



Christian Missionaries and Missionary Christians

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Contents

[Inside Cover]

Christian Missionaries and Missionary Christians

Tom Ascol

Church Planting and the London Baptist Confessions of Faith

Jim Renihan

A Command to Plant Churches

Poh Boon Sing

News

Letters

Book Review

- *My Heart In His Hands, Ann Judson of Burma*, by Sharon James, England: Evangelical Press, 1998, 237 pp.
Barb Reisinger
-

The Founders Journal



Contributors:

Dr. Thomas K. Ascol is Pastor of the Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida.

Jim Renihan is the Dean of the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in California.

Dr. Poh Boon Sing is a Baptist Pastor in Malaysia and Editor of *Gospel Magazine*.

Book Reviewer:

Mrs. Barb Reisinger is a secretary for Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida, and for Founders Ministries.

Editor:

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Christian Missionaries and Missionary Christians

Tom Ascol

THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth. (3 John 1:1-8).

The Apostle John wrote 3 John to a man named Gaius in part to commend him for his expressions of love toward fellow ministers of the gospel. Evidently some itinerant missionaries had been sent out by John's church and had returned with a report about how well Gaius had treated them.

There are two different categories of Christians that John mentions in verses 1-8. First are those whom he identifies as "brethren and strangers." These are Christian Missionaries, people who have left home to carry the gospel of Christ to others. Then there is Gaius himself, who stands as a wonderful example of a Missionary Christian.

These two different categories of believers highlight an important missiological axiom: Not every believer can be a Christian Missionary, but every believer must be a Missionary Christian.^[1] We can learn some important lessons about both from John's letter.

Christian Missionaries Go

In Close Relationship with the Church

Christian Missionaries leave the confines of their familiar surroundings in order to take the gospel to others. But they do not go on their own. Rather, they go in close relationship with the church. John learned of Gaius's wonderful work through the testimony of the missionaries who were reporting to "the church" (v. 6).

The significance of this relationship is made very clear in the first official missionary enterprise which is recorded in the book of Acts. In the first 5 verses of chapter 13 we are told how Paul and Barnabas became missionaries. As men who were already faithful in the local congregation of believers at Antioch, they were set apart for their work by the Holy Spirit through the church. Paul and Barnabas were sent not only by the Holy Spirit (v. 4) but also by the church (v. 3).

It is not enough for a man to sense the inward call of the Spirit to go preach the gospel (at home or abroad). Such a call is essential but inadequate to justify entering into missionary work. The church must bear witness to that call and be willing to send the missionary out. Self-appointed, self-sent missionaries have a hard time biblically justifying their independence from a local church. In the New Testament, Christian missionaries are sent by the church.

Their work is also defined in terms of the church. What did Paul and Barnabas do as missionaries? Equipped with the Word and empowered by the Spirit, they went out to make disciples and to establish them in local churches. Theirs was a church planting effort (as Acts 13 and 14 make clear). Humanitarian aid has its place and works of mercy are never to be slighted, but let the Red Cross and the Peace Corp set their sights exclusively on such efforts. Christian Missionaries are to aim at planting churches of new believers among the unreached people groups of the world.

Furthermore, not only are they sent by the church with the goal of starting churches, but also we discover in the New Testament that Christian Missionaries are accountable to the church. Luke records the conclusion of Paul's and Baranabas's first missionary journey with these words:

From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:26-27).

The missionaries were accountable to the church which set them apart and sent them to their work.

Just as there are no lone ranger Christians in the New Testament, so there are no lone ranger missionaries in the New Testament. Jesus said "I will build my church." Christian missionaries go out from one church in order to plant others. They are a part of Christ's church by maintaining a close relationship with local churches--both the one from which they have been sent, and the ones which they help to plant.

For the sake of Christ's name

Verse 7 of 3 John tells us the motivation which undergirds a Christian Missionary's work. "They went forth for His name's sake." Why leave family, friends, opportunities and comforts to travel to an unfamiliar country with a completely different culture? For the name of Jesus Christ.

God has always been concerned for the honor of His Name. He raised up Pharaoh in order to display His power and declare His Name throughout the earth (Romans 9:17). He did not destroy the Israelites in the wilderness for the sake of His Name (Ezekiel 20:14). He spared Jerusalem from enemy forces for His own Name's sake (2 Kings 19:34). He restored Israel from exile in order to vindicate the holiness of His own great Name (Ezekiel 36:22).

The first petition which Jesus taught us to make to God in prayer is "Hallowed be Your Name." To follow Jesus means living your life for the sake of His name (Matthew 19:26-29).

Paul's whole life as a missionary was lived for the glory of Christ's Name. When God called him, He told Ananias to go to Paul, "for I will show him how many things he must suffer for My Name's sake" (Acts 9:16). As Paul traveled he knew that his apostleship had been received from Christ "for obedience to the faith among all nations for His Name's sake" (Romans 1:5). When confronted with the prospect of suffering and persecution he rebuked his well meaning friends by declaring, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 21:13).

Who should go as Christian missionaries? Those who have already shown a jealousy for the Name of Christ--in personal devotion; in faithful service; in practical holiness (at home, on the job, in the use of time and resources, etc.). A call to be a missionary does mean a change of passion, it simply means a change of location and circumstances in pursuing that passion.

A church should send as missionaries only those who have an observable love for the Name of Jesus Christ. Devotion to "the Name" should be evident in the way a man treats his wife and a wife treats her husband. It should be demonstrated in the way that parents train their children; the way a man orders his home, conducts his business, witnesses and reaches out to others, studies the Word, serves the church, and uses his gifts. When such people are commissioned, they must be charged to carry that same passion to see our Lord and Savior's Name hallowed among the people to whom they are going:

As you move to your new home--remember the Name;
As you miss your family back in the states--remember the Name;
When you reach points of frustration--remember the Name;

When you grow discouraged and lonely--remember the Name;

When you are tempted to sin--remember the Name.

