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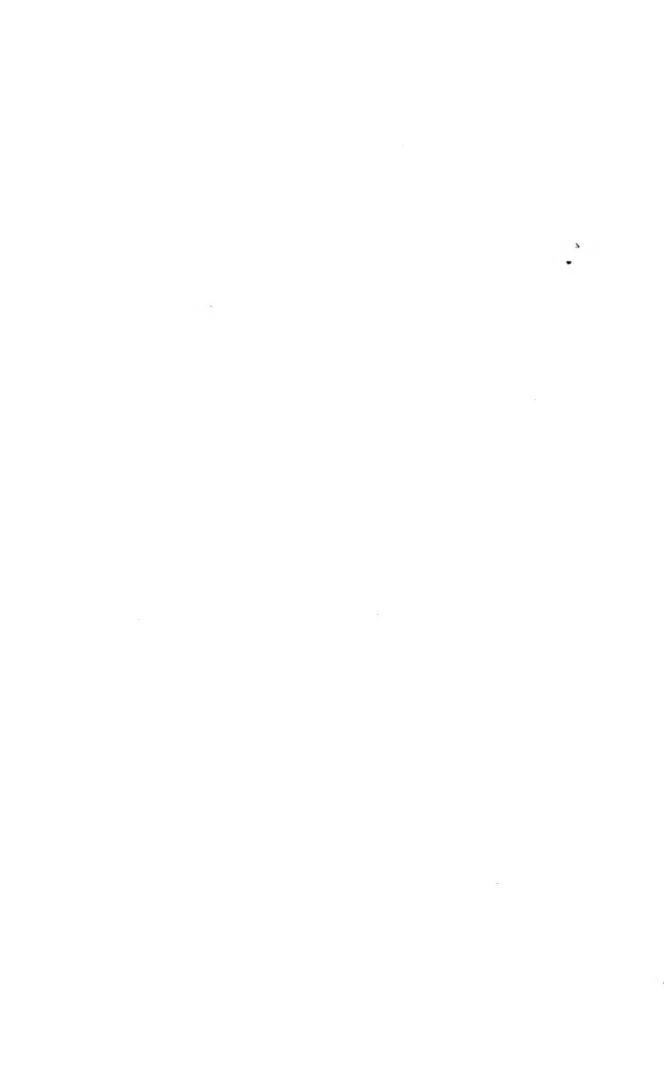
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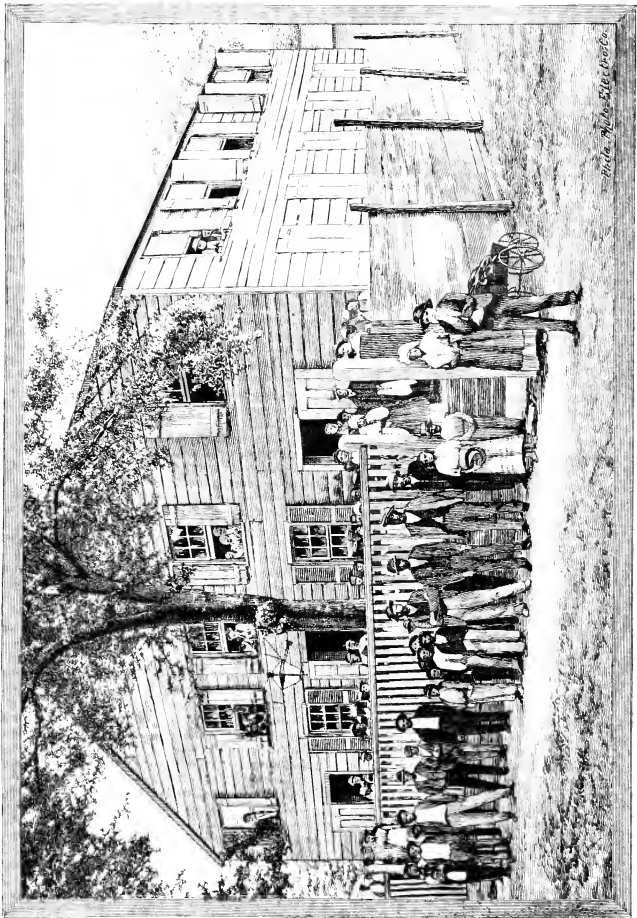
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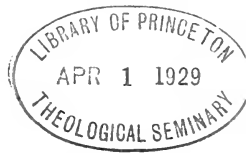






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THE FIRST COLORED BAPTIST CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA.



THE
FIRST COLORED BAPTIST CHURCH
IN
NORTH AMERICA.

CONSTITUTED AT SAVANNAH, GEORGIA,
JANUARY 20, A.D. 1788.

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE PASTORS.

WRITTEN FOR THE CHURCH
BY
REV. JAMES M. SIMMS.

PRINTED BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY,
PHILADELPHIA.
1888.

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To the Memory

OF OUR

REVERED FOREFATHERS AND MOTHERS IN THE GOSPEL OF
JESUS CHRIST,

REV. ANDREW BRYAN, DEACON SAMPSON BRYAN, HANNAH
BRYAN, KATE HOGG, HAGAR SIMPSON,

AND THEIR SUCCESSORS,

AND TO THE PASTOR, DEACONS, AND LOVING MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WHOSE
ZEAL HAS ERECTED THIS MONUMENTAL EDIFICE TO
THE GLORY OF THE TRIUNE GOD,

T H I S V O L U M E

IS

MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book.”—REV. i. 11.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

“My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father’s hand.

“I and *my* Father are one.”—JOHN x. 27-30.

IT pleased God, a century ago, to plant a Baptist Church of the negro race in Georgia, and having nurtured its growth and spread its branches until now, there are of this distinctive people in the State over thirty associations, fourteen hundred churches, and one hundred and sixty thousand members. We shall proceed by divine grace to give a history as we shall be able to gather the facts of this first church.

We shall not hesitate in using contemporaneous notices from our more favored brethren, well knowing our dependence in that direction; remembering our bondage and the almost impossibility of keeping

roborative from "The Salsbergers and their Descendants," by Rev. P. A. Strobball, 1855. Much of the history of Rev. Andrew Marshall is taken from what he furnished in life to Rev. J. P. Tustin, D.D., and a description of him given by Rev. John M. Krebs, D.D., both of which are published in "Annals of the American Pulpit," by Rev. William Sprague, D.D., 1859, the correctness of which we can attest. With diffidence in our ability we submit our recollections of these times, hoping they may furnish a basis for some more able historian of the future.

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THE
FIRST COLORED BAPTIST CHURCH
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NORTH AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

“And the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

“And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more.”—ACTS viii. 36-39.

IT is truly said by Dr. Benedict that a mysterious Providence has permitted a large portion of the sons of Africa to be transported from their native country to America, and here to have been reduced to a state

of absolute and (so far as human intent could control) perpetual slavery; but He who can bring good out of evil has overruled this calamity for their spiritual advantage.

In the good providence of God a colored man named George Liele,* born in Virginia about the year 1750, removed to Georgia with his master, Mr. Henry Sharpe, some time before the Revolutionary war. They settled in Burke County, and his owner being a Baptist and deacon of a church of which Rev. Matthew Moore was pastor, Brother George became converted under his preaching about 1774, and was brought to rejoice in the Lord Jesus through faith; and not long after was baptized by Mr. Moore and received into his church. Soon discovering that he was endowed with ministerial gifts, the church approbated the exercising of them, and he began to preach upon the neighboring plantations along the Savannah River with much success, and sometimes he preached in the evenings of Lord's Day to the church (white) to which he belonged. For about three years he occasionally came down the river as far as Brampton, a plantation belonging to Jonathan Bryan, Esq., and preached to his slaves; he, being a liberal master, encouraged these visits. He frequently extended these visits to the city

* Benedict's History, 1813, vol. ii. pp. 194, 195.

of Savannah, and preached at Yamacraw, in the western suburbs.

What converts he made, if any, during this time we have no information of, but his master and brother in Christ thought so well of him that he gave him his freedom. The war coming on of course stopped his preaching, and he remained in the family until the death of Mr. Sharpe, who was killed in the war. Brother George then went free, though some of the heirs, not being satisfied, threw him into prison; but on showing his free papers he was released. Colonel Kirkland, of the British army, who befriended him in this trouble, then advised him to leave the country with him when they evacuated; and, being an indentured servant to him for money which he owed, he departed the country for the island of Jamaica, in the West Indies, some time in July, 1783.

The vessel in which Brother George embarked for Kingston, on that island, was detained at the mouth of the Savannah River, near Tybee Island, for some weeks, the wind and weather not permitting her to sail. While detained there he came up to the city, by the providence of God, and baptized Andrew Bryan and his wife Hannah, Kate Hogg, and Hagar Simpson,—all colored persons and slaves,—thus closing his labors in this part of the Lord's vineyard. He soon after left, and was seen no more in these parts.

About nine months after his baptism Brother Andrew Bryan began to exhort his brethren, friends, and a few white persons who would assemble to hear him. Previous to his public exhortations, prayer-meetings were held on the master's plantation at Brampton, three miles west of the city; and under the influence of these meetings the man's faith grew and prepared the minister. The power and spirit of these exhortations were of such a character that his master and some few others saw it was a matter to be encouraged, as the seeming influence upon the servants for good was apparent. Therefore Mr. Edward Davis permitted him and his hearers to erect a rough wooden building on his land in Yamacraw, and for about three years they enjoyed the inestimable blessing of worshipping God freely,—the one single liberty for his good then allowed to a negro.

We must now go back and review the earlier religious condition of this part of the State briefly. The Wesleys had come and preached, under the auspices of the Episcopalian Church of England, in 1735, and after they returned to England Mr. George Whitefield came to Savannah, arriving on the 7th of May, 1738. He preached but four months, then returned to England to solicit aid in establishing an Orphan House, which, on his return, he commenced to erect on the 25th of March, 1740, calling the same

Bethesda (*“house of mercy”*). There had also been some attempts to found a Lutheran church—and some missionary work had been done between Savannah and Ebenezer,* in Effingham County, on the Savannah River—by Rev. John Martin Bolzius and Rev. Israel Christian Gronau as early as 1775. The Enhaw Baptist Church existed over in Beaufort district, South Carolina, some thirty miles off, but seemingly there was but little influence felt from that source. In the year 1757 one of Mr. Whitefield’s assistants at the Orphan House, named Nicholas Bedgegood, embraced the faith of the Baptists, and was baptized by a Mr. Oliver Hart, of Charleston, soon after; and in 1763, six years later, he in turn baptized Mr. Benjamin Stirk and wife, Thomas Dixon, and one Dupree,—all white persons. These, with a few other Baptists (emigrants from the old country, no doubt), had the Lord’s Supper administered to them at the Orphan House, nine miles south of the city, by Mr. Bedgegood; but this little society, it seems, soon scattered and no permanent organization of the Baptists came of them, much to the relief of Mr. Whitefield, it is said, who was much opposed to this Baptist interest growing up in the midst of his work.

* *“The Saulbergers and their Descendants,”* by Rev. P. A. Strobel, p. 94.

We note these efforts and their failure right here, as by them we may see God's sovereign will in giving the negro preference, and shall by and by revert to them again.

These humble slave worshippers stately met at their meeting-house, as it was called; and the good seed sown by the good Lord, through the instrumentality of Brother George Liele, began to spring up and bear fruit. Mr. Bryan, like "Andrew who first findeth his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus," was instrumental in converting his brother, Sampson Bryan, about the beginning of his ministry, and they, being visited by an aged minister named Thomas Burton, soon after Sampson and seventeen others of Mr. Bryan's converts were baptized, upon a credible profession of their faith in Christ. This number, however, is not an indication of the extent of his success, for many who may have been converted could not receive this ordinance, being so bound by the power of slavery that they required the consent of their masters in writing to enable them to obey God and satisfy this earnest religious desire of the soul. This small beginning seemed to have commenced in the year 1785, about the time that a religious revival was going on higher up in the State, and about the time the first association was organized; and the little nucleus for the church had to learn to labor in pa-

tience and to wait. Their progress was slow ; there could be no regularity in their meetings ; they had to bide their time and opportunity to serve the Lord. Here was the period when the system ever since known as the *Society* on each plantation was inaugurated,—that is, one brother was appointed as a watchman to open and lead the prayer-meeting at such place as the few believers and seekers after Jesus came together. Sometimes it was in the watchman's house, and often had to be in the swamp, when prohibition was made by the owner or overseer of the plantation ; for be it remembered that the majority of those preached to by Mr. Bryan were from and of the rice and indigo plantations along the Savannah River ; and only when tickets of permission were given to them to visit the city could they attend these preachings. On these occasions might be seen numbers of cypress log dugouts, called by the Indian name canoe, paddling down and up the river on the Sabbath mornings and evenings. Those of the city and suburban farms had, of course, better opportunities of attending oftener ; yet all were under the necessity of procuring passes from their owners or employers, the river and roads being patrolled by the county militia-men, and a severe castigation would be the penalty if found without such pass. Thus the progress of religion may only seem slow when, in 1788, about three years

after the visit of Rev. Thomas Burton, they were again visited by Rev. Abraham Marshall, of Kioke, accompanied by a young preacher of color, named Jesse Golphin. Mr. Marshall baptized forty-five more of the congregation in one day, and on the 20th of January, 1788, organized them into a church, and ordained Mr. Bryan to the ministry as their pastor, with full authority to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances of Christ:

Thus was the church struggling in embryo for about five years, and, being now fully and "fitly framed together for an habitation of God through the spirit,"* their faith was now to be put to a severe test; that "the trial of your faith, being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."† Joyous in this only privilege allowed, with much pride they gathered on the Lord's Day in their rough house of worship, in the suburbs of the city, singing the songs of Zion, making melody in their hearts. There had ever been opposition to any other religious worship save the Episcopal and Lutheran, the only existing churches founded with the colony, and the Presbyterians, planted by the Rev. George Whitefield, all Pedobaptists, so that as

* Eph. ii. 21, 22.

† 1 Peter i. 7.

this church grew and began to flourish, oft appearing at the Savannah River administering the ordinance of baptism, they met with various annoyances at first, which was patiently borne almost in silence ; but the opposition grew stronger and their trials greater. Frequent, then, became the whipping of individual members by the patrol on the plea of not having proper tickets-of-leave, which finally culminated in the arrest and punishment of a large part of the members, all of whom were severely whipped ; but Rev. Andrew Bryan, their pastor, and his brother, Sampson Bryan, one of the first deacons, were inhumanly cut, and their backs were so lacerated that their blood ran down to the earth, as they, with uplifted hands, cried unto the Lord ; and this first negro Baptist pastor, while under this torture, declared to his persecutors “ that he rejoiced not only to be whipped, but would freely suffer death for the cause of Jesus Christ.”

The brothers, Andrew and Sampson, with their backs bleeding, accused of evil designs against the whites or of plotting insurrection, as charged by their accusers, were with some fifty others locked up in prison and their meeting-house taken away from them. This was about the year 1789 or 1790. Mr. Jonathan Bryan, the master of Andrew and Sampson, interceded for these persecuted Christians, fully believing that they were martyrs to prejudice and wickedness.

They were examined by the Justices of the Inferior Court of Chatham County,—Henry Osbourne, James Habersham, and David Montague,—who found them innocent and released them. It is but just to say that many of the owners of these humble Christian slaves were indignant at the barbarous manner their servants were treated, and so freely expressed themselves; and Mr. Jonathan Bryan allowed them to resume their worship upon his plantation, and gave them the use of his barn. Yet even here, upon private property, they were followed and watched during their nightly prayer-meetings, when they did not see these eavesdroppers, and though protected and defended by several generous whites, who felt that they were earnest in their purpose of the worship of God, their enemies, nevertheless, kept up a continuous system of espionage around the church or barn, until at a time when one of their number was eavesdropping at Rev. Mr. Bryan's private house, he heard this pious servant of God praying earnestly for the very men who had so mercilessly whipped him.* Struck with surprise, conviction, and fear, no doubt through the spirit of God, he reported the same, which enlisted great sympathy about the county, and thereafter permission

* I have heard this circumstance related often by Rev. A. Marshall, in his reference to the past in his sermons.—[ED.]

was granted them by the Chief-Justice, Henry Osbourne, to continue their worship any time between sunrise and sunset.

They held meetings at Brampton about two years, and in this interval of peace and quietude they made some influential white friends. Aid in money by his people and friends, to rebuild, was given Mr. Bryan, and he succeeded in purchasing the lot upon which the church now stands, and in the latter part of 1794 began the erection of a church building. Meetings were being held also occasionally in the city suburbs; however, this year, in a temporary shelter, built upon a lot given for the purpose to Mr. Bryan by Thomas Gibbons, Esq. This lot is situated on what is now known as Mill Street, running to Indian Street Lane.*

“ABSTRACT SHOWING, SO FAR AS THE SAME APPEARS OF RECORD, THE INTEREST OF ANDREW BRYAN IN LOT NO. 12, NORTH OGLETHORPE WARD.

“This lot was conveyed in 1789 by Jacob C. Waldhauer to Thomas Gibbons, and by Thomas Gibbons, on June 1st 1790 to ‘Free Andrew.’—H 168, 170.

“On May 30, 1816, Andrew Marshall receipted to James Morrison, for the use of Delia, a free person of

* Abstract of Title recorded in the Supreme Court of Chatham County, Book II, folio 168-170, GG 93, LL 19. By I. Beckett.

Color, for \$210, being the purchase money of One-fourth of this lot, and agreed to make titles on his return from the North. Whether or Not he ever made titles does not appear from the records.—GG 93.

“On Oct 5th 1812 Fanny Bryan conveyed to Richard Richardson, guardian of Andrew Marshall, One-fourth of lot No 12 Originally purchased by Andrew Bryan from Thomas Gibbons, and by Andrew Bryan conveyed to Fanny Bryan,—so recited in this deed; but the conveyance from Andrew Bryan to Fanny Bryan is not recorded.—LL 19.”

While greatly troubled with these persecutions and removals, they seemed to have some anxiety of mind in another direction. Here they were alone, no association with other religious bodies; enemies questioning the validity of their organization as a church, as well as the ordination of the pastor; some weak members of the body feeling, if we are truly a church of Christ, why all these troubles? There was but one Baptist association then existing in Georgia. Rev. Abraham Marshall, who organized them and ordained their pastor, was a member of that body. The Georgia Association was organized in 1784. Its operations were in the upper part of the State, not easy of communication. It met at Brier Creek, in Burke County, about ninety miles from their church, in May, 1790, and a letter was sent from the church asking their

opinion as to the validity of the constitution of their church and the ordination of their minister, Rev. Andrew Bryan, which had been effected two years before by Rev. Abraham Marshall alone. To which they gave answer, that as it was an extraordinary case they gave their sanction.

Providentially, Mr. Marshall himself was moderator of this association at this particular session, and explained the embarrassment under which he labored. He said, "There I was alone, and no other minister within call. I felt it might appear an assumption of episcopal power; yet all things were ripe, and the interesting body of converts was suffering for want of organization and an administrator. The thing wanted doing, and I did it." And all has worked well. From that time until 1795 the church was a member of the Georgia Association, and was only dismissed, with twenty-three other churches, to form a new interest. At this meeting her membership, as reported, was three hundred and eighty-one, notwithstanding they were passing through fiery trials at this period.

The church was now encamped at Brampton's barn, with some degree of peaceful worship. Their late suffering from persecution having become known in the city and county, their patience, fortitude, and faith fully tried, elicited some sympathy from the better-thinking white citizens. Yet their Christian life was

so beset with fears of other persecutions that it was finally resolved to appeal to the authorities.

An extensive petition was drawn up for them by an able and influential lawyer, Lachlan McIntosh, Esq. Mr. Bryan took this document and commenced a pilgrimage to the leading men of the city and county, asking their endorsement, which is here copied *verbatim* from the original, now in our possession.

“TO THE HON^{BLE} THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF
THE CITY OF SAVANNAH.

“*The petition of sundry of the citizens humbly sheweth—*

“That the Negroes and Slaves, by the assistance of many of the Friends of Religion in Savannah, in different parts of the State, and from in the state of S^c Carolina, at some expence & trouble, have erected a meeting House, and have been regularly supplied with a Pastor, extreamly well adapted to thier capacities and situations, and who is better qualified to instruct them in the duties of thier states then any other person would be, though of greater Abilities—

“The influence of vital religion on the human Heart, in every rank and situation of life, and invariable tendency, in proportion to its operation, is to subdue the turbulent passions—promote a spirit of meekness & moderation—A contentment with the lot and situation—A resignation to the will of Providence, as ordering & directing all the events of this life by unerring

wisdom and for the most positive good of the creature—

“That ever since the society has been established it has been a standing rule to admit none who have not only the Approbation but the recommendation of thier Masters for thier good morals & faithfull behaviour—as individuals and a Society, they have been eminent for thier orderly conduct at the place of thier meeting—for thier meek and inoffensive carriage towards the Citizens—for thier submission & obedient behaviour to thier Masters & Mistresses. From the strict discipline that is kept up, if we may judge from the past, there is the most rational grounds for insuring the same peaceable & quiet behaviour in future—

“Your Petitioners, from personal knowledge, are fully satisfied that there are many instances in the City and Neighborhood of Savannah of bad and evil disposed Negroes & Slaves, who have been detected in thier villainies, and it seemed out of the power of the several punishment to deter them from a repetition of thier crimes; but since thier becoming members of Andrew’s Society, and thier attendance on his preaching have been entirely reclaimed; they have given the highest proofs of the happy tendency of religion in the humblest situation, on the smallest capacities, and of some desperately wicked, and notorious for almost every vice, becoming the most valuable & trusty slaves thier Masters have in their possession—

“From the irreproachable character thier Pastor has long maintained together with his Deacons & Elders, they have deservedly great influence over this society.

Thier being under the inspection of one of the most numerous Denominations in America. The evidence they have long given in thier daily walk and conversation in thier lives and echaracters, of the purity & the excellency of the Doctrines they possess. The desire they have to assemble is to get good, to become better slaves & better Christians—It would seem that a society from such motives, and regulated by such principals, could never interrupt the peace of the City—If your Petitioners might be permitted to express thier own thoughts, from these facts, in opposition to the suspicions which some people may seem to harbor—that if this society should be permitted to Assemble themselves for the purpose of Religious worship, they will pervert the privilege for base ends—for disorder & Confusion—and to give unnecessary alarms to the Citizens, are altogether groundless. Besides if there should be any disorder brooding from this quarter, thier Pastors, Deacons, and leading members would be the first to receive and the best to depend upon, for every information—So that from motives of policy it would be the highest wisdom, to attach rather than alienate the interest of the leading members, & they would be found to be usefull & valuable instruments in the hands of the Hon^{ble} Council, in cases of real emergency—It has been hinted by some of the friends, in favour of the prohibition, that the Doors of the different Churches in the City should be opened to them—This would be impracticable for it is known that when they are assembled in large numbers, from constitutional peculiarities, they are extremly disagreeable to

every audience. There seems therefore no other alternative, but, either, to permit them to assemble at thier own house, and in thier own way, or entirely deprive them the privilege of attending public worship. This we presume the *Hon^{ble} Council* would not do. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that a society of Christians, that have walked hitherto with so much order and decorum, who have been so eminently exemplary by thier inoffensive lives & Conversations, and have given such ample testimony of thier purity, & the influence of the doctrines they profess may no longer be deprived of the privilege of worshipping the God of thier existance, according to the dictates of their consciences and in thier own way. And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray &c &c—

“LACH^N M^CINTOSH”

As before said, Thomas Gibbons conveyed to Andrew Bryan, or, as stated in the deed, Free Andrew, Lot No. 12, North Oglethorpe Ward, bounded now by Mill Street on the south and Indian Street Lane on the north, and about midway between Ann and Farm Streets. The titles bear date June 1, 1790 and 1791. Mr. Bryan and his people erected another rough wooden building upon this lot in the city, where the church worshipped the next year at special times. Those members upon the plantations along the Savan-

nah River still meeting for communion at Brampton every three months.

These periodic meetings continued during the years 1791 and 1792, their petition being in the hands of the city authorities; the then place of meeting being within the extended limits of the city, and near the suburban village of "St. Gall," though at that time it was called in the woods, so thickly was it surrounded with shrubbery. About this time, through the kind feelings of the owner of Mr. Bryan, he had obtained his freedom for a nominal consideration, and commanding his own time, he of course devoted it exclusively to the work of his ministry. In moving around in the community he always appeared decently clothed, grave, but very polite, especially to the whites; and thus by his general deportment gathered toward him many influential friends; and, therefore, through Messrs. William Bryan and James Whitfield, as trustees, he purchased for thirty pounds sterling, equal to about one hundred and fifty dollars, Lot No. 7, Middle Oglethorpe Ward, ninety-five feet front and one hundred and thirty-two and a half feet deep, upon which this church now stands. The deeds are dated September 4, 1793, and conveyed by Matthew Mott and Catharine, his wife.

“ABSTRACT RELATING TO NO. 7 MIDDLE OGLETHORPE WARD, ON SOUTH SIDE OF BRYAN ST., WHEREON THE CHURCH STANDS.

“This lot appears for the first time in the records of deeds of this County, on Sept 4, 1793, when Matthew Mott and Catharine his wife convey it, for the price of thirty pounds, equal to \$150, to Wm Bryan and James Whitfield, ‘in trust for a free black man called and known by the name of Andrew Bryan, a preacher of the Gospel by lawful authority ordained’ The description given of the lot is in these words ‘All that lot of land known as No. 7 in the Village of St Gall, fronting Bryan or Odingsell Street, 95 feet front 132½ feet deep, and bounded West and South by land of the late Dr. Zubly, deceased, East on a lot of Richard Williams, deceased, North on the Main Street leading from Yamacraw to the brick Meeting house.—N. 117.’

“No further mention is made of this lot until 1840, When Edward Coppee, who appears to be the Surviving Trustee, appoints Wm W Wash, Richard D. Arnold and Abram Harrison as Co-trustees to hold the property with him. The facts are briefly described in the deed as follows: ‘On July 3, 1797, Andrew Bryan, a free black man and preacher of the gospel by lawful authority ordained conveyed to Thos. Polhill, Wm Matthews, David Fox and Josiah Fox, in trust for the use of the Baptist Church of Blacks, of which Said Andrew Bryan was pastor, one equal moiety being the half of the lot (described in this abstract). Thomas Polhill and David and Josiah Fox died, and Wm Matthews,

the Survivor, by Virtue of the power and authority contained in the original deed of trust from Andrew Bryan, on Dec 6, 1824 appointed Moses Cleland, Josiah Penfield, and Edward Coppee as Trustees in the place of the three deceased. Edward Coppee is now the Sole Survivor of the four last named Trustees, and appoints the three persons mentioned in this deed,—W. W. Wash, R. D. Arnold & Abram Harrison in the place of the three deceased ones.—3 L 279.’

“In 1867 R D Arnold, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebean, Trustees, transferred the property to Alex Harris & others, Trustees, and here the history ends, in records of deeds &c, except as to Mortgages given upon the property, which are all marked cancelled.—3 Z 26.

“It appears from the foregoing that Andrew Bryan conveyed only one half of the lot, in trust for church purposes. The other half appears for the first time in a deed made in 1884 by the Extrs of Edwin T. Winkler, who was one of the heirs of Shadrach Winkler, to Chas H. Ehlers. How Shadrach Winkler became the owner, I cannot discover—No deed conveying it to him appears of record.—5 M 1 Z 1.

“I. BECKETT

“Manager Abst of Title Office

“June 21st 1887*”

Upon the east end of this lot Mr. Bryan erected a small wooden building for his residence, and removed

* Records of the Superior Court of Chatham County, Book N, 117.

into it with his family in 1794, and soon after commenced the erection of a church edifice, forty-two by forty-nine feet. About the same time the rough building worshipped in was rolled over to this Lot No. 7, and placed at the southern portion of the ground, near the centre of the east and west line. These positions are defined thus strictly, as they will show the care of the old leader to have his meetings as little conspicuous as possible. The whole lot was enclosed by a high board fence, and the residence and meeting-houses were all inside the enclosure, the entrance being from the northwest end by a gate.

It will be borne in mind that Mr. Bryan held meetings under the permission of Chief-Justice Osbourne, while at Brampton, from which the church had now removed to the city. Their meetings here were held merely by sufferance of the patrol officers of the county, under individual certificates from the owners of the persons who attended worship, and the then known favorable opinion held by the community of the spirit and purpose of these meetings and their pastor's popularity; but with all this, they met under great fear and trembling. And so there gathered on the Lord's Day a few who lived in the city, and about four times a year the members from the country, when baptism and communion were administered, until 1795, and the big meeting-house, as it was then called by the

people in just pride at the peace and privilege they enjoyed, was completed.

