CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 36: William Carey: 19th c. Missionary to India

William Carey: A Gallery of Missionary Pioneers

They boldly went where no Christian had gone before

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Adoniram Judson (1788–1850)
Ann Hasseltine Judson (1789–1826)
America's unlikely missionaries to the Far East

He had been a cynical actor who rejected the faith of his father. She had been the town belle, indulged by her parents.

Hardly likely candidates for the rigors of the early nineteenth-century mission field—but now Ann Hasseltine Judson, nicknamed Nancy, and her husband, Adoniram Judson, are assured of their place in history. They helped open the Far East to others who would carry out the Great Commission.

Before they met and were married, both Adoniram and Nancy underwent powerful conversion experiences, passing, as Nancy put it, "from death into life." Both had a passion to join the nascent missionary enterprise that was firing the imaginations of youthful Christians on both sides of the Atlantic. So thirteen days after they wed, in 1812, they set sail for India.

Aboard ship, Adoniram, an ordained Congregational minister, changed his theology to the Baptist position. Ann did also, and they were thus forced to sever ties with their sending mission. The Judsons were baptized by William Carey's colleague William Ward.

The Judsons found that the English governors of the subcontinent did not welcome these Western visitors with their Bibles and zeal. Threatened with deportation, they left India and went first to Mauritius and thence to Burma—a closed land, ruled by a tyrannical regime, horribly hot and disease-ridden. The Judsons found the place "dark, cheerless, and unpromising."

Over time, Ann Judson suffered from smallpox and spinal meningitis, buried one child, and saw her husband shut up in a vermin-infested prison for two years. Yet she also translated the Gospel of Matthew into Burmese and strove to improve the lot of Burmese women, who were considered little more than chattel. She missed her family but could affirm that "I am happy in thinking that I gave up this source of pleasure ... [and] I am happy [to] labor for the promotion of the kingdom of heaven." She, and a new baby, died soon after Adoniram's release.

Adoniram fell into a deep depression after Ann's death and even contemplated suicide. But he recovered and went on to translate the entire Bible into Burmese. He also pursued an itinerant ministry that, after many years, began to yield fruit. In 1845 he returned to the U.S. for a visit, to find himself lionized as a living Protestant saint.

Judson, who was married three times, outlived all his wives and several of his children. Between marriages, he entrusted his children's care to others. Some of his children never saw him after childhood. But when he died in 1850, he left behind 7,000 more "children"—members of the Burmese Christian church he and Ann had begun.

Hudson Taylor

(1832–1905)
He "became Chinese"

"To go forth, to cry out, to warn, to save others, these were frightful urgencies upon the soul already saved." Author Pearl Buck, the daughter of missionaries, might have been describing Hudson Taylor's vision when she wrote these words. Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, had a single-minded dream to win to Christ every man, woman, and child in China.

He grew up in Yorkshire, England. As early as age 4 he was telling people he wanted to be a missionary to China. Following a rebellious period, at 17 he committed himself to Christ; at 18 he began training in medicine. During this time word reached England that the new emperor of China was a professing Christian. A door had been opened, and Taylor, sponsored by the Chinese Evangelization Society, left for Shanghai's missionary colony in 1853.

He didn't stay there long. He disliked the other missionaries and wished to get away from their "criticizing, backbiting, and sarcastic remarks," and so he began traveling into the interior, a vast territory long hostile to foreigners. Taylor decided that if he would "become Chinese," his ministry would have more impact. So he dyed his hair black and donned a false pigtail, Chinese spectacles, and baggy pantaloons .

The China Inland Mission (CIM) came into being in 1865 while Taylor and his wife, Maria (a missionary teacher he'd met and married in China in 1858), were on furlough in England. He toured the country recruiting missionaries with his message of "a million a month dying without God."

Now the work was in place. But quarreling among the workers, continued hostility from the Chinese, and criticism from the British dogged Taylor for years. And some of his problems were brought on by his brusque manner. Further, Taylor's vision of exposing all of China to the gospel—as opposed to working with nationals to build a local church—made CIM vulnerable to the Chinese suspicion of "foreign devils." In 1900, following an imperial decree that all foreigners be killed and Christianity exterminated, 135 missionaries and 53 missionary children were massacred.