For the sake of Christ's Name, go! Be willing to spend and be spent for the glory of that Name.

As workers for the truth

Christian Missionaries also go out as "workers for the truth" (v. 8). Believers are stewards, not originators, of the truth. We are messengers, not authors. We have had committed to us the faith which has been once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Christian Missionaries work for that truth by taking it to people groups who do not have the gospel. Consequently, they must have a clear conviction of and submission to the Bible as the Word of God. They must also be diligent students of that Word so that when they speak of it and from it they communicate its message accurately.

The mission field is no place to send doubters and skeptics in hopes that they will come to a surer knowledge of the faith. I had a professor in seminary who told the story of one of his students who came to him, confessing his doubts about the deity of Christ. He loved Christ, he said, and he wanted to serve Him in the world, but he simply could not accept that He was God in the flesh. As he related this encounter to the class, the professor told us how he wisely (as he judged it) responded to the troubled student. He said, "Just keep following Jesus and see where you wind up at the end of the day."

I shudder when I think of that man trying to serve a God in whom he does not believe. The gospel ministry, especially the mission field, is no place for the doubter or skeptic. The work is too important. Souls are at stake. God's fame is at stake! His truth has been entrusted to those who go and as they go, they must carry it with integrity, honesty, and devotion.

Christian Missionaries go in close association with the church, for the sake of Christ's name, and as workers for the truth. But, not every believer can be a Christian Missionary. Nevertheless, every follower of Christ must be a Missionary Christian.

Missionary Christians Send

Just as Christian Missionaries go, so must Missionary Christians send. John encourages Gaius to "send them [the missionaries] forward on their journey" (v. 6). As in the case with the first missionary journey from Antioch, those who did not go, sent (Acts 13:4-5). But how should Missionary Christians send out their loved ones in the world's mission fields?

Filled with love

John commends Gaius for his love (v. 6) which he has heard about from the report of others. Above all, Christians should be characterized by love, especially Christians who are committed to commissioning missionaries. First, love for God will ensure that when we send out missionaries, we do so "in a manner worthy of God" (v. 6). Secondly, love for the brethren, especially for those who go forth for the sake of Christ's name, will cause us to take a serious interest in those who go out from us. Finally, a love for people in the world--the world which God loved so much that He sent His own Son--will make us willing to send our brothers, sisters, sons and daughters to declare the great grace and glory of God's salvation to them. To fulfill the calling to be a Missionary Christian, one must have a heart filled with love.

Committed to the truth

But love is not enough. Zeal for world missions is no excuse for being weak on truth. In reality there can be no such zeal, nor genuine love, without a commitment to the truth. Paul says that "love rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). Further, an informed concern for world evangelism carries with it a jealousy for the unadulterated evangel.

Those who send must be as committed to God's revealed truth as those who go. John recognized this quality in Gaius and encourages him to become a fellow worker with missionaries "for the truth" (v. 8). How is such commitment cultivated? By learning to "walk in the truth" (v. 3). That is, by having a steadfast, practical devotion to the truth.

Love and truth make for a spiritually potent combination. It proved to be very beneficial to those who had come to Gaius's church. They had their needs met very well. Such balanced Christian living is attractive and encouraging to believers everywhere.

Being thoroughly committed to God's truth affords a great satisfaction in sending out missionaries who will faithfully carry that truth to unreached people groups. The prospect of being directly involved in sending the gospel around the world is reason to rejoice. But, having a deep love for those who are sent out also exposes one to deep pain. When we send loved ones, we send a part of ourselves with them. It involves sorrow--real sorrow at the thought of separation and change in relationships.

So it is common to find mixed emotions welling up within a congregation at the prospect of sending loved ones into the mission field. There is no need for shame or embarrassment at the tears which flow. We love them. And we will miss them. But at the same time we are devoted to the truth which they are taking with them and rejoice to have a part in the great work of declaring God's grace to the nations.

The following poem was read to missionaries who were commissioned to work among an unreached people group in Central Asia. It was originally addressed to Adoniram Judson by a friend, upon the Judsons' departure for Burma. In its slightly modified form, it adequately expresses the mixed emotions which a congregation feels on the occasion of sending loved ones to preach the gospel to the nations.

We Will Not Say Farewell

We may not tell you what we feel,
For words are powerless to reveal
Love deep as ours to you;
Love, which no stain of earth can shake--
Love, pure and holy--for *His* sake,
Whose image lives in you.

We may not praise: we dare not tell,
The love with which our souls now swell,
Nor can we cheer your heart;
But with a power unfelt till now,
We would call down upon your brow,
A blessing ere we part.

We *bless* you. Feelings long repressed,
Emotions ne'er before expressed,
Break from their long control.
We bless you with no uttered word,--
But Heaven the voiceless prayer has heard--
The language of the soul.

We *bless* you, for the living light,
Poured upon Asia's starless night,
Bidding its darkness flee;

Let future converts tell the rest:
They bless you, and you shall be blest,
Through all eternity.

Farewell! We may not call you ours,
Beloved from manhood's early hours--
Your home is far away.
You are not of us, and your heart
Even now longs to depart,--
We would not bid you stay.

Yet, yet its hard to let you go,
Feeling that never more below
You in our midst may dwell.
How our spirits do cling to you,
Though you are taken from our view;
We will not say Farewell!

We will go with you. Seas may roll
Between our homes, but the free soul
Across their waves shall glide.
God grant us, when this life is o'er,
To meet you on a happier shore,
And still be by your side.

Conclusion

Either go or send. But do not remain passive, uninterested bystanders in the missionary work of our Lord. Both goers and senders are needed. Both are important. Both labors must be entered into with equal commitment and seriousness.