It was slow in building, as facilities for getting materials were difficult; but the framing timber was good and solid, hewed out in the forest by its members, and the weather-boarding was all neatly planed smooth. The building was very plain, without any attempt at architectural beauty,—almost square and box-like, high pitched roof, with small windows; one wide door in the west centre of the building, and two smaller doors near each end on the south side, leading into the open space of the lot between the praise-house, as the smaller building was then called, and the pulpit in the east centre, built very plain, shaped like an acorn, with a raise from the floor of about three feet, plain board front, a neat cushioned pad for the Bible, and board seat which would accommodate three. No part of the building inside was ceiled, rafters and studs in their rough state, straight-back pews without doors; and the only pretension to neatness was in the smoothing of the backs and seats and rounding and beading the edges and tops. No part of the building was painted or whitewashed, but plain and pure as from the carpenter's hands.

Who can estimate the anxious cares, the simple but fervent prayers, connected with the labor of erecting this building? The men at work were greatly en-

couraged by the sisters, who would at times even assist in the work, holding up the ends of the boards while the workmen scribed, cut, and nailed, as some of those old Christian sisters, in after years, describing these times, have told us. But, oh, joy to the heart! praise to the Lord! the building is finished, and the church has rest from persecution or molestation in their Sabbath-day worship. And so, without any other formal ceremony, save an earnest dedicatory prayer of thanksgiving by their administrator and pastor, the males clad in their best garments, the elder females with snow-white aprons and neck and head handkerchiefs, standing in grave and silent awe while the throne of grace was being addressed, they entered and possessed the first sanctuary dedicated to Christ Jesus by the Hamite race in Georgia.

In this chapter we have seen the incipient planting of this the first negro Baptist church in this State (and it may be in the United States), its early growth, and the attempts made to uproot it; its transplanting at Brampton, and again temporarily on Mill Street; the storms of sorrow through which it passed, the fiery furnace in which it was tried and purified, then weighed in the balance, but not found wanting, and we may now proceed to examine its growth.

CHAPTER II.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”—PSALM i. 1-3.

THE Master, in his first sermon preached, logically put down the basis of judging the true disciples. He says, “Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them;”* and we find the Church from this period going forth sowing gospel seed and bearing precious fruit. The years 1795-1796 were years of great activity among the Baptists in the upper parts of the State; and while the noble pioneers of the cause, Abraham Marshall, the Mercers, Walkers, and others, were carrying the blood-stained banner of the cross along the mountain country, Andrew Bryan was demonstrating an eternal truth

* Matthew vii. 17-20.

that our "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," and that to the negro race it is given to carry and spread the gospel along the seaboard. Many were being added to this church, some of them being young colored men of intelligence and brightness, partaking much of the spirit of wisdom and understanding that characterized the Master whom they served; and their minds becoming illumined by their faith in Jesus, quickened by his Holy Spirit, their help to their pastor and usefulness in the church became apparent, and they became a power for good in this land, working helpfully and harmoniously for the peace and prosperity of the State and the glory of the kingdom of Christ.

The few white Baptists in this and adjoining counties, seeing, no doubt, the efforts for Christ's cause made by these humble slaves,—the self-sacrifice, fortitude, and perseverance exhibited by them, while they, with superior conditions and advantages of life, had attempted the constitution of a Baptist interest earlier in the history of the State and failed,—now became inspired to make another attempt. By the preaching of Mr. Andrew Bryan, in 1789, the highly-gifted son of an Episcopal minister, Thomas Polhill, and his wife, became awakened, and were finally converted and baptized in Effingham County, the Lutheran stronghold.

Mr. Polhill, with some others, made the effort and succeeded so far as to procure a lot and erect partly a building on Franklin Square; but failing to secure enough members to organize a church, and their building but half completed, they for the time being again abandoned the constituting, and rented their building to the Presbyterians, who had just lost theirs by fire, and thus became worshippers with them. But this branch of God's right-hand planting was steadily evangelizing among the colored people, native born, in the city, the surrounding plantations, and among the Africans then being imported in numbers from their country to our shores and sold for plantation purposes,—very many of whom were early taught to know the true God and embrace his son Jesus Christ, and so lost their pall of deep sorrow in being torn ruthlessly away from home, kindred, and kind, into a seemingly inextricable bondage, mental and moral; but now, with this new light of the gospel in their benighted souls, being born again of God after passing through generations of idolatry and ignorance, have become free indeed by the truth preached to them by those of kindred blood and race, though of a different tongue. Yet the Spirit helped their understanding to the exercise of a living faith, such as fear and the suspicion of treachery would prevent their receiving from the most learned and loving white person in America.

Many of these native Africans became eminent Christians according to their sphere of life, and several served in positions in the church as deacons and upon the plantations as householders (as some of the leaders of the branch society were called); and in nearly every instance their moral and religious character was equal to the best among their brethren of American birth. And this feature, we doubt not, early suggested the idea to our white brethren of designating a church composed wholly of colored persons as an African Church.

It will be remembered that this church became a member of the old Georgia Association in 1790, and so continued as the only strictly negro church in that body until 1794, when the meeting was held at "Powell Creek Meeting-house," near Powelton, when, in response to letters from several churches requesting a division, "it was agreed that all the churches in the lower part of our union who see fit to form another meeting of this nature have our consent; and that one be called the Upper District Georgia Baptist Association and the other the Lower District Georgia Baptist Association. The first meeting of the Lower District Association to be on Saturday before the fourth Lord's Day in September, at Buckhead Davis Meeting-house, the brethren John Thomas, Jephtha Wining, and Silas Mercer to attend as messengers. The meeting of the

Upper District Association to be at Kiokee New Meeting-house, on Saturday before the third Lord's Day in October, which Association is to hold the present Constitution and records." Rev. Silas Mercer was appointed to preach the Association sermon when they met in 1795, and the Saturday before the fifth Sabbath in September was set apart as a day of fasting and prayer. We copy this almost *verbatim* as recorded in the Georgia Baptist history, to show the careful manner in which our elder brethren in a division formed new interests for the Master, so as not to break the union of the churches or associations. It is further said that "twenty-two churches were withdrawn at this time, among which was the colored church at Savannah, which then contained three hundred and eighty-one members, their pastor being Andrew Bryan."*

The new interest organized in 1785 departed from the advice of the parent body so far as adopting a title, which was called Hephzibah. It does not appear that this church was represented in the lower or new body, and we may account for this in the fact that her sister churches (white) over in South Carolina failed also to attend, and likely they were all considering the

* On page 34, "History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia," there is a misnomer. It was Andrew Bryan and not Marshall, as Andrew Marshall was not then a member of the church.—[ED.]

propriety of organizing a like association for themselves nearer home,—for we well remember that the white brethren of our city were then erecting a building and endeavoring to constitute another Baptist church in Savannah; but, as we have said, failed in the undertaking then, but did at a later day succeed in doing so.

It is greatly to be regretted that the illiterate condition of this bulwark of grace was such that we can find no records or date of its work from 1795 to 1799; but it is a well-established fact that the church kept on the even tenor of her way; and it is worthy of remark that while our more favored white Baptist brethren affiliated under certain circumstances with Pedobaptists, yet this humble fold of Christ (though surrounded by Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and despite an earnest effort by Bishop Asbury to establish Methodism about this period) stood firm as the rock upon which she was planted. Orthodox in the Baptist faith, Jesus himself opened a door to the New Testament dispensation of grace in baptism by immersion, and which must ever remain the door to communion. Her pastor standing firm in this position, immovably preaching this doctrine; not that they or he was learned in the doctrines, but by a spiritual intuition that this was the way the apostles went, and on Sundays of their quarterly meetings (using the then common phrase) they might be seen in solemn procession, the

whole church marching as if actually going to a burial of the dead ; their sweet, plaintive voices heard as they went to the river at the foot of what is now known as Farm Street, singing the great commission given by their loving Lord, as paraphrased by Dr. Watts, and lined by one of the brethren or the pastor :

“ Go preach my gospel, saith the Lord ;
 Bid the whole earth my grace receive :
 He shall be saved that trusts my word,
 And he condemned who'll not believe.”

And while this honored servant of God fervently appealed to the throne of grace for blessings upon this land and country, the prosperity of the city, and the upbuilding of the kingdom of grace here, and that the candidates for immersion may receive the kingdom of glory by and by, the solemnity and impressiveness of the scene were at times awful and inspiring. In these earlier days of our fathers' worship at the water-side, it was a custom to sing some of the songs of Zion while the ordinance was being administered ; and, oh ! it was soul-cheering, indeed, to hear them break out in joyous acclamation, as the first subject was immersed and rose up from under the water,—

“ I am bound for the promised land,
 I am bound for the promised land ;
 Oh, who will come and go with me ?
 I am bound for the promised land.”

This was sung as a chorus to some subject or sentence from the Bible, and kindred to the occasion, paraphrased by some one of the brethren, many of whom had wonderful, though crude, poetical gifts, remarkable in their conception and application. Numerous were those spiritualizing songs; but this is sufficient as an example of the times, though very many of the hymns from the then popular edition of "Watts and Rippons" were used in regular church services, recited from the book by their pastor or some of the members blessed with the ability to read. Two lines of a stanza were given out between the period of singing; and such was their religious love, memory, and zeal that it was common in the prayer-meetings of the plantation societies to hear these hymns repeated and sung with considerable exactness, though ignorant of letters, even by some of Africo-American tongue; and while it is also true that the attempt, in some instances, would seem to excite ridicule, yet it was very comforting to kindred souls. The same may be said of the sacred Scriptures, many passages of which were read from memory, and by some whole chapters were accurately retained and intelligently commented upon; in broken language, perhaps, but to a great degree sound in doctrine and logic. While the church was in the fullest sense evangelical in faith and missionary in spirit, its strict principle on the communion question was ever

conspicuous,—none were invited, or, if known, permitted to come to the communion-table who were not baptized by immersion, coming through the door Christ Jesus, as he laid out the way of faith in Jordan.

Another evidence of the orthodox principle in the church was the marital relations of its members. Mr. Bryan required candidates for baptism to give the fullest proof of their being already married according to the tenets of the Bible; or, had they simply lived together loosely, as the slave-custom too commonly permitted, to come before him and have this solemn service administered; and all members of the church intending to enter into conjugal relations were strictly required to report the same to their leader, if on the plantations, and to the deacons, if in the city, to be reported to the pastor, who read out the banns in public church service, that these relations, so far as in the church were possible, should be kept inviolate, as Christ has taught they should be. The State recognized no such lawful relations among the slaves or persons of color, and constantly was the church perplexed by the cruel separation of men and wives, members of the mystical body of Christ being sold away from each other, in some instances, with no apparent hope of ever meeting again on earth; and which naturally entailed upon the man or woman, as the case might be, remaining with the church, the necessity of

contracting new relations of the kind; but even in such cases the church required sufficient time to elapse, that they might be satisfied there was no hope of return, before marrying again; thus guarding with all the power delegated to the church the sacred commands of Jesus, and throwing the onus wholly upon those who dispensed God's laws so unrighteously against a people purchased to himself with the precious blood of his only and well-beloved Son. Of course, many conflicting circumstances arose that baffled their reason to remedy. However, the church yet stood acquitted of what it was not in her power to cure, and could but in patience submit to and endure. Thus are noted these practices, which are the more remarkable among a people having nothing but the Bible as their guide, which but few of them were able to read, and that very imperfectly; yet by using the means of grace given them, and with the Holy Spirit's unction upon them, inspiring a desire to do simply the will of God, proved themselves equal to the interpretation of the Scriptures aright, and acting according to the mind of the spirit, and in faith and practice orthodox Baptists.

CHAPTER III.

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”—ISAIAH lx. 1.

WE now bring the history of the church to the beginning of the year A.D. 1796. Under the protecting care of Jehovah, led by his grace, they find themselves upon ground purchased by themselves, and within walls erected by their industry and love of Jesus, as will hereafter be shown; yet their liberty to worship permanently and peaceably was uncertain. The mayor and aldermen of the corporation having been petitioned, and their permission, after waiting for a long while, having at last been declined, an appeal was made to the commander of the county militia, and, thanks to several sympathizing white friends, they procured the following permission:

“PERMISSION FOR ANDREW & HIS SOCIETY TO
PREACH ON SUNDAYS.

“SAVANNAH 19th March 1790

“In as much as I deem it inconsistent with the Spirit and principles of the Christian Religion that any Set of People under the Sun Should be debarred exercising that Religion in the way they best understand it, and in the manner best fitted to their Capacities and Situations, when Conducted with that Decorum and decency

which becometh good Christians ; And it appearing that a Great Number of the Most respectable Citizens in Savannah have Signed a recommendation in favor of the bearer Andrew and his Society that they should be permitted to assemble and preach in the Meeting house built by them for that purpose at Yamacraw, so that their Meetings were Confined to Sunday between Sun Rise and Sun Set ; And as the Corporation have heretofore declined Acting on a Petition preferred to them for their Sanction, and it resting more particularly with the officers of the Militia.—I do hereby give unto the Said Andrew as Pastor, and to his Elders and Society, my full approbation to meet and perform Divine Worship, in the Meeting-house at Yamacraw, on the Sabbath day, between Sun Rise and Sun Set, so long as they Conduct themselves with due decency and order ; and that the persons attending thereon have a pass from their masters or Mistresses for that purpose ; And I do Recommend to the officers Commanding Companies in the first Battalion, to give their Sanction for the above purpose, and that they will Cause an inspection as often, and at Such times, as they may Deem Necessary, in order that no abuse of this indulgence may take place.

“ D. B. MITCHELL, Major.

1st Battalion C R—

JOSEPH ROBERTS

JAMES BOX YOUNG

JOHN MOORE

GEO. THROOP

JAMES ROBERTSON

FRANCIS DOYLE.”

I wish the prayer of the petition to be granted, the meeting to be on Sundays only in the day time.—**GEO. HOUSTON.**

THO^s. M. WOODBRIDGE.

RICH^d. WYLLY.

BARTH^w. WALDBURGER.

No objection to the within petition provided they meet on Sundays only, and that at twelve o'clock and by no means at night.—**W^m. MOORE.**

JOHN HABERSHAM.

If a proper white Clergyman was appointed to instruct the Negroes in religion I see no impropriety in their attending him on Sundays only with tickets from their masters.

JOHN P. WARD.

I wish the prayer of the petition to be granted, as every Man ought to enjoy his own religion.—**THOMAS PITT.**

I agree & approve of the within Petition provided the Hours of Worship are after Sun Rise in the Morning & ending before Sun Set on Sundays only.—**R. WYLLY.**

JOHN WALLACE.

BEN WALL.

JOSEPH DUNLAP.

ROBERT BOLTON.

I Signe the above petition finding that my Negroes that atend publicly worshop ar to be Trusted.—**JOHN MILLEN.**

H^{ar}. ANCIAUX.

DAN^l. JOHN GREEN.

Liberty of Conscience, & a Right to serve God according to its dictates are Natufal priviledges, and none ought to be prevented from enjoying them.—**Tho^s. F. WILLIAMS.**

DAV^d. MONTAIGUT.

VEN BOND.

JAMES MONTFORT.

JOHN Y. NOLL.

Let them meet to pray when they please.

Dr. MOSES VALLOTT.

SAMUEL SOFFAM.

DAN^t. M^cGARVEY.

W^m. BIRD.

LEWIS BIRD.

MATTHEW MOTT.

THO^s. HARRISON.

JN^o. H. ROBERTS.

J. WHITEFIELD.

JOHN HAMILTON.

LACH^a M^cINTOSH.

I wish the prayer of the above petition may be granted.

JOS. CLAY, ju^r.

I agree.

BEN. LLOYD.

EDW. LLOYD.

JA^s. JOHNSTON, Sen^r.

N. JOHNSTON.

EBEN^r. HILLS.

GODIN GUERARD.

I wish the purport of this Pet^r granted—for Sundays only and that in the day time.—JUSTUS H. SCHEUBER.

JOHN G. WILLIAMSON.

CHARLES HARRIS (for the age of Reason).

I wish the prayer of the above petition to be granted, as I think all men have a right to worship God in their own way, Especially as no possible danger can arise to the Community from their meeting in the day time.—MORDACAI SHEFTALL.

I have no objection provided their Meeting be in the day time & on Sundays only.—JOHN GLEN.

JAMES B. YOUNG agreeing with Mr. GLEN.

I agree with the above.—M. BRISKELL.

I recommend that Stated hours should be fixed for their meeting, on Sundays only, and that a Bell may be procured to call them together.—*JAMES MOSSMAN.*

Thomas H. McCaule wishes as many of the rights of man as possible restored to the blacks, To worship God according to conscience is certainly one of those rights.

Men ought not to be prevented from worshipping that God, who gave them existence—therefore I hope this their prayer may be heard.—*T. NETHERCLIF.*

I approve of this petition, provided they meet in the day and on Sundays only at stated hours.—*J. NEYLE.*

JOHN Y. WHITE wishes prosperity to the same.

The present Law of the State forbids a public assemblage of Negroes—therefore, the privileges claimed by the pet^{rs.} ought to be referred to the Legislature—I agree in this—that there ought not to be any hindrance to a free tolerance of public worship to my people—*W. STEPHENS.*

I agree to the above mode.—*P. V. MOREL.*

With this permit pastor and people felt more secure, and their meetings were more free and frequent. How much lighter must have been the hearts of his brethren, as the old servant of the Lord, their tried pastor and counsellor, from his pulpit offered thanks to God on that Sunday morning in March, 1796, for his mercies in procuring for them this immunity from their enemies, and, holding up the document before them, bade them walk the more humbly, and serve the more faithfully, that they might hold fast that which they had and not again lose it.

Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing what progress the church at this time made in numbers, from the report made to the Georgia Association, in 1790, of three hundred and eighty-one members; but there is no doubt that, so far as circumstances permitted, the gain of the church spiritually was equal to the blessings she had temporally. God had given them all they possessed, and their pastor, though purchasing through his white friends and in his individual name, yet knew it all was the gift of God to his believing, trusting people, and on the 3d day of July, 1797, "conveyed in trust, for the use and better security, to the members of his church, to Messrs. Thomas Polhill, William Matthews, David Fox, and Josiah Fox, one equal moiety being the half of all that lot of land (most part of said lot) . . . known as No. 7, in the village of St. Gall, fronting on Bryan or Odingsell Street." So states the deed in part, which will be found in full hereafter. The consideration named was the same as that originally paid for the land, thirty pounds sterling; the terms of the trust being perpetual, the survivors having power to fill vacancies whenever they should occur. It will be noticed that the first named in the trust, Major Polhill and wife, were converted by the preaching of Mr. Bryan in his yard at Newington, in Effingham County, eighteen miles above Savannah, in 1789, and were both baptized

by Rev. Alexander Scott, of Black Swamp, South Carolina, who, by his zeal for the cause, was instrumental in the constitution of the Newington Church, in 1798; being the oldest white Baptist church in the lower part of Georgia. Thus God blessed his seed of grace sown in the hearts of these humble slaves even to whites, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.

The close of the century found this church doing a good work for the Lord, and is also memorable in the loss to her of the first and ever-faithful deacon, Sampson Bryan, own brother to the pastor, and one among the first fruits of his ministry who became a deacon upon the constitution of the church, suffered severely like his brother in their great trials, passed with him as through fire, and came out but more purified and strong, never faltering or failing in any duty to his master, Jesus. He lived and rejoiced to see the old ship of Zion riding prosperously upon the sea of time, having safely weathered many gales; and then, on the 23d of January, 1799, his Lord called him home, to enter into that rest that remaineth to the people of God; and though his death to him was no doubt great gain, the loss to the church and to their pastor, his elder brother, can hardly be told in words. He was buried in the colored persons' cemetery of the city, his grave vaulted over with bricks, and a large

marble stone laid upon it with this inscription, which remains to this day :

“ Here lies the body of Sampson Bryan, who departed this life January 23d, 1799, aged 53 years. He was the first deacon of the First Colored Baptist Church in this city, and served faithfully in that office until his death.”

The feeble but earnest struggle of the Newington interest was all the Baptist strength east of Burke County, in this State; when, in 1799, Rev. Henry Holcombe was invited to Savannah by the pewholders of the congregation worshipping on Franklin Square, consisting of Presbyterians and a very few Baptists, who had built the house of worship, yet were not sufficiently strong to constitute a church; and so were jointly worshipping together, when Dr. Holcombe accepted the call to supply them.

His relation to and influence upon this church, as also of the Baptist interest of the whole State, warrants us in giving him more than a passing notice in this history. “ Rev. Henry Holcombe, D.D., was born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, September 22, 1762. While he was yet a child his father moved to South Carolina, where (to use his own words) at eleven years of age he completed all the education he ever received from a living preceptor.”* As a young

* “Georgia Baptists, Historical and Biographical,” by J. H. Campbell.

man he served in the Revolutionary war as a captain of cavalry. He was converted to Christ while so serving, and joined the Presbyterian Church at the age of twenty-two. He immediately began to preach the gospel, and, it is said, his first sermon was preached in the saddle, at the head of his command, on the 11th of September, 1785. Not long after he became convinced that the Baptist principles of religion were right, and he rode twenty miles on horseback to be baptized by immersion. He was soon ordained, and became a distinguished preacher, meeting with extraordinary success in his work. Among his converts were his wife and an only brother of hers, and their mother; also his own father, Grimes Holcombe, was converted from Pedobaptist views. All these he had the pleasure of baptizing.

He was pastor of the Euhaw Baptist Church of South Carolina, though he resided at Beaufort, when in 1799 he was invited to Savannah; and we repeat, truly his coming into the State rendered great service to the Baptist cause in general and this church and Savannah in particular; and from the time he became acquainted with Rev. Mr. Bryan, and the history of his church and people, ever manifested the deepest interest in their welfare, both moral and religious, as will be seen in history, and as long as he remained in

the State, and even after removing to Philadelphia, where he went in 1811.*

So much success attended his ministry that in 1800 it was judged proper to organize a Baptist church of his white brethren in Savannah. The constituent members were twelve,—three males and nine females. Dr. Holcombe soon after was called as the pastor, and served as such eleven years. There is no doubt but that this First Colored Church was remarkably successful in its humble sphere, and some of its past history coming to the doctor's notice, in his late field of service just across the boundary in Carolina, had made an impression, and he was not long in seeing in it a means of spreading the Baptist influence in this section of the State.

The constitution of this Savannah church gave three to the eastern part of the State: the First Colored, organized January 20, 1788; the Newington, 1793; the Savannah, 1800. They met in convention at Savannah in 1802, and organized the Savannah River Association. Who the officers were we have no knowledge, as the file of minutes has been lost, it appears; but this we are certain of, that the churches were enrolled according to the date of constitution, and the First Colored Church stood at the head of

* Benedict's "History of the Baptists," vol. ii. p. 186.

the roll;* its membership was reported at 850, and to strengthen the body it was resolved that two more colored churches be constituted out of the membership of the First, and that two more colored ministers be ordained as their pastors. While we may see clearly the wisdom and zeal of our fathers to enlarge and strengthen our Baptist field, no doubt suggested by the acute mind of Dr. Holcombe, it does also appear that the character and standing of the pioneer in this section, Rev. Bryan, stood out strongly insisting that in justice, as well as the eternal fitness of the purpose, he should have some ministering colleagues of his own race, and that the claims and fitness of some of the young men whom he had led to Christ by his preaching should be considered; and it appears that the old pastor also held that his church should be consulted in the premises and give her consent; and he carried his point. Subsequent events proved that this was the will of God to perpetuate colored churches.

Among the male members of this church showing gifts were Henry Cunningham, Henry Francis, and Evans Grate, deacons; but of the three, Cunningham's gifts and circumstances seemed to favor him above his fellows. Yet it appears that the minds of

* Benedict's "History of the Baptists," vol. ii. p. 186.

both church and pastor were different, for soon after the adjournment of the Association the church called a council and ordained Brother Henry Francis, May 23, 1802. Rev. Jesse Peters, of Augusta, preached from Mark xv. 16; prayer by Rev. A. Bryan; charge by Dr. Holcombe. This seemed, of course, to give him preferment over his other brethren for the new churches under contemplation; and as to Brother Cunningham he must have so felt it, for he requested his letter,—which, being granted, he put in the Savannah Baptist Church (white) and was received into fellowship as a member,—as did also several others who followed him, among whom, as has been named to us, were Brother Thomas Anderson and Sisters Betsey Cunningham, Silvia Whitfield, Silvia Monax, Charlotte Walls, Leah Simpson, Susan Jackson; Brethren Scipio Gordon and Richard Houston,—all of whom afterwards became active organizers of the Second Church.* This seemed to have been the first serious misunderstanding among themselves as a church, and requests for letters became so numerous that the old pastor refused to grant any more, and threatened to expel them for insubordination; yet all who were dismissed, residing in the city, joined Dr.

* "Reminiscences," by Samuel Cope, a young member at this period.

Holcombe's church and augmented his small body considerably. This showed also conclusively that it was the early intention of our white brethren to encourage and foster a mixed membership of white and colored, which in after years, as will be seen, completely checked the constitution of churches wholly of the negro race, and the ordination of negro preachers.

It may be here remarked that the members who took letters and became members among the whites were mostly of the house-servants in the city, whose condition and circumstances were highly favorable at that day. Many of this class in after years, like their pastors, purchased their freedom, having, in some instances, previously been permitted to hire their time and work in various occupations for wages. Their surplus over the amount charged by their owners was often larger than what they paid. Such persons would very naturally have, as members of the church, some independence of feeling and judgment, innate in a Baptist mind from the very nature of their faith and its teachings. Thus feeling ran high and much excitement was felt, if but little could be expressed, in making this division of the parent body and selecting the brethren who were to take the leading part in these new interests. However, it seems that Dr. Holecombe threw his influence in favor of Brother Henry Cunningham; and when, on December 26, 1802, the first

of the two new churches was organized, Mr. Cunningham was called to the pastorate, though Mr. Francis had been already first ordained with that view.

In making the division it seems that as one of the churches was to be located in the city, it was planted at its east end, in the midst of the residences of some of the wealthiest white citizens. Most of the members composing this church were those residing in the city,—intelligent domestic servants and some mechanics,—who were ever under the eye of their owners, which gave them great protection and peaceable worship; and so that church became the pride of the young colored people of Savannah. The other church was planted on the Ogeechee for the accommodation of the slaves upon the plantations along that river, some fourteen miles south of the city. To the Second Colored Church in the city were given about 200, and to the Ogeechee 250 members from this parent church, all regularly dismissed from her, and Rev. Henry Francis was given the pastorate. So there were now five Baptist churches in the Association, as follows: First Colored, Savannah, Rev. Andrew Bryan, membership 400; Newington, Effingham County, Rev. John Goldwire, 16; Savannah Baptist Church, Rev. Henry Holcombe, 67; Second Colored Church, Savannah, Rev. Henry Cunningham, 200; and Ogeechee Baptist Church, Rev. Henry Francis, 250 members.

So they were reported at their associational meeting in 1803. Two other churches above Savannah, in Georgia, united with them that year also,—namely, Black Creek Baptist Church, Rev. J. Peacock, pastor; and Lot's Creek Baptist Church, Rev. Henry Cook, pastor, 45 members.

To show the comparative growth of this First Church, we give them as reported again in January, 1804, in their order: First Colored, membership 476; Newington, 23; Savannah Baptist, 77; Second Colored, 230; Ogeechee, 276; Black Creek, 96; Lot's Creek, 59. Such were the blessings of God showered upon the denomination this year that the Association adjourned to meet again in November, when five other churches from across the river in South Carolina joined them. This church reported at that meeting having baptized 107; membership, 544; lost by death, 33, 21 of whom perished in a storm that winter. The other two churches she organized were also blessed with increase. The Second Colored had baptized that year 29, and the Ogeechee, 47. These figures will simply show that in the zeal inspired by this union of churches and ministers of Christ our Lord seemed to show his purpose to keep this old mother-church of the seaboard of Georgia in the van of the army of Christian progress,—even at this early day's dawn of hope for the race in America.

The thoughts of the elder members, at least, must have at this period run high with expectation of what God would do for them, seeing what he had done, as their minds went back to the days of BUNCOMBE HILL (as the place of their first worship was called) and BRAMPTON'S BARN, the scene of their struggles with faith in those times of persecutions and trials. But now they have a comparatively comfortable house of worship, and an out-house for rest and refreshment; both small and extremely plain, but upon ground of their own, though held in trust by friends more favored in life. Their aged shepherd is also sheltered in his own cottage near the house of God and the gathering-place of the sheep of his fold.

'Tis Christmas of the year of our Lord 1802, a season when all have liberty to visit the city from the plantations. Their leading brethren in the city, their watchmen from the plantation societies, are all together upon this to them holy ground. The fold has been divided in the interest of the cause of Christ. Their old shepherd seems in the zenith of ministerial glory. The noble among the whites respect and show honor to him. Few—very few, 'tis true—call him brother, as they agreed to address each other in associational meetings. All is aglow with peace and joy, and amid all this—wonderful change from their past dark day of trial—the two churches were organized, two new min-

isters set apart to the work of the Lord, new deacons and watchmen created, brethren in humble stations promoted. "Truly the Lord reigns, let all the earth rejoice." What a transition! "According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what hath God wrought?" It may truly be said that in the dark days this church has seen and passed through since this period, the brightness of the hope wrought in the souls of these people in the closing days of 1802 and the opening of 1803 may have been dimmed, bût has never died out to the present day.

CHAPTER IV.