Taylor, ill in Switzerland at the time, never fully recovered from the tragedy. He died in 1905. His example rallied hundreds to serve under CIM (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship), and the organization set the pattern for future faith missions worldwide.

David Livingstone
(1813–1873)
Seeker of "1,000 villages where no missionary has been"

The popular image of David Livingstone is that of a bearded, eccentric old man being "found" in darkest Africa by intrepid New York reporter Henry Stanley (who is remembered as saying, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?").

Livingstone, according to his biographers, ***was*** eccentric, or at least difficult. He ***was*** found by Stanley. But he also laid the foundations for generations of missionaries who sought to reach Africa with the gospel.

Livingstone was born in Scotland. His countryman, missionary Robert Moffat, inspired him with stories of "the vast plain to the north" of Kuruman, in southern Africa, where he had seen "the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been." It was to Kuruman, where the Moffats were based, that Livingstone trekked in 1841. He immediately fell in love with Africa; he also fell in love with the Moffats' oldest daughter, Mary. They were married in 1845.

Livingstone's zeal for exploration was at least as strong as his zeal for evangelization. He and Mary (and,

later, their children) would set off on frequent expeditions into the wilderness, earning him the rebuke of his mother-in-law: "A pregnant woman with three little children trailing about with a company of the other sex—through the wilds of Africa among savage men and beasts! [The] thing is preposterous."

Livingstone finally sent his family home to England—unfortunately to live in poverty. Some believed his wife began drinking. Meanwhile he began his greatest journey, across the continent along the Zambezi River. Hostile tribes and fever were constant threats, but Livingstone and tribesmen reached the coast in six months. Then they turned back and did it again.

In his travels Livingstone encountered the brutal slave trade. He was convinced that a combination of "Christianity and commerce" would bring prosperity to the region and thereby end the evils of slavery.

Returning to England in 1856, Livingstone was hailed as a national hero. He made two more expeditions; neither was as successful as the first. The last time he went to Africa, in search of the source of the Nile (he didn't find it), he stayed seven years. He suffered from malnutrition and fever.

After Henry Stanley found him, the two men became friends. Stanley later said of him, "For months after we met I found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out the words, 'Leave all and follow Me.' But little by little, seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness ... I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it."

CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 79: African Apostles: Black Evangelists in Africa

Pioneer of Self-Euthanizing Missions

To Henry Venn, a mission's only purpose was to render itself unnecessary.

Ted Olsen

Had the Church of England's evangelism operation been the nation's royalty, Henry Venn would have been a king. His eponymous grandfather was one of the most influential evangelicals of his day (known largely for his shaping of Charles Simeon). His father, John, was rector of Clapham during its emphasis on moral renewal (antislavery crusader William Wilberforce was among his parishioners) and one of the founders of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).

But Henry Venn was no elitist—especially where race was concerned. Though Venn spent his life as a missions administrator, rather than as a missionary (in fact, he rarely spoke publicly, and never visited the mission field), he befriended Africans throughout his life.

One of his earliest memories was of playing with Africans sent to England for education. And he later recalled the words of an African merchant he had met. "Treat us like men, and we will behave like men," the merchant had told him. "Treat us as children and we shall behave like children."

This idea became a foundation of Venn's thinking as president of the CMS, a position he held from 1841 to 1872. European missions to Africa could produce infant Christians, but these could only grow to adulthood under a "self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending" native church.

He likened a mission to scaffolding: "The master builder is the chief actor, and all the poles and platforms which he creates are the chief objects; but as the building rises the builders occupy less and less attention—the scaffolding becomes unsightly and when the building is completed it is taken to pieces." The purpose of sending missionaries, he said, is "the euthanasia of a mission."

Venn was not alone in his ideas, which were based in the vision of racial equality his father and other Clapham Sect members had promoted in their fight against slavery. But racism, backed by the rising philosophy of Social Darwinism and a growing state interest in colonialism, soon undermined his long-term goal of promoting indigenous Christianity.

"Even missionary societies suffer from the tendency to underrate the social and intellectual capacities of the native races," he lamented.