

## A Credible Profession of Faith

Excerpt from *A Memoir of the Life and Labors*  
of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D., Boston, 1853, vol. 2, p. 8.  
(Judson had been a missionary to Burma in the 19th c.)

by FRANCIS WAYLAND,  
President of Brown University

There is one feature of the following narrative which may possibly require a brief explanation. It will be seen that, on many occasions, Dr. Judson, in his tours through the jungle, met with men and women who requested Christian baptism; and that, after conversation with them, and what is termed “a relation of their experience,” with the approbation of such native Christians as were present, he admitted them by this ordinance, *to the fellowship of the church*. It may be asked, How, from such a brief acquaintance, could he know that they were suitable candidates for the reception of this rite? The answer to this question is briefly as follows:

Dr. Judson believed that when any man becomes a Christian, or a real disciple of Christ, a specific moral change takes place in his spiritual nature. The essential elements of this change are, a deep and universal sorrow for the sins of his past life, an entire renunciation of all hope of salvation by any merits of his own, an unreserved surrender of himself to Christ, relying on Him alone for pardon and acceptance with God, and an earnest desire to live henceforth in obedience to all the requirements of the gospel; and that these spiritual exercises terminate in a radical change of moral character, leading to a pure and holy life.

A man’s fitness for membership of a church is therefore to be learned, *first*, from the nature of these exercises, of which he himself alone can be conscious, and which, therefore, we must learn from his own lips; and *secondly*, from the testimony of those who know him, that his life has corresponded with these professions.

It was on this ground that Dr. Judson acted in admitting men to baptism; and he seems to have acted with good reason. “If any man,” says St. Paul, “is in Christ, he is a new creature.” This new creation must comprehend not only a change in *practice*, but a change in *motives*, and in all the *moral affections*. What is *external* may be known in part from others; what is *internal*, the source of all, being apparent to his own consciousness alone, must be known from himself. The personal narrative of this change in moral character is frequently called the relation of a man’s “religious experience.” It was after hearing this, and learning the character which the candidate maintained among his neighbors, that he was received to membership in the church.