WE have but little of the history of this church, after the events of the last chapter, except so far as, like the two other churches wholly of colored membership, holding their positions in the Savannah Association, and their routine of Sunday worship three times a day,—that is, early morning prayer-meeting at sunrise, preaching at ten o'clock in the forenoon, and at three o'clock in the afternoon. Very seldom were night services held, unless some of the white ministers preached to them. Even then such meetings had to be early and of short duration, for by rule the drum of the city's patrol guard must beat at eight o'clock in winter and at nine in summer, and the said drum commenced half an hour earlier and beat at intervals of about ten minutes, the last roll ceasing at the striking of the hour. By this time every slave or person of color must be in-doors, and if found out fifteen minutes after drum-beat they were taken to the guard-house, and there kept confined until the owner or employer was notified the next morning to call and release their servant, at a cost of one dollar for keeping him in custody, and if not willing to pay the fee, the

servant was whipped and let out. There were exceptions to this law in cases where the servant presented to said guard a written permit from his owner, employer, or (if a free person) his guardian, to pass him until ten o'clock P.M. Some owners allowed their servants to hire their time, paying the wages earned to them each week or month, and extended the terms of these passes accordingly; that is, when the servant came and paid up the sum required he was given a new ticket, as the common expression was; but it was actually granting certain limited liberty, based on good behavior as a slave.

But to return to the general permission of church service, they were from sunrise to sunset, for, be it remembered, the statute laws of the State and ordinances of the city forbade the slaves to assemble together for any purpose (except funerals) to the number of seven without the presence of a white person, under penalty of fine or whipping with stripes, yet under these regulations the church could find pleasure and comfort. The larger number felt, and so expressed themselves as often as they met, that though in this world they had but little to hope for, they still possessed within righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It was indeed a joy every three months to come to the table of their Lord and commemorate his dying love for them, his risen power

to redeem and save them. So the even tenor of their permitted custom went on. The white ministers of Savannah, and the Carolina churches associated with them, were often and earnestly counselling to devise means for establishing educational facilities for their race and missionary work for the denomination, and constantly had the prayers of our colored churches for their success, notwithstanding being well aware that they could not share in its benefits, neither themselves nor their posterity, and much was being done in that direction. None were more zealous and self-sacrificing in that work than their friend and brother, Rev. Dr. Holcombe, who often advised with and counselled his colored brethren in their special work. The number of churches composed of mixed membership and congregations with white pastors increased within their bounds, until, in the year 1810, the number of them uniting with the Association was seven in addition to the number organized at first;* conspicuous among this latter number was the Sunbury Church, constituted by Rev. Charles O. Screnen, of Liberty County, who associated in 1805, and in whose constituency the colored members were largely in the majority, all of whom had become converted by his preaching and were

*The name of the Association was now changed to the Savannah River.

baptized by him. Dr. Henry Holcombe states in this year, 1810 (without giving particular names), "That the colored Baptists in and near Savannah numbered 1500, and at their quarterly communions, when they received new members, their numbers were augmented by 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, and in one instance 64, at a time; and it is but fair to presume, from connecting events, that the largest addition was made to this First Church."

Their pastor, Rev. Andrew Bryan, having become feeble from age and with long and industrious service, often had to be assisted in his ministrations by the younger preachers. Evans Grate, who had been dismissed, and became one of the deacons of the Second Church at its organization, proved to be a man after the requirements of the apostles for this office, and seems to have partaken much of the spirit of his first pastor. Andrew Cox Marshall, the son of Rev. Bryan's sister, had, some years before this time, been converted and joined the Second Church, and was baptized by Rev. Henry Cunningham. He was well advanced in years, of much worldly experience, of fine intellect, and a little learned in letters; and, like the Apostle Paul of old, he straightway after his conversion commenced to preach the gospel, so that Brethren Evans Grate and Andrew C. Marshall were duly licensed by their church to preach; but the latter

was called soon after ordination as assistant to his aged and enfeebled but venerated uncle, of whom Dr. Holcombe, in writing of his friend, about the beginning of the century, said: "Andrew Bryan not only honorably obtained liberty but a handsome estate. His fleecy and well-set locks have been bleached by eighty winters; and dressed like a bishop of London, he rides, moderately corpulent, in his chair, and, with manly features of a jetty hue, fills any person to whom he gracefully bows with pleasure and veneration, by displaying in smiles even rows of natural teeth white as ivory, and a pair of fine black eyes sparkling with intelligence, benevolence, and joy. In giving daily thanks to God for his mercies my aged friend seldom forgets to mention the favorable change that has of late years appeared through the lower parts of Georgia as well as South Carolina in the treatment of servants." We cannot doubt that this high encomium is just and true; that this pen-picture of him is faithfully drawn by one who knew him well and whose high character precludes the thought of flattery.

The assistance Mr. Bryan now had from his nephew, Andrew, much relieved his arduous labors of the Sabbath in preaching and administering the ordinances. On those occasions the old bishop (as he was sometimes called) might be seen at the river seated in his chair (so the two-wheeled carriage drawn by a horse and in

which he now almost constantly rode was called). As the candidates were immersed by his assistant and rose again from their watery grave, his silver hair, smiling face, and hearty amen spread a halo around the scene. Himself gave them the charge relative to their future conduct in life; extending the hand of fellowship and welcome to the table of our Lord after baptism, in the presence of the ready-prepared communion-table, the members in their seats and the newly-born and baptized all standing. At such times the scene was solemn and impressive in the extreme, as the aged man's words dropped upon the ear and entered the heart and mind, subduing the will. He was ever a strict disciplinarian. He watched for his people's souls, and, as far as he could, tried to ameliorate their condition, and this was a duty that he was not relieved from so long as he lived and was able to go upon his pastoral visits. These pastoral visits were twofold,—to the sick or those in distress of any kind, or to those unusually absent from the appointed Sabbath services,—and equally as often was he sent for by the mistress to correct an offending maid or by a master for a servant. Such, in the latter days of his ministry, was the respect for him that the best citizens found that his Christian discipline and fatherly advice had such effect upon their servants that the being threatened with a debarring of their Christian privileges insured their

faithfulness to the household duties better than the old harsher means. Thus, between the visits to the parlor of the mistress and the humbler quarters of the servants, the minister of God had peculiar duties to perform, and it had to be done with great prudence to be beneficial to all. Yet the system proved good in many ways when properly executed, and even after Mr. Bryan's day the same continued with beneficial effect to many households; and, though this may appear an anomaly, it has saved many a member of the church from being sold away, from a whipping, or other severe punishment, and many wives and husbands from being separated by being sold from each other. These incidents are not reverted to with any vindictive purpose whatever, but simply that it may appear how fully the religion of our Lord Jesus, administered by his called and chosen servants, meets the requirements of every clime, caste, condition, or circumstance, be it ever so intricate or difficult. Faith, hope, and charity overcome for all.

How like the sunshine driving away the clouds must it have appeared on so many of these occasions, to see his smiling, cheerful face come into the yard, bowing, with his hat in his hand, going up to hear the complaints against any of his members, and gracefully retiring, get in his chair and ride away after sometimes an hour's visit, and none, perhaps, but himself know-

ing what he had said,—part to mistress, part to maid, —suited to the case in question; but generally leaving reconciliation, peace, and confidence in the rectitude of his actions. To estimate the consequences of these visits would take an infinite mind and almost eternity to reveal, when we consider what may have been or was prevented from being done, and thus changing evil consequences for good.

It is remarkable that both Grate and Marshall, who assisted Mr. Bryan in his later days, were members not of his church but of the Second, and there is no record that either of them ever changed their membership to this church; though Mr. Grate had once been a member and dismissed upon the organization of the Second Colored Church. Mr. Marshall never was a member of this old church. As the old shepherd drew near to the close of his earthly labors, like Moses of old, he seemed to be desirous of leaving the flock over which the Lord had made him the overseer in the keeping of one chosen of God, as in the case of Moses and Joshua, and seemed to have fixed his mind upon Mr. Marshall; doubtless, not because he was his nephew, but that he saw the promise of that ability which developed so fully in after years; and he frequently so expressed it to his church that he believed it was the will of God, and it certainly was his desire. As will be seen, the wish bore great weight after his demise.

Mr. Bryan's decline was gradual. Gently the hand of his God led him down through the valley of the shadow of death, and from his ninetieth year he was constantly looking for and speaking of his departure, which came not until he was, as he supposed, ninety-six. Yet he had made all the preparation a man of his years and circumstances could, and when the time came it found him ready, willing, and waiting.

“Tranquil, amid alarms,
It found him on the field ;
A veteran slumbering on his arms,
Beneath his red-cross shield.

“The pains of death are past ;
Labor and sorrow cease,
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.”

He fell asleep in Jesus October 6, A.D. 1812.

To comprehend the death of this man of God properly, and its effect and feeling upon a people whom he led in religious principles, is to consider the parallel in the history of Moses and the Israelites ; and it is perhaps the first time in the history of the State that one of this despised race commanded the respect of a community and an acknowledgment that in the negro character, even under the conditions of slavery, there is true manhood and virtue developed by Christianity.

The city and neighboring plantations turned out to honor this noble man, whose life was spent in inculcating charity in the servant class, to the extent that the men with no other education save imitating their masters and the maids their mistresses produced a class and society in the community that was remarkably interesting, to say the least. As servants, their integrity was a security to the master in his goods, and their warm and affectionate character infusing itself in the white children whom they nursed, produced a type of manhood and womanhood in both races that is not seen in this day. Truly, in planting this church, the seed of grace sown in this man's heart (Mr. Bryan's) was good, and the tree and the fruit good. "The tree is known by its fruit."

In the plain, humble house of worship which he built for God, his body lay encased in a neat but plain black coffin constructed by the hands of his own race and members of his church, and like his Master, Jesus, "he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."*

Rev. Henry Kollock, D.D., pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church, and Rev. Mr. Johnson, of the Savannah Baptist Church, condescended to

* Isaiah, liii. 9.

enter his humble pulpit, and bore testimony to his worth, and made suitable addresses to his people. He was followed to his grave by over five thousand persons; and at that spot, in the common cemetery for colored persons (located then where now stands a principal part of the city, and notably St. Joseph's Hospital), other addresses were delivered by Thomas Williams, Esq., a distinguished white citizen, and Rev. Henry Cunningham, who committed the sacred remains to their last resting-place, reciting the beautiful and impressive funeral service of the Episcopal Church, his weeping members and friends singing one of the songs of Zion appropriate to the occasion. And so ended the glorious life, death, and burial of Rev. Andrew Bryan, one who had "fought a good fight, finished his course, kept the faith, and received a crown of righteousness."

His demise being reported to the Association that year, "I find in their minutes," says Dr. Benedict, "the following article:

"This Association is sensibly affected by the death of the Rev. Andrew Bryan, a man of color, and pastor of the First Colored Church in Savannah. This son of Africa, after suffering inexpressible persecutions in the cause of his divine Master, was at length permitted to discharge the duties of the ministry among his colored friends in peace and quiet; hundreds of

whom through his instrumentality were brought to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus. He closed his extensive, useful, and amazingly luminous course in the lovely exercise of faith and in the joyful hope of a happy immortality.’”*

In after years his grave was neatly bricked over, and a large tabulated marble stone was laid thereon, with this inscription, no doubt composed by his nephew, Andrew C. Marshall.

“Sacred to the memory of Andrew Bryan, pastor of the First Colored Baptist Church in Savannah. God was pleased to lay his honor near his heart, and so impressed the worth and weight of souls upon his mind, that he was constrained to preach the gospel to a dying world, particularly to the sable sons of Africa. Though he labored under many disadvantages, yet, taught in the school of Christ, he was able to bring new and old out of the treasury, and he has done more good among the poor slaves than all the learned doctors in America. He was imprisoned for the gospel and without ceremony was severely whipped, but while under the lash he told his persecutors, he rejoiced not only to be whipped, but he was willing to suffer death for the cause of Christ. He continued to preach the gospel until Oct. 6th, 1812. He was supposed to be ninety-six years of age. His remains were interred with peculiar respect. An address was delivered by Revs. Mr. Johnson, Dr. Kollock, Thomas Williams, and Henry Cunningham. He was an honor to human

* “General History of the Baptist Denomination in America,” etc., 1855, p. 739.

nature, an ornament to religion, and a friend to mankind. His memory is still precious in the mind of the living:

“ Afflicted long he bore the rod,
With calm submission to his maker, God.
His mind was tranquil and serene,
No terror in his looks was seen.
A Saviour’s smile dispelled the gloom
And soothed his passage to the tomb.

“ I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: even so saith the spirit, for they rest from their labors.

“ This stone is erected by the First Colored Church as a token of love for their most faithful pastor, A. D. 1821.”

Born a slave near Goose Creek, sixteen miles from Charleston, South Carolina, Mr. Bryan had purchased his own freedom,—for how much we do not know,—also that of his wife and an only daughter; besides, the estate which he left was valued at about three thousand dollars.

CHAPTER V.

THE last chapter closes the history of the church as we find it up to 1812, under an administration by Mr. Bryan of twenty-four years, though he was actually preaching four years previous, making his labors in the gospel twenty-eight years. Rev. A. C. Marshall was supplying the church as assistant pastor, and was expected to fill the place of his honored uncle whenever the church should call a pastor. This did not take place, however, for over two years after Mr. Bryan's death. Mr. Marshall seems to have become disqualified in some way. He was now a man of business in draying, and had the patronage of most of the first merchants of the city. It was a time when this country had just become engaged again in war with England, so it may have been a matter of his business that prevented his continuing his service to the church. However, we find Rev. Evans Grate supplying the church for over two years, yet never called as the pastor; but some time in the latter part of the year 1814, or the beginning of 1815, the church did set apart a Sabbath-day in which to fast and pray that the Great Head of the Church would direct their choice of a successor to their deceased pastor, whose memory they



REV. ANDREW C. MARSHALL.



still revered. There was no preaching on that day. Mr. Grate was present, and as a meek and humble Christian man, though not very learned or able as a minister, he had won the love and confidence of a large portion of the members of the church; and so, for the first time in her history, having to make choice between two candidates for her pulpit, there was very naturally an event of some moment among them that day. Rev. Mr. Marshall seems to have had confidence in the wisdom of the church, and that his call was in the hands of God and his brethren. He absented himself on the occasion and went to the Presbyterian Church. At twelve o'clock the church proceeded to the business of calling a pastor, and many strong appeals were made in behalf of the latter from the standpoint of the wish of their old shepherd, his uncle. Great fears were entertained by those of his friends who really desired Mr. Marshall as their pastor that Mr. Grate would defeat him; but when the vote was taken, though a large body rose in his favor, Mr. Marshall was found to have received a majority, and became their pastor.*

It is commendable to the spirit of all that there

* Memoirs of two old members actively present on the occasion, Samuel Cope and Jack Bourke, corroborated by Sisters Grace Hague and Dianah Wallace.

was no bad feeling engendered by the defeat of Mr. Grate, as he continued an assistant in this church, and performed evangelistic work many years after; and no division or dissension ever arose out of this or any later work of the ministry on his part. The church at this period was strong and prosperous. Many young men and women of natural ability and intelligence became connected with the church, and the number of her members largely increased. Yea, this seems to have been a time when the Lord favored his Zion, when the set time had come, though we can only draw these facts from the figures given at a subsequent period, having no statistics to guide us until 1818, when it became necessary for the Savannah River Association to dissolve the union which was organized in 1802. The division was mutual, the South Carolina churches withdrawing to form an organization of their own in that State, and the Georgia churches to meet at Sunbury, in Liberty County, on the 7th of November, 1818, to organize a new Association, which took the name of the village in which it was held and the church with whom they met, the Sunbury Baptist Church, Rev. Charles O. Screnen being the pastor. The churches at this organization were the First Colored, the Savannah (white), Second Colored, Great Ogeechee, and Sunbury, mixed membership.

This church was represented by Deacons Adam

Johnson and Josiah Lloyd, and reported her membership as 1712. The Second Colored Church reported 538, and the Great Ogeechee 460. The First was represented by Rev. Henry Cunningham, Deacons Thomas Anderson and George Carter; the latter by Deacon John Cabbage. So we may clearly see that this church had continued increasing her numbers; doubtless the largest portion were from the river plantations near the city, but her popularity as the mother church—the Jerusalem of the colored race—kept her, of course, in the lead, as has been said; so that in 1810, when the three colored churches' membership combined was about 1500, this church comprised over half. So now it may be seen by comparing the figures above,—which continued for many years,—as the records of the Sunbury Association, which we have in full, will show.

At the time of organization of this Association Mr. Marshall had been the pastor of this church about three years. He seems to have inherited the power and popularity of his uncle; was prosperous in his ministry of the gospel and in his temporal affairs; was dearly beloved by his own people, and was greatly respected by the whites, among whom he had many warm and influential friends, who aided him materially in his business as a drayman of their mercantile goods. Thus favored of God and man, is it not natural that he should become a shining mark for the adversary's

spirit to shoot at? Yet we will see that his "bow abode in strength, though the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him."* Mr. Marshall ever showed great deference for the laws and institutions of the country, combined with a high measure of self-respect, and frequently held to his own opinions with decision and inflexibility. With no education, having barely by his own persistent efforts learned to read, but never being able to write, he became by practice a good reader, and procuring such books as he could, under the circumstances, became an earnest student, as we have often heard him tell. A lover of truth, he sought it with his soul. "Get wisdom, get knowledge, but with all thy getting get understanding," was his motto; thus he essayed to dive deep into theology, and the Bible became his principal study, and Dr. Gill's Commentaries one of his main guides. It will be observed that he did not represent the church at the organization of the Sunbury Association and for several years after. This was about the time when he became somewhat unpopular with the white brethren of his own denomination, on account of what they termed his extreme views of theology, or the doctrines which he then preached, which bordered on Antinomianism, or, in the plainer

* Genesis xlix. 23.

sense of the term, against law,—a doctrine which held that the law is not a rule of life to believers under the gospel dispensation. The appellation is generally given to those who carry the doctrine of justification by faith without works to such extreme as to separate practical holiness from true believing, and injure, if not wholly destroy, every obligation to moral obedience. This was not the purpose of Mr. Marshall, by any means; but the construction his jealous opponents put upon his efforts to explain to his people the difference between the law and the gospel of faith in the atoning merits of Christ, by which we obtain salvation. Of course, while among the white people he was unpopular on account of the doctrines he essayed to preach,—and which only the learned in the Scriptures could understand,—he became the more popular among his own race and people, because he was able to preach such doctrines, whether sound or not. They felt a just pride in his ability to compete with the whites, to the extent that they were jealous of his power in expounding the Scriptures, and so drew his church so near to him that they were willing to suffer all things with him rather than give him up. But this was not the only trial the tempter made him undergo. About the same period (from 1819 to 1821), while engaged in his secular avocations, and having accumulated a goodly portion of money (he was build-

ing himself a two-story brick house,—a rather lofty undertaking for a man of color in that day), in an unguarded moment he violated the law (unintentionally, no doubt) by purchasing from slaves having no tickets with permission to trade or sell; and though many white people had laid the foundation of great success in business before, as many others have done since, by contraband trade with the blacks, the advantage was taken of Mr. Marshall's inadvertency, it happening at the period of his temporary unpopularity, and he was prosecuted for buying some bricks said to have been stolen from Mr. McAlpin, and was sentenced to be publicly whipped in the market-place. But here also we may witness the power of God and the means of his grace to save, by using man against man, even as steel will foil steel. Mr. Richard Richardson, the partner in commercial business with Mr. Robert Bolton, to whom Mr. Marshall belonged about the time he was converted, had bought him that he might become free, and now further showed his true friendship and deep interest in him by coming forward at this time of trouble. He interceded in the courts, and put in his claim as master in behalf of a valuable servant whose interests he was determined to see should not suffer; and though he failed in an effort to release him by the payment of money, as he was fully able and willing to do, seeing it was the

determined purpose of the prosecutors to punish and disgrace this servant of God, Mr. Richardson, by his influence, enlisted the sympathy of several of the best citizens, who declared they would not allow him to be cruelly punished, and they went to the place of execution of the sentence, and the constable was instructed that he should not scratch his skin or draw his blood. His old master stood at his side to see that these precautions were faithfully and humanely carried out,* and thus the whipping was only a semblance.

These severe trials of his own faith, and the attempt made by the devil and his agents to injure the church through his disgrace, wholly failed; she stood firm in these evil days. The people said but little on so momentous an occasion, but drew nearer together, it seems, and shielded him with prayer; and he soon came forth again brighter and stronger for having come through the fire, as his old uncle and revered predecessor had done before him, and to whose memory he and the church this very year erected the tablet and wrote the epitaph mentioned in the last chapter. Doubtless this trial called his mind to the duty he and they owed to the memory of Mr. Bryan after nine years,—now that

“He knew what sore temptations meant,
For he had felt the same.”

* “Memoirs of A. Marshall,” by J. P. Tustin, D.D.

The church could not be held responsible for what the pastor did, and though he was crippled in his ministry for awhile, they managed to go right on, Brother Evans Grate again coming to their aid and Rev. Henry Cunningham assisting them. She was not reported in the Association in 1819, but in the year 1820 was again represented by Deacons Adam Johnson and Adam Sheftall, and reported her membership 1836, showing a gain in the two years of 124 members, notwithstanding the trials through which she had passed. The Second Colored Church in this year reported a larger increase, her membership being 736, a gain of 198 ; Rev. Henry Cunningham and Deacons Thomas Anderson and John Devoux representing her. The Great Ogeechee was not represented, but the membership was the same as at the last report, 460. In 1821, Rev. Evans Grate alone represented the church in the Association, and the membership had increased to 1916, a gain of 80 for the year, while the Second Church membership increased to 822, a gain of 96, and the Ogeechee reported the membership at 497, a gain this year of 37. While there was a small increase in each of the three colored churches this year, there seems to have been a lethargy in their associational interest. Rev. Messrs. Grate and Cunningham represented the First and Second Churches alone, respectively, and the Ogeechee had no representative.

We have given but the names of the pastor and the brethren who represented the church at the associational meeting heretofore, yet there were many others of weight and intelligence fully equal to the task of filling the several offices of the church assigned to them, and were ever zealous for the cause of their Lord. Nothing but their condition of moral bondage prevented them from displaying their gifts and accomplishing much good to his glory, and, so far as they were permitted, they did what they could. The church always had good choirs of singers, good committees of deacons, assisting the pastor in looking after the welfare and godly walk of the members, visiting them at proper times, and counselling them in love for their temporal and spiritual welfare, at such times as circumstances would safely permit, for these were indeed times when the injunction of our Saviour, "Behold, I sent you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves,"* applied with much force to them. Among the most intelligent men and women, and the earnest workers with influence among the people, who could drop a word of caution at times among their fellows, and prudently allay the suspicions of wrong in the minds of the whites here mentioned, in distinction from the

* Mathew x. 16.

more general class of members, too numerous to be named, yet who did their full share cheerfully for the good and upbuilding of their Zion and the glory of Christ, we may name of those times Adam Johnson, deacon; Adam Sheftall, deacon; Josiah Lloyd, deacon; Jack Simpson, deacon; Isaac Beard, Sampson Walls, Wm. Campbell, Jack Bourk, Samuel Cope, Joseph Clay, Adam Anderson, Benjamin Renier, Jack Cohen, Benjamin Verderee, Benjamin King (deacon, and a native African), Emanuel Wand, Goldsmith Lloyd, Abram Wallace; and among the noble women, also, Bash Devoux (who attended the females at baptism), Grace Hague (who was baptized by Mr. Bryan, and lived in great preservation up to 1885), Sarah Nelson, Betty Williamson, Elizabeth Beard, Lesse McFarland, Rachel Marshall (wife of Deacon Johnson), Hetty Campbell, Sally Verderee, Sarah Span, Sarah Wallace, Lucretia Dolly, Diana Wallace, Martha Monger, and Sophia Simpson.

These, with perhaps others, were persons whose circumstances enabled them to do most for the building up of the cause of Christ, and whose Christian life and zeal brought them most conspicuously before their brethren and the world. Some among them had worked out their time, as was then expressed for those who had purchased their freedom, or had procured it by gift from their owners on account of blood relation-

ship or faithful and important services rendered. Some were allowed to hire their time, because their owners were among the middle or poorer classes of whites, who invested their money in this species of property as an investment that paid the best interest upon the capital surer and sooner. Yet out of each and all of these conditions in which the members of the church were situated, they were doing something for God's glory, as the only glory they had in the world, the advancing of the light and liberty of the gospel among their race; and thus they very naturally vied with each other who should shine brightest in the affairs of the church and as the light of the world.

Among the officers of the church Adam Johnson early became a man of commanding influence. His fine stature, over six feet high, and otherwise proportionately well developed, facial features regular, a head poised upon square shoulders, high, broad forehead, denoting intelligence and reverence, with always a grave demeanor, a dark-brown complexion, showing some slight mixture of white blood, but in all a fine specimen of the negro men from the West India islands, he being born in the British West India island of New Providence. Like Mr. Marshall, and others among these brethren, he was only able to read, but was a man of profound thought and judgment, who had much

more concealed in the depths of his mind than was seen upon the surface by his actions; thus he ever stood more prominent in the church than any other out of the pulpit, and while Jack Simpson, Josiah Lloyd, Adam Sheftall, and others before named, held prominent places in the church, Mr. Johnson is thus particularly mentioned on account of the part he performed in this church's history for over forty years. Adam Anderson and Joseph Clay were perhaps better learned in letters than any others in the church at that time, for each was able to both read and write tolerably well, and what little record of the church's early doings found were made by them as clerks. The pride in their ability to do this service, too, was shared by nearly the whole people, and clothed them with great dignity in their day and made them the objects of emulation.

Among the females who prominently figured in the history of these days were: first, the three sisters baptized by Rev. Mr. Leyle with Father Andrew Bryan, —his wife Hannah, Kate Hogg, and Hagar Simpson. We have little history of the work done by these mothers in the church. No doubt they did what they could, judging from the progress made in that early day; but the most authentic history we have of the work of these latter named is that of old Mother Bash Devoux, who occupied the old first house of worship

on "Buncombe Hill," where the candidates for baptism were prepared as long as she lived. She was a pattern of good works to many who have followed her example to the present day as spiritual mothers of the church. Of this group of thorough Baptist women, all of whom distinguished themselves in some way in the building up and perfecting of the work of the church, and most of whom lived to remarkable ages, but more especially of the number, was Mother Grace Hague, whose long life and preservation, mentally and physically, is worthy of notice. She gave many of the incidents of the early history of the church, corroborated by written history. When very young she was baptized by Mr. Bryan in his later days. She lived until the summer of 1885, mention of which was made in the minutes of the Zion Association, by resolution that year. Sarah Nelson, Diana Wallace, and Sarah Wallace, each in turn, became the successors of Mother Bash in officiating at the water during the baptism of females, and were therefore highly respected as pious mothers of the church by all, male and female members.

CHAPTER VI.

THE church was represented by Rev. Evans Grate and Adam Sheftall in 1822, but the membership was not given; and in 1823 by Adam Sheftall and Jack Simpson, with a membership of eighteen hundred and eighty-eight. It was at this meeting of the Association that the designation of African Churches was given to these two bodies with exclusively colored pastors and membership. It seems that there were some additions of churches organized by white ministers with a mixed membership, as, for instance, the White Bluff and Abercorn, organized by Rev. James Sweat and Rev. Henry Cook. But this title or designation was not given to either, though their membership was largely of colored persons, with very few whites. But upon the minutes these two Savannah churches were ever after styled the First African and the Second African, and although the Ogeechee Church, as first organized, was exclusively colored in membership and its pastor, it was now represented in the Association by white brethren and served by white missionaries. This was, no doubt, for prudential reasons, as it was against the policy of the State Legislature for large bodies of slaves to assemble unless presided over by some white person as

their religious teacher. In 1824 the First African was represented by A. Sheftall and A. Johnson, the membership being 1912; and in 1825, for the first time, Rev. Andrew Marshall appeared, representing the church in the Association, with Deacons A. Sheftall, A. Johnson, and J. Simpson as colleagues, with a membership of 1886, showing a decrease of 26; but in 1826 there were the same representatives, Marshall, Sheftall, Johnson, and Simpson, with a membership of 2141, showing a gain of 255 for this year. It was in this year, also, that the first Sabbath-school for colored children was instituted in this city and at this church. Messrs. George W. Coe, John Lewis, James Barr, and others, teachers of the Independent Presbyterian Sabbath-school, under the superintendence of Mr. Lowel Mason, established a branch here for colored children. Mr. Coe was the superintendent of this branch until his death, when he was succeeded by Mr. William Bee. At first the school was conducted under the class system, but afterwards the superintendent conducted all the exercises, and gave the instruction from the desk. The average attendance of the school was about two hundred. Mr. Coe's plan was to make the scholars bring to the school certificates of good behavior from their owners during the week, and during the exercises he made all who had certificates of good behavior stand up and show themselves to the school;

afterwards he gave them tickets with a Scripture text ; then he made all those who were reported bad at home stand up and show themselves to the school, to receive, probably, a public reprimand. This mission school in the church continued successfully down to December 27, 1835, since which time it has been kept up by the church.* In 1827, Marshall, Johnson, and Simpson were the representatives ; membership, 2275 ; gain, 134. In 1828 the delegation was A. Marshall, Joseph Clay, and — Ross ; membership, 2311, a gain of 36 ; and in 1829, with the same delegation, Marshall, Clay, and Ross ; membership, 2357, a gain of 46. The colored delegates were increased in the Association this year by the addition of Rev. Evans Grate, representing the White Bluff, and Rev. B. Renier, the Abercorn, with Rev. Mr. Cunningham, Deacons Anderson and Devoux, of the Second African, making a respectable number of our race holding up the banner of the cross among the more favored white brethren, representing a colored constituency at this meeting of 4264 members, which in detail was : First African, 2357 ; Second African, 1040 ; Ogeechee, 300 ; White Bluff, 407 ; Abercorn, 160. In 1830 the delegation of this church was Marshall, Clay, and Simpson ;

* We are indebted to Mr. John Stoddard, of the Independent Presbyterian Church, for the copy of these records from the files of the church in this city.

membership, 2418, a gain of 61 for the year; and in 1831, Marshall, Johnson, Simpson, and S. Whitfield (a grandson of Father Andrew Bryan); the membership this year, 2795, a gain of 377. It will be seen that the church had experienced a great revival this year, and had the largest increase of any previous year; and there seems to have been an increase in all the colored churches of the city and county this year from their report by the Association; but the great ingathering took place in this church. Yet this outpouring of the Spirit and increase was followed by the severest trial but one in her whole history.

