

Griffin's History

CHAPTER V.

A CHAPTER ON MODERN MISSIONS.

The paternity of the Missionary System among the Baptists is claimed for Mr. Fuller, by his biographer. His new doctrine on the Atonement, as might be expected, caused great distress and controversy in the churches. And in order to give the reader a hint, respecting his state of mind, and his standing among his brethren, previous to his begetting this thing, a few quotations from his diary, as reported by his biographer, will be sufficient:

1781, April 1st.—"It seems as if the church and I should break each other's hearts! To night I have been but truly charged with having 'an irregular mind.' How heartily could I embrace death, if it pleased God to send it! How far are peace and happiness from me!" 1785, Nov. 21st.— 'Much grieved to find the spirits of people about the neighborhood of Ghurt by controversy. I find there are several whose conversation almost entirely, and on all occasions, turns on these subjects. It seems to be one of Satan's devices, in order to destroy the good tendency of any truth, to get its advocates to hackney it out of its senses, dwelling upon it in every sermon or conversation, to the exclusion of other things. Thus the glorious doctrines of free and great grace have been served in the last age, and so have fallen sadly into disrepute. If we employ all our time in talking about what men ought to be and to do, it is likely we shall forget to put it into practice, and then all is over with us."

The reader, if his heart has been circumcised, his ears unstopped, and his eyes opened by "free and great grace," is now fully prepared to admit that Mr. Fuller was, on the 21st November, 1785, qualified to be the father of some new invention. And accordingly, about this time, we are informed by his biographer, the "germ of this Missionary institution" began to exist. But it was seven years afterwards that it began to bear tangible fruit.

The following extracts from the memoirs of Mr. Fuller, will show his relationship:

"In conjunction with a few individuals who had united with him in strenuous efforts to induce compassion on behalf of the heathen world, Mr. Fuller was, in the midst of his afflictions, occupied in maturing plans which issued in the formation

of the Particular Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the heathen. A meeting was convened for that purpose at Kettering, on the 2nd of

October, 1752, on which occasion the contributions amounted to £13 2s., 6d., which then constituted the whole of its pecuniary resources."

In a letter to Dr. Ryland, Mr. Fuller says, (as reported by his biographer): "You see things of great consequence are in train. My heart fears while it is enlarged. I have this day been to Olney to converse with brother Sutcliff, and to request him to go with me to Leicester this day se'nnight, to conciliate the church there, and to sound Mrs. Cary's mind, whether she will go and take the family" (to the East Indies.)

1794, Oct. 27—(From his diary again.): "Of late I have been greatly employed in journeying and preaching, and endeavoring to collect for the East India Mission. I find a frequent removal from place to place, though good for my health, not good for my soul."

"There was (says the biographer) at that time little or no precedent for the management of the affairs of such institutions, nor had Mr. Fuller any predilection for that business—like apparatus which the more extended concerns of the society at length imperatively demanded, and for the want of which they suffered during the latter part of his life. Besides his utter repugnance to that parade which has in too many instances been made an appendage to the business of religious institutions, he entertained serious objections of another kind. 'Friends,' said he, 'talk to me about coadjutors and assistants, but I know not how it is, I find a difficulty. Our undertaking to India really appeared to me, on its commencement, to be somewhat like a few men, who were deliberating about the importance of penetrating into a deep mine, which had never before been explored. We had no one to guide us; and, while we were thus deliberating, Cary, as it were, said, 'Well, I will go down, if you will hold the rope!' But, before he went down, he, as it seemed to me, took an oath from each of us at the mouth of the pit to this effect, that while we lived, we should never let go the rope. You understand me. There was great responsibility attached to us who began the business."

In this last sentence, Mr. Fuller has no doubt uttered a profound truth. "Who hath required this missionary system at their hands?" Is such a system set forth by precept or example in the revelation of God to man?

If not, as we boldly assert, how dare they practice such a system in His name—professing at the same time to take His revealed word as their only rule of faith and practice.

Be this system what it may, and founded on what authority it may, it is uncontrovertibly true, that Mr. Fuller, "in conjunction with a few individuals," did mature the plan, which, in 1792, "issued in the formation of the Particular Baptist Missionary Society." And those who deny this fact, as a mere matter of policy, are attempting to rob Mr. Fuller of the honor justly due him, and give it to the Apostles, who would not accept it were they present.

