

PUBLISHED BY THE
BOARD OF MISSIONS
OF THE
BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION.
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FIFTY YEARS AGO.

It is really astonishing to think how wonderfully God has blessed the efforts of his people in spreading the glad news of salvation among the people of our beloved State. Nor can we appreciate the condition of affairs, until we know something of the destitution which prevailed, only a few years ago.

The labors of the missionaries of our State Board have extended into every county in North Carolina; and those communities in the State which are most highly favored with gospel privileges were once the scenes of the sacrifices and successes of our State missionaries as they went forth with "weeping, bearing precious seed."

Fifty years ago there was not a Baptist church at either of the following county towns: Halifax, Wilkesboro, Statesville, Roxboro, Louisburg, Greensboro, Hillsboro, Wadesboro, Salisbury, Mocksville, Washington, Wentworth, Lincolnton, Newton, Dallas, Charlotte, Goldsboro, Henderson, Monroe, Winston, Pittsboro, Smithville, Plymouth, Snow Hill, Williamston, Jacksonville, Morganton, Graham, Statesville, Rockingham, Lexington, Marion, Nashville, Lenoir, Burgaw, Bayboro, and several others, at which churches have been organized without the aid of the Board. There are a good many of the counties in the State which have been formed within these fifty years. And a large majority of the towns named above were without Baptist churches even less than *thirty years ago*.

Fifty years ago, our dear old college, Wake Forest, was in its infancy, and the BIBLICAL RECORDER had been on its round of blessings only a few months. What wonders hath God wrought among us during this half century! The hundreds of men who have come out from Wake Forest, with the *multitude* of faithful laborers who had not the privileges and advantages of college training, together with the adopted sons from other States, have gone out into the highways and hedges, climbing rough mountains, plodding through valley, penetrating lonely gorges and trudging along in the sand hills, carrying the bread of life to the hungry souls who were crying for it.

And the last promise of the blessed Saviour—"and lo, I am with you alway"—has been fulfilled in them. Never have richer tokens of his favor been vouchsafed to any people.

Fifty-six years ago, we were a feeble, insignificant folk, with fifteen thousand three hundred and sixty souls in all our churches, white and colored. *Four years later*, we numbered *thirty thousand*, and God gave us 4,278 additions in one year! The next year he gave us *five thousand more!* And the good work has gone on, increasing as it has gone and gaining strength with every year's growth, until the Lord has made of us a great people. Oh, the rich blessings of our God upon the labors of his unworthy servants! If our efforts had been in proportion to his favors, the whole State might have been brought to the feet of Jesus long ago.

A CHAIN OF INTERESTING LINKS.

When the Baptist State Convention was organized, fifty-six years ago, there were only fourteen Associations, two hundred and seventy-two churches, and fifteen thousand, three hundred and sixty members in our churches in the State. Now we have eighty-four Associations, two thousand, two hundred and twenty-two churches, and two hundred and twenty-five thousand, three hundred and twenty-two members.

The first four missionaries sent out by our State Board of Missions were J. L. Warren, into Onslow and New Hanover counties; William Dowd, into Stokes, (a part of which is now Forsyth); Eli Phillips into Randolph, and James Dennis into Wake, Johnston, Sampson and Duplin. At this time there was not a Baptist church in New Hanover nor Johnston county.

In 1832 Jacob C. Grigg was sent by our State Board as a missionary to the city of Wilmington, and the church at Smithfield was organized by James Dennis, with forty or fifty members.

The same year Eli Phillips and Noah Richardson occupied a field extending through Wilkes, Rowan, Surry, (a part of which is now Yadkin) Iredell, Richmond, Robeson, Bladen and Columbus counties. A pretty extensive field that. And yet Thomas D. Armstrong had a still more extensive one to cultivate alone, viz: Halifax, (in which there was no Baptist church at that time) Nash, Edgecombe, Wake, Chatham, Orange, Randolph, Moore, Montgomery and Anson.

In 1834 there were nineteen Missionary Baptist Associations and eight Anti-Missionary in N. C. The Anti-Missionaries baptized one hundred and eighty souls, and the Missionaries baptized four thousand two hundred and seventy-eight!

