school at Serampore run by Hannah Marshman. She wrote home:

Good female schools are everywhere needed in this country. I hope no Missionary will ever come out here, without a wife, as she, in her sphere, can be equally useful with her husband. I presume Mrs Marshman does more good in her school, than half the ministers in America.<sup>18</sup>

The following description of one little girl illustrates the horror of slavery that Ann faced and the dire need of intervention. The child was a slave of seven years old. Of her condition Mrs Wade, another female missionary, wrote:

Her little body was wasted to a skeleton, and covered from head to foot with the marks of a large rattan, and blows from some sharp-edged thing which left a deep scar. Her forehead, one of her ears and a finger were still suffering from his blows, and did not heal for some time. Her master in a rage one day caught her by the arm, and gave it such a twist as to break the bone... Besides, she had a very large and dreadful burn upon her body, recently inflicted. Of this last horrid deed, delicacy forbids my attempting any description... after nursing her with unremitted care by night and day myself, for two weeks, I had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing her begin to play with the other little girls...<sup>19</sup>

Adoniram managed to rescue her and take her into the school, but there were countless other girls in equally oppressive circumstances that needed freedom and education. Ann treats the subject of female education in her appeal to American women entitled, *Address to Females in America, Relative to the Situation of Heathen Females in the East*. Ann's appeal ends with a stern call to action:

Shall we sit down in indolence and ease, indulge in all the luxuries with which we are surrounded, and which our country so bountifully affords, and leave beings like these, flesh and blood, intellect and feeling, like ourselves, and of *our own sex*, to perish, to sink into eternal misery? No! By all the tender feelings of which the female mind is susceptible, by all the privileges and blessings resulting from the cultivation and expansion of the human mind, by our duty to God and our fellow creatures, and by the blood and groans of Him who died on Calvary, let us make a united effort, let us call on all, old and young in the circle of our acquaintance, to join us in attempting to meliorate the situation, to instruct, to enlighten, and save females in the Eastern world; and though time and circumstances should prove that our united exertions have been ineffectual, we shall escape at death that bitter thought, that Burman females have been lost, without an effort of ours to prevent their ruin.<sup>20</sup>

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At the time of her death, Ann had already started a girls' school in Amherst and all proceeds from her *Account* were to be put back into schools for girls in Burma. After her death Mrs Wade continued to take in little girls from backgrounds of terrible poverty and suffering. Thus those who had responded to Ann's appeal to sponsor female orphans and redeemed slaves could know that the work was continuing.

### **A FAR-REACHING INFLUENCE**

Though she lived a relatively short life, Ann's writings were a mighty force to stir up missionary interest among the Protestant population both in America and the United Kingdom. Her book, *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire* was widely read. She also provided numerous spirited contributions for missionary magazines. In all of her writing Ann clearly stated the urgent need of proclaiming the gospel to unreached peoples and duly inspired many into involvement in missions. Even more pointedly, her life and death became an inspiration to a whole generation of American Christians. Ann's *Memoir* was printed soon after her death and, because of its popularity, ran through many editions. In one story of influence, in 1828 a twelve-year-old factory girl, Emily Chubbuck, was deeply moved by the story of Ann's hardships and death. Eighteen years later she would become the third Mrs. Judson. Emily said to a friend before meeting Adoniram, "I have felt, ever since I read the *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson* when I was a small child, that I must become a missionary."<sup>21</sup> Though it would be impossible to record every life that has been inspired by Ann's story of faithfulness and love, it is evident that through her memoirs and other writings, Ann Judson has exerted a far-reaching influence for the further advance of the Gospel.

### **A LASTING LEGACY**

Finally, Ann Judson's life and writings are a powerful example of the radical faith inspired by a rock solid commitment to the total sovereign goodness of God. Her private letters and journal demonstrate her conviction that this life is only temporary, a preparation for eternity. She endured the seemingly unendurable because of this perspective. Moreover,

she and her husband believed that what happened to *them* was of secondary importance—a sovereign God would use them as long as he wished, but then raise up others in their place. Their religion was God-centred not human-centred. Francis Wayland writes of the Judsons' unshakable faith saying:

They always enjoyed the most entire certainty as to the result of their labours, though occasionally doubting whether they would live to witness it. Their confidence rested solely and exclusively on the Word of God. They believed that he had promised; they doing as they believed his will, accepted the promise as addressed to them personally. Their daily work was a transaction between God and their own souls. It never occurred to them that God could be false to his promises.<sup>22</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

The brevity of Ann Judson's life and her tragic death caught the imagination of a generation. Together, she and Adoniram gave their lives in faithful ministry to the Burmese people. Their sacrifice led to the development of native churches and schools in Burma as well as spearheaded the modern mission movement. Not only did they in their own lifetime proclaim the gospel to countless unreached peoples, but they also inspired many others to devote their lives to the same cause. Many salvations can be traced back to Ann Judson who, through a life of faithful and passionate devotion to the Gospel, serves as a lasting example to us all.

### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> Sharon James, *My Heart in His Hands: Ann Judson of Burma, A Life with Selections from her Memoir and Letters* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1998), pp. 33-35.
- <sup>2</sup> Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marketing of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), p. 124.
- <sup>3</sup> James, *My Heart in His Hands*, pp. 21-23.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

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- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-38.
- <sup>9</sup> Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1987), p. 108.
- <sup>10</sup> James, *My Heart in His Hands*, pp. 55-56.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 67.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 66.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-87.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 157-8.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. pp. 163-4.
- <sup>16</sup> Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, pp. 380-381.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 383.
- <sup>18</sup> James D. Knowles, *A Memoir of Mrs Ann H. Judson* (London, 1830; Boston, 1835), p. 72.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 362-63.
- <sup>20</sup> James, *My Heart in His Hands*, p. 208.
- <sup>21</sup> Edward Judson, *Adoniram Judson, D.D. His Life and Labours* (London, 1883), p.483.
- <sup>22</sup> Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labours of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.*(2 Volumes, London: 1853), vol. 1, pp. 162-3.

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Ann's own journals and letters were edited by James D. Knowles and published soon after her death, the *Memoir of Mrs Ann H. Judson* (London, 1830/Boston 1835). This has long been out of print. Most of the journal entries and letters are included in *My Heart in His Hands: Ann Judson of Burma, a Life, with Selections from her Memoir and Letters* (Sharon James, Evangelical Press, 1998; Portuguese translation, Editoria Fiel, 2004). The most accessible biography of Adoniram Judson is by Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The life of Adoniram Judson* (Judson Press, 1956, rep, 1987). The first full length biography of Adoniram Judson was by Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labours of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.* (2 volumes, London, 1853). For a short, popular biography, see Erroll Hulse, *Adoniram Judson and the Missionary Call* (Reformation Today Trust, 1996).