Mr. Fuller, under a deep sense of the responsibility of the undertaking, expresses himself, in a letter to Dr. Ryland, thus: "You see things of great consequence are in train. My heart fears while it is enlarged." He viewed the matter "somewhat like a few men, who were deliberating about the importance of penetrating into a deep mine, which had never before been explored." "We had no one guide us," says Mr. Fuller, "and while we were deliberating, Cary, as it were, said, 'well, I will go down if you will hold the rope'!!!!"

One more quotation from Mr. Fuller's biography, and we will pass on. In reply to an editor he says:

"As to magazines, there are several to which I contribute, for the sake of the Mission and other public interests, and, through such a number of objects as press upon me daily, my own vineyard, my own soul, my family and congregation, are neglected."

Our limits will not permit further quotations.

Before crossing the Atlantic in search of Missionary operations in our own beloved country, it would perhaps be well to notice the leading text, on which the New School Baptists rely, in support of their missionary system, viz: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This command was given to the Apostles, and not to the elders of the churches. They are two distinct sets of officers, the former were ordained by our Saviour personally, the latter by the Holy Ghost, instrumentally.

That there is some difference of opinion, among orthodox Baptists, relative to the obligation of this command, is readily conceded. Nevertheless, were it not for traditional notions on this subject, and were the mind strictly confined to the revealed word alone, the difference would no doubt vanish into nothing. At all

events, the Apostles did fulfill the command, and whether it will ever again be fulfilled, or not, let those who believe it, show their authority.

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.—Mark xvi:15.

"If you continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which was under heaven." —Col. i:23.

"But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."—Rom. x:18.

Without involving ourselves in the controversy about the extent of the world here meant, it is sufficient for our purpose to prove that the fulfillment of the command is asserted by equal authority and of equal length and breadth.

It is well known to all those concerned, that scripture language often has a special and general meaning. As a general rule there is no objection raised. But as to the specialty of the command, in the sense in which it was given to the Apostles, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, it never was required at the hands of the churches, nor the elders of the churches.

In conclusion of this part of the subject, we will quote from the circular letter of the Primitive Baptist Association, published in 1847, viz: "The elders were ordained as overseers of the churches. And Paul says to the elders, 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Peter, also, in his first letter, exhorts the elders to 'feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.' Not one word from either of these inspired writers, about the command laid upon the Apostles, and which the Apostles fulfilled. Neither can it be found in all the apostolic writings addressed to the churches. Paul tells Titus that a Bishop must 'Hold fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision. Whose mouths must be stopt, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. 'They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.' Though an Apostle might officiate as an elder, we have no authority for supposing,

that an elder may officiate as an Apostle. The Apostles were commanded to work miracles, but the elders were not.

"Some contend that the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, was given to the Apostles in a church capacity, and equally binding with the sacrament of the Lord's supper. But we see many palpable objections to such a conclusion. And 1st, we have no testimony of any organized Gospel church before the day of Pentecost. And 2nd, supposing the Apostles organized into a church, at the time they received the command to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel,' and by analogy made binding on all church members, then, according to this hypothesis, all should go, men and women; or, do what is less possible, show gospel authority for sending substitutes. Again: The Comforter, who was to lead Christ's people into all truth, directed the supper to be administered to the members of organized churches— but in all the letters to the churches, they are nowhere commanded to 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' Neither was this undertaken, or practiced by the Church at Jerusalem, or any other of the gospel churches, so far as we know from Divine truth."

None were ever specially engaged under this command, except the Apostles; and they, not as a Church nor Missionary Society; but as extraordinary Ministers, who "conferred not with flesh and blood," and were responsible to none but their Master.

We would now ask every intelligent Christian, whether the gospel was sent to the heathen land of America by a Missionary Society, or the providence of God? The truth is, that the Holy Ghost, it seems, has never adopted any other mode than persecution in some shape for sending the gospel from one country to another. This was commenced at Jerusalem, and has been continued ever since. "Wo unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh."