Those of us who stay are called to be senders--for now. But, are you willing for God to call you to go in the future? Our attitudes ought to be this: willing to go, called to stay; and therefore determined to do all that we can to be as faithful in our staying as we expect those we send to be faithful in their going.

The ones who go out from us do not merely "become" our missionaries. Nor do we merely "let them go." Rather, we *send* them. They remain a part of us--our responsibility; our privilege to serve and love--though now in a vastly different way. They are our family--extended across the world, all for the sake of the Name.

As Christian missionaries go they do so as a part of a local church. They go for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ and with a commitment to the truth which is revealed in Him. They go to make Christ known where He is not presently known. Therefore they must go with a determination to live holy lives, to teach God's Word and to tell of His love for sinners. In dependence on God's Spirit, they go to persuade those who have been shut up in darkness to come to the Light that gives life.

When William Carey volunteered to leave England for the distant shores of India to "take the gospel to the heathen," his friend and fellow pastor, Andrew Fuller agreed to stay behind and rally support for the effort. Their lives typify, respectively, what it means to be a Christian Missionary and a Missionary Christian.

Looking back on the solemn occasion when Carey agreed to go, Fuller describes the commitment which was made.

We saw that there was a gold mine in India, but it seemed almost as deep as the center of the earth. Who will venture to explore it? "I will go down," said Mr. Carey to his brethren, "but remember that you must hold the ropes." We solemnly engaged to do so; nor while we live, shall we desert him.[\[2\]](#)

May such a spirit live on in a new generation of goers and senders.

This article has been adapted from a sermon preached at Grace Baptist Church during a missionary commissioning service. Audio cassette tapes of that service are available from the church. Write to Grace Baptist Church, 204 SW 11th Place, Cape Coral, FL 33991; or call 941/772-1400.



¹ I am indebted to Tom Stellar for this thought. In "The Supremacy of God in Going and Sending," an "Afterword" to *Let the Nations Be Glad!* (Baker, 1993) by John Piper, Stellar writes, "Not every Christian is called to be a missionary. But every follower of Christ is called to be a world Christian" (p. 228).

² Cited in Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (New Hope, 1991), p. 74.



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² Cited in Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (New Hope, 1991), p. 74.



Church Planting and the London Baptist Confessions of Faith^[1]

Jim Renihan

Almost as soon as Calvinistic Baptists appeared on the scene in 1640s England, they demonstrated a whole-hearted commitment to evangelism and church planting. They were not alone, for many of the Puritans expressed concern for the regions of their country not yet blossoming with Gospel assemblies.^[2] None of these men could be content enjoying their own privileges, but actively engaged in seeking to bring the message of Christ to others.

The growth of the early Particular Baptists^[3] is amazing. W. T. Whitley, in a 1910 article, estimated that in 1715 there were 220 Particular Baptist churches in existence in England and Wales, and about half as many General Baptist churches.^[4] Included in many of Whitley's entries is a figure of approximate attendance. After extensive comparisons with other extant records, Michael Watts concludes that the figures are generally accurate for the period.^[5] When one remembers that in 1641 there were no Calvinistic churches practicing believer's baptism by immersion, the statistics take on much meaning.

Among the Particular Baptists, the work of church planting was often done through evangelists. This was not an office in the church, though the men involved were often elders, but rather appointed emissaries charged with the task of spreading the gospel and establishing churches. They carried with them authority from the sending churches. Two early examples of the convictions present in these churches provide the basis for later actions.

In 1649, the Glaziers' Hall, London church held a day of prayer "to seek the Lord that he would send labourers into the dark corners and parts of this land."^[6] On the next day, John Myles and Thomas Proud appeared in their midst, concerned for the needs of Wales. They were apparently baptized and sent, within a fortnight, back to Wales for the purpose of planting churches. On 1 October 1649, baptisms began to take place, and the Ilston church was organized, having forty-three members by October 1650.^[7] Myles engaged in an aggressive plan to bring other churches into existence, so that within a year of the first baptism two more assemblies had been formed, and the first "General Meeting"^[8] in South Wales was held on 6 and 7 November 1650.^[9] White, citing the Ilston church book, states that the commission given to Myles and Proud by the London church was "to gather a 'company or society of people holding forth and practising the doctrine, worship, order and discipline of the Gospel according to the primitive institution.'" He then comments,

The terms in which they understood their mission are of considerable importance: they saw their task not only as concerned with the conversion of individuals to Christ but also with the foundation of congregations rightly ordered according to what they believed to be the one, unchanging, apostolic pattern.^[10]

White is undoubtedly correct in this assessment. The well-ordered church was so central to the redemptive purposes of God that any kind of evangelistic thrust must seek, as its highest goal, to establish new assemblies. For these Welsh evangelists, one church was insufficient. The needs of the countryside were so great that only the founding of many churches would satisfy. This early perspective was active among the Particular Baptist churches.

The London church under the ministry of Hanserd Knollys sent Thomas Tillam^[11] to another one of the "dark corners of the land," the North (County Durham), in December 1651. He was appointed to a lectureship by the "Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel" established by Parliament in February 1649/50,^[12] and used this post as the base to plant a Baptist church in Hexham. In seven months, sixteen individuals were baptized and a church was formed. Tillam saw this as the great end of his mission:

upon the 21st day of the 5th month, 1652 . . . after serious consideration and some gospel preparation, a living temple began of these living stones. . . . These, solemnly giving themselves to the Lord and one to another, to walk in communion together, with submission to all the ordinances of the Gospel, I, Tho. Tillam, espoused to one husband; hoping that I shall present them a chaste virgin to Christ.[13]

The formula for church planting was at the front of this action. Evangelism was not carried out simply to seek after conversions. Churches had to be planted. Those who received the gift of salvation were expected to become part of a well-ordered church. The Baptists could not conceive of evangelism apart from church planting. Converts were to be baptized, and formed into a church by a (to use Benjamin Keach's term) "wise master builder."

