



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

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April 29, 1970

125 Years of Foreign Missions Evaluated in Terms of People

by Jesse Fletcher
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Southern Baptists have had a foreign mission board for 125 years. How can 125 years of missionary labor be assessed?

Histories tend to do it chronologically, geographically, even administratively. In a more profound sense, however, 125 years of foreign missions history must be told in terms of people.

This kind of historical record is dominated by family names such as Shuck, Bowen, Bagby, Moon and Green; rather than by country names such as China, Nigeria, Brazil, Argentina and Italy.

When more than 3,500 men and women have stepped out of the familiar environs of home, often at great personal risk, to cross great oceans and penetrate unknown frontiers in the name of Jesus Christ, how can you possibly trace the blood, remember the sweat, recall the tears, and tell their story completely? Especially, how do you do this when people are still going and when over two-thirds of them are still at it?

Man, obviously, cannot keep such a history. He can have faith, however, that God keeps such a history and is in the best possible position to appreciate its chapters--the written and unwritten, the known and the unknown.

The modern missionary movement came into being through the commitment of an English Baptist, William Carey, who is often called by historians the "father of the modern missionary movement." In 1793 he journeyed to India where he served for more than 41 years as missionary, preacher, teacher, linguist, and educator.

It took a providential turn to put Baptists in America into the foreign mission business on their own. In 1812, three Congregationalist missionaries set sail for India. Adoniram and Ann Judson, on one ship, and Luther Rice, on yet another ship, had similar experiences. On the long voyage, they became convinced after a study of the scriptures that they should be Baptists. The Judsons and Rice were baptized in Calcutta within a few months apart. Resigning from the Congregation mission, they sought support from home as the first Baptist missionaries from America.

Judson and his wife settled in Burma in 1813 and began their work, while Rice returned to the United States to secure support for the first Baptist foreign missions work of America. He traveled throughout the country seeking support for Baptist foreign missions efforts. It was in his travels that he conceived the plan of a general mission society made up of representatives from smaller bodies.

Rice's work led to the founding in Philadelphia on May 18, 1814, of the General Convention of Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, more popularly called the Triennial Convention.

While Baptist foreign missionary history begins with the names Carey and Judson, the distinct starting point for Southern Baptists is with the name J. Lewis Shuck, of Alexandria, Va., the first missionary appointed by the Triennial Convention from the South.

Shuck was appointed as a missionary to China in 1835 under the Triennial Convention. But when the Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845, he resigned and was appointed by the new convention's Foreign Mission Board. He returned to Canton, China in 1846.

As a part of a missionary youth group at First Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., Shuck faced an offering plate being passed for foreign missions. Rather than placing money in the plate, he placed a note reading, "I give myself." His spiritual posterity has been doing that ever since.

Few people at the time realized that a young Virginia woman appointed as a missionary to China in 1873 would have a profound effect on the future of Southern Baptist missionary efforts.

Charlotte (Lottie) Moon served in China for 14 years before she took her first furlough. During that time, she wrote to Baptist women in the South, asking for reinforcements. The first Christmas offering, later to be named for Lottie Moon, provided three additional missionaries. The spirit of their ministry, and that first annual offering, paved the way for the remarkable events that lay ahead.

Southern Baptists' first missionary to Africa was a man named Thomas Jefferson Bowen. He was a Georgian, and his pilgrimage to missionary labor was a dramatic one. Quite well-known as an Indian fighter and adventurer, Bowen was converted in 1840. He began preaching the following year, and in 1849 he persuaded Southern Baptists to appoint him as a missionary to Africa.

His early missionary efforts and exploration of Nigeria were remarkable despite the fact that his health was soon broken. He returned to the United States, regained his health, and embarked on an exploration trip to Brazil in 1859. Though ill health again prevented him from fulfilling his dreams, his reckless commitment characterized the lives of many missionaries that followed him to Africa and to Latin America.

A number of years elapsed before anyone followed Bowen to Brazil, but his successor made up for lost time. W. B. Bagby, a Texan, and his wife, Anne Luther, went to Brazil in 1881. Their outstanding efforts established an exciting work in South Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Five of their nine children returned to South America as missionaries.

In the equatorial area of the Amazon Valley in northern Brazil, the historical spotlight centers on the name Erik Alfred Nelson. Born in Sweden, but reared in Kansas after his family migrated to the United States, Nelson was influenced by a letter from W. B. Bagby.