Dr. Judson is set up, by his friends, as the father of American missions. But the reader should understand this in a qualified sense. Mr. Fuller is the father of modern missions; and the American missions are fashioned after the English model. Therefore, to speak of sectional missions, would seem to be invidious distinctions, wholly unjustifiable—for they are all governed by the same spirit.

In 1812, Dr. Judson left America, a Congregational Missionary, and proceeded to Rangoon, in Burmah, and commenced operations. The next year "he was adopted by a society formed among the Baptists of this country." "In that year American

Christians pledged themselves to the work of evangelizing the world. They had but little to rest on except the command and promise of God. The attempts then made by British Christians had not been attended with so much success as to establish the practicability, or vindicate the wisdom of the missionary enterprise. For many years the work advanced, but slowly. One denomination after another embarked in the undertaking—and now American Missionaries are seen in almost every clime."

The above is from the address of Dr. Judson, delivered, or read, in Baldwin Place, Boston, in June, 1846, and of course will be received as apostolic authority, at least by the Missionaries. He calls it a missionary enterprise, and though it had then been in operation about twenty years, yet, its practicability had not been established, or its wisdom vindicated.

We take the following from the address of the President of the Foreign Mission Board to Dr. Judson, at Richmond, Virginia:

"When you and your honored associates, Nott, Mills, and Newell, presented to the General Association of Congregationalisms, in Massachusetts, assembled in Bradford, in 1810, a paper expressing your desire to engage in the work of Foreign Missions, and asking their advice and aid, who could have anticipated the result of the application! At that time the churches were slumbering profoundly on the subject of Missions—there were no Missionary Societies—no plans matured for conducting Missions— and no funds collected for the support of Missionaries.

"The application originated the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. A noble institution it is, superior to any in our own land, and vieing in the wisdom of its measures, and the success of its efforts, with the best ordered and most renowned Missionary organizations of the old world. Its annual expenditures is not far, if at all, short of one third of a million of dollars; and its Mission stations have dotted almost the whole extent of heathendom.

"Under the patronage of this Board, after considerable hesitation and delay on their part, you embarked, with your companion, and several associates, in 1812, for the East. On your arrival there, an event occurred deeply affecting your own course, and the cause of Missions. You, Mrs. Judson, and the lamented Rice, became Baptists. The hand of God was in it. The change was the means of arousing, among the Baptists of the United States, the Missionary spirit, and forming the Baptist Triennial Convention, under whose patronage you have so long labored.

***** "The success of the Missionary enterprise has every where corresponded, in a remarkable manner, with the measure of ability, zeal and diligence employed

in its prosecution. We base our expectations on the increasing prevalence of the Missionary spirit. When more than half a century ago, the work of Foreign Missions commenced (at Kettering,) among the Anglo— Saxon Christians, led on by the immortal Cary, it was predicted that its advocates would soon grow weary; and relax their efforts. The prediction has not been fulfilled. At no previous period has it been so much the settled policy and purpose of the churches to make efforts and sacrifices in the work of evangelizing the world, as it is now. *****

"Henceforth, my brother, you and we shall labor in connection with different Boards. Events which neither you nor we could control, produced the separation. * * * We honor you as the father of American Missions."

In the foregoing the reader will readily see, that in his eagerness to honor Dr. Judson, the President has admitted modern Missionism to be a new thing among the Baptists. And yet in the face of this, and the truth of history, the New School Baptists will contend, that it has been practiced ever since the days of the Apostles.

For the purpose of showing the estimation in which modern Missionism was held in America in days gone by, we extract the following from an address of Dr. Judson, at Utica, New York, viz:

"Thirty— three years ago he took passage with an associate missionary in a ship bound for India. No ministering brother, and but a few Christian friends, dared risk their reputation so much as to accompany them to the ship. No prayers were offered on the occasion, no affectionate farewells. They went down to the ship alone, crept into the cabin, and committed themselves to the deep. Now, how changed!!!"

So do we say "how changed!" And all the Old School Baptists throughout the United States say "how changed!" But the most astonishing thing of all is, that when Dr. Judson says "how changed!" the New School Baptists are ready to throw up their hats—and when we say the same thing, they, with a contemptuous scowl upon their faces, will affirm that modern Missionism is regular Baptist usage, and has been practiced ever since the days of the Apostles.