The difficulties of the Restoration Era hindered the spread of churches, but in the relative freedom of the 1690s, several attempts were made to form new congregations. Benjamin Keach argued that ministers should be active in preaching in the towns and villages near where they were located, so that new churches might be planted.[14] The Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, church ordained David Crosley as an evangelist in 1692 stating "we by virtue of authority given unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ, have called our Brother forth to preach the gospel and baptize wheresoever the Providence of God shall open a door to his ministry." [15] This "roving commission" [16] was not simply to preach. It included the necessary attendant for converts, baptism, implying the next logical step, the formation of churches.

This evangelistic impulse was the driving force behind the 1689 London General Assembly's initiative to begin a fund intended (along with other purposes) "to send Ministers . . . to preach, both in City and Country." [17] In the *Narrative* of the 1690 London General Assembly, the participating churches rejoice at the good work already done through the fund, "especially in *Essex* and *Suffolk*, where were no Baptized churches," because the mission was so well received that "two churches are like to be gathered." [18] According to Murdina MacDonald, Richard Tidmarsh had been sent into those counties, with two new churches as the apparent result. [19]

These examples give some indication, at least from among the leaders of the movement, for the spread of their message and the desire to see churches multiplied. For them, the church was not simply a society of holy people gathered for fellowship with one another, but was an instrument to bring light and life to the darkest places. When they were able, they encouraged and engaged in mission efforts within their capabilities. Undoubtedly, the relative poverty of many of the churches and their ministers hindered expansion. [20] But efforts were made, at times with positive results.

The impetus for these actions was theological, embedded in the general Confessions published by the churches. The first London Confession (1644) states,

Christ hath heer on earth a spirituall Kingdome, which is the Church, which He hath purchased and redeemed to himselfe, as a peculiar inheritance: which Church, as it is visible to us, is a company of visible Saints, called & separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of faith of the Gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joyned to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement, in the practical injoyment of the Ordinances, commanded by Christ their head and King. [21]

It should be noticed that the church consists of believers, brought out of the world to faith in Christ by means of gospel preaching, baptized, and united together to enjoy the ordinances given by Christ. This definition of the church is dependent upon earlier statements in the Confession describing the process and fruit of conversion:

Faith is ordinarily begot by the preaching of the Gospel, or word of Christ, without respect to any power or capacitie in the creature; but it being wholly passive, and dead in sinnes and trespasses, doth beleeve, and is converted by no lesse power, then that which raised Christ from the dead.

That the tenders of the Gospel to the conversion of sinners, is absolutely free, no way requiring, as

absolutely necessary, any qualifications, preparations, terrors of the law, or preceding ministry of the Law, but onely and alone the naked soule, as a sinner and ungodly to receive Christ, as crucified, dead, and buried, and risen againe, being made a Prince and a Savior for such sinners.

The same power that converts to faith in Christ, carries on the soule through all duties, temptations, conflicts, sufferings

All beleivers are a holy and sanctified people, and that sanctification is a spirituall grace of the new Covenant, and effect of the love of God, manifested to the soule, whereby the beleever . . . presseth after a heavenly and Evangelicall perfection, in obedience to all the Commands, which Christ as head and King in His new Covenant has prescribed to them.[\[22\]](#)

The Baptists confessed that saving faith produced evangelical obedience, and this obedience was to be worked out in a gospel church. Dead sinners are brought to life through the power of Christ attending the preached word, and the resulting believers, sanctified by the grace of the new covenant, give themselves to "obedience to all the Commands." The context for this obedience is the local church. This theological progression is unavoidable in the Confession. Churches are the result of Gospel preaching. Their evangelism was not merely "soul-winning" but rather a full-orbed attempt to see churches planted according to the Word of God.

The Second London Confession is no different in its emphases. The following words, found in paragraphs five and six of chapter 26 teach the same doctrine:

In the execution of this power wherewith he is so intrusted, the Lord Jesus calleth out of the World unto himself, through the Ministry of his word, by his Spirit, those that are given unto him by his Father; that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience, which he prescribeth to them in his Word. Those thus called he commandeth to walk together in particular societies, or Churches, for their mutual edification; and the due performance of that publick worship, which he requireth of them in the World.

The Members of these Churches are Saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ; and do willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ, giving up themselves, to the Lord & one to another by the will of God, in professed subjection to the Ordinances of the Gospel.[\[23\]](#)

Christ calls sinners to himself, commanding them to be part of churches in which they demonstrate their obedience to his will. These men could not conceive of evangelism divorced from churches. The theology of evangelism itself required that converts be added to existing churches, or formed into new churches for the glory of God. Nothing less would fit the case.

In order to account for the remarkable growth present among the Particular Baptists, one must remember this fact. Evangelism is at the heart of the doctrine of the church. New assemblies are planted as men and women are brought to faith in Christ. In these Confessions, practical theology is the necessary concomitant to ecclesiology. Doctrinal formulations are not merely theoretical constructions. They have very important implications and applications for life and ministry.

Historic Baptist theology brought together theology and practice. In the best Puritan fashion, it was recognized that what we believe must influence what we practice, and that what we practice must rest on the theological truths we confess. These men and their churches sought to be faithful to that principle. As we strive to preach the whole counsel of God and apply the principles of reformation in our churches, we must take hold of this perspective. Church planting ought to be at the very forefront of our agenda. In Particular Baptist Ecclesiology, the church was fundamentally the result of the personal and sovereign activity of Christ in calling sinners out of the world to salvation. From its roots in the New Testament, it was intended to be a holy community, separate from the world and focused on heaven. But, so important was

the planting of churches that programs were established to promote their increase. Funds were raised, men were ordained and sent, and new congregations were organized. Does our theology of the church inform our evangelism? What more can we do?