Dr. Alexander Campbell (then called the great new-light preacher) visited Savannah, and was permitted by the pastor, Rev. A. Marshall, to preach in the church his new doctrine. The orthodox Baptists of the city and vicinity, with the leading officers of this church and a large part of the members, disapproved of the pastor's course, and became highly displeased with him. The pastor also, in some remarks from his pulpit, seemed to give the impression that he was favorably inclined towards Dr. Campbell's doctrine. The effect was terrible. Disputes arose in the church to such an extent that even in the meetings for public worship, as well as in those for business, the disorder was so great that the city officers were called in to disperse them, and some of the most turbulent

were caught and severely whipped on one Sunday evening by the city marshal. The church became hopelessly divided, the subject becoming the town's topic, and this glorious heritage of Christ, the hope and light of the negro race in our city and all the neighboring plantations, became a reproach.

Rev. A. Marshall withdrew from the building with one portion of the church, the other remaining, under the leadership of Deacon Adam Johnson, the most able and influential of the deacons. The great power of his preaching and the general popularity of Mr. Marshall drew a large majority of the members after him, and for a long time the disputes waged between the majority and the minority parties without their seeming to know what was the issue. It was principally the Marshall and Johnson parties, the latter accusing the pastor of preaching false doctrine, and of being the common talk among the people as well as the respective members. The church was not represented in the Association, and did not make any report for the year 1832; but that body, being in session at Walthourville, Liberty County, considered the state of the church and appointed a committee of investigation, who made report on the 10th of November, 1832, as follows:*

* Extract from the minutes of Sunbury Association, 1832, p. 6, paragraphs 24-27, kindly furnished by Rev. Lewis C. Tebeau, now secretary New Sunbury Association.

“The committee to whom was referred the consideration of the difficulty existing in the First African Church, Savannah, make their report.

“Your committee, after a serious consideration of the painful and difficult task assigned them, would present to your body the following resolutions, as the result of their consideration :

“*Resolved*, That we approve highly of the recommendation of the council of ministers that was called, viz., That A. Marshall be silenced ; and we concur in the opinion that he be silenced indefinitely.

“*Resolved*, That the First African Church, as a member of this Association, on account of its corrupt state, be considered as dissolved ; and that measures be adopted to constitute a new church as a branch of the white Baptist church.

“*Resolved*, That we advise our colored brethren in the country, now members of the African churches in Savannah, to take letters of dismission, and either unite themselves with neighboring churches of our faith and order or be constituted into separate churches.

“The committee recommend the public expression of this body, extending their entire approbation of the Christian deportment of the Second African Church.

“*Resolved*, That a copy of the above resolutions be transmitted to the mayor of the city of Savannah.

“Signed,

“SAMUEL S. LAW,

“*Moderator.*

“OLIVER STEVENS,

“*Clerk.*

“A true extract from the minutes of the Sunbury Association, convened at Walthourville, Georgia, November 9, 10, and 11, 1832.

“LEWIS C. TEBEAU,
“*Clerk of Sunbury Association.*”

This may seem a very summary proceeding to some Baptists, considering that an Association has no ecclesiastical powers over Baptist churches; but it will appear less strange when we remember that under the then existing laws of the State of Georgia our white brethren were held somewhat responsible for our good conduct, and that they came and sat in the conferences or any other meetings when they thought it necessary, and the courts of jurisdiction would not give our colored ministers a license to preach or officiate in the ordinances of the Church unless they were endorsed by two or more white Baptist ministers. Thus virtually all the colored churches were wards. It is also true that most generally these actions were done kindly and with a desire on the part of some white brethren only to guard us for good under the circumstances; yet, too, there were at times some severe exceptions.

The church property being under a perpetual trusteeship, the Association no doubt then looked to the continuation of an orthodox colored church upon this spot, in its recommendation to reorganize the same as a branch of the white Baptist church, and that it

would be in harmony with the trust and yet be controlled under some white minister appointed by them, and in interviews with the deacons such action was proposed. Yet there is no evidence that the resolution ever was effectual in the way contemplated by that body.

While the church last reported two thousand seven hundred and ninety-five members, not more than about two-fifths were residents of the city, the other three-fifths being scattered upon the plantations along the Savannah River, and had no voice in the disciplinary part of the church; therefore not more than about eleven hundred were engaged in this dispute or division, and a majority of this number took sides according to their preference for the leading parties in the dispute and not upon any merits of the questions at issue. There was a very distinct and grave question involved, and that question was, Did Mr. Marshall say from his pulpit that he favored the peculiar doctrines of reform preached by Mr. Campbell to his people? Deacons Adam Johnson, Jack Simpson, and a large body of the members, and some of the whites visiting on the occasion, held that he did, judging from the associational report; and we learn that a council had been called which decided that such was the fact, and resolved that Mr. Marshall be not allowed to preach, as they considered his views of Baptist doctrine as erroneous as Mr. Campbell's.

However, while this adjudication was taking place, whether legal or not, the parties to the issue were not idle. The minority, under Mr. Johnson's leadership, continued to meet in the old church building, and held such services as were permitted by the city authorities. The white Baptist church had this year (1832) completed and moved into their new brick church edifice on Chippewa Square, and their wooden building on Franklin Square, in which they had worshipped since 1800, was vacant. Mr. Marshall, through the intercession of some very influential white friends, purchased this building from the white church, which was much more commodious than the old house built by Rev. A. Bryan. This bold effort on his part gave him a great advantage over his opponents, and drew the people to him in means and numbers; and they met with him and prayed, if they could do nothing else; but he was careful to keep within the bounds of the law by having some friendly white person always present on the occasion of his meetings.

In this division the strongest portion of the male members sided with the minority, and so did all of the ordained deacons,—namely, Johnson Sheftall, Simpson Wall, and Ross; and among the males of note, William Campbell, Isaac Beard, Jack Cohen, Sampson Whitfield, Joseph Clay, Josiah Lloyd, Benjamin Verderee, Adam Anderson, William Monger, and others;

and with Mr. Marshall, acting deacons Benjamin King, Patrick Williams, with Brethren Jack Burke, Emanuel Wand, Robert McNish, Bing Frazer, James Mills, Lenan Brown, and others. Of course, with few exceptions, the wives and children went with their husbands and fathers; but the generality of the females, who have ever been in the majority, went with Rev. Mr. Marshall. On both sides the feeling ran very high, and much of crimination and recrimination existed for some time before it subsided. Several of the male members vacillated from one side to the other, as circumstances seemed to favor, and a few who could even left the country and went to Liberia, Africa; others took letters and joined the Second African Church, not desiring to have any part in the dispute. Such was the status of both sides at the beginning of the year 1833.

It will be borne in mind that in 1832 the church was not represented in the Sunbury Association, though it had been a member from the organization of that body and at the time the resolutions relative to the church and pastor were adopted; but at the session of 1833 she sent as delegates to represent her Rev. Thomas Anderson, who had been called as the pastor this year, with Deacons A. Johnson and J. Simpson. The membership, as then reported, was 398; of course, this representation could be but circumstantial, for in

1831 her membership was 2795. Where had they gone? was certainly a question; and to account for them we must consider the fact that but about two-fifths of the church's membership resided in the city,—which would be in round numbers about 700,—a majority of whom, as has been said, followed Rev. Mr. Marshall; and if the number here reported by the church (398) is near correct, the other 702 were with him, and there must have been about 1700 baptized members of the church upon the plantations who were now “scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”*

When we consider the persecutions of the church in its earliest days, the history of which has come down to the members of this period from their parents,—some of those who had suffered with Mr. Bryan being yet alive,—it is easy to see that these people, unable to understand the true merits of the questions that distracted and separated the church, should believe that Mr. Marshall was being persecuted, like his uncle had been, simply for the cause of Christ, and in order to prevent him from enlightening them as poor, persecuted slaves. We do not wonder, then, that the majority were with him, right or wrong, in this difficulty: their condition and circumstances would justify them in this belief.

* Matthew ix. 36.

On the other hand, Was their pastor wrong? Did he desire to do wrong, or lead them the wrong way, in his preaching to them? He told them plainly of Jesus and his love; of his dying for their sins upon the cross; of his rising from the dead for their justification, if their faith believed this; and of his ascension to glory, where he went to prepare them a home; their mansion in heaven was sure if they lived a life of faith and practised good works. They could fully understand him in this, and it sufficed a large majority of them, the greater portion of whom he had baptized into the faith of the Church. Yet there was a thinking, discriminating number of members in the church even then who were able to judge of sound doctrine, and whether or not their minister was "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," and they strongly differed with Mr. Marshall, though a minority; and it was this body of the church's members who sent Rev. Thomas Anderson, A. Johnson, and Jack Simpson to represent them in the fifteenth session of the Sunbury Baptist Association. They were so received and enrolled as the Third African Church, according to the manner of the white brethren, entitling those churches wholly composed of colored officers and members.

A question that arises just here is, Why did the As-

sociation not receive these delegates as the representatives of the First African Church, and so enroll them as formerly? The proposition here propounded is certainly necessary of solution to maintain the original status of the church, we think; and does the fact that the Association changed the number or title of recognition of the church at this time alter its original identity? In logic, opposition in propositions implies a disagreement in respect of quality, and it does appear to be a matter that the Association should have considered and decided upon as an advisory body under the Baptist polity; but it seems that they did not, although the white brethren of Savannah held several meetings with the leaders of the division. Such brethren as Rev. H. O. Wyer, Deacons Holmes Tupper, Abram Harmon, W. W. Wash, H. H. Furman, and others, men eminent for their piety and sound judgment and orthodoxy in the Baptist faith, counselled with and examined into the unhappy difficulty; and it was certainly their advice and direction that brought on the settlement in the form we have it upon their associational records, which we now quote:*

(Par. 25.) "Application was made by the Third African Church to become a member of this Association. Granted by a unanimous vote.

* Minutes of the Sunbury Association, 1833, p. 6, paragraphs 25-29.

(Par. 26.) "*Resolved*, That this Association approves of the conduct of S. Whitfield, J. Clay, and others, who separated from the First African Church, and recommends them to full fellowship with all the churches.

(Par. 27.) "*Resolved*, That this Association expresses its disapprobation of the conduct of such member or members as attempted to invalidate one or more of its resolutions.

(Par. 28.) "*Resolved*, That it be considered respectful and safe for any church, differing as to the expediency or propriety of any resolutions of this Association, that they submit their views at the next annual meeting, and defer until such time operations on the subject.

(Par. 29.) "*Resolved*, That this Association, having undoubted testimony of Andrew Marshall holding the sentiments avowed by Alexander Campbell, now declares him and all his followers to have thrown themselves out of the fellowship of the churches of this Association, and it recommends all of its faith and order to separate from them, according to the advice of the Savannah Baptist Church."

It must also be borne in mind that at the previous session, when fellowship with the First African Church was declared dissolved by the Association, and they expressed by resolution their entire approbation of the Christian deportment of the Second African Church,

they yet by another resolution recommended to that church the expediency of their connecting themselves as a branch of the white Baptist church in Savannah, and that we adopt measures to constitute all the African churches branches of white Baptist churches. A foot-note says a committee was appointed to transmit this resolution to the State Legislature and Mayor of Savannah, with explanatory remarks.

In the session of 1834 the only allusion made to this difficulty is a paragraph of the digest of letters, saying, "The Third African Church seems engaged in its duties with diligence and Christian zeal;" but at the next session, 1835, we find on page 1, paragraph 16: "Application was made by the First African Church in Savannah for membership; but difficulties beyond the control of the Association being presented, with the consent of the representatives of said church, a committee was appointed, consisting of J. S. Law, A. Harmon, D. Harmon, T. Mell, W. W. Wash, and H. Furman, who should request the assistance of Rev. C. B. Jones, and who should act for the Association in the adjustment of the difficulties;" and at the session of 1835, on page 9, we find only a synopsis of the report of the committee, as follows: "The committee appointed by the preceding Association to settle differences existing between the African churches in Savannah, report the following as the conditions

upon which an amicable adjustment might be effected : That the First African Church act aside from her pastor, thereby dissolving her illegal and disorderly connection with him ; that she renounce the unscriptural doctrines taught by Andrew Marshall ; that she satisfy the Second African Church in relation to her excommunicated members ; that she return to the Association in the faith and order of the churches which compose that body."

In the minutes of 1836 (page 4, par. 12) we find, "The committee appointed at the last session of this Association for the adjustment of the difficulties in the First African Church in Savannah, being called upon, presented their report, which, being read, was accepted." Also (par. 13), "A committee from the First African Church presented a letter addressed to the Association by one of its trustees, and also a petition for restoration to the fellowship of this body, which, after being examined by a committee, were returned with a recommendation that they should be read." (Par. 14.) "The letter and petition being read, on motion, a committee, consisting of Brethren J. S. Law, J. McDonald, and A. Harmon, was appointed, to report upon the petition."

(Page 5, par. 20.) "The committee appointed to examine the letter from the First African Church thus reports : that they truly admire the spirit in

which the petition of that church to your body was dictated, and would affectionately advise them to accede to the terms of reconciliation stated in the report of your late committee, as the only terms upon which reconciliation can be made in the present state of things. We would also recommend that the clerk furnish the delegates of said church with a copy of this report."

At the session of 1837 (page 6, par. 13), "A letter was presented from the First African Church, requesting to be readmitted a member, stating that the difficulties heretofore existing were removed." The proceedings of the committee of the Savannah church (white), together with its report to the church, as follows, were read: "Your committee, after a laborious service, are now able to report that they have reason to believe the long-existing difficulties between the several African churches are brought to a close; each has expressed itself satisfied, and all has been done by the First African Church in accordance with the resolutions and recommendations of the Association; and Andrew Marshall, having made full renunciation of holding the peculiar sentiments of Alexander Campbell, with which he has been charged, there seems to be no difficulty in his holding full fellowship in the church to which he belongs. It was then resolved that the First African Church

be readmitted a member of this body." Thus we have here all the public correspondence and actions of the Association relating to the difficulty, fully, as they appear in its minutes, and must leave for another chapter its analysis.

*

CHAPTER VII.

WITH the going out of Mr. Marshall and his followers from the Sunbury Association, the record of which we gave in the preceding chapter, and their return to that body, is fully given also his going out from this church and the causes, notwithstanding the church have no special records to show of her own keeping; but there is only this difference in his leaving the church: he never did return to it; and it must be recollected also that while he had been its pastor for about sixteen years, he never was a member of the church; his membership ever remained with the Second Colored Church, which he originally joined and where he was baptized. This church, therefore, could not discipline him. Seeing by these records of the Sunbury Association that the First African Church went away from and was declared by them "*dissolved*" on account of its corrupt state, and also that it is "*re-admitted*" a member of the body about five years after under the same title, the question naturally presents itself, Is it still the church which, under God, Mr. Bryan planted in the year 1788, which is existing still, and which has never been rooted up, neither have the

gates of hell prevailed against it? By carefully analyzing the preceding chapter we gather the facts which must determine the question, and we will now endeavor to set them in their order.

Then, 1st. By the blessing of God, Rev. Andrew Bryan founded this the first negro Baptist church in the United States of North America, in the city of Savannah, of the State of Georgia, and after its journeying in a wilderness of tribulation, doubts, and fears, from Buncombe Hill to Brampton, and from there back to the city, they finally rested on Lot No. 7, Oglethorpe Ward, and erected a house for God. To secure it, he, by faith—no doubt looking for this day—in the promises of God, placed it in trust of those whom he believed would keep the property securely in possession of the worshippers of God of his race until God should deliver them from their moral and physical bondage. Having proved himself and followers sound in the faith of the Baptists, and as such associated with others of the State and country, he died, leaving the church in a comparatively peaceful and prosperous condition, with the hope of continuing so.

2d. Mr. Marshall became his successor, finding the church still progressing, and it continued so until he departed from its faith and was deposed. He had never represented the church in the Association,

though its pastor until the year 1825, seven years after the organization of that body at Sunbury; but Johnson, Simpson, Lloyd, Sheftall, and others had, and the church had overcome all obstacles to her peaceful worship and ordinances by her good conduct, with no serious disturbance until Mr. Alexander Campbell's visit, in 1832. She had grown strong through the grace of peace. Then all these troubles of the last five years were but the fruit of the ambition of her pastor; and when the troubles came, it was Mr. Marshall and his followers who withdrew and went away from the old ground and buildings, surrendering all in possession of the trustees to those who held to Mr. Bryan's faith and practice, and contended against him for the same,—and these were to a man those who had ever represented her in the Association, and who in 1833 received the commendation of their brethren in that body for having done right; not, as they say, in “separating from the First African Church,” but rather should have said in not going out from the faith with Mr. Marshall and his followers, when they left them. These being truly the church, because they had the faith and doctrine, were recommended to full fellowship with all the churches; but why give them a new number of recognition among the African churches, then? This seems inconsistent.

3d. There is no evidence that there was a new organization of the church when Rev. Thomas Anderson, Deacons Adam Johnson and Jack Simpson attended the session of the Association as representatives in 1833, the year after the schism. They went as a part of the same body of which they had ever been consistent members, stating their position, and asking true Baptist recognition; but they allowed their designation to be made by the white brethren, who, of course, controlled all these details, and who, having already declared that strongest and most popular of all the Baptist churches in the Association corrupt and demoralized, and having by resolutions shown their purpose to revolutionize the African churches, changed the title of recognition of this church. It is plain that the stigma upon the First African Church and the desire to control the religious privileges of colored preachers hereafter advised this apparent new organization and new number, for it was still called African by them; but in fact it was the old First Colored Church who assisted in their organization as an Association, and whose faith, principles, order, and city location had never changed for any time since it had been founded to the present day.

4th. It is true that this church as an independent body, as every Baptist church properly is, might have demurred or protested or made demands for what

they knew were their rights in the premises. Among our white brethren this could be done at that day; but with colored delegates it was very different. We presented our letters of credence, petition, or statistics, and took a back or separate seat in the body. We had a vote, and at most times timidly used it, but never had a voice in the body unless answering some question asked. The church was in great trouble now, and wanted the union she ever held with her white brethren for that protection from the laws of the State which menaced her religious liberties continually. Her independence was nothing without union, and our colored brethren, no matter what they knew of their rights as Baptists, would think it prudent for their people's benefit, whom they represented, not to oppose the will of these white brethren of power in the land. They desired to have another colored pastor, and unless recognized by the Association in some way, they could not get his recommendation to the courts signed or indorsed by these white ministers, as required by law, as here given.

“WHEREAS, by an act of the Legislature, assented to by the Governor, on the 23d day of December, 1833, it is enacted, ‘That no person of color, whether free or slave, shall be allowed to preach to, exhort, or join in any religious exercise with any persons of color, either free or slave, there being more than seven per-

sons of color present, without a written certificate being first obtained, from three ordained Ministers of the Gospel of their own order, in which certificate shall be set forth the good moral character of the applicant, his pious deportment, and his ability to teach the Gospel, having a due respect to the character of those persons to whom he is to be licensed to preach. The said Ministers to be members of the Conference, Presbytery, Synod, or Association to which the Churches belong in which the said colored preachers may be licensed to preach; and also the written permission of the Justices of the Inferior Court of the county: and in counties in which the county town is incorporated, in addition thereto, the permission of the Mayor or Chief Officer or Commissioners of such corporation. Such license not to be for a longer term than six months, and to be revocable at any time by the persons granting it.—And whereas, the following certificate has been presented to us, in compliance with the stipulations of the foregoing recited clause of the fifth section of the act aforesaid, viz.:

“We, the undersigned, ordained Ministers of the Gospel, being members of the Sunbury Baptist Association, for the year of our Lord eighteen hundred & fifty-five do hereby certify to the Justices of the Inferior Court of Chatham county, and to the Mayor of the city of Savannah that Ulysses Houston is of good moral and pious deportment, and that he possesses the ability to teach the Gospel to the persons belonging to the third African Church in Savannah a constituent of the Sunbury Baptist Association, of which he is a

member, and therefore pray that he may be licensed accordingly.

“ ULYSSES HOUSTON

“ Licensed Preacher

“ A. HARMON

“ F. R. SWEAT

“ THOMAS RAMBOUT

“ GEORGIA, }
“ COUNTY. }

“ Now be it known, That we, the Justices of the Inferior Court of _____ county, do hereby license the said _____ to teach the Gospel to the people of color of the _____ African Church, in _____ for the term of six months from the date hereof, the Mayor of the _____ first agreeing thereto: this license to be revoked at any time, good and sufficient cause being shewn therefor.

“ Witness Our hands, at _____ this
day of _____ 185

“ WM. H. CUYLER J. I. C. C. C.

“ JA^s. E. GODFREY J. I. C. C. C.

“ MONT. CUMMING J. I. C. C. C.

“ COUNTY, }
“ CITY OF _____ }

“ LICENSE is hereby granted to _____ in terms of the law of the 23d day of December, 1833, to teach the Gospel to the people of color belonging to the _____ African Church in _____ for the space of six months, unless sooner revoked.

churches were gone; but our brethren no doubt privately appealed to such old and influential brethren as J. S. Law, H. O. Wyer, and a few others like them, with high Baptist principles and some charity, which saved them, and modified the tone of their resolution of 1834 (on page 5, par. 30). They say, "This Association being an advisory body, and having no power to dictate to or bind any church or churches of which it is composed, *Resolved*, That it be respectful for any church differing as to the expediency or propriety of any resolution of this Association to submit their views in their annual letter or instruct their delegates with regard to the ground of their objections."

At the period when this change of purpose is seen this church was again in the Association, represented by Anderson, Johnson, and Simpson. The church had again procured a license for her pastor, Rev. Mr. Anderson, to preach for her, by her acquiescence in the advice given. These licenses had to be renewed each year as evidence of good behavior on the part of pastor, preacher, and people, and so this favorable change affected all the colored churches who had negro pastors. It is to be noticed, too, that during the year of this modification, Rev. J. S. Law, the best friend the colored churches and pastors ever had in this Association, became pastor of the Savannah Baptist Church, and was

thus often in counsel with our brethren, and, having an opportunity of observing the true state and needs of our churches, could do much to aid in the troubles and soften the feelings against their freedom. All are willing to bear testimony to his noble, loving heart and sympathetic feelings towards HIS COLORED BRETHERN, as he often expressed it, and this feeling extended even to Mr. Marshall, though he was under interdiction for heterodoxy and schism. So that, in 1835, Mr. Marshall made bold to send a delegation with a letter to the Association, asking that they be recognized and received; and though they were refused, they nevertheless had a committee appointed, all of whom resided in Savannah, with Rev. J. S. Law as chairman, to endeavor to remove the difficulties in their way.

6th. The astute mind of Dr. Marshall was not idle. Among his friends were some of the most wealthy, wise, and influential citizens, some of whom were merchants who patronized him in business, he having bought the property for his people through their aid. He held it under a new trusteeship; two of these trustees (Messrs. John P. Williamson and William H. Stiles) greatly aided and protected him at this time, and their influence and power in the community were excelled by none at that day. His religious independence, which he exhibited in bringing about these very troubles, gave him some popularity among other denominations

in the city. He was not a man to remain passive under his interdiction, and thus we see him at the Association in 1836, not in person, but by a letter from one of his trustees, that commanded the admiration of the committee who reported upon the contents of that letter and the petition accompanying it, and which also drew from them affectionate advice (page 5, par. 20); and while the letter did not alter his condition at that session, it nevertheless had great influence in bringing about a settlement later; and while this grand but mistaken old man and minister was struggling to extricate himself from the dilemma in which he had placed himself and people, panting to use that great power he felt moving within his heart, and, like a caged eagle, beating itself against the bars of the cage that confined it, so he, looking from the bars of the interdiction which his own Baptist brethren had placed around him because he essayed to deviate from sound doctrine, and seeing other colored ministers of less ability and influence in possession of those ministerial privièges he could not use, he then yielded to the inevitable, and sought reconciliation with this church and his late officers.

The committee of the Association's appointment—namely, Messrs. J. S. Law, J. McDonald, and Abram Harmon, with Rev. F. R. Sweat, Deacons Adam Johnson, Jack Simpson, and Adam Sheftall, of this

church, Dr. Marshall, Benjamin King, Robert McNish, and Samuel Cope, from the second party—met in the Savannah Baptist Church. There were a few other brethren present, yet these were principals in the council. After the usual preliminaries, this church, through Deacon A. Johnson, reiterated the charge against Mr. Marshall, of proclaiming from his pulpit the erroneous doctrines of Mr. Campbell, thereby creating a schism in the church and all the attending evils arising in the church and among the people since; that Mr. Marshall had denied that he had so preached from the pulpit, and that from said denial a question of veracity existed, which, as the representatives of this church, he and his brethren thought should be settled; that they had no malicious feeling against him, neither did they desire to hinder the good among his people that he was so capable of doing; that they appeared there simply in the defence of truth, and all they asked, on their part, was that Mr. Marshall would make confession that they had not misrepresented or wronged him. The clear, profound, and dignified manner in which Mr. Johnson delivered his charge made a deep impression upon the whole council, and was spoken of by the fathers many years after this event.

Mr. Marshall, being called upon by the council to answer, rose with grave submission and, with his native

eloquence, *confessed*. He said that what Brother Adam and the other brethren had said about this matter was true, only with this difference,—that he did not say from his pulpit that he agreed with Mr. Alexander Campbell's doctrine, but that being favorably impressed from hearing him expound them, when he had examined the doctrines for himself, if he found them true according to Mr. Campbell's views of them, then he should join him; but upon a more thorough examination of the Scriptures, he saw no reason to change his faith in the doctrines as now held by his Baptist brethren. With this confession Mr. Johnson rose and stated that himself and brethren present, to whom the church had intrusted the settlement of this long-pending difficulty, were now satisfied, and had only desired the peace of the churches and the progress of the Lord's Zion, and that they might prove that the Church of God is the pillar and ground of truth. These two brethren, Marshall and Johnson, by far the ablest colored Baptists of their day, and then standing as the leaders at the head of separate parts of the First Colored Baptist Church, then approached each other and extended the hand of fellowship and peace; and the matter, so far as this church was concerned, has so remained settled; and it was upon this basis that, at the session of 1837, the committee reported to the Association, "That they have reason to believe the

long-existing difficulties between the *several African churches* are brought to a close. . . . Andrew Marshall having made full renunciation of holding the peculiar sentiments of Alexander Campbell with which he has been charged, there seems to be no difficulty in his holding full *fellowship in the church to which he belongs.*"

It will not fail of notice, the peculiar wording of this report and its vagueness. Mr. Marshall and one of his deacons presented a letter asking to be re-admitted as members, and stating that the difficulties heretofore existing were removed. The committee of the Savannah white church said: "After laborious service we are now able to report;" but with all that their labor has removed there remain some important questions in this difficulty not settled, and which ought to have been at the time,—abstruse questions, it must be admitted, but yet susceptible of a solution by earnest Christian brethren, zealous for truth and the glory of God. Which is the original body or church? The *majority*, who withdrew and set up in another place, upon new doctrines, or the *minority*, who remained and held the faith of the church? The divergence has been clearly shown from the testimony and reports; yet they were left untouched so far as we know or from anything we have seen in the records of this difficulty and its settlement. It will not suffice here only to see

that a majority went away. In our Baptist polity the majority rules; but if they would rule, they must stay. Can they run away and rule? If in the right they can well afford to stay. Majorities are not always God's power, or carry out the divine purpose. Ten out of the twelve tribes of Israel seceded, but the sceptre still remained with Judah until Shiloh came; and unto him is the gathering of the people, and in the history of this church we shall perhaps see a parallel.

