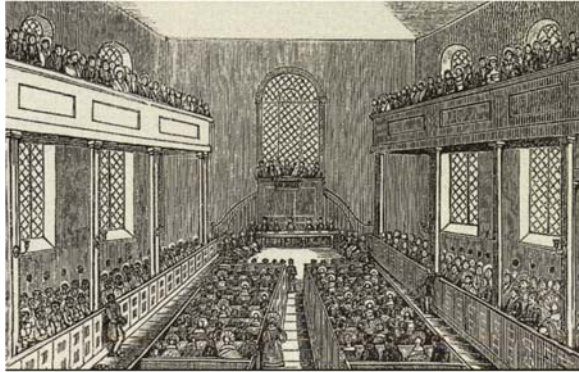


Baptist Heritage

Baptists Organize for Missions

In 1814 supporters of the Judson mission to Burma formed the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions. Meeting every third year, this first national organization of American Baptists became known as the Triennial convention.

Luther Rice had returned to the United States to raise funds for Baptist mission work after Ann and Adoniram Judson had become Baptists as a result of their studying scripture passages



First Baptist Church of Richmond, VA, during the 1835 Triennial Convention

about baptism during their voyage to India. The Judsons concluded that believers' baptism as taught by British missionary William Carey was correct, not the infant baptism practiced by the

Congregationalist churches that had originally commissioned them. Rice visited Baptist churches and women's societies throughout the United States, seeking support for the Judson mission.

Through publications, educational programs, and numerous meetings, the infrastructure for a national Baptist movement was built. Rice's co-workers and leaders in this work of nurturing a national Baptist movement were William Staughton of Philadelphia, PA, Richard Furman of Charleston, SC, and Thomas Baldwin and Lucius Bolles of Massachusetts.

Initially the Baptist board sponsored mission everywhere, including in the western U.S. frontier settlements of St. Louis and Michigan. But by the 1830s limited finances caused Convention leaders to focus solely on foreign missions.

The Triennial Convention in 1845 renamed itself the American Baptist Missionary Union, after Baptists in the South broke off

over the issue of slavery. The direct descendants of the Triennial Convention and then the ABMU are International Ministries (formerly called the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the



Adoniram Judson

Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society) and the American Baptist Churches in the USA (previously known as the Northern – and later American – Baptist Convention).



Ann Judson

Throughout the nineteenth century Ann and Adoniram Judson remained the best known ambassadors of the new global mission. But critical to the spread of this new gospel of missions were the ministerial leaders who organized the Triennial Convention. They established the infrastructure needed to sustain and grow the mission into the 20th and 21st centuries.

Among the youngest of those Triennial leaders was a Massachusetts minister, Howard Malcom, whom the Triennial Convention sent in 1835 to review the mission work in Burma and India. Malcom's role in accessing, refining, and publicizing mission work was critical, and his published report on his travels to Asia became the handbook for mission education in the nineteenth century. (The American Baptist Historical Society has sketches of mission sites Malcom made, as well as the Triennial Convention records.) After his retirement from serving as President of the Baptist College in Lewisburg, PA (now Bucknell), he became the curator of the American Baptist Historical Society, insuring that missionary letters and reports would be at the core of American Baptist historical collections.



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