Nelson went to the Amazon Valley in 1891 and in a unique boat ministry up and down the Amazon, organized churches from Belem near the mouth of the Amazon to Manaus, about 1,000 miles inland. His heroic labors were well celebrated and aptly titled in L.M. Bratcher's book, *The Apostle of the Amazon*.

Across the Atlantic, the first missionary was sent to Europe in 1873 when George Boardman Taylor, son of the board's secretary, began his 34-year ministry in Italy. Italy was also the scene of a significant missionary labor by Everett Gill Sr., who did notable work in Italy, especially in the field of relief. After World War I, he gave Baptist work new impetus in Spain, Italy, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Rumania. His son later became Foreign Mission Board secretary for Latin America.

During the same period that Gill was working in Europe, a medical doctor named George Green was writing an exciting chapter in foreign missions history in Nigeria. Appointed to Nigeria in 1906, Dr. Green organized the hospital at Ogbomosho, established a camp for treatment of lepers, and helped two other doctors work out the most advanced treatment of leprosy that had been developed to that date. His compassionate heart also spawned a motherless babies' home.

Green's gifts expressed themselves in teaching and preaching, as well as in administration and medicine. He became an inspiration not only to Nigerians and Southern Baptists at home, but also to countless missionaries who labored beside him in West Africa.

Sometimes, the historical spotlight simply flits across the page, hardly pausing and yet somehow illuminating the whole scene. Such was the case of Grace McBride. This young missionary nurse went to China in 1916, but two years after arriving, she joined the Red Cross to serve American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia. She died of typhus fever in Tumen, Siberia, in 1918.

The dramatic story of Bill Wallace has inspired thousands. Appointed to China as a surgeon at the Stout Memorial Hospital in Wuchow, Wallace continued his work through World War II and the Communist invasion. In December of 1950, he was arrested by the Chinese Communists, and died the following February. His martyrdom and life were told in both a book, and a full-length motion picture, entitled *Bill Wallace of China*.

In recent years, the names dotting the landscape of Southern Baptist missionary history with similar significance, dedication and valor have increased. Names like Bertha Smith, Wimpy Harper, Edith Vaughn, Loyce Nelson, L. C. Smith, I.N. Patterson, and Eric Clark are also part of this story.

Meanwhile, at home, men were administrating the Foreign Mission Board's far-flung ministries. Men like English-born James B. Taylor, the board's first executive secretary who served from 1846 to 1871. Taylor set the tone of missionary and sacrificial leadership that also characterized his successors.

Of the same stalwart leadership qualities came Henry Tupper, who followed Taylor and served until 1893 when R. J. Willingham became executive secretary. It was under Willingham's administration that medical missions, schools, publishing houses and seminaries came to new emphasis as approaches to foreign missions.

When J. F. Love took over in 1915, the world was at war and missions confronted a set of problems it was to face again and again in subsequent years. Efforts to enlarge the foreign missions effort in Europe and South America on the strength of the \$75 million campaign left huge debts when the pledges failed to fully materialize.

When T. D. Ray assumed the leadership task in 1929, the financial crisis was deepened. He is remembered for a facile pen that challenged Baptists to the "great adventure." It fell upon Charles E. Madrey, who became executive secretary of the board in 1933, to lead Southern Baptists back to the financial soundness that would allow new advance.

M. Theron Rankin became the board's seventh executive secretary in 1945. Known as "the apostle of advance," he challenged Southern Baptists to a far-reaching expansion. Rising numbers of new missionaries and rapid entering into many new countries quickly followed.

Advance was in full swing when Baker James Cauthen assume the post in 1953. Under his leadership, the board's ministry has assumed proportions undreamed of by his early predecessors.

In 1850, for example, there were only 17 missionaries. By 1920, the number had risen to 405. Thirty years later, in 1950, the number of missionaries had doubled to 804.

This year, on the board's 125th anniversary, the number of missionaries has increased to almost 2,500. The statistics represent the collection of life commitments and aggregate adventure in the name of Christ that must stand above numbers if we are to understand the true significance of the first 125 years of missionary labor abroad.

Perhaps the spirit of all of them is captured in the story of one who was appointed recently as a missionary to Hong Kong. His name was Fred Rippeto. After his appointment in the summer of 1969, he went to Callaway Gardens, Ga., for missionary orientation. In October, sudden illness took his life.