7th. The right to the use of the property held in trust for this church since the third day of July, 1797, as shown in a preceding chapter, had some bearing upon this question of the original church. By right of succession under the original conveyance of Father Bryan, in 1824, Moses Cleland, Josiah Penfield, and Edward Coppee became co-trustees with the one survivor of the original number, William Matthews, and so held the trust through all the period of these difficulties. They seem never to have been called in question during that time, except, it may be, by individuals in a private way; but after the settlement, Mr. Marshall laid claim to the property as heir and successor of his uncle, Andrew Bryan, and employed able counsel; but he failed to recover on his own account or that of his church. The trustees decided that the property was held for this church, as it had ever been in posses-

sion and was peaceably enjoying its use at the time; and it has so continued to the present day, as will appear in a new charter received from the State at a later period. From these several points of fact must the impartial judgment of our brethren of the present day, and posterity hereafter, decide for themselves the question, and when they have so done the verdict is of small import, save for the truth of history.

Rev. Thomas Anderson served the church as pastor but two years, and in 1835 the church called Rev. Stephen McQueen, and was represented in the Association by himself and Brother Sampson Whitfield, who reported baptized, 10; received by letter, 8; and the total membership, 224, a gain for the year of 28. In 1836, Rev. S. McQueen, S. Whitfield, and John Harris; baptized, 10; by letter, 16; membership, 183. In 1837, Rev. S. McQueen; baptized, 6; membership, 189. In 1838 represented by Rev. S. McQueen, Deacons Lloyd and Sheftall; membership, 223. In 1839, Rev. S. McQueen, July Ward; membership, 240. In 1840, Rev. S. McQueen and A. Sheftall; membership, 234.

In 1841 the church was again without a regular pastor, but was represented in the Association by Deacons A. Johnson, Charles Newell, and July Ward. Rev. John Devoux, a former deacon of the Second African Church, was called to ordination by this church as its pastor, and in 1842 represented the

church in the Association, with Deacons Samuel Boles, A. Sheftall, and Brother Benjamin Verderee; membership, 212. In 1843 the delegation was John Cuthbert and Quives Frazer; membership, 252, a gain, this year, of 40. In 1844, Rev. J. Devoux, J. Cuthbert, and S. Boles; membership, 272, a gain of 20 for the year. In 1845, Delegate J. Cuthbert; membership, 282, a gain of 10. Rev. J. Devoux resigned the pastorate, and the church called Rev. Isaac Roberts, also a member of the Second African Church, to the pastorate; and it is remarkable that this church, peacefully organized in 1802 with members of this parent body and those who had received letters of dismission, has furnished her with pastors each time from the death of the old patriarch, Father Andrew Bryan. This year (1846) the delegates to the Association were Rev. I. Roberts, the fifth pastor called from the Second Church, and Deacons A. Johnson and July Ward; the membership, 300, a gain of 18. In 1847, Rev. I. Roberts, A. Johnson, S. Boles; membership, 298, a loss of 2. In 1848, Roberts, Boles, and Frazer; membership, 305, a gain of 7.

Rev. Mr. Roberts was the most energetic of all the pastors since Rev. Mr. Marshall. In the second year of his pastorate he made a change in the house of worship, by making an entrance on Bryan Street, and the building was put in thorough repair and painted,

for, from its erection, in 1794, it had never received any paint until 1848. The pulpit was remodelled, the inside ceiled and painted, galleries were put in, and the Old Jerusalem, as the old church was then familiarly called, had put on her new dress, which revived her greatly. In addition to Mr. Roberts's energetic spirit, he was a man of much intelligence and a bold and spirited preacher, and in all his duties of pastor was very acceptable to the people. Unfortunately for this church, the pastor of the Second African Church, Rev. Thomas Anderson, who had also been pastor here, and had left to accept a call from that congregation, died this year, and the Second Church was without a pastor. Much to the regret of this mother-church, and against her earnest entreaties, Rev. Mr. Roberts resigned the pastorate and returned to the Second Church in the belief that that church would tender him the pastorate whenever she again made a call, and again this church was left without a pastor. Thus, in 1849, she was represented only by Deacon S. Boles; her membership being 301, a loss of 4 for the year. The church now made a call for Rev. Brister Lawton, a brother from Beaufort District, South Carolina, who accepted the call, and preached for her only about a year. The delegates for 1850 were Rev. B. Lawton and S. Boles, and the membership 315, a gain of 14 for the year. The

Second African Church made a call for a pastor also this year, but chose Rev. John Cox, another of her sons, greatly disappointing Brother Isaac Roberts. He and Brother Cox were business partners. The effect upon him was such that he soon after left the country and emigrated to Liberia, Africa. Thus this church had to suffer for the second time from the ambitious pride of her pastors. Rev. B. Lawton was only called for a year, and the church did not renew the call at its expiration, and in 1851 the church, for the seventh time since the demise of Father Bryan, was without a pastor, but was represented in the Association that year by Deacons S. Boles and Q. Frazer; membership 205, a loss of 110. In November of this year they called to the deaconship Grant Simpson, Alexander Harris, Ulysses L. Houston, and Lewis Ross, four of her sons of zeal and ability, which gave much strength to the cause and aid to the old senior deacon, Johnson.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE aged senior deacon of this church, whose watchful care over her interests was unceasing, was one of the strictest disciplinarians in any church in this city; and under his guidance the moral tone of the church was truly commendable. Well informed in the rules of debate upon the questions which naturally arose in the church conferences,—a qualification which but few of the pastors possessed,—he, as a general rule of the church, presided at all business meetings unless necessarily absent, and from the discession of Dr. Marshall he was in deed and in fact the ruling spirit of this church; and it may be positively asserted that he watched over its welfare as a father over a loving household family; and equally so did the church revere and love him, though at times they murmured at the strictness of his discipline; but his love to God and humanity, with the ripe experience he possessed, guided them rightly, and he was instrumental in the saving of many from the snares and difficulties in this life and into the haven of eternal rest above.

In 1852 the church called to ordination Brother

Garrison Frazer, a Baptist from the State of Virginia, a man of fair natural ability and good delivery, with a limited degree of education, lately brought to this city by his owner. He was ordained pastor in December, 1851. There became attached to the church this year another brother, Andrew Neyle, a man of fine natural attainments, who, from the opportunities with which he had been blessed, in coming in contact with learned and generous masters, had acquired some education, and was, like Mr. G. Frazer, of high-church principles. He came from the First African Church by letter, having been baptized by Rev. Mr. Marshall before the division, and departed with him when he left. Both of these brethren were of pure African blood, and they added great strength to the church and its cause. Rev. G. Frazer became the pastor this year and Brother Neyle a deacon. Thus the delegation to the Association was Rev. G. Frazer, Deacons A. Johnson,* A. Harris, and Quives Frazer; membership, 208.

* The church was now called to mourn the loss of her aged and faithful deacon, Adam A. Johnson, the ceaseless watchman over her interests for about forty years, who now was called to yield up his trust and lay down his cross. He died March 19, 1853. The following testimonial, by one of the members of this church who knew him well, expresses the feelings of the church and community towards him:

“*OBITUARY.*—Died, on the 19th of March, 1853, ADAM ARGUILE JOHNSON, aged seventy-seven years. Thus, after long

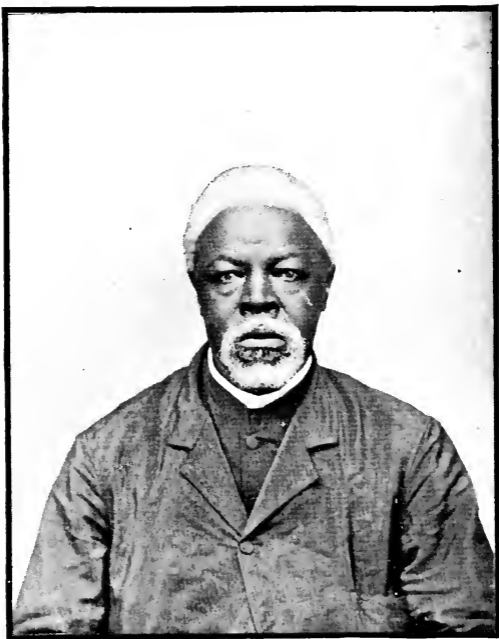
In 1853, G. Frazer, Q. Frazer, and A. Neyle; membership, 205. In 1854, G. Frazer and Deacon Alexander Harris; membership, 213. In 1855, G. Frazer, S. Boles, and A. Harris; membership, 203. In 1856, Deacons A. Harris and S. Boles; membership, 223, a gain, this year, of 20. In 1857, Rev. G. Frazer, A. Harris, and A. Neyle; membership, 241. In 1858 the church was not represented in any way in the Association. In 1859 by Rev. G. Frazer; membership, 197, a loss, this year, of 44. It may be here observed

suffering, it hath pleased the Giver of all good to take unto himself one of the loveliest of his creatures. His mission on earth seems to have been to afford an assurance to men that even amid the sinfulness of this world native goodness might bloom and ripen into stainless and exalted virtue. Meekness and humility walked with him, and he took no thought of self; he envied not another's lot, nor triumphed in his own. As an elder he was blameless, loving; as a husband, devoted; as a brother, affectionate and ever kind; as a friend, sincere and unchanging; as a Christian, true and faithful; as a man, noble and lovely, shining with a gentle and perpetual radiance, dispensing kindness unto all around him, and teaching by the loftiness of example. He is not dead,—God hath recalled him to his native heaven. His voice will be heard no more on earth, for it mingles with the sacred choir which sing around the throne,—his form will no more be seen among us, for it shines an angel amid angel bands. And yet he is not dead,—in every heart that knew him is a shrine to his memory, a place where he will live forever. Weep not for him! he is an angel now, and treads the floors of Paradise! All darkness wiped from his brow, and sorrow and suffering banished from his eyes, victorious over death, to him appears the joys of heaven's eternal years! Weep not for him!

“AUG. BENJAMIN.”

that these figures do not in all cases show the actual increase of the church, as many of the members at times were taken away from the city and the country and sold by their owners, and could not be accounted for to the Association in its assessment upon the churches for missionary funds to pay the white brethren who preached to the slaves at times. Each of the colored and white churches were taxed according to their membership as reported to the Association at each yearly meeting. Thus our colored churches often only reported those members residing in the city, and from whom it was possible to collect this tax.

In 1860 the delegates were S. Boles and A. Neyle; membership 199. In 1861 there was no meeting of the Sunbury Association; but in May of that year the Southern Baptist Convention (white) met in Savannah with the Baptist church. There was great excitement throughout the country on account of the breaking out of the civil war between the States. It was a time for great caution in our churches. "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves" came home with much force to every negro Christian's heart, and especially those who stood in the awfully responsible position of officers of the colored churches. The pastor, Mr. G. Frazer, gave notice of a desire to resign his charge. Deacon U. L. Honston had been licensed to preach in 1855. He was in every



REV. ULYSSES L. HOUSTON.

sense a son of the church. Born in 1825, in South Carolina, he came to the city when a child, the slave of Mr. James B. Hogg, a thorough Baptist, and a deacon of the Savannah Baptist Church until his old age. He had raised Ulysses in his home with much care and piety; thus he became converted in 1841, and joined this church at the age of sixteen; so, like Samuel of old, he grew in the house of the Lord. He became early a member of the singing choir, in 1851 a deacon, and, as has been said, was licensed in 1855, often aiding the pastor in the meetings of the church and country societies; and now, as he was about to relinquish his charge, he advised the church to ordain for her service this young son of her own spiritual raising. Having resolved to carry out this advice, and the time seeming auspicious, the Southern Baptist Convention being in session here, and no ordination of negro preachers being possible without the presence and sanction of the white brethren, the church, through the pastor, made application to the executive board of the Sunbury Association, who came to the church and examined him and took the opportunity of the presence of the convention to have him ordained by that body. Rev. S. Landrum, the chairman of the board, so invited the convention, and in the midst of the excitements of that ever-memorable month and year, a Presbytery of the white members of that convention repaired to the

church on the 12th of May, 1861, and set apart to the gospel ministry, by the laying on of hands, Ulysses L. Houston. Six months after, on the 20th of October, the church called him to the pastoral care, and he became the ninth from Rev. Andrew Bryan, and, like the old founder, he was born in Carolina, raised in Georgia, a slave of a kind master, with like privileges; and he is the only one ever pastor that was a son of that church since the first, and has proven a veritable prototype.

In 1862 the delegation to the Association was Rev. U. L. Houston and Deacon A. Harris; membership, 106. We were now in the midst of a terrible strife throughout the country, and the South being the principal battle-ground, the danger to the church was very great and her sorrows also. Many of her members were run off up the country by their owners, fearing to lose them, causing sad separations and the breaking up of family ties. Again, some of the male members absconded rather than be carried away, some of whom, later, went into the lines of the Northern army for freedom. All of these incidents had a fearful effect upon the church; yet she was kept by the power of God, through faith unto her salvation, in the even tenor of her way, and at no period during the war was her worship interfered with or her officers held to account for the private acts of her members. Their service to the

church and its members as individuals being strictly religious, gave no cause for offence to the owners. Whatever were the thoughts upon the questions and results of the war, there was no allusion to them in the services of the sanctuary. Yet a careful private council was held frequently among the official brethren relative to the course to be pursued in extremely critical periods; but the secret thoughts belong to God, and from the beginning of the war to its close there was an abiding hope in every breast that God would in the end grant us freedom. By the grace of God prudence never forsook nor did patience fail in the church. It was in this year that the first ray of freedom's dawning broke upon our hearts in the proclamation issued by President Lincoln on September 22, 1862. It reached our city very soon after being issued. At first it was only whispered around by the white citizens, but it was soon openly spoken of to the servants, accompanied with the assurance that this emancipation proclamation could never be enforced. Who, then, could estimate or describe with tongue or pen the struggle in their hearts between *hope and fear*? Who can measure the prayer offered in secret at this period and know its effects? Neither men nor angels could, we think, be equal to the task. Only the divine mind of Jehovah knows. The one hundred days passed and the old year also passed into the

annals of time, and, as had ever been the custom of the church for some years, by permission from the mayor of the city, they assembled in their house of worship and held a watch-meeting, singing and praying until the new year came in; then greeted each other with a happy new year, and then separated. Oh, there was a secret meaning in this greeting on the first of January, 1863, that could not then be expressed, and should never be forgotten! But with all this outward turmoil and the inward panting for the long-looked-for and often-prayed-for freedom now promised by that decree, a perfect equanimity was maintained. All moved along as empty pitchers,* but the glowing lamp of prayer was burning brightly in their hearts. It was not yet time for these gospel trumpeters to blow "the year of Jubilee had come," though the church and her choir were wont to sing of it on many communion days in the past. She now refrained at this peculiar day. The tongue must be dumb upon that theme; it was the soul that sung. The music was not for earth's ears, but it was heard in heaven; and who can say that Fathers George Leyle and Andrew Bryan, Mothers Hannah Bryan, Kate Hogg, and Hagar Simpson, and the hosts who with them and by their labors and prayers came through the great tribu-

* Judges vii. 16, 17, 18.

lations of the moral bondage, did not up there repeat the song in joyous strains before the Lamb above on that New Year morning of 1863?

This year the delegation to the Association was U. L. Houston, pastor, and A. Harris; membership reported, 225; and in 1864, Rev. U. L. Houston and Deacon Andrew Neyle; membership, 261.

The meetings of the Association have ever convened in the month of November; and this session is notable in two or three particulars. The first is that whereas there were thirteen of the churches known as colored, but three (the First African, Second African, and this church) met with the body that year.* The absentees were the Ogeechee, Abercorn, White Bluff, Oakland, White Oak, Bethlehem, St. Catharine's, Skidaway, St. Marys, and Clifton. It is true that though these were negro churches, six of them had white pastors and all but two were country churches. Again, their absence was caused, no doubt, by the demoralized state of things here at that time. The meeting was held with Salem church, about twelve miles west of Savannah, on the Louisville road. The Federal army, in command of General W. T. Sherman, was marching through Georgia and approaching in the

* We mention these churches incidentally as evidence of the increase of churches of our race in the lower part of the country up to this time, as it closes the control of our white brethren.

direction of this city. There was a vigilant patrol-guard in the vicinity of the church at night, and the house in which the colored brethren lodged was entered after dark, and tickets from their owners demanded, permitting them to be absent from home. Some of the men of this patrol-guard were in the session of the Association during that day. The colored brethren went to the meeting of the Association carrying only their letters of credential, which they had handed to the clerk of the body, Rev. D. J. Daniel; they had nothing to show but their railroad tickets. Without saying what was their intention, the squad rode away from their lodging-place and returned no more that night. The brethren could sleep no more then; but in the morning they reported it to the Moderator of the Association then convened; and it is due to justice and truth to record that some of the white brethren, more especially the Moderator, Rev. Silvanus Landrum, on receiving the report, were indignant. A committee was appointed for the protection of the colored brethren, but they took no further risks; they nearly all left and returned to the city that day. This was the last session of the old Sunbury Association. In about thirty days thereafter the Federal army of occupation entered Savannah, and then they realized what our fathers desired, prayed, and looked for in faith,—
“And these all, having obtained a good report through

faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us that they without us should not be made perfect." When the morning light of the 22d of December, 1864, broke in upon us, the streets of our city were thronged in every part with the victorious army of liberty; every tramp, look, command, and military movement told us that they had come for our deliverance, and were able to secure it to us, and the cry went around the city from house to house among our race of people, "Glory be to God, we are free!"

"Shout the glad tidings o'er Egypt's dark sea,
Jehovah has triumphed, his people are free!"

This old Zion of God resounded with praises and thanksgiving to God for his great deliverance of his people; but while doing this our people were mindful of charity; and, save maintaining and enjoying their freedom in a proper, modest manner, they acted with courtesy and decorum towards their owners and employers, as formerly, many remaining for long periods with them without remuneration. If any disagreements arose, it was not on the part of the members of the church; and if there were any exceptions they were remarkably few, as many yet living well know.

Two days after the army entered the city, the colored ministers and some of the other officers of

their churches called upon Major-General Sherman, the commander, to pay their respects, and offer humble thanks for their deliverance from bondage. They were received very cordially, and were each personally introduced by name and position in their church: among whom were the pastor and the deacons of this church. It so happened that the Secretary of War under President Lincoln, Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, was present at this interview, and also received an introduction. Both himself and the general gave many kindly expressions relative to the changed condition of themselves and people, with assurances of protection and provision until settled; but enjoining industry and sobriety. The brethren with thanks sent their message of gratitude to Mr. Lincoln by the Secretary, and modestly retired. This interview took place at the residence of Mr. Charles Green, Madison Square, then the headquarters of General Sherman, on the 23d of December, 1864. Rev. Garrison Frazer, ex-pastor of this church, introduced the brethren. The war-cloud seemed to be passing away, and some of the scattered and wandering members found their way back to the fold. Many Baptists who had left their homes in the upper part of the State, and had followed in the wake of the army marching through from Atlanta to this city, now located themselves here in Savannah, seeking a place where they might find rest.

They were welcomed and taken under watchful care of the church, until they became settled in the fold of Christ; and by these wandering Christian pilgrims the numbers in the congregation were considerably augmented. All who could properly account for themselves were welcomed to share in the privileges and blessings of this old Zion of God until they could return to the church of their membership, some of whom were well-known in the former days of peace. These duties and the continuous service of our Lord in his house every evening but Saturday, and four meetings on the Sabbath, the praises of the God who had with a strong hand and outstretched arm delivered his people, was heard for months while the Union soldiers occupied the city and its suburbs, guarding the peace and liberty of all who prayed for the peace, unity, and prosperity of these United States; and this did the churches with fervent zeal. But their joy and thanksgiving met a sudden and serious check: the skies of hope, that seemed so clear and beautiful to faith's vision, were overshadowed, as it were, in a moment by the terrible announcement that President Lincoln had been assassinated on the evening of the 14th of April. The gloom was for a moment paralyzing. What did it mean? was the question. Like Luther in the Reformation, the leading brethren soon recovered their faith in God, and felt that what he commands

is certainly wisest and best, and that what he permits he is able to overrule for the greatest good to those who love and trust him. So, in the midst of this gloom and sorrow for the death of this great and wonderfully-gifted man, whom God in his providence had raised up to be the great emancipator of our race in North America, they did seem to feel and believe that, notwithstanding his death, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though mountains be carried in the midst of the sea." God is in the midst, and we shall not be moved.

CHAPTER IX.

BY a call of some of the ordained ministers of our denomination, among whom was the pastor of this church, a convention met at Mitchellville, upon the island of Hilton Head, in South Carolina, on Friday, July 14, 1865. This church sent to that convention as delegates her pastor, Rev. U. L. Houston, Deacon A. Harris, and Brother S. Whitfield. Upon the assembling of that body, composed wholly of colored members, Rev. Mr. Houston was chosen chairman, and presided over the deliberations of the body until an Association was organized. The representation in that body consisted of four churches from Savannah, who were members of the Sunbury Association, and three churches of Beaufort District, South Carolina, constituted during the war. Rev. John Cox, pastor of the Second African Baptist Church, Savannah, and the oldest ordained minister in the body, was elected Moderator of the Association upon its organization; Brother K. S. Thomas was chosen clerk, and subsequently the pastor of this church, treasurer. He also preached the opening sermon before the Association from the text, "*My presence shall go with thee, and I will*

give thee rest," Exodus xxxiii. 14. Thus this oldest church was recognized at the organization of the First Negro Baptist Association in the two States of Georgia and South Carolina by having the honor of first presiding, first preaching the word, and first holding the financial trust; and these honors were conferred by the colored brethren present, who were capable of knowing her true position, having been associated with her in the old organization of mixed Baptist churches for many years. The first honor was given this church, and the second honor to the Second, which was organized out of this in 1802, by Rev. Mr. Bryan and others. Moreover, in the appointment of a committee to draft the constitution and by-laws for the Zion Baptist Association, the committee stood: A. Harris, A. Bourke, W. J. Campbell, A. Mercherson, and J. Jones,—this church having the chairmanship.

To extend her usefulness in the kingdom of Christ and to give to the missionary cause her aid, she sent her pastor to meet the Consolidated Missionary Baptist Convention of the United States, which met at Alexandria, Virginia, in August, 1865, and offered herself for membership in that body, and was one of the first representatives from the Southern States in that convention.

After the return of the delegates from the organization of the Zion Association the church decided that

this was the proper time to designate this the oldest organization of a colored Baptist church, seeing that the God-given rights of discipleship in Christ and the power to act and control her own affairs was no longer restrained as formerly; resolved, as a fitting name and designation, she should be henceforward known as the First Bryan Baptist Church; and authorized her officers to take the necessary steps to procure for her chartered rights to hold and control the property in her now designated title,—which was subsequently done, and at the next session of the Association reported a title of her own choosing, a privilege never yet freely used. Constituted originally a Baptist body, her particular designation had ever been circumstantial and of the choosing of others: thus colored, from the shade of the physical complexion of her members; African, as to the country from which her early ancestors had come; the number as enrolled among the churches by the white brethren controlling the Association, Old Jerusalem, as an endearing appellation akin to the heavenly promise; but now choosing this name designed to perpetuate the name of her founder, and put herself back in her true position.

The Zion Baptist Association met with the First African Baptist Church at Savannah, July 13, 1866, the delegation from this church being U. L. Houston and A. Harris. The first statistical report since 1864

to the Sunbury was given then. Her membership was 261. She reported at this latter session: baptized this year, 90; received by letter, 80; restored, 18; expelled, 10; died, 10; showing an increase of 118 and a loss of 20,—a neat gain of 98; and a membership of 462, and increase in membership of 201 since 1864. The next session of the Association met in Florida in July, 1867. The church, which was represented by letter, reported: baptized for the year, 51; and membership, 513. The church had in 1866 ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, as an evangelist and missionary, Brother Andrew Neyle, whose labors have been wonderfully blessed. He entered the work upon the mission of the Association this session, and continued several years in their service. The church also in this year obtained her charter.

“R. D. ARNOLD *et al.*, TRUSTEES, TO TRUSTEES OF
FIRST BRYAN BAPTIST CHURCH.

“STATE OF GEORGIA, }
“CHATHAM COUNTY. }

“This Indenture, made this seventeenth day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven, Between Richard D. Arnold, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebeau, all of said County and State, of the first part, and Alexander Harris, Lewis Ross, I. W. Toer, Quibus Fraser, and Daniel Butler, also of said County and State, Trustees

as hereinafter mentioned, of the second part, Whereas, by a certain deed of Indenture entered into and executed on the third day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety-seven between Andrew Bryan, a free black man and a preacher of the Gospel by lawful authority ordained, of the one part, and Thomas Polhill, William Mathews, David Fox, and Josiah Fox, of the said State of Georgia, of the other part, it was witnessed, that the said Andrew Bryan, for and in consideration of the sum of Thirty pounds sterling money to him in hand paid, did grant, bargain, sell, aliene, convey, and confirm unto the said Thomas Polhill, William Mathews, David Fox, and Josiah Fox, and the survivors and survivor of them, and to such successor and successors of them as might be appointed by the survivor of them in the manner in the said deed directed, in trust and to and for the use of the Baptist Church of Blacks at Savannah, over which the said Andrew Bryan did then preside, and had for some time presided, as pastor and minister, one equal moiety, being the half of all that lot of land (most part of said lot) situate lying and being at Yamaeraw above the City of Savannah, known by the number seven (7) in the village of St. Gall, fronting Bryan or Odingsell Street, containing nearly ninety-five (95) feet in front and one hundred and thirty-two and a half ($132\frac{1}{2}$) in depth; bounded West and South by land of the late Doctor Zubly, deceased; East by a lot late the property of Richard Williams, deceased; and North by the main street leading from Yamaeraw to the Brick Meeting-House, together with

the Brick Meeting-House thereon erected and standing, and all and singular the houses, out-houses, premises, and appurtenances to the same belonging. To Hold the same for the sole use and purpose of the public worship of God by the society of Blacks of the Baptist persuasion, and for no other use or purpose whatsoever, and that on the death of any or either of the above-named Trustees the survivor or survivors might or should within one year thereafter nominate and appoint a successor or successors in the room of such deceased Trustee, which successor or successors so appointed should be considered as a party to the said deed for the uses and purposes thereby intended, all of which will more fully appear, reference being had to said deed. And, Whereas, in accordance with the provisions of said deed, the said William Mathews, as surviving Trustee, did nominate, constitute, and appoint by his deed of Indenture, dated the sixth day of December, one thousand eighth hundred and twenty-four, Moses Cleland, Josiah Penfield, and Edward Coppee to be co-trustees of the said property, under and by virtue of said deed. And Whereas the said Edward Coppee, as survivor of the said Trustees hereinbefore last mentioned, did nominate, constitute, and appoint by his deed of Indenture, dated the day of April, one thousand eight hundred and forty, William W. Wash, Richard D. Arnold, and Abram Harmon to be co-trustees of the said property under and by virtue of the said deed. And Whereas the said Richard D. Arnold, as survivor of the Trustees hereinbefore last mentioned, did nominate, constitute, and appoint by his deed of Indenture, dated

the twenty-third day of March, one thousand eight hundred and sixty, J. W. Rabun, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebeau to be co-trustees of the said property under and by virtue of the said deed, all of which will more fully appear, reference being had to said Indentures. And Whereas the said J. W. Rabun has departed this life and the said Richard D. Arnold, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebeau are the surviving Trustees under said last-mentioned appointment, and by virtue of the provisions of the said original Indenture. And Whereas, by the ordinances and laws of the State of Georgia, the members of and constituting the said Baptist Church of Blacks are now invested with full and equal legal rights and capacities, and are no longer subject to any legal disabilities. And Whereas, under and by virtue of said laws, the members of said Church were duly incorporated at the January Term, eighteen hundred and sixty-seven, of the Superior Court for Chatham County under the name and style of the First Bryan Baptist Church, as will fully appear, reference being had to the records of said Court. And Whereas, in and by said Act of incorporation, it is amongst other things provided that the said Church may appoint such officers and Trustees as to it may appear proper, who may manage the affairs of the said corporation, and may receive and hold the property thereof to them and their successors in office, and may control the same for the use and benefit of the said Church according to the rules of discipline and method of Church government. And Whereas, in and by a decree in Equity had and obtained at the

January Term aforesaid of the Superior Court for the County of Chatham, it is ordered that the said Richard D. Arnold, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebeau, Trustees as aforesaid, do grant, transfer, and assign to the said Church, or to the Trustees thereof and their successors in office, the estate and property of the said Church held by them as aforesaid, to be received, held, and controlled by the said Trustees for the use and benefit of the said Church according to the trusts upon which said property was originally granted, and the Trustees of the said Church and their successors in office are by the said decree appointed and constituted Trustees to receive and manage the said property as aforesaid. And it is further ordered and decreed that upon executing such grant and transfer the said Richard D. Arnold, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebeau be relieved from all further trust and from all responsibility in or about the said property, all of which will more fully appear, reference being had to said decree. Now, therefore, this Indenture Witnesseth, that the said Richard D. Arnold, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebeau, said parties of the first part, in consideration of the premises and of the incorporation aforesaid, and by virtue of the power in them vested by the said decree, and for and in consideration of the sum of Five dollars to them in hand paid at and before the sealing and delivery of these presents, the receipt, whereof is hereby acknowledged. Have granted, bargained, sold, assigned, transferred, released, and confirmed, and by these presents Do grant, bargain, sell, assign, transfer, release, and confirm unto the said Alexander Har-

ris, Lewis Ross, J. W. Toer, Quibus Fraser, and Daniel Butler, said parties of the second part, Trustees of the said First Bryan Baptist Church and their successors in office and assigns, the said lot of land and Brick Meeting-House and all and singular the premises and property of the said Church, held by them in trust as aforesaid, and all of the estate, right, title, property, and interest of every nature and kind of the said parties of the first part, To Have and To Hold the said bargained premises and every of them unto the said parties of the second part as Trustees of the said First Bryan Baptist Church, and to their successors in office and assigns forever. In Trust, nevertheless, for the use and benefit of the First Baptist Church, and to and for the several uses, intents, and purposes in the said original deed of trust specified and hereinbefore in part recited, and to and for no other uses, intents, or purposes whatsoever.