1 Some of this material is taken from his 1997 doctoral dissertation, "The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705: The Doctrine of the Church in the Second London Baptist Confession as Implemented in the Subscribing Churches."

2 Cf. Christopher Hill, "Puritans and 'the Dark Corners of the Land,'" in *Change and Continuity in 17th-Century England*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 3-47. Hill demonstrates that a concern for the spread of the Gospel (and its attendant influences) was a significant concern among leading Puritans in the first half of the seventeenth century.

3 This is the title most commonly given to the 17th century Calvinistic Baptists.

4 W. T. Whitley, "The Baptist Interest under George I," *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society 2 (1910-11)*: 95-109. Whitley based his statistics on a document known as the "Evans Manuscript," supplementing it at several points. The Evans Manuscript is held at Dr. William's Library in London. It was an attempt to list "every Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist congregation in England and Wales" in the period 1715-18. A detailed analysis of its statistics is found in Michael Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978), 267-89, and in the Appendix, 491-510. The quote is from Watts, 268.

5 Watts, *The Dissenters*, 504.

6 Cited from the Ilston Church Book by B. R. White, "John Miles and the Structures of the Calvinistic Baptist Mission to South Wales, 1649-1660," in Mansel John, ed., *Welsh Baptist Studies* (Llandysul: The South Wales Baptist College, 1976), 36; See also B. G. Owens, ed., *The Ilston Book: Earliest Register of Welsh Baptists* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1996), 32; Henry Melville King, *Rev. John Myles and the Founding of the First Baptist Church in Massachusetts* (Providence, RI: Preston & Rounds, Co. 1905); Joshua Thomas, "The Histories of Four Welsh Baptist Churches c. 1633-1770," in Carroll C. and Willard A. Ramsey, *The American Baptist Heritage in Wales* (Gallatin, TN: Church History Research and Archives, 1976), 40-66.

7 White, "John Miles," 37.

8 i.e. association.

9 White, "John Miles," 40; White, *Association Records of the Particular Baptists* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1971), 3-4.

10 White, "John Miles," 36.

11 Ernest A. Payne, "Thomas Tillam," BQ 17:2, (April 1957): 61-66; David Douglas, *History of the Baptist Churches in the North of England, from 1648 to 1845* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1846), 8-69; E. B. Underhill, *Records of the Churches of Christ, Gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, and Hexham. 1644-1720* (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1854), 289-96. Tillam used the phrase "dark corner" in the first entry to the Hexham records, and the church, in a letter sent to Knollys' assembly in London, used the full phrase five months later, 289, 304.

12 Underhill, *Records*, 304; Payne, "Thomas Tillam," 61. On the "Committee" see Hill, "Puritans and the Dark Corners," 32-44.

13 Underhill, *Records*, 289.

14 [Benjamin Keach], *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated* (London: John Harris, 1689), 92-96; cf. Keach, *Exposition of the Parables: Series Two* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991 reprint), 362-63, where he likened ministers to "planters" whose fruit is to be "planted in a visible church of Christ."

15 Peter Wortley, transcriber, "Church Record Book, Volume One 1670-1715" (Bromsgrove: Bromsgrove Baptist Church and The Baptist Historical Society, 1974), 51.

16 W. T. Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England, 1649-1913* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1913), 76. See also Frederick Overend, *History of the Ebenezer Baptist Church Bacup* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1912), 71.

17 *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* (London: 1689), 12.

18 *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* (London: 1690), 4-5, emphasis in original.

19 Murdina MacDonald, "London Calvinistic Baptists 1689-1727: Tension Within a Dissenting Community Under Toleration," Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1982, 42.

20 In the 1689 *Narrative*, this point is explicit. They mourned the financial neglect of ministers who must be "so incumbred with Worldly Affairs, that they are not able to perform the Duties of their Holy Calling, in preaching the Gospel" 1689 *Narrative*, 5.

21 William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 165.

22 *Ibid.*, 163-64.

23 *A Confession of Faith: Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677), 87-88. While usually referred to as the 1689 Confession, it was originally published in 1677.



The Founders
Journal
Contents Issue 37

The Founders
Journal
Main Page

1 Some of this material is taken from his 1997 doctoral dissertation, "The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705: The Doctrine of the Church in the Second London Baptist Confession as Implemented in the Subscribing Churches."

2 Cf. Christopher Hill, "Puritans and 'the Dark Corners of the Land,'" in *Change and Continuity in 17th-Century England*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 3-47. Hill demonstrates that a concern for the spread of the Gospel (and its attendant influences) was a significant concern among leading Puritans in the first half of the seventeenth century.

3 This is the title most commonly given to the 17th century Calvinistic Baptists.

4 W. T. Whitley, "The Baptist Interest under George I," *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 2 (1910-11): 95-109. Whitley based his statistics on a document known as the "Evans Manuscript," supplementing it at several points. The Evans Manuscript is held at Dr. William's Library in London. It was an attempt to list "every Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist congregation in England and Wales" in the period 1715-18. A detailed analysis of its statistics is found in Michael Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978), 267-89, and in the Appendix, 491-510. The quote is from Watts, 268.

5 Watts, *The Dissenters*, 504.

6 Cited from the Ilston Church Book by B. R. White, "John Miles and the Structures of the Calvinistic Baptist Mission to South Wales, 1649-1660," in Mansel John, ed., *Welsh Baptist Studies* (Llandysul: The South Wales Baptist College, 1976), 36; See also B. G. Owens, ed., *The Ilston Book: Earliest Register of Welsh Baptists* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1996), 32; Henry Melville King, *Rev. John Myles and the Founding of the First Baptist Church in Massachusetts* (Providence, RI: Preston & Rounds, Co. 1905); Joshua Thomas, "The Histories of Four Welsh Baptist Churches c. 1633-1770," in Carroll C. and Willard A. Ramsey, *The American Baptist Heritage in Wales* (Gallatin, TN: Church History Research and Archives, 1976), 40-66.