He never made it to Hong Kong, but he died in the course of doing the will of God as he saw it, in obedience to the Great Commission. In doing so, he somehow underlined the spirit of those who have gone.

April 29, 1970

A Look At 125 Years On
The Home Mission Front

by Arthur Rutledge
Executive Secretary, SBC Home Mission Board

As I look back over the first 125 years of the Home Mission Board, five things seem to stand out which have meaning for Southern Baptists today.

- * The tremendous importance of missions in Southern Baptist life.
- * The constant emphasis we have had on enlargement and expansion.
- * The necessity of flexibility and change.
- * The urgent need for financial soundness.
- * How God has blessed this cause.

In the initial meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Augusta in 1845, two agencies were formed by our Baptist forebearers. The two, the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board (then called the Domestic Mission Board) have continued in existence from that day until this.

They were established, not as "societies" which imply that missions is optional and that you can cooperate with this "society" if you want to; but as agencies, saying that missions is not optional in the church.

Cooperation and support were slow in coming. The first 15 years of the Domestic Mission Board were trying years. For a time, it looked as if it might have been stillborn. About the time it was ready to begin to show some signs of vitality, there came the Civil War.

By 1882 the future of the Home Mission Board and the convention itself were very much in question.

The Home Mission Board was moved in 1882 from Marion, Alabama, to Atlanta, Georgia. The board "was moved;" it did not "move." The Home Mission Board never voted to move. The convention, meeting in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1882 voted to move it to Atlanta.

The convention actually dismissed all the directors and the executive secretary--then called "corresponding secretary."

The convention was showing its faith in the board, particularly in its potential. They could have killed it. They could have merged it. The suggestions to abolish or to merge with the Foreign Mission Board came from time to time, but the convention said it believed there was a need for a Home Mission Board.

Then came the time of debt and the great embarrassment of a debt enlarged by embezzlement. Just a couple of months after the embezzlement was discovered, Baptist Honor Day was held. On that November day in 1928, Southern Baptists gave almost \$400,000 for the benefit of the Home Mission Board. This whole offering was for the Home Mission Board.

Then the One Hundred Thousand Club produced over \$600,000 to go on debt retirement over a ten year period, 1933 to 1943. Along with the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Offering, these special efforts provided a little more than \$1 million toward retiring a debt of \$2½ million.

Last year a little more than \$5 million came through the Cooperative Program for home missions. A little less than \$5 million came from the Annie Armstrong Offering.

Missions has been an inspiring, unifying cause for Southern Baptists. Today with 21 SBC agencies, 19 looking to the Cooperative Program for support, about 70 per cent of the SBC budget goes to the two mission boards--about 50 per cent to the Foreign Mission Board and 20 per cent to the Home Mission Board. Missions continues to be a primary concern of this convention as it was 125 years ago.

The second major factor is our convention's constant emphasis on enlargement and expansion. Geographical expansion, new fields, going to new places, going to new people--these have been dominant. In 1845 the convention talked about New Orleans. Texas was in the minds of our forefathers. Of the first six missionaries appointed in 1846, two went to Texas, two went to New Orleans, and two to other places in the South.

In 1855 the churches were urged to support the American Indian Mission Association which was led by Isaac McCoy. Ten years later, after McCoy's death, the association was offered to the convention and the convention accepted it. This work was assigned to the Home Mission Board, which was renamed the Domestic and Indian Mission Board.

From 1853 to 1861 we had mission work in California. It was disrupted by the Civil War, resumed again in 1870, and terminated in 1884. More than fifty years passed before Southern Baptists ever again officially served in California. Cuba was added in 1886; Panama in 1906, as expansion continued.

In our own day expansion has been into the western states, then the north, and finally the northeast.

In 1951, the convention voted to free all of its agencies to serve anywhere in the United States. By 1963, with the formation of a church in Vermont, the Southern Baptist Convention had one or more congregations in all fifty of the states.

Program expansion has been the order of the day. From the beginning Home Board missionaries were involved in establishing new churches--out on the frontier and in neglected areas in the South--and we are still involved, helping to pay salaries of pastors as new work is started and additional support is needed until the churches can be self-sustaining.

The need for church loans for the buying of property and the erecting of buildings was evident early, as far back as 1853. After a half century, in 1901, the fund had reached only \$4,110. Today the assets in that fund, belonging to Southern Baptists, total something like \$20 million. The great acceleration has come within the past 25 years with Cooperative Program money designated through the capital needs section of the budget, and with the Annie Armstrong Offering making special designations at times.