“ In Witness whereof, the said Richard D. Arnold, Farley R. Sweat, and Lewis C. Tebeau, Trustees as aforesaid, have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

“ R. D. ARNOLD, [L.S.]

“ LEWIS C. TEBEAU, [L.S.]

“ F. R. SWEAT. [L.S.]

“ Signed, Sealed, and Delivered in presence of us,

“ R. WAYNE RUSSELL,

“ GEO. A. MERCER,

“ *Not. Pub., C. C., Ga.*

“Not subject to stamp duty,

“A. N. WILSON, *Coll.*

“Recorded May 11, 1867, Book 3 Z^s, folios 26 *et seq.*

“GEORGIA, CHATHAM COUNTY, }
 “CLERK’S OFFICE, SUPERIOR COURT. }

“I, Barnard E. Bee, clerk of said Court, do hereby certify the writing on this and the foregoing six pages to be a true copy of the above deed, as appears of record in this office in Book 3 Z^s, folios 26 *et seq.*

“In Testimony whereof, I have hereto set my official signature and affixed the seal of said Court this 26th day of January, A.D. 1884.

[L.S.]

“BARNARD E. BEE,

“*Clerk, S. C. C.*”

In 1868 the church was represented in the Association by Rev. A. Neyle and A. Harris. (The pastor had leave of absence to be in attendance as a member of the Georgia Legislature, he having been elected to the lower house, representing the county of Bryan in that body.) The statistics were: baptized, 33; received by letter, 13; membership, 541,—gain, 28. In 1869 the delegates were Rev. U. L. Houston and A. Harris. Baptized, 53; received by letter, 14; membership, 574. In 1870 represented by Houston, G. Frazer, A. Harris, and James Andrews; baptized, 20; received by letter, 2; membership, 583. The pastor

was still engaged in his duties as a member of the State legislature, and attended this session by leave of absence from that assembly. After he returned to Atlanta, the seat of government, a conspiracy was formed to oust him from his pastorate, which he had held for about nine years. By his zeal and the grace that had been given him from God, evidenced by the success he had attained,—a success beyond any pastor that had served the church since Mr. A. Marshall,—he had endeared himself to a large majority of the members, and in many ways was quite acceptable to the community, until, for two or more years past, he had taken some part in the political affairs of the State, which became necessary under the new order of affairs in the country, giving the franchise to the emancipated slaves and creating them citizens by law. In seeking out men to represent the colored people in the councils of the nation and State, it was believed that the most competent men were to be found, with few exceptions, among the ministers of the gospel of Christ; and while it is to be deeply regretted that this was so, on account of a sound principle in the government of this country, that it is best to have a separation of Church and State, yet in the very nature of things in the past of our people it was unavoidable; and thus many pastors and preachers necessarily had to leave their flock and legitimate field of labor to

enter the arena of politics in order to secure right and justice for their people. And the people instinctively felt this necessity, and consented to their spiritual deprivation for the time being, notwithstanding the white citizens among whom they lived and served, and the late owners, constantly spoke disparagingly of the ministers who served in these positions. They very often convinced some men of weak judgment and vacillating minds among our race, and thereby excited dissension and division even in our churches; but there were also some men of intelligence and ability, capable of better judgment, who, jealous of the success of others in the positions they were chosen to, became easily incited to opposition and evil designs, and fitting tools for those whose purpose it was to divide and weaken our people, the better to prey upon and again enslave them by weaving a web of circumstances around them of secondary bondage inexplicable, at least for many years; thus many new trials arose with which the church had never had any experience, and which they now had to meet and overcome by faith and humble prayer.

Since the death of the aged deacon, Adam Johnson, in 1853, no deacon of the church, it seems, possessed those controlling qualities which he exhibited in the degree that brother Alexander Harris did, whose highly intelligent mind and indomitable will gave him the

leading place in the affairs of the church in the absence of the pastor; and in some measure controlled his actions in the rulings incumbent in his office. Step by step he seemed to gain ascendancy in this direction; and not always using the power with due propriety, and with that special regard for the glory of God, but mere purpose of exhibiting his personal strength and influence, while most of his brethren in the church and in the deaconship with him, having less mental ability and business qualities, yet being more kind and considerate of the Christian needs of the members, bore more weight with the majority of them. In the conference meetings for the disciplining of members, or devising ways and means for the progress of the church, using his superior powers of debating,—tenacious of his views, not always the best, most beneficial or agreeable,—there naturally arose such a degree of friction between himself and colleagues in office that his best help became irksome to the most of them. Brother Harris as a man seemed to be compounded of some opposite natural qualities. Physically, like Mr. Johnson, he was above the medium, tall and commanding in appearance as he moved, finely developed head, and well-cut, regular facial features, large, full eyes, roundly-turned chin, medium large mouth and clear voice. Yet his natural manner and way of acting were pecu-

liarily repulsive. Quick of perception, deep thinking, having an impediment of speech, his delivery became difficult, and naturally, when opposed, irritable and pugnacious in a moral sense, but quickly affable when in concord with. Thus, like the traveller on the road, the fierce blinding wind and storm made him hold the more tightly his cloak; and it is the warm, bright genial sun that makes him lay it off. So to his brethren he became powerful but unpopular. Wise and wilful but unlovable by the people, he was most interested in as a public servant of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His brethren feared him more than they respected him, and in the church often yielded to his opinions because they feared his power; and therefore with a view to harmony in their council, they invited or requested him to exercise his gifts in a different part of the work, by licensing him to preach.

The church had connected by membership branches in the country among her scattered members, located upon St. Catharine and Skidaway Islands; and a part of the members of the Great Ogeechee church, which had become much demoralized by the war, she sheltered under her watchful care, and fed them at stated times with the Bread of life at a plantation called Woodstock, where Brother Harris had customarily attended them with the word, at least once

each month. It was upon a Sabbath day of one of these visits, and he absent, that the church in conference removed him from the deaconship, passed the resolution inviting him to preach; against which act, upon learning, he strongly protested; proclaiming that he never had said to any one that he felt called on to preach, and the church by his request rescinded her actions and restored him to the deaconship.

It must not be supposed that with the several objectionable features of this brother's character and manner he had neither admirers nor followers. In certain secular contingencies that had arisen in the church some of the very qualities he possessed seemed both necessary and desirable, and with men of intellectual equality and distinction would be admired and respected; and in the church there were a number of those who had been reared up from childhood under the care and Christian teachings of Mr. Johnson, and whose parents had been his staunchest supporters in the earlier days of the church, that saw in this brother his prototype and successor, and were prepared at all times to be guided and controlled by his advice, and therefore stood by and supported him. With this class of followers, and a few others whom he bound to himself by particular or personal services rendered, and who felt obligated to him, he attempted, in the absence of the pastor, to usurp his place.

The conspiracy seemed to have begun soon after the adjournment of the Association, which met at Grahamville in July, 1870, and while the pastor was still at Atlanta, in attendance as a legislator of the State. The custom of the church at this time was to call their pastor yearly, and as his term would expire in a short while, and his term of office in the State Assembly expired nearly about the same time, he had stood for re-election, received the nomination from his constituents of Bryan County, and was busily engaged in the canvass of county and State. Mr. Harris, seeing this, made a pretext for advising the church not to recall him the next year, as his service to the people in their political interest was such that they must make the sacrifice and do without him. However, the officers felt that the pastor should not stand for re-election, because while in the legislature they found it very difficult to fill his place on communion days, as he was away; but he persuaded the church that, should he return, the period of the term would be short, as they by law could sit only forty days. Deacon Harris insisted that the pastor could not tell anything about that, as the body could change the law, and that he ought not to go, and if he went the church ought not to recall him. Houston's reply to this was that he was again nominated by his constituents, and nothing

would keep him from going but defeat at the polls. Thus, when he went into the canvass determined to be re-elected, he left the deacon determined to defeat his recall; and he had the decided advantage in the argument made against the pastor's running for the political office, as he could show the need of the pastor's presence at home, so that when he was absent after this argument before the people, he picked the favorable opportunity, and got a resolution passed not to recall him.

The church had reported this year a membership of five hundred and eighty-three, two-thirds of whom resided in the city and generally attended conference at the time. Those present at the conference, April 15, 1871, vary in the estimate of the number present, but all agree that there were not less than between one hundred and fifty and two hundred. Brother Harris in the chair, the church proceeded to elect a pastor. Revs. Andrew Neyle, David Watters himself, and Brother J. S. Habersham, were nominated. A brother arose and nominated Rev. U. L. Houston. The chair stated that the nomination was out of order and could not be entertained. The brother persisting in his purpose to nominate Mr. Houston, and being seconded by several brethren, Brother Harris called Rev. Mr. Neyle to the chair, and proceeded in a very boisterous manner to show that they could not use that name; and it was

disorderly, because they had at a previous conference resolved by vote that they would not recall Houston. After silencing the parties completely, without any allusion to the right of the body to reconsider the previous vote he alluded to, and knowing their ignorance of usual parliamentary usages, those who understood it somewhat seemed to be with him, he resumed the chair and took the vote on the four already nominated, which, when called to rise and stand until counted, stood: Neyle, 15; Watters, 15; Harris, 34; Habersham, 16. We do not vouch for the perfect correctness of these figures, but are sure they are a close approximation. This vote was in the aggregate cast for the four candidates nominated, only about half of the members being present, the others not voting because they desired to vote for Mr. Houston, and urgently expressed themselves to that effect. But the chair positively refused to permit an expression of their choice by vote, and declared himself duly elected, having received the largest plurality of the votes cast, and thus became elected pastor of a Baptist church of five hundred and eighty-three members, about two hundred being present, and receiving only thirty-four votes of the whole. The meeting adjourned with a general murmuring of dissatisfaction, many expressing the determination that the said election should not stand; but a majority of the members, with Christian meekness and patience,

bore the injustice. The bold action of the man seemed to paralyze the church and the deacons who had not joined in the conspiracy with him. Some of them, not feeling competent to act in the matter, sought counsel of brethren of other churches no stronger than themselves, and who endeavored to act as arbitrators, but with no success; all appeals for Christian fairness availed nothing; this brother's mind seemed made up to a purpose that he would not desist from. Suffice it to say, that he gathered together a council of brethren weak enough to suit the purpose, used the name of the church in calling them to act as an ordaining presbytery, had himself ordained, had himself and the clerk of the church appointed delegates to the Association, and appeared there July 14, 1871, as pastor of the church.*

Mr. Houston, having failed of re-election to the legislature for another term, and having timidly remained away from his post of duty to a people who really loved him, with the few exceptions stated, finding his place now usurped, went to the aid of a Baptist people who were put out from the white brethren of a church in Liberty County. He organized them under a bush arbor as the Zion Baptist Church of Liberty County (now a large and flourishing church), and also went to the Association meeting at Brunswick, Georgia,

* Minutes of Zion Baptist Association, 1871, pages 5, 6, 7, 11, 16, 17, 25.

representing it as pastor, and applying for recognition and membership ; but claiming also by letter to represent a majority of the members of the First Bryan Baptist Church, with Deacon William Green as associate. When the question of the contesting delegations came up, the Association, after considerable debate, laid the question on the table the first day, because of this vexed question retarding the business. They took it from the table on the fourth-day morning, and debated it until the hour of adjournment. The subject was resumed in the afternoon, then, and decided by a vote of twenty to eleven that "the letter from the First Bryan Baptist Church, borne by Rev. A. Harris, was the legal letter of that church, and must be received," and, as it seems, to soften somewhat the glaring wrong which they felt was perpetrated upon that people, passed this resolution :

Resolved, That we as an Association sympathize with the majority of the members of the First Bryan Baptist Church of Savannah. But as it is out of our power to interfere with the internal affairs of individual churches, we would recommend that they endeavor to reconcile affairs within themselves. And the clerk be instructed to forward by the hand of Brother William Green a copy of this resolution, with the regrets of this body that such should have occurred."

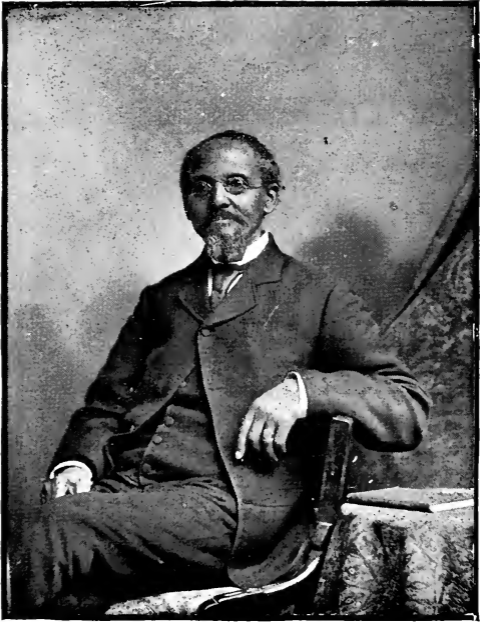
It is not very clear what is meant by "*such should have occurred*," whether it be what Brother Harris did towards the majority of the church, what they did in receiving the usurping delegation, the impudent actions of the brother in that body, or that this old mother church should be suffering as she then was again a second time. We suppose the latter; but the peculiar and indefinite wording of the resolution, especially the closing sentence, would cover any or all of those points. But the sharpness of the third will be better seen in his having himself appointed chairman of the committee on nominations for next session by offering the motion to appoint them. Three other very weak brethren were appointed upon that committee with him, one only of whom could not be controlled by him, who reported back his own name to preach the introductory sermon.

The statistical report made that year read as follows (and we suppose is correct, as the figures must have been taken from the books by the clerk, who was also one of the delegates): baptized, 65; received by letter, 8; restored, 22; dismissed, 2; expelled, 13; dropped, 13; membership, 427. Twenty days after the adjournment of the Association, on the 7th of August, Mr. Harris presented to a called meeting of the church a committee from a council of ministering brethren, held in the Savannah Baptist Church,—Rev. Farley Sweat

(white), Rev. W. J. Campbell (colored). The former read the decision of the Council, made upon the *ex parte* statement of Harris and his friends. "The decision declared Mr. Harris elected pastor of the church by the silence of the majority, who did not vote because he (Mr. Harris) would not let them vote as they pleased, or as an honest Christian brother in the chair should, whose duty it is to regulate the debates and facilitate the business of the conference, especially upon so sacred a duty as the calling of a pastor."*

After reading the report Brother Sweat asked what action should be taken upon it, and it was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted that it be received. It was then immediately moved and seconded also that it be adopted, but that vote was largely in the negative, showing the church's respect for the brethren of the council and committee but not for their opinions upon this case. What the Church bound on earth shall be bound in heaven, is the promise of the gospel, not what a small faction of the Church and an *ex parte* council did. The true body of that Church present on that evening showed by their action then and there that their eyes had become opened and that they had not thus bound themselves, though seemingly bound, and trusted God to loose them if they were.

* Minutes of the First Bryan Baptist Church, August 27, 1871.



REV. JAMES M. SIMMS.

Brother Campbell, of the committee, then made some persuasive remarks, which the church heard with respectful silence. Seeing he could do nothing, Mr. Harris then sang the Doxology; and before he could declare the meeting dismissed, Deacon William Green requested the members to remain, when, on motion, the church resolved itself into a conference and called Brother Green to the chair, who, after leading in prayer, asked what should be done, seeing the dissatisfaction with the report. On motion it was resolved that as the committee of that council simply gave their decision,—which was respectfully heard and differed with by so large a body of the members,—they should have inquired the reason for their refusal to adopt it; as they did not, that no more notice be taken of it. On motion they restored to his rights Brother J. S. Habersham, whom Mr. Harris had impeached. Also, on motion, and by a unanimous vote, two of the three living trustees—namely Alexander Harris and Daniel Butler—were removed, and Brother Quives Frazer, Revs. J. M. Simms and David Watters were elected, and the conference adjourned. Thus the proceedings of opposition, commenced at the meeting of the Association for the first time after the usurpation, were resumed here as an irrepressible conflict between right and wrong in the church.

CHAPTER X.

SABBATH morning, July 27, the church met and took steps to protest against the action of Brother Harris and others in locking the doors of the church against them, and against his entering their pulpit without their consent or permission. On motion, it was resolved that, if he made the attempt to preach on that Sabbath, Deacon William Green be instructed to rise in his seat and respectfully say to Brother Harris that the church protests against his entering their pulpit, as he is not their pastor; that he should repeat the expression three times in a peaceable manner, and then sit down quietly until after the church service was over. He did precisely as he was directed by the church in conference. Harris paid no attention, but conducted the usual service, a large majority of the members present taking no part, though quietly sitting, only the few followers of Mr. Harris joining him in the singing, etc. As soon as he had pronounced the benediction and had come down from the pulpit, Deacon Green, as instructed, requested the members to remain in their seats. He was called to the chair by vote, and Brother J. S. Habersham was requested to act as secretary. After resolving the

meeting into a conference, on motion, the action of Brother Harris and those officers concerned in closing up the doors of the church-building was condemned, and they were also suspended from their office.

The letters of acceptance from the new trustees-elect were read and received, and they were subsequently requested to take such steps as were necessary to recover and protect the church property. It was also resolved at this meeting that the regular communion services, which should have taken place that day, be suspended until the church settles her present difficulty and is again at peace. The conference adjourned to meet at the next regular conference, on the third Sunday in September.

On Monday, the 28th, after the foregoing, Harris placed Green upon the information docket of the city, charged with a violation of law, by disturbing the public services of his church. He (Green) was cited to appear on Wednesday the 30th, and so did,—Harris and some others appearing against him before the mayor, and Green, by counsel, requested a postponement until the next Friday. On that day, the case being up, counsel for Green pleaded want of jurisdiction for the crime charged, it being a misdemeanor punishable only by the State courts, and, on motion of his counsel, the mayor dismissed the case. On Wednesday evening, the 30th, in which the case of Brother

Green was before the court, the church held a called conference in the lecture-room of the Second African Church, by permission. Brother Green was called to the chair. After stating the object of the call, it was resolved to provide funds by a collection for feeing the lawyers who were to defend Brother Green. The letter of acceptance of Brother James M. Simms, as one of the trustees, was received, read, and a committee was appointed to call upon Brother A. Harris and request him to deliver up the keys of the church-building, who reported that they had so done, and that he refused to surrender them. The members present at this meeting were counted, and numbered one hundred.

While the case of Brother W. Green was being tried, on the following Friday, the trustees took in charge the church-building by having a new set of locks put on, and held the keys in their possession for the church, and subsequently applied to the judge of the Superior Court to enjoin Brother Harris from interfering with the church or entering the church-building until he should show his right as the pastor. It so happened that the judge was upon the eve of leaving the State, upon a summer vacation, at the time of granting the writ, and, the sheriff not serving the same until after his departure, there was no remedy for Brother Harris until his return, it seems, as the case was not argued until the following November.

During the interval the church was in peaceful possession of the building, as the writ enjoined none but Harris. Yet it seems that the parties taking sides with him never entered the church services, with a few exceptions, perhaps, of those who had changed their views and left him finally.

The church met in extra conference on September 10, 1871, calling Brother Quives Frazer to the chair, and the secretary-elect, Edward Wicks, who for a time seemed to have gone over to the Harris party, being present at this conference, made some explanation of his position upon the questions in dispute, which being satisfactory, on motion, he was permitted to resume his place.

The branch of the church at Woodstock sent a letter, asking the privilege of withdrawing themselves, as they intended to reorganize the Great Ogeechee body. On motion, their request was granted. On motion, Brethren Wm. Green and Edward Wicks were set apart for ordination as deacons of this church on the 14th inst., and that the day be observed as a day of fasting and prayer. A committee, composed of the two last-named brethren, was sent to call upon Sister Sarah Harrison, where the vessels and linen used in the communion service were kept, and requested that she deliver them to the church. Her house had been the depository of them for some years.

The wine-pitchers, cups, and bread-baskets were of silver, with the name of the church engraved upon them. They have never been found.

The church met on the 14th, pursuant to her adjournment on the 10th. Rev. Andrew Neyle was called to the chair, and three additional brethren (A. Denslow, P. Jackson, and G. B. Lewis) were set apart to the deaconship, having received the highest number of votes among six brethren nominated for the office; and agreeably to the resolution of the 10th, Brethren Green and Wicks were solemnly ordained the same evening.

The church also in regular conference, on the 17th of September, adopted these resolutions:

“WHEREAS, Brother Alexander Harris has as a member of this church assumed powers not delegated to him and unwarranted as a deacon, and by such assumption has inflicted great evils upon this church, he procuring by false representation his ordination to the gospel ministry, attempting to preside as the pastor of this church against the wishes and the protestation of two-thirds of its members.

“*Secondly*, Making false reports to the authorities of the city relative to the good order of the church, and bringing police-officers within the grounds to intimidate us from the enjoyment of our corporate and spiritual privileges, and closing the doors of the house of God against us for three weeks, bringing reproach upon us as a Christian body, by indicting in the police-

court of the city our brother, William Green, whom the church has appointed to the deaconship, and elected as its chairman to preside during her business conferences, and for other purposes, and whom they had empowered to protest against the illegal and irregular acts of Brother Harris.

“*Thirdly*, And whereas this church on Sabbath, the 3d of September, 1871, met in solemn conference, and cited Brother A. Harris, who was then present, to answer for his unlawful actions, yet he, in the spirit of arrogance and contempt, ignored the authority of the church, and left the house and his brethren who desired, in the spirit of forbearance, to admonish him to heed their counsel.

“AND WHEREAS, This church conceived it her duty to so far admonish Brother Harris, inflict the censure of suspension from his privileges in this church until he should reflect and repent of his actions, and notified him of this fact, and he, in a total disregard of this action of the church, met in the afternoon of the same day and essayed to officiate in and administer to a few of his followers the holy ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, which act we feel was highly improper, if not sacrilegious ; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That this church do hereby declare that all these several acts herein cited are highly improper, wrong, and sinful in our brother, A. Harris, and not prompted by the spirit that should characterize a Christian member of the church ; and for such actions we do declare Brother Alexander Harris expelled from our membership, praying his repentance and return.

“*Resolved*, That we do hereby admonish those of our brethren and sisters, members of this church, who have by the ill advice of Brother A. Harris lent their aid to these illegal acts of his, to depart from their errors and return to their covenant relations and duties of the church on pain of expulsion for a failure so to do; and the deacons, acting in their capacity as such, are requested to seek out such of our members, and, in the spirit of Christian forbearance and brotherly love, notify them of the consequences should they neglect to comply with these requirements after hearing the reading of these resolutions.”*

These resolutions were unanimously passed in the conference; and by resolution Brother E. Wicks and Sister Elizabeth Edy were requested to resume the work of the Sabbath-school, which had been suspended since these difficulties began. At the conference of October 15, Brother William Rivers, one of the deacons, who was among the followers of Mr. Harris, returned, gave due satisfaction, and was restored to all of his privileges as a member and deacon; and at that of November 19, a letter was received from the Woodstock branch, notifying the church that they had become organized as a sister church, under the old title of the Ogeechee Baptist Church. At an extra conference, held on the 19th of December, it was voted that the last Sabbath in the month, being the

* Minutes of the church, September 17, 1871.

31st, be set apart as the day for calling a pastor by fasting and praying through the day. The church met in extra conference on the 28th, and unanimously reconsidered the vote she passed in March, declaring that she would not recall Rev. U. L. Houston, and on the afternoon of December 31, he was recalled to the pastorate by a unanimous vote of one hundred and thirty-four. It was also resolved that the time of service be not specified, but that he remain as pastor as long as agreeable to himself and the church.

With this recall the pastor re-entered upon his duties with the year 1872. During all the conflict he was absent, serving the churches lately organized by him,—one at North Newport, Liberty County; the other near the Great Ogeechee, in Chatham County. The first is known as the Zion and the latter the Ogeechee; both of which are still thriving, prosperous bodies, with commodious and neat grounds and buildings for country churches.

At the regular church conference, held January 21, 1872, Brother J. M. Simms, one of the lately-elected trustees, was received as a member of this church by letter from the First African Baptist Church of this city. He had been a member of that church from early youth, and gave her much service in his more mature manhood. He had been clerk of the church from 1858, and also acted as deacon until 1863, when

he was licensed by the church to preach. He was master-builder in the erection of her new brick edifice, and organized the Sabbath-school of the church, she having had none from the separation from this body, in 1832. Born and reared in Savannah, Brother Simms was well known to all, and, like the pastor of the church, had taken an active part in seeking to secure the political rights of his people. He was also elected to the Georgia Legislature, and served during the same term with Rev. Mr. Houston; thus they were intimate in their relations. He was ordained a minister of the gospel by the Twelfth Baptist Church of Boston, Massachusetts, while sojourning there during the late war, and returned to his church at its close, in 1865. But, his church taking offence at his becoming ordained in his absence from her, he fell under disfavor in the body through the influence of the pastor, Rev. W. J. Campbell; and thus took his letter and removed back to this old church, whose roof sheltered him when Mr. Marshall was its pastor, and in whose Sunday-school he received his earliest religious teachings. The church, on receiving him into membership, passed a resolution recognizing his office as a minister of the gospel and welcoming him to her pulpit, and he at once became a timely auxiliary to the church and pastor.

The church in extra conference, on February 11 of this year, took measures looking to a reconciliation with

all of her revolting members, if possible, and so appointed committees to call upon them and endeavor to bring the same about. Her communicants had been suspended on account of the disturbances arising out of the usurpation of the church's powers and prerogatives by ambitious brethren and their deluded followers; and the church was continuously in a feverish state of excitement, with the feeling then existing, and which had existed for several months, and now some of the more conservative suggested the calling together of all of the male members of the church, without reference to what had been done, and consult in order to harmonize.

The meeting was held February 22, in the lecture-room of this church. There was considerable argument before a chairman was selected, each wing of the division desiring to have the honor of presiding, feeling they had the right; one side by virtue of being the majority, with the rightful pastor, and the other claiming they were the church by virtue of the recognition of Mr. Harris as the pastor by the Association, and a council of ministers. They finally submitted the question to a vote, and Brother Q. Frazer was elected the chairman, he being with the majority and one of the oldest trustees, but a mild, conservative Christian brother, in whom all had much confidence. As a basis of settlement it was insisted upon that the

meeting should decide who was the church and on which side was its power and authority. It was resolved that the church was in itself the sovereign power, and independent of all other powers in her spiritual affairs, subject only to Christ, and that in a Baptist church the majority of the members, in any matters of the church rules, must be obeyed, and what they do must be sustained, and that we so recommend to the church. When this resolution passed, the party with Mr. Harris walked out of the meeting, and the effort at reconciliation became a failure. The report of this meeting was submitted to the church in her conference, and was received and adopted March 3, 1872. The trustees reported also at this meeting that they had called upon Brother Harris, informed him of their appointment, and desired him to deliver to them any books, papers, or other property he held belonging to the church, and that he declined either to recognize their authority or to surrender what he held until he should see further into the matter. At this conference two more of Brother Harris's most violent partisans, namely, Isaac Butler and Edward Harden, were expelled for gross and improper temper and language in the meetings of the church; also at the same meeting Brother John Williams, under watch-care, and licensed to preach by this church, was dropped from her fellowship, and his license was revoked.

It will be remembered that in September, 1871, the newly-elected trustees procured an injunction, restraining Brother Harris from interfering with the rights of the church, as shown in the preceding chapter. On the 14th of this month (March) he with counsel appeared before the judge of the Superior Court that granted the Trustees the injunction, and it appears that they satisfied his Honor of his election to the pastorate of the church. Neither the trustees nor any one on the part of the majority having received notice to appear, however, his Honor the judge dissolved the injunction granted in September last, and granted Harris a temporary injunction against the Trustees.