7 White, "John Miles," 37.

8 i.e. association.

9 White, "John Miles," 40; White, *Association Records of the Particular Baptists* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1971), 3-4.

10 White, "John Miles," 36.

11 Ernest A. Payne, "Thomas Tillam," BQ 17:2, (April 1957): 61-66; David Douglas, *History of the Baptist Churches in the North of England, from 1648 to 1845* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1846), 8-69; E. B. Underhill, *Records of the Churches of Christ, Gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, and Hexham. 1644-1720* (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1854), 289-96. Tillam used the phrase "dark corner" in the first entry to the Hexham records, and the church, in a letter sent to Knollys' assembly in London, used the full phrase five months later, 289, 304.

12 Underhill, *Records*, 304; Payne, "Thomas Tillam," 61. On the "Committee" see Hill, "Puritans and the Dark Corners," 32-44.

13 Underhill, *Records*, 289.

14 [Benjamin Keach], *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated* (London: John Harris, 1689), 92-96; cf. Keach, *Exposition of the Parables: Series Two* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991 reprint), 362-63, where he likened ministers to "planters" whose fruit is to be "planted in a visible church of Christ."

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16 W. T. Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England, 1649-1913* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1913), 76. See also Frederick Overend, *History of the Ebenezer Baptist Church Bacup* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1912), 71.

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21 William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 165.

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A Command to Plant Churches

Poh Boon Sing

The Great Commission is a command directed to local churches. Specifically, it is a command to plant churches. Three considerations drive us to this conclusion.

The correct understanding

The correct understanding of the Great Commission requires this. Consider, first, the scope of the Great Commission. We are required to make disciples "of all the nations." This is primarily a reference to ethnic groups, and not to political entities, or countries. Of course, we often find a certain ethnic group concentrated in a particular country, or one ethnic group scattered in many countries. The point we are making is that we must not be misled by the modern usage of the word "nations," which is synonymous with "countries."

The scope

The original Greek for "the nations" is *ta ethne*, from which we get the English word "ethnic." In Acts 2:5, we read of devout men who came "from every nation under heaven." Here, the reference is to the Jews and proselytes who came from the regions around Judea and who spoke languages other than Hebrew. On other occasions, "the nations" is translated as "Gentiles," that is, people other than the Jews. In Acts 13:46, for example, we read of Paul and Barnabas saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles." The Jews rejected the gospel, so Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles, or "the nations."

To reach "all the nations" would require traveling to other places. As noted already, we may find various ethnic groups in one location, in which case the traveling would not be so extensive. The thrust of the Great Commission, however, is that other peoples elsewhere must be reached with the gospel. That is why the Great Commission, as recorded by Mark, reads, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." And it is recorded in Acts 1:8 as, "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Christians throughout the ages have understood this point. David Livingston traveled all over Africa to reach the various nations. William Carey crossed the seas to reach the peoples of India, and translated the Bible into more than thirty languages. Surely, we can see that it would have been impractical to bring all the converts back to the mother church from which the missionary came. The Lord did not intend the converts from all over the world to be brought to the mother church in Jerusalem!

If that is the case, what are we to do with the new converts? Surely, we cannot let them float about aimlessly without a local church to attach to. The converts should be gathered into local churches! The very scope of the Great Commission requires the planting of local churches!

The three elements

Then consider the three elements found in the Great Commission--"going," "baptizing" and "teaching." The first element involves going into the world. We are not to wait for hearers to stream into the church to hear the gospel. A few odd individuals may be moved by God in His own mysterious ways to come to church. That would be the

exception rather than the rule. The rule is that believers are to go to the people outside the church and invite them to come in to hear, or, better still, to bring the gospel to them. That is the first element of the Great Commission, which defines how the task is to be carried out. It is not the only element, and it must not be separated from other elements.

Many sincere and zealous Christians notice only the first element, which is to go into the world to make disciples. They would go witnessing to other people and feel happy when the hearers profess belief. Many of those who profess belief often turn out to be unconverted--they are not true disciples of Christ. A mere profession of faith does not constitute true conversion. And even if these Christians are careful to ensure that the hearers are genuinely converted, nothing more is done other than teaching the new converts to keep private devotion. The Great Commission, however, requires that the new disciples be baptized, which means incorporating them into the membership of the local church. In a pioneering situation, the new disciples would have to covenant together to become a new local church so that subsequent believers may be incorporated into it, through baptism.

The third element of the Great Commission is to teach the new disciples to observe all things commanded by the Lord. They are not to be taught only the elementary things of the faith, but "all the things commanded," which would mean the teaching of the whole Bible. This can be done only in the context of the local church. The new converts have to be given systematic teaching and pastoral care. They have to "grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," which is a gradual process. This can occur well only in the atmosphere of a spiritual family, which is the local church.

Apostolic examples

Apart from understanding correctly the Great Commission, as given by the Lord, we must consider also the apostolic examples. This is probably the best way to be convinced that we have understood the Great Commission correctly.

The apostles

First, we consider the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul. He was sent out with Barnabas by the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). They went around making disciples and gathering them into local churches. In Acts 14:23, we are told specifically that they "appointed elders in every church." To the apostles, a local church was not a loose gathering of believers, but believers who were properly constituted, and, ideally, had elders ruling over them. We know that Paul continued to do the same thing in the subsequent missionary journeys because we read of him meeting with the elders of the church in Ephesus, in Acts 20, which was planted earlier, in his second journey.

Not only were Paul and his colleagues doing this, the other apostles who were based in Jerusalem were also planting churches. In 1 Corinthians 9:5 we read these words, "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" Here, Paul was defending his apostleship. We are able to glean from his words the practice of the early churches--the churches had been sending out men, accompanied by their wives, to plant churches! Just as the apostle Paul had been traveling around to plant churches, so had the other men who were based in Jerusalem.