Concern for city missions did not begin with the urbanization of contemporary society. The convention had an early concern in New Orleans, just as it has concern for the two hundred plus metropolitan centers in our nation today. New Orleans was about the only city of any size in the early Southern Baptist territory.

Language missions was an early concern in home missions.

From the 1850's till World War I there was concern for immigrants coming into our country. There was involvement in Texas with Spanish language people, in Louisiana with people of French descent in the early part of this century.

Today this program is the largest of the Home Mission Board programs in size of budget. Half of the home missionaries are serving with this program among some 17 distinct ethnic groups.

Through all of the board's enlargement and expansion the dominating objective always has been evangelism in a deep and broad sense. Whether starting new churches, establishing a mission to another language or culture group, or working with Negroes, the objective has been to lead people to know Jesus and follow him as their Lord and Saviour.

The third major impression is the necessity of flexibility and change.

Our home mission enterprise has been changing constantly. Changing national conditions as well as changing denominational conditions have demanded change in approaches.

The Civil War practically eliminated all of the mission work of the Home Board. But it caused a beginning of our chaplaincy ministry that is now a very significant program.

We had chaplaincy ministries whenever we had war. In the 1940's the convention established an ongoing chaplaincy ministry which today includes not only the military chaplaincy, but also hospital, penal, industrial, and other institutional types of chaplaincy.

The national economy has had a tremendous influence upon us. The Home Mission Board had to suspend its evangelism department for an eight-year period, because of heavy debts.

Urbanization and industrialization have brought pronounced changes in our missions approach. Changes in race relations have brought continuing change in the expression of the program of work with Negro Baptists. In the beginning this was almost totally an evangelistic program. Then education came to the front. These two emphases continue, but now fellowship, understanding, and good will are very important results of this program.

Our objectives remain unchanged, but the expressions of our programs have to change.

A fourth impression has to do with financial soundness.

My heart goes out to my predecessors before we had the Cooperative Program. These men had to raise funds, as well as direct a program, and the burdens were terrific.

The secretaries themselves, in those early days with poor means of travel, traveled extensively. Joseph Walker wrote: "The office of secretary to Domestic missions is by no means a home office. We have been on the road two-thirds of our time for the past six months. Unpleasant as is this gad-about life, the mission could not succeed without it."

The coming of the Cooperative Program with the 75 Million campaign paving the way for it, demonstrated that we could work together. This has been a tremendous high-water mark in the life of this convention. It has given us a reasonably stable means of financial support. It has enlisted our people. It has enabled us to advance in a way never possible before we had an orderly means of support.

We were crippled for 80 years without a financial plan. We've made real progress now. But I must also say a word about responsible management.

All of the agencies went in debt in the 1920's. The Home Mission Board was in debt \$38,000 in 1917; by 1921 for one-half million dollars; in 1928 for \$1,600,000. Then came the discovery of embezzlement which lifted the total debt to \$2½ million. The debt was four times the annual income in 1928. It would be like the Home Mission Board today being in debt for \$40 million. But every dime of debt was paid, with no discounts.

What about the embezzlement? The board's treasurer, a trusted man, was given authority that was considered routine in those days, which we don't give today. He was authorized to borrow to meet current board needs. So he went all over the South, to 20 or 30 different banks borrowing sums of money from different banks for his own use. He did this over a 9 year period.

Today we have the business and financial plan, we have audits, we report to the SBC Executive Committee.

We learned something. It is not a demonstration of faith to make obligations that we do not have reasonable expectation of meeting. In this day of easy credit we need to be warned once again lest we have the same kind of difficulty faced 40 years ago.

We need to use the greatest care, the best business judgment we have and can gather around us, and be completely honest.

Another lasting impression is that the blessings of God have been upon this home missions cause.

There have been some hard days, such as Civil War days, the years of debt. Actually, there have been only two extended bright periods in the life of the Home Mission Board. One of them began with Isaac Taylor Tichnor and lasted 40 years, terminating with the inception of debt. The second period began in 1943 and extends to the present.

The Home Mission Board had many chances to die. Southern Baptists didn't want it to die. I don't think God wanted it to die. And so at this time in our history, we need humbly and gratefully to thank God for his guidance and blessings during this century and a quarter.