The church resolved to set apart Sunday, the 18th, as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, not knowing the deep trial and sorrow she would be called to pass through on that day. The morning opened clear and beautiful, and at early dawn the members met and opened their meeting with singing and prayer, led by the several official and lay brethren; and so continued until about eleven o'clock in the day, when, to the surprise of all, Brother Harris, who had not been in that house for more than six months, entered the eastern front door, stately walked up the aisle, followed by about twenty odd of his adherents, who, as he stepped into the pulpit, took seats in the pews, grouping together as closely as it was convenient for

them. Mr. Harris sat down in the pulpit, his large, full eyes gleaming with defiance as he glanced over the assembly; his face, rigid with resolve, and lips compressed together, indicative of a firm determination, seemed to paralyze the church for a few minutes; but as he arose, hymn-book in hand, to announce the number and recite the stanzas, the death-like stillness of the moment was broken by a brother sitting in the front pew nearest the pulpit, and of course nearest the speaker, who was seized with a violent fit of coughing. This in itself would not appear strange in any church at this time, but it instantly became contagious, and soon nearly every one in the house, excepting those with Mr. Harris, was violently coughing, so that when the little flock who followed in his lead raised their hymn of victory, it was really like the chirping of birds on a very windy day in March, and could not be heard; and, as it was incessant, the thwarted brother in the pulpit beckoned with his finger to the tallest deacon he had among his party, William Washington, who left the house for a few moments, and returned with a city police-officer as tall as himself (over six feet), in full uniform,—helmet, red-top boots, and large brass spurs,—armed with pistol and club in his belt. As he stalked into the church, and up to the pulpit, he was saluted with this strange chorus of coughers, who

otherwise sat still in their seats. Mr. Harris leaned over the pulpit-rail and spoke to the officer. What he said of course was not known, but in a slight lull in the chorus, led by the brother in the front pew, who seemed to regulate the pitch (now down to a "pianissimo," or the softest tones), the officer was heard to say, as he gazed around and his eyes rested inquiringly upon the brother in the front pew, "I see nothing disorderly, only that everybody seems to have a bad cold;" and with this he went out and left the band which had entered so victoriously half an hour before quite in a dilemma. It is thought that the officer, fearing to take so weighty a responsibility upon himself at this crisis, referred Harris to the barracks where his chief was. He left a few moments after the police-officer, followed by *his members*, and the chilling blast of his presence being removed, the coughing ceased; the tempest of the hearts in the church was stilled, and the legitimate service of the meeting was resumed, and it was good to be there to hear the Christians then sing and pray.

The service of fasting and prayer was timely and proper, in the highest sense, on this occasion, if ever, for the church was even, as twice before, "low down in the valley of humiliation;" but she seemed to remember in this day and hour, though her way was dark, that sure promise of her God, "*Call unto*

me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not;"* and surely it was to be. The service continued without the slightest incident to mar its solemnity during the afternoon, and the singing and praying waxed warmer as the sun sank in the western horizon, when the meeting closed with a solemn-sounding doxology, as it is the Baptists' custom to sing on parting; but down in the vale at sunset the acclaim was solemn and low; it was as the soft bleating of the sheep instinctively feeling the coming of a storm at night when the sun goes down in a dark cloud. So, as they sang this doxology and received the parting benediction, with injunction to return in the evening after they had broken their fast, they separated.

Although the late service was calm and peaceful, the brethren had their misgivings aroused by the quiet leaving of Mr. Harris and party. The pastor and Trustee Simms, who knew Brother Harris well, counselled together, and kept a careful watch for what might come, believing the afternoon calm was but the precursor of the coming storm; and at the opening of the door for the evening service were present in their seats upon the platform fronting below the pulpit, one on the right and the other on the left of that position.

* Jeremiah xxxiii. 3.

The seats were well filled with the members; and the deacons and congregation were singing a spiritual song (as the homely compositions are called) in a low but sweetly plaintive tone—all seemingly as calm without as one could wish it to be (nature seemed to be engaged in the scene that was about to be enacted, as the day was fair until the sun went down, and just at this hour it clouded up)—when Mr. Harris entered the church again, as in the morning, only with but few of his followers. As he was about half way up the aisle, between the door and the desk, a police sergeant stepped inside the door and stood looking at him as he mounted the steps of the pulpit. As he stepped in, a trustee arose from his seat and in tones of stern reproof exclaimed, “Mr. Harris, in the name of this church I protest against this usurpation,” or nearly in those words, and the pastor arose also almost simultaneously, and said, in a voice deep with feeling, “Yes, and I, in the name of God, protest.” While they were speaking there could also be heard at the front door the loud tones of the officer, “Rush in, men!” and ere the sound of the words of the trustee and pastor, aforesaid, had died away the sergeant had seized the former by the collar of his coat, and another officer the pastor, with the order, “Take them out to the barracks,” as he handed the trustee over to one of his subordinates. As they were both being

roughly pulled towards the door the excitement was terrible, the men rushing towards the pulpit and the women screaming in their fright. The police, fearing no doubt an attack from the men, drew their pistols and fired two shots; and to crown the scene with horror, some one turned off the gas, and left them, as it were, in the darkness of midnight. By this time the trustee and pastor were out of the tumult, in the street, without hats and in the rain. The police-officers, seeming content with the arrest of these two,—no doubt agreed upon and so ordered by their chief,—molested no one else of the large crowd who followed them to the station-house. It is not known with certainty how Mr. Harris got out, there being a large window behind him as he stood in the pulpit, opening into the back part of the lot; no doubt he found safe exit by it, and, maybe, jumped over the back fence and took the nearest route towards his residence or that of some of his friends. However, he was not seen again that night, nor did he appear at the police-station to prefer charges, as is customary in breaches of the peace. Houston and Simms were taken there, and searched and dispossessed of what their pockets contained, for the time being (returned upon their release), and ruthlessly locked up in a dark cell, with nothing inside but themselves, the four walls, the floor, and the ceiling.

It was about ten o'clock when they were locked up. For a few minutes after each was busy with his thoughts, and neither spoke to the other a word. Rev. Houston, being a large, heavy man, from the long walk, about a mile, felt tired, and sat down upon the floor; Simms, being small of stature and light of frame, and under mental excitement, stood up, leaning against the wall of their prison. The silence was broken by Pastor Houston, who cleared his throat, and at once commenced to sing in a soft, clear voice Dr. Watts's beautiful hymn of "God's purpose of mercy,—"

"The Lord on high proclaims
His Godhead from his throne;
Mercy and Justice are the names
By which he will be known.

"Ye dying souls that sit
In darkness and distress,
Look from the borders of the pit
To his recovering grace.

"Sinners shall hear the sound;
Their thankful tongues shall own
Their righteousness and strength are found
In thee, O Lord, alone.

"In thee shall Israel trust,
And see their guilt forgiven;
Thou wilt pronounce the sinners just,
And take the saints to heaven."

He sang every stanza as correctly in that dark room as if he were in his pulpit with the gaslight on the book. His companion in imprisonment, being moved by this cheering act of faith and resignation, joined in as he began the second stanza, and they thus sang together to the end. As if the arch-enemy would mock them, a most ludicrous incident occurred while they were singing. The guard outside, in the passage-way to the cells, a son of the Emerald Isle (or, in other words an Irishman), exclaimed gruffly, in his native brogue, "*Niver moind; Mayyer Screeven will give yees the divil in the morning;*" and both the singers simultaneously replied, "No, he won't." It was not more than about twenty minutes after when, as guard and door-keeper, he received the order at the outer door, "Bring out Houston and Simms."

Like the early churches of the Apostles, our old Bryan was now wide awake in this the height of the storm, and active for the deliverance of these brethren and leaders. Directed by the God of heaven, they quickly found human succor. When the two prisoners came into the police-office again, whence they were sent not over half an hour before, the appearance of things was very different. The officer in charge was more pleasant and polite, and some three or four deacons, with Mr. Charles Ash, a citizen of property and prominence, and P. W. Mildrim, Esq., a young lawyer,

were all pleasantly chatting together over the incidents of the night. As the officer handed each of us an envelope, he requested us to examine its contents, and see if they were as when delivered to him. Being assured that they were, we were told that we were at liberty to depart then, and to appear again at ten o'clock in the morning, to answer to the charge in the mayor's court. Bonds had been given by those kind gentlemen, both of whom are, under the smiles of kind Heaven, living and prospering at the time of this writing.

When they appeared on the streets they were greeted by the church members with joy ; a large number of the sisters, brethren, and some other friends, were at the portal of the prison, though it was still raining, when they delivered the prisoners, and their friends shortly afterwards returned to their homes, rejoicing in the midst of their trials at what God had done.

They appeared before his Honor, the mayor, in the morning, and he discharged them on the same ground upon which he previously had Brother Green, for want of jurisdiction in the case. But, not to be outdone, the brother got his case before the grand jury of the Superior Court, which returned a true bill against Simms and Houston for misdemeanor.

The officers in behalf of the church and through counsel petitioned the court to dissolve the injunction

granted Harris, showing the extent of the injury he was doing the church, and ten days after the trial in the mayor's court the following writ was granted :

“SUPERIOR COURT, CHATHAM COUNTY.

“Alexander Harris, complainant, and Ulysses S. Houston, *et al.*, defendants. Temporary injunction issued March 14, 1872.

“It Being Made To Appear, That The Complainant, Alexander Harris, although elected for one year pastor of the First Bryan Baptist Church, was a member of said church, and as such is under the dealings of the church, and by virtue of the Sovereignty of Baptist churches, the church has the power to deal with him in their own way; And it further appearing that his pastoral year for which he was elected has expired or nearly so, it is ordered that the said injunction be dissolved.

“Witness my hand and official signature this 1st April, A.D. 1872.

“W. SCHLEY,

Judge Supreme Court Eastern Circuit of Georgia.

“A true extract from the minutes,
this first day of April, A.D. 1872.

[L.S.]

“Z. N. WINKLER.

*Deputy Clerk, Superior Court
of Chatham County, Georgia.”**

This shut Mr. Harris out finally, and he has never returned; and the “church felt in her body that she was healed of the plague.”

* True copy of the writ.

CHAPTER XI.

THE church again peaceably met in her regular conference April 18, 1872. All her regular meetings for prayer and preaching had been resumed. Deacon Rivers made report of his mission of reconciliation, for which he was appointed, that the only one that he could persuade was his aged colleague upon the deacon's staff, Brother Grant Simpson, who was present. After some explanations relative to his public acts and present feelings, he was fully restored to his former privileges and position. A committee was appointed at this meeting to draft resolutions relative to the action of the members revolting against the authority of the church and report them at the next conference, which they did on the 16th of May following :

“ Your committee, appointed to draft suitable resolutions respecting the disorderly members, submit the following preamble and resolutions :

“ WHEREAS, The following-named persons, Brothers Peter Campbell, William Washington, Major Cannorn, John Jackson, David Sleas, Andrew Law, Augustus Grampus, Hezekiah Givens, James Lewis, John Longwood, Amos McFall, Daniel Green, Wm. Fergerson, Lisbon Bing, Charles Cumming, Joseph Stiles, Joseph

Verdere, Henry Hamilton, James Spalding, and Sisters Sarah Harrison, Ann Stiles, Sarah Odingsell, Mary Irving, Mary Savoy, Jane Irving, Sally Howell, Elsey Moter, Eliza Washington, Julia Cooper, Mary Verdere, Sarah Ferriby, Lizzie Mitchel, Francis Harris, Mary Anderson, Mira Webb, Anna Bullock, Abigail Small, — Blocker, — Blocker, Dolly Moran, Virginia Cannorn, Rebecca Williams, — Lewis, Nelly Johnson, C. McQuiney, having openly rebelled against the sovereign power of the church; and have smuggled away the church property, and setting themselves up as a church, and are receiving and communing with the excluded members of this church contrary to her rules and the gospel.

“AND WHEREAS, Repeated invitations have been extended them to return to the fellowship and authority of the church, and they have not done so, but continue to ignore the rights of the church, Now, therefore, be it

“*Resolved*, By the authority of the same, that their actions are hereby condemned, and each and every one of them are hereby expelled.

“*Resolved*, That this church is in no way opposed to the largest liberty of its members consistent with the gospel of Christ and the long practical experience in the discipline and customs of the Baptist denomination, and believe that any member or members, for good and sufficient reasons first being given to the church, may withdraw their membership.

“*Resolved*, That we earnestly condemn and deprecate the action of any Baptist church receiving the expelled members of another Baptist church into their

fellowship, and hold union and communion with them, and the fact that the pastor of the First African Baptist Church of this city inviting an expelled member of this church to preach in his pulpit and officiate in said church meet the unqualified condemnation of this church, and is productive of disunion among the churches of our Association, contemptuous of our Baptist discipline, and perverse of the Christian religion.

Resolved, That these resolutions be spread upon the minutes of this church, and a copy be sent through our delegates to the Zion Baptist Association when they shall again convene.

“Signed,

“ W. M. RIVERS,

“ H. RAHN,

“ E. WICKS, *Chairman.*”

The delegates to the Association this year (1872) were: Rev. U. L. Houston, Brethren Q. Frazer, W. Rivers, W. Green, and E. Wicks: reported baptized, 29; by letter, 4; restored, 25; dismissed by letter to organize a church, 268; membership, 337. It will be remembered that the Association adjourned to meet with the Darien Baptist Church, and that Brother A. Harris was to preach the introductory sermon, with Rev. C. F. Lawton as alternate. Both were present when the session met. Mr. Harris's career since the last session was most notoriously known by nearly all

the delegates present. He went into the pulpit and attempted to preach, notwithstanding he well knew the church's delegates would protest, as he was an expelled member of this church. The brethren who came to the Association prepared to sustain him insisted that, as the appointment was made before these occurrences, he was entitled to preach, and that the protest be made after organization. This was demurred against, and the trouble of the church now became transferred to the Association. After spending the whole morning discussing the matter, the church was sustained against Brother Harris and his followers, for it seems they were fully under his control, and the introductory sermon was dispensed with. The Association then proceeded to the business of organization, and read letters up to adjournment in the evening. On the morning of the second day occurred a stormy session during the election for officers; but it resulted in a complete victory for right and justice. The Moderator for the last six years was renominated by Mr. Harris, and the pastor of this church was nominated by Brother Simms, now pastor of the Zion Baptist Church of Liberty County. The vote as reported by the tellers was: Rev. A. Bourke, 31; Rev. U. L. Houston, 41; and the church was thus vindicated. Subsequently the committee on the state of churches reported relative to this church as follows: "We find that two

-sets of letters were sent to the Association, two sets of delegates representing the First Bryan Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, complaining against each other, and one set of letters mention a council of ministers called to investigate the matter, and gave names of only a portion of the council, and fails to report the decision of that council, and the other letter makes no mention of a council.*

A portion of this report was stricken out by the Association, and the following substitute, by Rev. David Watters, was adopted in its stead :

“ That each church is the judge of its own members, and we endorse the action of the First Bryan Baptist Church in the case of Mr. Harris and others ; yet, as an advisory body, we hereby counsel them to return to the First Bryan Baptist Church, Rev. U. L. Houston, pastor, and be reconciled.”

The course of Brother Harris was so notoriously wrong, unchristian-like, and inconsistent as a Baptist, that the brethren who defended it could only do so from personal motives or prejudicial feelings, and not for the glory of God and the interest of our denominational cause ; and it is due the truth of history to say, as much as we regret it, that at that particular period

* Copied from the minutes of the Association, 1872, page 27, paragraph 8.

in our history much of that feeling of prejudice and jealousy prevailed,—Campbell against Simms, Boles against Houston, each of whom had influence in different spheres. Campbell and Boles were men very popular with the white citizens of Savannah, and thought it was best that those in the ministry should not meddle with politics, and were much influenced in their views by the opinions of the white brethren. Houston and Simms, younger and feeling more independent, felt it their duty to enter that arena, as it was at the time a death-struggle for equality of rights before the law. Both were, no doubt, ambitious. Again, Boles was a member of this church and a very useful man in doing much to build her up, and there is no doubt that he aspired as a son to be the pastor. The church chose the young man, Houston, and not the elder man, Boles. He became offended, left this church with a letter, which the church very reluctantly gave him, and joined the First African Church, of which Rev. Campbell was pastor, leaving behind him a feeling of deep regret and the seeds of dissension with his friends in his old mother church, of course; and he ever after strove to detract from her and draw away her country membership.

Simms had become early in life a member of the First African Church, under Dr. Marshall, and was Brother Campbell's constant help at the time of his

building the present house of worship. He had been his clerk, deacon, master-builder, and intimate counsellor, until the church insisted upon setting him apart for the ministry, against the objections of the pastor. Jealousy ensued, and their close relations ceased. The civil war was raging and the younger colored men of the city were being pressed into service upon the Confederate works around the city. This was so repugnant to Simms that he left the South, went to Boston, Massachusetts, and while preaching there as a licentiate from the First African Church of Savannah, the brethren in Boston proposed to ordain him, to be prepared for the work soon to be begun at the close of this great conflict, as now our people were free. So, in April, 1864, in the Twelfth Baptist Church a presbytery of five colored Baptist ministers—Grimes, of the Twelfth; Raymond, of the Second Baptist of New York; White, of Joy Street Church, Boston; Thomson, a missionary of Boston; and Randolph, of Charlestown, Massachusetts—ordained him as an evangelist of the gospel. When he returned to Savannah, Rev. Mr. Campbell took this as a pretext for crippling his influence with the members of his church, claiming that it was an infraction of his church's rights to allow ordination by another church under whose watch-care he was, and that it showed contempt for him. The Twelfth Baptist Church

wrote a letter disclaiming any intention of infringing upon the rights of her sister church in the South, and stating that what they had done was with the view of facilitating missionary work down here solely as a war measure. This letter was suppressed by the pastor, and the church, not receiving the information, refused to recognize the ordination; and having a large congregation spread far around the country, thus stopped the ministerial work of Simms, who was a missionary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, laboring on the Savannah River plantations.

Mr. Simms, being crippled by his pastor and church in his religious labors, turned very naturally to where at this time he was much needed,—the political field. He went, as Rev. Houston did, to the legislature from the largest populated county in the State,—*i.e.*, Chatham. What little distinction he won in that body and upon the hustings increased the jealousy of Brother Campbell; seeing this, and his friend and sympathizer, Houston, in trouble, partly through his persuasion in getting him into politics, he took his letter from the First African and went to the First Bryan Church. Thus it will be seen how the seeds from which the roots of bitterness sprang created these dissensions. Brother Harris, the better to help his ambitious personal ends, took advantage of the feeling which he was well aware existed between these four

brethren before mentioned, they having much influence with our elder ministers outside of the city among whom they had been laboring for years in slavery times, having since ordained some of them, and being looked up to as their advisors in the affairs of their people. Campbell and Boles had a following that Harris designed to and subsequently did use for his advancement, without which his religious and ministerial career might have ended with this session of the Zion Baptist Association. As we now look at the then division, Campbell and Boles, Houston and Simms, with Harris in the breach, striving for place and power to appease a morbid ambition with personal unpopularity, and taking hold upon these two elders with a large constituency and small mental calibre, so well suited to his purpose, we have the elements out of which grew, soon after adjournment, the "*Mount Olive Association*," from which much good has come, we know, which is still existing, and which may do much more by the overruling power of God. Nothing here written is intended to disparage that Association in any sense. But the controlling power of the Zion Baptist Association, for seven years in the hands of these elders, was lost to them at this session; and seeing younger men, whom they had unwisely endeavored to keep down, if not to destroy, now in the ascendancy, their power taken away, as evidenced in

the election of Houston, and their measures voted down, they were guided by the strong, insidious, wilful mind of Brother Harris, and resolved to separate from the old Association.

It is really true that all who opposed the wishes of those elder brethren respected them highly, yea, some loved them, and regretted the state of things that existed; but seeing they were in the wrong, and that their action would stop the progress of our cause, opposed them, and from that day to their death, so far as our Baptist field is concerned, their glory departed; and, as they could no longer rule, they seceded—some six churches—and founded the Mount Olive Association. That was all they did. They did it for the benefit of Brother Harris; and one by one they soon passed from earth to heaven, leaving it to him, now the only survivor of that day. And now, as we must close up the historical part of Brother Harris's connection with the church,—he having from this associational meeting no connection with it,—it is due to this history to say that it is solely with the public acts we deal; in private life, had we to make criticisms, we could show many excellent qualities of this our brother; and we write as fully as we do for the benefit of those to come after us, that when they examine into and review our work and way, they may better avoid the mistakes we made, which if we had not we might have accomplished

so much more. No doubt it was a mistake for Houston and Simms to dabble in politics, in which there is much evil, yet it may have been necessary, and if so it was at the time with them; but it may be in the case of Mr. Houston the original evil that suggested the first wrong thought and act in Mr. Harris, and led on a train of circumstances in one direction and then in another that culminated in the whole of these difficulties shown in this history. Looking at it from this point, none of the actors can be clear from blame, if a small cause may produce a large effect,—and a cause is responsible for its effects,—though two wrongs are never known to make a right. But with these wrongs and mistakes we may see the hand of an overruling Providence, and that his commands in his revealed will to us are the best possible good for man; yet what he permits he is also able to overrule for good to his glory. Therefore, had Houston not gone to Atlanta for two years, Harris might have always remained a deacon of the church to the end, as Mr. Johnson has done; had Simms not gone to Boston and been ordained, he might have remained with the First African Church, in harmony with Brother Campbell, who would never have had cause to oppose Houston because he sheltered Simms; had Campbell and Boles not aided Harris in his extremity in the Association, himself, as a pastor, his present little church might not

have striven to organize and perform the many services to the cause of charity that they are known to have accomplished, distinctively more than any other in proportion to their numbers and resources.

The Georgia Infirmary owes much to him and his church. His inventive genius served him constantly as he has ripened in age and experience, some bitter, it is true; yet it has given him more real power for the good which he is so capable of doing; and with an education in the letters and occult sciences to light up that genius, his energy and indomitable will would have made him superior by far to any of the group of men with whom he had been reared and with whom he acted in the affairs of life. The cause of the separation and the wounds made there by him have long been removed and healed, and the Church has as much claim upon him and his church and the same love that a mother would feel for a wayward daughter, who at last turned out well and proved creditable to the house from which she sprang. Does not all this show the overruling power of God, whose love and grace are sufficient for us? These views will lighten the burden of age to all of the actors of the day of which we now write, though there are very few that still remain; but they are not written for them, but for those that shall succeed us. It must not be inferred either that what has been accom-

plished was not by some self-sacrifice on the part of all these brethren, and, even in the height of these disagreeable times, there were always a middle and conservative class of brethren who neutralized much of the evil tendencies, and at last brought about peace and harmony. Houston's consoling words and prayers in the closing hours of Rev. Brother Boles's life,—Simms's doing the same services for Rev. William J. Campbell,—standing by his bed, closing his eyes in death, and both Houston and Simms officiating at his funeral from this old church (and not the one he built), the old mother Bryan church, going first in a body to her wayward yet loved daughter (Bryan church) to break bread in spiritual communion with her; and as she entered the sanctuary, Houston and Harris met in the embrace of each other. All hearts full of peace, all eyes bathed in tears, they feast with their Lord and former pastor at the table, with their own pastor by his side; they sing together thanksgiving and praise, and take the parting hand of fellowship which had once been withheld, never to be severed, we trust, again. Surely, then, we see that his grace is sufficient, his ruling providence is as wise as it is good, and thus, like David of old, we are made to exclaim of our God, through Christ, "He is good, and his mercies endureth for ever."

In 1873 the church was represented by the pastor

alone, who also was pastor of and represented the branch organized at Ogeechee. This church baptized 155; received by letter, 16; restored, 16; and reported a membership of 537,—a gain of 195 for the year. Her trials being over, she was blessed with an outpouring of the Spirit and the ingathering of souls; peace and great harmony prevailed now in every way. The deacons were Brethren Grant Simpson, William Rivers, William Green, and Edward Wicks of the old staff; in September, 1871, during the troubles, there were added Brethren Amos Denslow, Polado Jackson, and J. B. Lewis; and at the regular conference of February 7 of this year, Brethren H. R. Rahn and Hazzard McPherson were chosen and set apart on trial. It has always been the custom of the church to put her deacons on some months' trial before ordaining them. Now that she had put on trial these newly selected, on the 28th of April four brethren who had been on trial some length of time, namely, Brethren Rivers, Lewis, Jackson, and Denslow, were ordained. It was at the conference held this month that the church adopted the new constitution, covenant, and by-laws reported from a committee appointed to draft them, consisting of Brethren J. M. Simms, E. Wicks, and H. R. Rahn, and a resolution was passed to have the same printed in pamphlet form, with a roll of the members therein, for distribution.

It was in this year that the proposition was made by some of the brethren to take down the old church-building, erected by Mr. Bryan in 1794-95. The out-building or praise-house, as it is generally called, built upon the Gibbons lot before mentioned, and rolled upon this ground in 1793, became dilapidated, and a new building, twenty-five by forty feet, was erected in its stead in 1865, on the southern part of the lot. This main edifice was much out of repair; besides, all felt it had been desecrated by the troubles of 1871, when the police entered it and fired off their pistols. And now it was proposed to take it down and erect a brick structure as a monument to the memory of Father Bryan, and as a token of their gratitude to God for their redemption from moral as well as spiritual bondage. On the 10th of August, 1873, a mass-meeting of the members and of the friends of the church was called. The pastor, Rev. Mr. Houston, was called to the chair, and the subject of taking down and erecting was fully discussed, and it was resolved that, if the church would consent to tear down the precious old structure, they would, as a committee of the whole, see that another built of brick would replace it, upon the plans selected by the church. Brother Edward Wright suggesting that, in so important an affair, we should first seek counsel and direction from Almighty God, the pastor therefore led in a

fervent, feeling prayer. Then, as an earnest of the pledge, a spontaneous collection of three hundred and fourteen dollars and twelve cents cash was raised, with promises of much more in subscriptions. Committees on finance, on materials, and on building were appointed, ready to act when the church gave their consent, and when their endorsement was procured.

The committees as appointed were :

On Finance.—J. M. Simms, chairman, George B. Lewis, D. Watters, Edward Wicks, Henry Rahn, Wade Collins, Joseph Stiles, Frank Jones, Isaac Righton.

On Building.—U. L. Houston, chairman, William Rivers, Charles H. Price, Polado Jackson, John Simmers.

On Materials.—John Jackson, chairman.

The proposition was submitted to the conference of August 18, 1873, and was unanimously accepted, and the chairman of the building committee was empowered to procure a draft of a plan and submit the same to the church forthwith. On the 14th of September the draft of a plan made by civil engineer and city surveyor John B. Howard, of Savannah, free of charge, was exhibited to the members of the church, who authorized the taking down of the old building which had sheltered them, and in which so many of our fathers and mothers had gathered to worship God, to

sympathize with and to encourage each other, remembering the prayers made, the tears shed, the sins confessed and pardon found, the sweet communion, solemn and joyful songs of prayer and praise, the numberless souls born of God, renewed in Christ, that had marched from her doors to the river and been baptized, and then in heaven, while many were yet here on earth. With these reflections, while the consent was given to remove this ancient landmark of our civilization and Christianity, once the pride and glory of our ancestors, the church was loth to part with it, and as an evidence of her devotion to its memory had the old temple photographed on the afternoon of Monday, the 29th, the pastor, with the new building-plan, standing at the door, surrounded by members and friends outside, and the aged mother of the church, Sarah Wallace, beside the gate. The copies of this photograph sold readily to the members and friends at one dollar each, over a hundred being taken and sold for the benefit of the building fund.

The church had communed for the last time in the dear old building on the last Sabbath, or 28th of September, and on Wednesday morning, the 1st of October, the brethren who volunteered to tear it down commenced the work, such of the old planks and timbers as were found in a good state of preservation being reserved for use in minor places in the new building.

Such were the zeal and progress of the work at the beginning that on the afternoon of the 13th of October the corner-stone of the new building was laid. The stone and the copper box enclosed therein were paid for and presented by the Sabbath-school, at a cost of twenty-two dollars. The stone was laid with imposing ceremonies by the members of the Grand Lodge of Colored Masons in the State of Georgia, attended by two subordinate lodges,—Eureka, No. 1, and John T. Hilton, No. 2. Grand Master Lewis B. Torner officiated, assisted by Deputy Grand Master John H. Devoux (a grandson of one of the former pastors) and Grand Secretary Albert Jackson. They marched from their hall, at the corner of Bay and Lincoln Streets, in regalia and with their emblems, to the church grounds, where was assembled a very large congregation of both white and colored citizens. An appropriate ode was sung by the order, an address was delivered by Rev. Henry M. Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, now a bishop, suitable and impressive prayer was offered by Rev. James Meriles Simms, a short statement of the early history of the church was given by the pastor for deposit in the box, with copies of the city press, the State constitution, and the names of the State officers, also the names of the mayor and city council; many coins and small curiosities of jewelry worn by the old members; also pieces of old coin which had

been found on pulling down the old building, and which had been deposited in the corner-stone at its erection, were placed again in the new box. The cover of the box was soldered on, and the stone was then placed in its position according to the ancient customs of the Free and Accepted Masons. A doxology was sung, the benediction was pronounced by the pastor, and the large but orderly assemblage quietly dispersed. The day was bright and the afternoon as balmy as that of an autumn day could be.

In 1874 the delegates were Rev. U. L. Houston, Wm. Rivers, A. Denslow, P. Jackson, and E. Wicks; baptized, 15; membership, 550.