This is confirmed by Acts 9:31-32, "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda." Two things are clear. First, many churches were already established throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria by that time. Second, Peter, and other men, were in the habit of traveling to plant new churches and to strengthen the existing ones.

The early churches

From these examples, you might get the impression that only the apostles, and the churches with which they were associated, engaged in church planting. This is not the case, however, for the apostles appeared to have taught each of the churches to be involved in church planting as well! This might sound preposterous to many, but we can easily prove the point. First, we look at 1 Corinthians 1:2, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Who are the "all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord"? This is often interpreted to mean "all believers throughout the world." The letter of Paul to the Corinthians is then taken to be one that was addressed to all believers everywhere. While this may be a legitimate application of the verse, it is unlikely that it was the original intention of the apostle.

Like the other books of the Bible, this epistle arose from a certain historical setting. Paul was addressing the various problems faced by the Corinthian church--such as sectarianism, immorality, the eating of food offered to idols, and others. It is known that churches in a region were in the practice of sharing the letters of the apostles. We know that the churches in Asia did this, for we read in Colossians 4:16, these words, "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." It would appear that Paul was doing just that when he wrote to the Corinthian Christians. He wanted the letter to be read by other believers in the region of Achaia. This is spelt out explicitly in his second letter. We read in 2 Corinthians 1:1, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia."

This shows that the church in Corinth was in touch with groups of scattered believers in the region of Achaia. These were probably believers who gathered regularly to worship and pray. The church in Corinth would have been exercising pastoral oversight over these scattered groups, until such time as they would become viable churches. Preachers would have visited them regularly to preach, exhort, or at the very least, to read to them the apostle's letters.

We consider another example. Acts 9:32 says, "Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda." A few verses on, we find these words, in verse 38, "And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them." The two congregations, in Lydda and Joppa, were in contact with each other. We are told earlier, in verse 31, "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied." The churches are referred to according to regional groupings. In Galatians 1:1 we read of "the churches in Galatia," and in Revelation 1:4 we read of "the seven churches which are in Asia."

When we piece all this information together, the picture that emerges is that of an extremely dynamic, and yet organized, situation--in which each church had its satellite works in the surrounding region, preachers were being sent out to minister to these groups until they became viable churches, and these continued in fellowship with one another as regional groupings of churches. The New Testament churches were truly active and more mission-minded than is commonly realized! Like an organized army--a nest of ants, or a hive of bees--each was busily engaged in planting churches!

The early church understood the Great Commission as a command to plant churches.

Our spiritual forefathers

We must cover the last point very quickly--namely, the example of our spiritual forefathers. Our interpretation of Scripture should not be dictated by how others have understood it, but it would be foolish of us to act as though the Holy Spirit only enlightens believers in this generation and not those of the past. It will be helpful to consider how the early Independents had understood the Great Commission.

When we make a careful study of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, we would discover that they had worked through many issues that we have not even thought of. Take, for example, chapter 26 of the Confession of Faith, which deals with the church. It is spelled out clearly that the ordination of elders should involve fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands by the eldership of the church, while the ordination of deacons is to involve prayer and the laying of hands. Fasting is not laid down as a requirement for the ordination of deacons. This is just what is taught in Scripture. Although this is a relatively minor point, it does bring home the truth that the Particular Baptists had thought through many issues which may have escaped us.

When a study is made of the history of the Particular Baptists in the seventeenth century, you will be amazed to know how active and systematic they were in church planting. John Bunyan, for example, used to ride on his horse to visit the various preaching outposts for a week or two before returning to his homebase in Bedford. This practice of planting churches continued through to the eighteenth century. The same was done by the other Independent churches, of whom the Particular Baptists were part--each church had its own network of satellite groups. (See *Established Church, Dissenting People*, by Lovegrove.) The point we are trying to make is that the early Independents seemed to have grasped the teaching well--that the Great Commission requires the planting of other churches.

These, then, are the three considerations which drive us to the conclusion that the Great Commission is, in reality, a command to plant churches--the correct understanding of the command itself, the example set by the apostles and early churches, and the example set by the Independents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This article originally appeared in the *Gospel Highway*, a journal which is edited by Poh Boon Sing and is available free of charge to full-time workers who write and request it. Contact the editor at *Gospel Highway* * Good News Enterprise * c/o 52 Jalan SS 21/2 * Damansara Utama * 47400 Pelaling Jaya * Malaysia.



News

Southwest Founders Conference

The Southern Baptist Founders Conference Southwest is planned for September 30-October 2, 1999 at Heritage Baptist Church, just outside of Ft. Worth, Texas. The theme is "Our Triune Lord" and speakers include Pastors Tom Chantry, Bob Selph, Fred Malone, Tom Ascol and Professor Tom Nettles. Cost is \$40.00, with discounts for students and early registrations. For more information contact Glenn Woods, Conference Coordinator at (817) 297-2702 or (817) 991-6076.

Founders Breakfast in Atlanta

The Founders Fellowship Breakfast, held in conjunction with the annual Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta was attended by more than 150 registrants. The event was covered by both Baptist Press and Associated Baptist Press and articles are available on their web sites.

SBC President Welcomes Discussion of Calvinism

In his presidential address at the recent Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. Paige Patterson noted the revival of the doctrines of grace among Southern Baptists. "Some wring their hands in apparent terror over these discussions," He said. "I welcome them."

Appealing to a theory of Southern Baptist origin, Patterson stated, "Discussions of Calvinism will not injure our corpus or hinder our future so long as we remember that two distinct tributaries feed our Southern Baptist river. From the Charleston tributary we receive a strong infusion of the sovereignty of God, while the Sandy Creek tributary runs deep with the freedom and responsibility of man. Sandy Creek inspires us to persuade men to come to Christ, while Charleston reminds us that salvation is the work of God alone. As long as we can, with Christian charity and brotherly compassion, discuss these verities whose mysteries clearly transcend even our brightest minds like the blazing noon-day sun transcends a flickering candle, we shall not squander our heritage."