In one of the annual reports to the Southern Baptist Convention, J. B. Lawrence referred to those hard days of indebtedness: "No one outside of those on the inside can, or will, ever know the intensity of the struggle and the pain of effort through which the board passed during those awful years. Yes, the going was hard, but we learned the meaning of Emmanuel--God with us--for if he had not been with us we could never have gotten through."

So today we lift our hearts to God to say thank you and to pledge ourselves anew to be faithful to him in our day.



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Baptists Before 1848:
In Search of a Heritage

by Leonard Hill
Managing Editor, The Baptist Program

Credit for beginning the first Baptist church in America must go to Roger Williams--a free thinker and radical among radicals in the New World. In 1638, he and 11 others formed a Baptist church in Providence, Rhode Island.

Williams' principal contribution to religion, however, was not the founding of the first Baptist church in America, but his battle for religious liberty--one of the primary Baptist tenets.

Williams' church had no "children"--no off shoots, no missions. Williams himself remained a member only a few months before resigning to become a Seeker.

A more substantial Baptist root in American Baptist history can be traced to the seaport village of Kittery, Maine. There, William Screven, after leaving the established church in 1681, helped to organize a Baptist church. He became the first pastor.

He was jailed and fined for opposing infant baptism and released only after he promised to leave Maine. In 1684 (or 1683) Screven and other Baptists settled in the Charleston, S.C., area, and established the first Baptist church in the South.

John Clarke who emigrated to New England to find freedom of conscience did more to establish early Baptist strength here than did the short-term Baptist, Roger Williams. By 1644 Clarke and the church he founded near Newport, Rhode Island, were Baptist.

The surrounding community was hardly impressed. Clarke and two friends were arrested, charged with unauthorized preaching, denying the lawfulness of infant baptism, and other offenses. Clarke got off with a fine. One of the other men was made a public example and was brutally beaten in the streets of Boston.

Baptists from England and Wales continued to migrate to the New World to escape the persecution of the kings, James I and Charles I. But persecution took a faster ship and was waiting their arrival on American shores.

Only in Pennsylvania was the situation different. William Penn's colony afforded welcomed peace for all suffering Christians, and Baptists took advantage of it.

As Baptist churches were formed there they began coming together quarterly for fellowship, inspiration, and advice on doctrinal matters. Out of these meetings came the Philadelphia Association in 1707, the first Baptist association in the new land.

Baptist growth received a boost from unexpected sources--the Congregational churches of New England and the Great Awakening (1725-50). The Established Church had become staid, stale and sterile. It created a spiritual vacuum which Baptists helped to fill.

The Great Awakening, emphasizing individual conversion and the new birth, raised the moral tone of the whole country for a brief time. Congregationalism was shaken to its foundations and divided in sympathies. One group, called the New Lights, formed strict Congregational churches and were named the Separatists.

Harsh restrictions forced many of these Separatists in the direction of the Baptists. When revival fires flickered out about 1780, groups and churches of Separatists found their way into Baptist fellowship. While there were only six Baptist churches in 1740, by 1800 then number had grown to 325.

These separate Baptists were highly emotional and evangelistic. They appealed particularly to the poor and less educated. Rugged individualists, they looked with suspicion on associations having authority over churches.

The Separate Baptists also met with opposition from Regular Baptists, who had emigrated from England and Wales. Because of opposition from the Regular Baptists, two Separate Baptists, Daniel Marshall and Shubael Stearnes, moved from Virginia to Guildford County, North Carolina where they organized a church on the banks of Sandy Creek in 1755.

Sandy Creek Baptist Church grew rapidly from an original sixteen members to more than six hundred. It reached out into surrounding communities to establish other churches. And the branches often sent out other branches before they could get a minister ordained themselves!

In 1760 Sandy Creek Association was formed. Churches in North and South Carolina and Virginia were included until it was divided into a separate association for each state in 1770.

From North Carolina, Daniel Marshall moved further south into Georgia where he met with great success. Kiokee Creek Baptist Church was begun in Georgia in 1772 and the Georgia Baptist Association was formed in 1784.

After the Revolution the Separate and Regular Baptists gradually merged. Evangelism and missions, lifeblood of the Separates, still course through Southern Baptist veins.

Pre-Revolutionary War persecution pressured Baptists in two directions--both ultimately good. Persecution scattered the Baptist witness into the newly opening areas of the New World. It also pushed Baptist churches into closer cooperation in their fight for religious liberty.

