

The Atlantic Messenger.

EDITOR:
HIGHT C. MOORE, New Bern, N. C.

A monthly Baptist newspaper started in May, 1899, as the organ of the Atlantic Association; twice enlarged and improved within a year; in January, 1902, its field was so extended as to embrace the "Baptist Destitution" of about twenty counties in Eastern North Carolina, the territory lying mainly in the bounds of the Atlantic, Neuse, Wilmington, and Tar River Associations.

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OUR FIELD.

The Principal Baptist destitution of North Carolina is found in the twenty counties lying on and east of the Wilmington and Weldon R. R., between the Cape Fear and Roanoke rivers. This territory covers nearly 10,000 square miles, thus embracing one-fifth of the entire area of the State.

The white population of these counties is 185,374 (the colored being 165,000). They are scattered in fertile farming sections or grouped in thriving towns and villages. Wilmington has 20,000; New Bern 10,000; Kinston and Goldsboro 6,000 or 7,000 each. Of the smaller towns nine go above 1,000; six over 500; and thirty-five over 200. So in these twenty counties we have more than fifty towns ranging in population from 200 to 20,000.

This is a great farming and trucking region. Land produces per acre fifty to a hundred bushels of corn, 1,000 pounds of tobacco, from one-half to two bales of cotton, 75 to 100 bushels of peanuts, from 100 to 220 bushel crates of cabbage, &c., &c. The lumber interests are extensive and our forests will bear cutting over every 15 years. There are numerous manufactures such as oil, fertilizer, hosiery, farming implements, iron foundries, brick, ship-building, &c., &c. The water products are considerable; thousands of our people gain their support and their money from rivers, sounds, and sea. The health record is fine notwithstanding many of our up-country friends regard the East as a hospital if not a graveyard. Moreover, it is a principal theater of our State's distinguished history stretching back to the discovery of the New World. And, what is better still, Eastern Carolina can attain in the future a yet more glorious record than that which adorns the pages of the past.

THE BAPTISTS HERE AND ELSEWHERE.

In these twenty eastern counties we have two whole Associations—the Atlantic and the Neuse; the main part of the Wilmington; the area of destitution in the Tar River; and a fraction of the Chowan. If we have estimated correctly, we have in this section roughly 100 churches and 7,000 members. A pretty good showing, you say? But let us make two or three comparisons:

1. Take two associations lying north of us and occupying the six north-eastern counties of our State. The Chowan has 56 churches and 8,580 members; the West Chowan has 49 churches and 9,724 members. These two associations in about a half dozen counties have more churches and not far from three times as many members as we have in the twenty counties of our area.

2. Take four county associations from representative sections of the State: Robeson in the east, Union in the center, Caldwell in the foot-hills, and Buncombe beyond the Blue Ridge. Those four counties equal in area but one-

third of the territory we have described in the East; yet they have 144 churches and nearly 14,000 members. In those counties one-sixth of the white population is in our churches and there is one Baptist church to every seventeen square miles; while in the East we have less than one twenty-seventh of the white population and have but one church to every 100 square miles. There are about as many members in the 71 churches in Robeson and Caldwell counties as in our entire twenty counties in the East.

3. Take the Baptists of the State as a whole including our area and numbering 175,000. Our twenty counties cover one-fifth of the State; yet we have only one twenty-fifth of the Baptists of the State. As already said, we have here 100 square miles to every church; but in the State all together we have a church to every 30 square miles. One-seventh of the white population of North Carolina (roundly, 1200 thousand) is in the membership of our churches; but here we have not quite one twenty-seventh. Or, taking the entire population into the count, every tenth person in North Carolina is enrolled in our white Baptist churches; while in our area we have but one in fifty.

In view of these comparative figures, who can fail to be impressed with the Baptist destitution of Eastern North Carolina.

OTHER DENOMINATIONS IN THE EAST.

More than a score of religious sects are at work in Eastern Carolina. At least four of them outnumber us. We should say about ten others are stronger here than elsewhere in the State. And more than a half-dozen others are working to secure a foothold in this territory.

The M. E. Church, South, leads with a membership approaching 20,000.

The Free Will Baptists have about 12,000. Their theological seminary and the chief paper of the entire denomination is located at Ayden in Pitt county.

The Disciples, (or Christians, sometimes called Campbellites) have 104 churches and 10,000 members. Their college is located at Wilson; they have three normals; and their paper is now published at LaGrange.