While his historical analysis bears closer scrutiny in light of Regular and Separate Baptist documentary evidence, Dr. Patterson's theological cautions and plea for brotherly love are deeply appreciated, timely reminders to all Southern Baptists who want to live under the authority of God's Word.

New Founders Press Title

Be Sure What You Believe: The Christian Faith Simply Explained, by Joe Nesom, is the latest title by Founders Press. Erroll Hulse describes it as "a first-rate book because it explains in an easy-to-read, flowing style the foundational truths of Christianity. Joe Nesom is thoroughly biblical and meets hard questions without flinching." Dr. Nesom is a member of the Founders Ministries Board of Trustees. He is the pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, LA. The book retails for \$11.99 and is available from Founders Press, PO Box 150931, Cape Coral, FL 33915.

Pastor and Church List on the Web

After many requests and years of consideration, plans are underway to post on our web site a list of pastors and/or churches which are "Founders friendly." The number of requests to Founders Ministries for churches or contacts from people who desire fellowship with other like-minded believers near them has become almost overwhelming over the last year. In order to make this information more readily available, a voluntary list will be compiled and posted at Founders.org. If you are interested in being included in such a list, contact our web master, Dr. Stan Reeves at sjreeves@eng.auburn.edu with pertinent contact information. Include a statement of your own confessional orientation and/or that of your church.



Letters

Dr. Ascol,

First, let me say that the *Founders Journal* has been a real blessing to me. I am encouraged that other Southern Baptists see the error in the "man-centered" theology that pervades most Southern Baptist churches today. We are right to call our brothers and sisters back to the doctrines of our founders, because their doctrines were centered around the power and mercy of God. If we, as Southern Baptists, are going to truly honor God and re-energize the local church, we must preach and teach the Doctrines of Grace!

Secondly, I am convicted of the need to bring back church discipline. The fact that Bill Clinton is a member of a Southern Baptist Church in good standing shows how far we have gotten away from God's provisions for maintaining the spiritual health of the local congregation. ...

Again, thank God for the Founders Ministry and I look forward to receiving the *Founders Journal* for many, many more years. May God bless you all.

In the Love of Christ,
I. M., via e-mail



Book Review

My Heart In His Hands, Ann Judson of Burma by Sharon James, England: Evangelical Press, 1998, 237 pp.

Reviewed by [Barb Reisinger](#)

The old saying goes, "Behind every good man is a great woman" and such was the case of one of America's first foreign missionary couples, Adoniram and Ann Judson. Ann Hasseltine Judson was truly a remarkable and godly woman and the book, *My Heart in His Hands* is a wonderful biographical account of her life. Sharon James masterfully selects numerous extracts from Ann's own diary entries and various letters to tell the story of this devoted wife and consecrated Christian.

The author's narrative along with Ann's own memoirs work as a magnifying glass giving the reader a clear and intimate look into the heart and soul of this dear Saint. The book leaves the reader admiring and loving Ann Judson, but more importantly, it shows how Ann's life brought glory to God. The reader will gain a renewed sense of awe and amazement of God's majesty, mercy and grace.

At 16 years of age, God saved Ann Hasseltine during the Religious Revival of 1806 in the New England town of Bradford, MA. Her piety, fervor and depth of understanding at this young age reflect the gracious influence of God's Spirit. In her testimony Ann articulates her heart-felt convictions. Deserving particular attention are the profound theological truths she expressed. She writes,

A view of his purity and holiness filled my soul with wonder and admiration. I felt a disposition to commit myself unreservedly into his hands, and leave it with him to save me or cast me off, for I felt I could not be unhappy, while allowed the privilege of contemplating and loving so glorious a Being (p. 25).

Unlike many Christian biographies, this book takes seriously the theological convictions of its subject. Sharon James clearly demonstrates that Ann's life was built on the theology that she held so dear.

Subjective experience (what she felt) was always based on objective reality (what she knew to be true, this knowledge being based on Scripture) (p. 15).

Ann's letters and diary entries written during dark and difficult days, such as the death of their beloved son or Adoniram's two-year imprisonment, clearly demonstrate her belief in God's sovereignty and providence. In the midst of trials and suffering Ann would humbly submit herself to the Lord's will praying that His purpose in the affliction would be accomplished.

Ann was keenly aware of the depravity of her own heart. Her humility and zeal in serving God came from her sincere belief that she was an unworthy servant of a majestic God. In a letter to her sister she wrote:

If I have grown any in grace since I have left America, it has consisted entirely in an increasing knowledge of my unspeakably wicked heart. . . (p. 102).

Ann's religion was totally God-centered--not relying on what she could do but rather, what God promises to do. Ann

confronted everything with total confidence in God and relied solely on the promises in His Word.

This book stands as a clear testimony against those who falsely claim that "Calvinism kills missions." The Judsons not only espoused the great truths of God's sovereignty in salvation but they were also motivated and strengthened by them. The book gives repeated evidence of this.

Sharon James is to be commended for her literary contribution in *My Heart in His Hands*. Appreciation for this book is so great that one would hesitate to even mention two minor areas of criticism. However, this reviewer sensed a disappointing loss of ambience in chapters 13 and 14--almost as if they are two pieces of a different puzzle. Secondly, the appendices in the back of the book are extremely informative and interesting, so much so that much of the information found in them could be more beneficial to the reader were it woven into the story.

In closing, *My Heart in His Hands* is recommended reading for not only women, but men and serious young people as well. This work will stir the emotions and thrill the soul as it exalts the God that Ann Judson gave her life to serve.