Warren Association, the first association of Baptists in New England, was formed in 1767, during the struggle for religious freedom. Isaac Backus, the apostle of liberty, was the association's forceful witness for this cause before the Continental Congress.

Religious liberty was slow in coming to the Baptists, but Baptists gained increasing respect for their obvious patriotic views. Baptists were hawks in those days, marching in step to the fife and drums. Could fellow countrymen who echoed their cry for political freedom long deny the Baptists religious freedom?

The severe depression in the new country following the Revolutionary War opened the tides of westward migration. And Baptists, generally poor and among the first to feel the economic pinch, moved in great numbers. They found the democracy of the frontier to their liking. Baptists were a part of the frontier, and as the frontier grew, so did Baptists.

Following the war, a spiritual revival again began to sweep the country. Out of the revivals came a growing desire to spread the gospel to all people, especially those in the West and to the American Indians.

Missionary societies sprang up among various church groups to "carry the gospel to the heathen." The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society was founded in Boston in 1802. The Philadelphia Association sent out itinerant missionaries for a brief period.

Credit for the first national foreign missionary society in America must go to the Congregationalists. They formed the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810. Baptists also must thank the Congregationalists for providing them with an "instant" foreign mission program a few months later.

In February, 1812, five young men were ordained by the Congregationalists in Salem, Mass., prior to going to India as missionaries. Among the five were Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice.

After intense Bible study as they sailed to India on separate ships, both Judson and Rice arrived deciding to become Baptists. Judson wrote to Thomas Baldwin, pastor of First Baptist Church in Boston, to tell him the news.

To help support these new Baptist missionaries, in Baldwin's home was formed the Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel in India and Other Foreign Parts--a title almost long enough to reach from Boston to Calcutta.

Judson and his wife Ann were forced by restrictions in India to move on to Burma. Rice returned to America to seek Baptist support of their work.

Due to his intense efforts, missionary societies were established in all important Baptist centers. In 1813, Rice conceived the plan of a general missionary society made up of representatives of smaller bodies that was later to form the basis for the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 1814 33 delegates from 11 states formed the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination of the United States of America for Foreign Missions, more popularly called the Triennial Convention since it met every three years.

It was Rice who changed the scattered Baptist churches into a Baptist denomination.

A true unity developed among Baptists immediately following the Revolutionary War. The two Baptist groups who emigrated from England and Wales--General Baptists who believed

Christ died for all men, and Particular Baptists who held a more Calvinistic belief that Christ died for the elect only--gradually combined and were known as Regular Baptists.

Regular Baptists' suspicions of the Separate Baptists who came out of the Congregational churches gradually were overcome. By the 1800's Regular and Separate Baptists were almost completely merged. Brought together by persecution, interest in missions, and a common belief, all were covered by the one name--Baptist. But then--between Baptists in the North and Baptists in the South--differences arose.

In the North the "society" pattern of organization prevailed. In the South the trend was to a denominational body with separate organizations of state conventions and associations. The society organization fitted well with the pattern of independent town meetings of New England. In the South, tight knit state political organizations, plus semi-presbyterial influences brought by Stearns and Marshall from Congregationalism into early Baptist associational life influenced the leaning toward denominational organization.

Another serious and more direct factor leading to a division among the Baptists was the controversy over slavery. This controversy affected all denominations, but particularly the Baptists.

Early Baptists were usually not in the slave holding class--being too poor. But as southern agriculture boomed after the 1630's the Negro became much more valuable property. At the same time antislavery sentiments crystallized in New England. Economic interests and antislavery forces clashed in the churches.

Where the revivals had been most successful, the antislavery movement found its largest support. It was strongest in New England in rural towns and in the country. More than two-thirds of this group were Methodists and Baptists.

The slavery controversy, like a knife, sliced Baptist forces into two major groups, separating South from North, and cutting one of the great spiritual ties that had bound the union together. Differences became too great.

In 1845 Baptists in the South pulled out of the Triennial Convention and formed the Southern Baptist Convention in a meeting in Augusta, Ga.

That was 125 years ago. As Southern Baptists in 1970 celebrate their 125th anniversary, they also need to look to the past to the heritage of 332 years since Roger Williams established the first Baptist church in Rhode Island as they search for an understanding of the roots from whence they have grown.



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