The Primitive Baptists number certainly as many as 10,000, perhaps more. The organ of the denomination is published at Wilson.

The Episcopalians were first on the field and they still retain a strong hold in the older towns. Their present main aggressive work is educational; as at Beaufort and Chocowinity.

The M. E. Church (locally known as the Northern Methodists) have their chief educational institution in the State at Marshallberg and their paper is now published at Parmele.

The Holiness Church includes 30 organizations (mainly in the East) and their State Convention was held recently at LaGrange. The Sanctificationists of various kinds (including the Lynchites) belong under this head.

The Baptists (believing in free communion, formerly called Union Baptists, now sometimes designated as Spurgeonites) have 16 associations from this State to Texas. Their stronghold is in our area and their paper is published at Goldsboro.

The Christian Scientists have but four churches in the State. One of them and the oldest is at Asheville; but the other three and the more vigorous are in the East—New Bern, Kinston and Wilmington.

The Unitarians are at work and

we know of two churches recently formed.

The Second Adventists are stronger, we are quite certain, in the East, than elsewhere in the State.

Of the Universalists no doubt the same can be said, though we have not the figures at hand.

The Salvation Army forces found a fertile, though temporary, soil in several of our towns a few years ago.

The Presbyterians have about 50 churches and not far below 4,000 members.

The Lutherans have a church at Wilmington and possibly at other points in the East, while there is a sprinkling of them here and there through the country.

The Roman Catholics can claim several organizations at important points.

The Methodist Protestants are at work but we think they have only a very few churches.

The Quakers have certainly so many as two or three churches; perhaps more.

The Dunkards have at least one church; possibly there are others.

The Jews have a synagogue at Goldsboro; we think, also at Wilmington; one is contemplated for New Bern; and there may be others.

The Mormons have "compassed land and sea" in the East and not without success.

The Menmonites, we hear, talk of organizing a church in the near future.

Very probably other sects are at work in the territory we have described. At any rate, the list of denominations working alongside of us runs up to nearly twenty-five. In this ferment of conflicting creeds, no wonder that Baptist growth is slow.

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE BAPTISTS.

We are sorry to say the era of discouragement has not yet passed away. In much of our territory, our Baptist work is in its initial stage. And the beginnings are small; organization is effected when the membership does not run up to the teens. These infant churches start out on a career of abounding difficulties and they are without a native and stable ministry to guide them on and up to their highest efficiency. They must seek to be content with meagre results: often a year without a baptism; often a meeting conducted by some of our ablest pastors in the State yet without a profession. And the isolation of these miniature Baptist centers is something sickening to the loyal Baptist heart; sister churches are far away, the denominational hand of help is seldom extended with sufficient power to raise up the weak; the lonely, discouraged pastor sometimes goes his way, and the little church scatters, disbands and dies! And of those who do maintain a struggling existence, not one but stands in sore need of better training than can now be given it. Pastoral appointments are infrequent; too often pastorates are brief, changeable, and irregular; the tides of error are strong and adverse; the stimulus to struggle is weak; and our cause suffers. Nay, the hour of the wailing jeremiade is not yet over.

But the elements of promise are to be seen; in some places, even by the unseeing; everywhere, by the eye of faith. The growth in numbers is slow, but it is growth and it is steady. The quality of the members won to our faith from the din of clamoring creeds if often very gratifying; and they only need to be taught the way of the Lord yet more perfectly by a constant and competent ministry, and they will prove valiant defenders of the

truth. Moreover, the self-supporting churches in this territory are becoming aroused to the Baptist possibilities around them and their own responsibility in the matter of supplying the destitute regions. For example, one church which four years ago reported about eight dollars for State Missions will give this year between \$300 and \$400 to give the gospel to the people in the surrounding country. Again, our mission fields have been and are being conveniently grouped into pastorates and the lack of a native ministry is being atoned for by the erection of parsonages and provision for the settlement of pastors in our midst. The school work under denominational auspices is just now particularly gratifying as exemplified in the thriving high schools at Winterville and Morehead City.

And so while in our territory there are spots of darkness, there are also points of light. In the main we are doing foundational work; at certain places the structure has risen above ground; and in the coming days the building will rise into symmetrical and magnificent proportions.

THE NEED OF THE HOUR.