Humphrey Posey was the first missionary sent out by our State Board west of the Blue Ridge, and his field of labor extended from the French Broad river to the Tennessee line. Some of the counties west of the Ridge were without any churches. Now there are nearly twenty thousand Baptists in this territory.

Wake and Wilkes counties were missionary ground fifty years ago. Now there are fifty-six Baptist churches in Wilkes and forty-two in Wake.

William Richards, who did such a wonderful work for the Baptists in Iredell, Surry, Wilkes and Ashe counties fifty odd years ago, is still alive, I am informed.

Five thousand souls were added to our Baptist churches in 1835.

The missionaries of our State Board have labored in the territory occupied by every county in North Carolina, and many of us are their spiritual children. Is there not, then, a two-fold duty upon us to help in the State mission work?

The first Baptist church was organized in North Carolina at Old Shiloh, Camden county, in 1727—one hundred and fifty-nine years ago. What a wonderful work God has wrought through and for us since that time!

In 1844 the sessions of the Baptist State Convention, which met in Raleigh, were held in the Presbyterian session room. Lewis Du Pree was then the missionary of the State Board to what is now the First Baptist Church of Raleigh. Today there are three white and three or four colored Baptist churches in Raleigh, with over two thousand members. God be praised for His mercy and grace.

Some forty years ago Robert McNabb, a missionary of our Board, was refused the use of Mt. Zion (Anti-Missionary) church, in the edge of Granville county, nor was he permitted to use the benches in the grove. He invited the people down to the road, where they spread down their riding-shirts, dusters and shawls, and sat upon the ground, listening to one of the most powerful sermons they ever heard. Mt. Zion church has long since gone down, and Amis Chapel, one of the churches of the Flat River Association, occupies a place close by.

Many years ago, when Samuel Wait, the Corresponding Secretary of the Baptist State Convention, was passing through a part of the Catawba valley, the people refused to receive him into their homes, and he was compelled to spend the night out under the trees. The South Fork Association now occupies that territory, and there are hundreds of Baptists there.

In 1846 John Robertson, missionary of the State Board, went out into Guilford, Stokes and Surry counties, organized three churches and baptized sixty souls. The next year he organized four churches and baptized a hundred souls.

In 1848 Elias Dodson, missionary of our Board, held protracted meetings with the churches at Kay Fork, Friendship, Little Yadkin, Leaksville, a point near Wentworth, and at Hogan's Creek, now Reidsville. The same year Greensboro Church was organized as a branch of Madison. In 1859 it was regularly organized into an independent church.

Thirty-one years ago we had no church in Charlotte, Goldsboro, Henderson, Franklinton, Winston, Thomasville and Reidsville.

Twelve years ago we had no church in Littleton, Hickory, Morganton, Graham, Statesville, Salisbury, Gastonia, Rockingham, Laurinburg, Wauhtown, Lexington, Enfield and Matthews.

Six years ago we had no organization at Mooresville, Toisnot, Alma, Pantego, Middleburg, Old Fort, Morehead City, Lewisville and Concord.

Three years ago we had no active Baptist minister nor Baptist church in Pamlico, Hyde nor Dare county. Now there are two interests in Dare, two or three in Pamlico, but still *none in Hyde!* Nor is there a Baptist minister located in either of these three counties, even now.

There is but one Baptist minister located in each of the following counties: Alleghany, Wilson, Edgecombe, Martin, Pitt, Washington, Tyrrell, Beaufort, Craven, Onslow, Lenoir and Greene. These counties, with one exception, lie in a group with the three named above, in which there is *no minister of our faith*. In other words, *thirteen* ministers to cultivate *sixteen* as good counties as there are in the State! Is not this field enough for our State Board to operate in for years to come?

In 1863 such a huge debt had accumulated that the State Board entirely suspended operations. Will the brethren allow debt at the next meeting of the Convention to cripple our efforts for years to come?

The first regular Baptist preaching was begun in Concord only two months ago. Soon a church will be organized, with fifteen or eighteen members.

The work was begun in Lexington about five years ago, with monthly preaching. Now we have as good, active membership as is generally found, and about the best meeting-house in the place.

The first efforts were put forth at Kernersville only two years ago. They have nearly finished a house which is an ornament to the town and a credit to our denomination.