

5. LUTHER RICE BEFORE TRIENNIAL CONVENTION

Luther Rice went out to India as a Congregational missionary under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1812. Soon after arriving there, Rice adopted Baptist views. He returned to America to arouse Baptists to the support of Baptist missionaries, Ann and Adoniram Judson, who were then in Burma. Rice, anticipating his return to Burma to work with the Judsons, accepted appointment as the first missionary of the Triennial Convention which was formed in Philadelphia in May, 1814. Rice was requested to be the agent of the new convention, and to visit Baptists enlisting their support and organizing missionary societies.

Here the artist pictures Rice demonstrating a map of the East, explaining the need of Baptist missions to the world. Richard Furman, South Carolina, the first president of the Triennial Convention, sits to the right. Thomas Baldwin, Massachusetts, the first recording secretary, is seated at the desk to the left. Rice is credited with changing the scattered Baptist churches into a Baptist denomination. He was indeed a great Baptist statesman.

The Artist says:

This particular painting in many respects was the most challenging to come up with a meaningful story-telling composition. Once again the artist had to rely on the historian's guidance who suggested the action of Luther Rice pointing to the map of the Far East. This action was dramatized both in position and lighting to give the central figure a little more feeling. For this was that moment with all talk and discussion ended, when they would vote to support the missionaries and thus form the first national organization of Baptists in America.

The open Bible with the light of the Lord shining through the windows, the attentive group, with one in deep introverted contemplation consider the plan of Luther Rice. The enthusiasm and dedication of Rice mark this Christian as truly a Baptist guided by *Philippians 3:14*.

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.