We might present and press as great needs in the East the establishment of first-class schools which would give us an outlook upon and command of the future; or the organization of Sunday Schools in every one of our churches (many of which are now without them) and at numerous mission points; or the erection of houses of worship for the struggling little churches which are unable to build. (At this moment ten church buildings are greatly needed in the Neuse and Atlantic Associations alone). Such demands upon us would seem to be monumental and imperative. But the inclusive duty and that authorized by Christ is *Preaching the Gospel*; we must push out error with sound doctrine and lead a people surfeited with creeds to the foot of the cross.

So our great need is men: men who can evangelize, winning souls from darkness to light; men who can indoctrinate, unfolding the great teachings of the Bible; men who can develop weak and struggling churches, bringing them to the highest efficiency and usefulness.

We need *more* men. The Atlantic Association, for example, has now only seven pastors and one field missionary—one preacher to every three hundred square miles of territory, one preacher to each 4,000 white people! Yet we have 900 Baptist preachers in the State!

We need *strong* men. The East is not a field for mere practice nor a shelf for the set aside. Its problems are subtle, its difficulties great, its discouragements many; and a strength is needed and demanded the equal of that exhibited in the foremost pulpits of our State.

We need *supported* men. No one can do his best work with his finances in a tangle; and for a preacher such a situation is ruinous. There is such a thing as starving a preacher into removal. We have known a good minister who did not get enough from his field and the State Board to meet his expenses for the year. Of course he left the field. Our men must be supported or they cannot serve.

We need men of consecration, of talent, of perseverance, of strong faith, of flaming zeal, of holy patience, of heavenly wisdom. If they can be had in plentiful supply and for a few short years, our present jeremiade shall be forgotten in future hallelujah, the wilderness shall blossom as the rose,

the East shall be redeemed. God hasten the day!

A GOOD MEETING AT FORT BARNWELL.

The Neuse Union met with Fort Barnwell church on Friday night before the fifth Sunday in November. Bro. C. A. Jenkins, who was to preach the Introductory sermon, being absent, Bro. H. C. Moore, from the Atlantic Association, was asked to take his place, which he did, and gave us a very interesting and instructive lecture on "Destitution in the East."

On Saturday morning, after devotional exercises by Bro. W. O. Wooten, "Christian Giving" was discussed by brethren Willingham, Davis, Moore and J. B. Jackson.

On Saturday afternoon "Personal Work in the Salvation of Souls," was well discussed by brethren Newton, Cowan and Bilbro. At night, "Education" was the theme, and was discussed by brethren Cowan and J. L. Jackson. Both speeches were good, and Bro. Cowan's speech was extra fine, convincing us of the fact that we could have a successful educational rally although the brethren that were expected to speak were not present.

On Sunday morning after an interesting Sunday School Mass Meeting, directed by M. D. Lane, Bro. Cowan preached a very fine sermon from the text "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

As a whole, the Union was very good, although some pastors and many delegates that should have been present were not there.

We are much indebted to brethren Moore and Davis from the Atlantic, in helping us to make the Union a success.

The place for the next Union was not decided, but left in the hands of a committee to investigate whether or not it would be wise to unite with the Atlantic Association in a Sunday School Convention, instead of having a Union Meeting on next fifth Sunday.

J. B. JACKSON.
Goldsboro, N. C.

EVANGELIZATION AND EDUCATION.

Rev. A. H. Harnly, Girard, Ill.

DEAR BRO. MOORE: As I remember Eastern North Carolina it has two great, pressing, present needs: Evangelization and education, and the second need is like unto the first. The great problem of Western Carolina is education. And that need is rightly emphasized. But my experience within the bounds of the Atlantic Association (and I take it for granted that is representative) leads me to conclude that the educational needs of the West can be no greater than those of the East. If any thing those of the East are more urgent because the East is so besieged by isms and heresies, and so long as the people are not thoroughly enlightened they fall easy victims to the teachers of error.

Associational schools must be established and maintained; and I am thanking God for the splendid work of the schools of the Atlantic and Neuse Associations. Then there is the great problem of evangelization. As I recall the missionary pastors on these fields whose needs I know so well, I can think of them only as heroes. I was about to say as martyrs. God bless them every one, and give them the victory, for they deserve it. The immediate need is the doubling, yes the quadrupling of missionaries. How can one man do justice to such a field as the Pamlico or the Carteret, or the Onslow? My interest in Eastern Carolina is unabated, and my prayer is for heaven's richest blessing upon you all.