In 1875, Rev. U. L. Houston, G. B. Lewis, O. Foster, A. Denslow, E. Wicks, H. R. Rahn, J. M. Simms, and W. Rivers; baptized, 33; membership, 586.

In 1876, Rev. U. L. Houston, Wicks, and Jackson; baptized, 34; membership, 630.

In 1877, Rev. U. L. Houston, Foster, Wicks, Lewis, and Rahn; baptized, 98; membership, 715.

In 1878, Rev. U. L. Houston, Lewis and Wicks; baptized, 24; membership, 730.

In 1879, Rev. U. L. Houston, Simms, and Wicks; restored, 36; baptized, 129; membership, 909.

In 1880, Rev. U. L. Houston, Rahn, Wicks, and Simms; baptized, 36; membership, 944.

In 1881, Rev. U. L. Houston, Rahn, and Rivers ; baptized, 10 ; membership, 925.

In 1882, Rev. U. L. Houston and Rivers ; restored, 30 ; baptized, 153 ; membership, 1114.

In 1883, Rev. U. L. Houston, Simms, Wicks, Rahn, Rivers, Denslow, and Bateman ; baptized, 76 ; membership, 1172.

In 1884, Rev. U. L. Houston, Rahn, Ranier, and S. D. Green ; baptized, 51 ; membership, 1231.

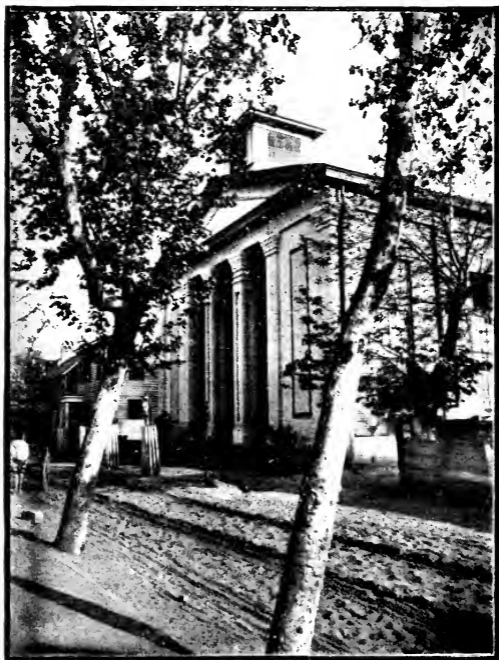
In 1885, Rev. U. L. Houston, Wicks, Lewis, Jackson, Denslow, Rahn, P. Jackson, Foster, Rivers, Green, Gadsden, and Renier ; baptized, 147 ; membership, 1450.

In 1886, Rev. U. L. Houston, Rahn, Denslow, James, Bateman, and S. D. Green ; baptized, 122 ; membership, 1512.

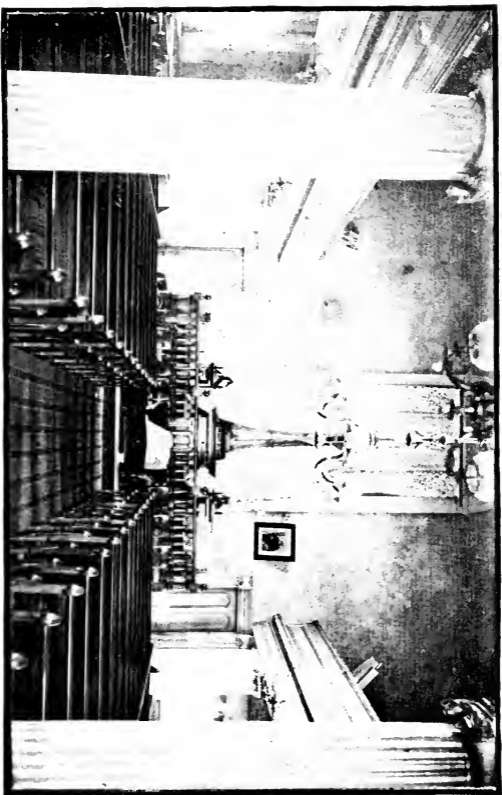
In 1887, Rev. U. L. Houston, Denslow, Ranier, James, and Quarterman ; restored, 181 ; received by letter, 22 ; baptized, 322 ; membership, 2005.

The great earthquake of this year brought in this large addition to the church.





EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE NEW CHURCH.



INTERIOR VIEW OF THE NEW CHURCH.

CHAPTER XII.

THE work of rebuilding now went on, and was industriously pushed forward. The old building had been taken down, and the foundations of the new one were built up to a height of four feet within thirteen days. The work was done exclusively by colored mechanics and laborers, under the direction of a white architect, whose presence was seldom required. The city of Savannah has ever been noted for first-class colored mechanics, especially in house building.

Materials were readily furnished on credit, as the law gives a lien on the property to secure their payment. Thus all needful articles were procured and the work continued rapidly onward. The church starting out with strong faith, large desires, and a small cash capital, the struggle to meet the requirements and make payments when due was great, and compelled her members and friends to bestir themselves, and taxed their efforts to the utmost capacity. Yet, the will to do being in them, they, by the help of God, found the way, and adopted many means for raising funds. We mention the following as an example: A short historical sketch was prepared by the chairman

of the finance committee, accompanied by an appeal for aid, which was printed and distributed to the citizens. Several of the best-known members and friends were then given books, with the name of the church printed thereon, to canvass the city among their friends. As one set would come in and report their success, another would follow. Many of the societies of the city among our people also made donations from their treasuries, and nearly every member of the church contributed such amount as he or she was able. We have received from the clerk of the church the following itemized statement :

SUBSCRIBERS PAYING FIVE DOLLARS PER
MONTH.

U. L. Houston.....	\$10.00	J. Bryant.....	\$4.00
Cato Jackson.....	29.00	R. Wicks.....	13.00
J. Julian.....	5.00	P. Johnson.....	25.00
T. Alston.....	2.00	J. Ancrum.....	2.00
R. Dudley.....	5.00	C. Latson.....	34.00
L. Rutlege.....	5.00	J. Candler.....	20.00
Geo. Mack.....	10.00	H. E. Clark.....	19.00
W. H. Royal.....	14.00	H. R. Rahn.....	17.00
S. Jones.....	9.00	Robert Herb.....	6.00
H. Cook.....	11.00	Mrs. J. A. Natall.....	5.00
Wm. Sheftall.....	15.00	S. Jones.....	14.00
A. Barnard.....	1.00	A. T. Jackson.....	23.50
R. F. Williams.....	10.00	James Beal.....	32.00
Isaac Bacon.....	6.00	Polado Jackson.....	12.00
H. R. Brown.....	16.00	Pulaski Cooper.....	10.00

John Watson.....	\$4.00	W. H. Walker	\$10.00
Henrietta Houston.....	5.00	Franklin Smith	5.00
Betsey Taylor.....	12.00	James M. Simms.....	27.50
Benjamin Rahn.....	24.50	Moses Ferrill.....	15.00
J. A. Bee.....	5.00	Wm. Carter.....	5.00
Wm. Medseo.....	5.00	Jack Holms.....	5.00

SUBSCRIBERS PAYING FOUR DOLLARS PER
MONTH.

Wade Collins.....	\$14.00	John Johnson.....	\$7.75
March Roberts.....	6.00		

SUBSCRIBERS PAYING THREE DOLLARS PER
MONTH.

Elizabeth Edy.....	\$16.60	Henry Mongin.....	\$2.00
Henrietta Houston.....	5.00	Daniel Gadsden.....	28.00
Betsey Taylor.....	12.00	Benjamin Rahn.....	24.50
Samuel Ryals.....	5.75	Louisa Murry.....	5.50
H. Cooper.....	3.00	Isaac Quarterman.....	20.50
Dolly Cooper.....	3.00	David Watters	3.50
Henry Gordon.....	2.00	Robert Harris.....	4.00

SUBSCRIBERS PAYING TWO DOLLARS PER
MONTH.

D. Benjamin.....	\$21.00	Jane Burroughs.....	\$18.00
S. Baker.....	3.50	Ellen Williams.....	4.00
Nancy Rahn	8.00	Nancy Pierce.....	3.00
Lizzie King.....	1.00	Melia Murry.....	13.00
Laura Small.....	2.00	Louisa Parker.....	18.00
J. R. Allen.....	2.00	Mary Cooper	2.00
Lizzie Noble.....	4.00	Sarah Mayes	12.00
Molly Rivers.....	7.00	Julia Gibbs.....	17.00
Celia Gardner.....	4.00	Julia Rahn.....	8.00

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Lewis Thomas.....	\$9.00	Emma Tolbert	\$4.00
Mary Ann Wicks.....	.50	Oliver Foster.....	3.00
Miley Jackson.....	8.50	R. Stord.....	10.00
Silvia Reid.....	2.00	G. Wright.....	7.50
Charlotte Goodwin.....	.25	John Bruen	9.00
Stephen Riley.....	8.00	Adam Sheftall.....	.25
Harriet Riley.....	5.00	Susan Gardner.....	2.00
Howard Williams.....	2.00	Sarah Sayers.....	18.00
Noble Gray.....	2.00	Mariah Hargraves.....	8.00
Susan Houston.....	2.00	Eugenia Hooker.....	20.00
Ellen Rahn.....	3.00	Margaret Candler.....	10.00
Charlotte Dallas.....	2.00	Francis Stard.....	8.50
Mary Ann Roberts.....	2.00	Edward Stevens.....	12.00
James Candler.....	2.00	J. L James.....	2.00
Peggy Porter.....	12.00	By Cash	2.30

SUBSCRIBERS PAYING ONE DOLLAR PER
MONTH.

Sarah Wallace.....	\$5.00	Addel Williams.....	\$2.00
Sarah Wadley.....	2.60	Ana James.....	1.00
Ellen Houston.....	1.00	Jane Naylor.....	5.85
Rebecca Russel.....	3.00	Margaret Denslow.....	1.50
Molly Rahn	9.00	Lucy Price.....	11.00
Rebecca Burroughs.....	8.00	Lizzie Haywood.....	3.50
Harriet Vandross.....	1.00	Martha A. Burroughs...	1.00
Antoine Genelatt.....	2.00	Francis Erwin.....	4.50
M. Grate.....	1.00	Dolly Houston.....	3.00
Rebecca Golden.	12.00	C. Bullock.....	4.00
Ellen Ancrum.....	4.00	Elizabeth Edy.....	1.00
Tama Thomas.....	10.00	Sarah Goldsmith.....	4.00
Laura Dudley.....	5.00	Juber Williams	2.00
Elizabeth Williams.....	3.65	Charlotte Cook.....	4.00
Rebecca Haywood.....	4.00	Mary Singleton.....	8.00

Dolly Scott.....	\$2.00	Minnie Hooker.....	\$10.00
Diana Sneed.....	.50	Sally Anderson.....	2.00
Rose Harley.....	2.00	Lydia Benjamin.....	3.00
Harriet Quarterman	6.00	Fanny Brown.....	1.00
Mahale Miller.....	4.00	Polly Benje.....	11.00
Martha Simpson.....	4.50	Rhoda Reed.....	3.00
Lucinda Williams.....	6.00	Ana C. Floyd.....	7.00
Rachel Daniel.....	5.00	Mary Lewis	3.00
Harriet Butler.....	1.00	By Cash	1.50
Elizabeth Williams.....	6.00	Eve Reed.....	5.00
Grace Hicks.....	2.00	Dora Pooler.....	9.00
Jane Sneed.....	5.55	Rosa Goodwin.....	3.00
F. Johnson.....	1.00	Nancy Hamilton.....	4.00
Eve Watters.....	8.00	Minty Coachman.....	5.85
Lavinia Law.....	3.50	Hettie Cooper.....	1.00
Ellen Candler.....	4.00	I. Brown.....	1.00
Julia Moore.....	2.00	Sarah Logan.....	10.00
Judy Winn.....	4.50	Delia Burns.....	1.00
Martha Prentice	8.75	Sibby Gibbs.....	18.00
Alice Ferguson.....	4.00	Hetty Brown.....	6.00
Betsey Coachman.....	3.75	Charity Jackson.....	6.00
Isabella Burns.....	11.50	Margaret Smith....	3.00
Hannah Davis.....	10.00	Molly Harris.....	3.00
Eliza Crawford.....	5.00	Mariah Glen	1.00
Charlotte Turner.....	2.00	Florence A. Lewis.....	1.00
Dolly Hampton.....	6.00	Frances Mosman.....	1.00
Dora Drayton50	Judy C. White.....	1.00
Mahale Francis.....	4.50	Rose Adams.....	4.00
Abby Thomas.....	6.00	Tena O'Neal.....	1.00
Anna Golden.....	3.00	Delia Grant.....	1.00
S. Jefferson.....	1.00	J. A. Wicks.....	1.50
— Cooper.	2.00	C. Logan.....	2.00
Cloc Powell.....	9.75	Sarah Johnson.....	1.25

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Susan Bryant.....	\$10.00	Francis Jackson.....	\$2.00
Julia Butler.....	2.50	Silvia Smith.....	6.00
L. W. Cooper.....	2.00	Mary Ferguson.....	3.00
Georgiana Stiles.....	.50	Grace Jackson.....	2.00
Mariah Johnson.....	2.00	Mary Taylor.....	10.00
A. Watson.....	1.00	Phoebe Smith.....	4.00
Anette Gibbons.....	5.00	Juno Fry.....	3.00
Amelia Morell.....	2.00	Susan Simms.....	1.90
Agie McDane.....	2.00	Edward Ferebe.....	2.00
Jane Perkins.....	5.00	John Armstrong.....	1.00
P. Johnson.....	4.00	J. S. Habersham.....	1.00
Rebecca Young.....	1.00	Master Thomas Ferebe.	2.00
Harriet V. Calhoun.....	1.00	D. Miller.....	7.50
Selena Read.....	6.60	E. A. Stiles.....	1.00
M. Norman.....	7.00	S. Grant.....	1.50
Patsey Barnard.....	1.50	Samuel Manning.....	1.30
Carrie Jackson.....	1.00	F. B. Gadsden.....	10.00
Martha Thompson.....	4.40	R. D. Bivens.....	1.00
Sinda Hawkins.....	12.00	James Bithford.....	2.00
Fanny Simpson.....	1.00	Charles Frances.....	5.00
Mary E. Dean.....	2.00	Isaiah McCall.....	2.00
Mary Gadsden.....	8.00	Henry Magett.....	2.00
Mary Morten.....	2.00	Isaac Reed.....	3.00
Betty Royal.....	2.00	Benjamin Henry.....	2.00
Sue Gardner.....	2.00	Edward Gass.....	1.00
Virginia Williams.....	1.00	Isaac Henly.....	4.00
C. F. Logans.....	1.00	Robert Black.....	3.00
Fanny Smith.....	1.00	Benjamin Cooper.....	2.00
Betty Butler.....	1.15	Eugene Lewis.....	1.00
Mary Redding.....	1.00	Johnson Bick.....	10.00
Emma Harris.....	9.75	Sampson Whitfield.....	2.00
Sarah Gardner.....	1.50	Henry Vance.....	.50
Adaline Williams.....	3.00	Syrus Allen.....	1.00

David Slee.....	\$1.00	N. Green and Wife.....	\$2.00
Willie Grant.....	.50	A. McIntosh.....	4.20
James I. Davis.....	1.00	D. Lambert.....	1.00
Isaac Righton.....	5.00	P. McPherson and Wife.	1.35
James Fletcher.....	1.00	C. Sebury.....	1.00
Joseph Brown.....	.50	R. Holmes.....	1.00
Elliek Rivers.....	1.00	Marion Roberts.....	1.00
James Alston.....	1.00	H. Golden.....	.50
By Cash.....	5.49	Samuel Green.....	1.00
H. McPherson.....	4.75	J. Willet.....	1.00
Julius Maxwell.....	1.75	J. McClue.....	1.00
T. C. Jackson.....	1.00	From White Visitors...	7.50
By Cash.....	2.10	Cuffee Brown.....	1.00
Andrew Naylor.....	1.00	F. Jones.....	1.00
Johnson Grant.....	1.00	S. Yates.....	1.00
Renty Butler.....	2.00	E. Williams.....	1.00
S. Butler.....	.25	Edward Green.....	5.00
Lonon Mack.....	.50	Simon Shelmon.....	1.00
Henry Holmes.....	.50	John Johnson.....	1.00
R. Smith.....	.50	J. Lewis.....	1.00
James Young.....	1.25		

MONEY RECEIVED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

St. Martin's Society (male), per K. S. Thomas, President....	\$11.00	Wrestling Jacob Asso- ciation, John Jackson, President, E. Wieks, Secretary.....	\$25.00
Benevolent Sons of Sa- vannah, James Flem- ming, President, D. L. Yeomans, Secre- tary.....	25.00	Female Progressive As- sociation, J. Jackson, President, Josephine Radcliff, Secretary....	15.00
Nightingale Association, per Paul Reynolds, Secretary.....	10.00	Benevolent Sisters, Mrs. Sarah Box, President.	10.00
		Rising Daughters of	

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Africa, Mrs. S. Box, President.....	\$5.00	Dolly Jackson, Presi- dent.....	\$123.00
Ladies' Galatian So- ciety, Mrs. S. Box, President.....	70.00	Sabbath School for lay- ing the corner-stone, Wm. Rivers, Superin- tendent.....	27.00
Connected with the Sec- ond Church, the La- dies' Christian Asso- ciation, Mrs. Margaret Millidie, President, Mr. Henry Feilds, Sec- retary.....	10.00	And from Tableaux.....	6.17
From the Ogeechee Bap- tist Church, contrib- uted at sundry times.	60.00	And roofing the build- ing.....	20.00
Collection from a ser- mon preached by this pastor at St. Philip's Church while under Rev. H. M. Turner...	60.00	From the Deacons' Ex- cursion to Beaufort, cash.....	230.40
The Daughters of Light, Sister Dolly Jack- son, President, Nan- cy Pearce, Treasurer, Rev. H. R. Rahn, Sec- retary, for putting gas- pipes through the church.....	180.00	From Mrs. C. A. Price and other ladies, two suppers.....	30.49
And donated in cash.....	47.00	Bryan Christian Union Association.....	5.10
Daughters of Light Club, for column branches.	34.00	Deacon P. Jackson's Stevadore Gang.....	14.00
Daughters of Nehemiah, different times, Sister		Rev. Q. Frazer's Isle of Hope (people's list)....	16.00
		Sisters of Charity of this church.....	36.70
		Sister Mary Foster, from a supper.....	29.00
		From the Pastor's So- ciety.....	5.00
		Brother Gadsden, from Isle of Hope.....	7.22
		The Old Sisters' Associa- tion, to put in the pulpit window... ..	35.00
		Bryan Mutual Aid So-	

ciety, Fredrick Jones, President, William Golden, Treasurer, Frank Lawrence, Sec- retary.....	\$190.00	Mrs. N. Pearce, mana- ger.....	\$12.50
From the captains of the separate squads, who put lights and blinds in ten windows, at \$20.00 each window, aggregate.....	200.00	Sister Julia Costen, from a supper.....	23.00
The communion set hav- ing been stolen in the late division, the wives of the deacons, by their united efforts, in ten days replaced them with a new set, consisting of six bread- baskets, six cups, and three goblets, all of silver, at a cost of.....	85.00	A sunflower festival, Mrs. Ellen Rahn, man- ager.....	43.15
A supper from sisters,		Sisters Eugenia Hooker and Dora Poaler, stone and inscription over the front door, at a cost of.....	15.00
		First Bryan Baptist Church Nickel Club, Sister Eugenia Hooker, President, Sister Dia- na Rivers, Secretary, for furnishing the pulpit.....	102 50
		Memorial Stone to the memory of Rev. A. Bryan, by the Nickel Club.....	25.00

The foregoing is simply an approximation of the moneys secured in the several different ways suggested by the fertile brain of the pastor to the members who raised the means to build the church. While all were interested and impressed with the burden of this work, the greatest part of the responsibility devolved upon their under-shepherd of Christ, who fully proved

himself equal to the occasion; and as a wise master-builder was always foremost in suggesting new methods for gathering necessary means as soon as those already utilized seemed unavailing, and so the church, as it should, drew supplies from many sources,—churches, societies, civil and military organizations, individuals, white and colored members of her own body, and of sister churches. They all, individually and collectively, contributed to her aid in this great work and came to her relief when compelled to contract debts; for with all these several resources from which she drew, the means did not accumulate sufficiently to meet the demands, and, therefore, with much regret, the trustees were called upon to borrow money from several institutions and individuals to meet the payment of bills when due, in order to save the credit of the church.

The following is a statement of the amount borrowed and the sources from which it was obtained: From the Alabama State Life Insurance Company, \$1000, at ten per cent. per annum; from F. Harty, \$500, at seven per cent. for ninety days; from the Chatham Mutual Loan Association, on twenty shares of stock purchased, \$4000; from the Savannah Bank and Trust Company, \$1000, at seven per cent. per annum; all of which was paid up when due, according to their obligations. The church as a committee of the whole,

with the pastor as chairman directing their actions,—and at periods mortgaging his personal property for security,—met every debt. A committee of the church, comprising the pastor, deacons, and trustees, was appointed to make a thorough investigation of the receipts, disbursements, and indebtedness soon after the building was up and enclosed sufficient for temporary use, who made the following report :

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR SIX YEARS AND EIGHT MONTHS, ENDING DECEMBER 28, 1879, ON THE FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE FIRST BRYAN BAPTIST CHURCH.

SAVANNAH, April 30, 1880.

TO THE FIRST BRYAN BAPTIST CHURCH :

DEAR BRETHREN,—Your committee of pastor, deacons, and trustees would beg leave to report, in conclusion :

That our last report of progress showed that the cost

of the building, so far as done, was... .. \$8,290.10

The amount paid thereon..... 7,826.42

The balance due upon the same..... \$463.68

We have found, on further examination, that for the period of six years and eight months,—the time covered by your resolution appointing us,—commencing with April 27, 1873, and closing with December 28, 1879, that in that time the whole amount of money received and disbursed by the officers of the church and the Finance and Building Committees is, in total..... 15,512.89

Contributions from all sources for the benefit of the church (principally by its members, but a con-

siderable portion from a generous public, and by friends of the church, with private enterprises of some members and their friends, by excursions, from societies, from suppers, lectures, tableaux, picnics, concerts, and fairs).....	\$1,026.86
Then there is to be taken away from the aggregate also the amount borrowed from the Chatham Mutual Loan Association.....	1,884.50
Actual cash received out of a call for.....	4,000.00
The premium paid on this amount under rule	2,115.50
Making a total from the two sources alone named, not directly money contributed by the church.....	2,911.36
This leaves as the real amount contributed by the church	12,601.53
Being an average of about for each year.....	2,200.00
However, the largest portion of this amount was contributed by the church in the years 1873 and 1874,—the active years of their building the new edifice,—and was used for that purpose principally, and the other expenses of the church, including the pastor's salary, in part.	
These moneys have been received and paid out by the following-named officers of the church, whose accounts have been audited by us, and found correct as far as was possible for us to ascertain the facts, the record in some instances being imperfect, somewhat; as, for instance, during the treasurership of our Brother Denslow, he being unable to record for himself his receipts and disbursements; yet there appears no doubt of his having really fulfilled his duty as faithfully as his abilities would make it possible. He received and paid from April, 1873, to December, 1876	3,537.29

There was also received by Elder Simms from September, 1873, to February, 1877, as the chairman of Finance Committee, and paid.....	\$6,856.26
And by Deacon Rahn, as treasurer, from December, 1876, to December, 1879, and paid.....	5,044.60
All, or very nearly all, the money paid out for building purposes has been paid under the order of the pastor, Elder Houston, as chairman of the Building Committee, except a very small portion, which was disbursed by him directly, paid by clerk or deacons, not having passed through the hands of the treasurer or the Finance Committee.....	74.74
This makes up the full receipts and disbursements.....	15,512.89
as has been accounted for by the respective officers of the church.	
From the whole or aggregate amount received there have been paid the pastor upon his salary, from May 4, 1873, to December 28, 1879.....	1,659.93
Collected from the members, paid to the treasurer by the clerk, and paid to the pastor from the treasurer. What has been collected for each and every month of that time has been duly shown upon the records and admitted by the pastor; there is this exception, that in the year 1878, by his agreement, he collected his salary himself directly from the members, and got for that year \$209.05, which year the church was relieved from the then existing contract of paying the pastor fifty dollars per month, which would amount to six hundred dollars a year. Thus the amounts received each year and paid him as part only of his salary were,—	
For the year 1873, eight months	265.48
“ 1874, twelve months.....	310.81

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For the year 1875, twelve months.....	\$249.99
“ 1876, twelve months.....	250.90
“ 1877, twelve months.....	91.97
“ 1878, twelve months*	
“ 1879, twelve months.....	416.04
And from sundry collections as stated.....	<u>74.74</u>
Making the total of all received	1,659.93
By his contract of six hundred dollars per year, for five years and eight months, is.....	3,400.00
Deducting then from this amount the above will leave a balance actually due him of.....	1,740.07
This is the actual showing from the books.	
There is, we also find, due to the Loan Association, of which we are members, a monthly back due since 1878 of.....	
	250.00
For which is paid each month as interest.....	2.80
And since that time a further back due of 1879	120.00
Being three months, making total back dues.....	370.00
On which is being paid each month as interest and fines.....	4.20
(This amount of dues should be taken up, if possible, before any other after Mr. Walker's debt, to stop this further tax upon the resources of the church.)	
To recapitulate the whole by the foregoing statement and figures is,—	
Whole amount collected, six years eight months	15,512.89
Paid for building purposes the same period	7,826.42
Paid to pastor as past salary.....	1,659.93
Paid for all other church purposes and dues to As- sociation	<u>6,026.54</u>

* There was nothing collected to his account, but there was paid him from the treasury by Rahn \$74.74, to be deducted from \$1740.07.

And there are due on the building yet, as represented	\$463.68
Also to the pastor to January 1, 1880.....	1,740.07
Also back dues to Loan Association.....	<u>370.00</u>
This being exclusive of the monthly dues, thus making an actual indebtedness of the church, the most due the pastor.....	2,573.75

From the somewhat unclerical manner of the accounts, which we have examined thoroughly, we have been very naturally detained in our report; but we will plead for this delay that the most thorough investigation has been made of all these accounts, and as critical report made herein as was possible; and respectfully suggest that this report be made the basis of a financial ledger, in which shall be recorded separately each future monthly, quarterly, and yearly report, that in future the financial condition of the church may be more readily ascertained. And it is the bounden duty of the officers who have exclusively the secular affairs of the church in their keeping to see to this matter whenever a report is made, although it is the right of the church or any member to inquire into and insist that this be done, that the generations to come after us may know where to find the oldest church of our race and denomination in this State.

Most respectfully submitted,

JAMES M. SIMMS, *Chairman*,
DAVID WATTERS,
QUIVES FRAZER,

Board of Trustees.

Appended.—In the account of Treasurer Rahn we find that in his account for three years, up to January 1, 1880, he paid out thirty-six dollars and fifty-five cents more than his receipts.

JAMES M. SIMMS,
Chairman.

Since then they have continued their efforts up to the completion of the building as it now stands. The outer dimensions are: length, 75 feet; breadth, 56 feet; height from the foundation to the peak of the roof, 45 feet; with a belfry above containing a bell. On the inside the distance from the floor to the ceiling is 26 feet; a spacious gallery occupies three sides, which, with its lower audience-room, gives a seating capacity of about 1500 persons. It cost, in round numbers, about \$30,000, not including an organ, valued at \$1350,—all paid for excepting the latter (now [1888] being placed in position), which will be when it is completed according to contract.

The church in 1885 wrote a letter to the Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, of which she is a constituent member, notifying them of her approaching centennial. The Convention, upon considering the subject, resolved to celebrate the planting of a Baptist church one hundred years coming (1888) with becoming ceremonies, and chose Savannah, where the church was constituted, as the place for the meeting. The church at a subsequent meeting of that body requested that their church should be the headquarters of the centennial committee on that occasion, and her monumental edifice built with the especial intention of commemorating the fathers, and showing gratitude to God for her glorious deliverance from moral as well as

spiritual bondage within this century, they were also requested to dedicate to his praise. And the Convention which met at Brunswick, Georgia, in May, 1887, set apart a day in June, 1888, for that purpose, as the time best suited to the gathering of the large number of Baptists and their friends from over the State and country. While this seemed best to them under the existing circumstances of our people, the church also feeling unwilling that the date of the original organization, so precious to her memory, should pass unnoticed, held a special service on the evening of January 20, 1888, commemorative of that blessed event, and ordained Brethren J. L. James and J. H. Bateman to the ministry, and Brethren Hosea Green, Benjamin H. Renier, and Daniel B. Gadsden as additional deacons of the church, after the following programme :

1. Organ Prelude. By PROFESSOR S. B. MORSE.
2. Invocatory Prayer. By REV. J. D. GIBB.
3. Thanksgiving Anthem. By the CHOIR.
4. Reading Epitome of First Church History. By REV. J. M. SIMMS.
5. Hymn by the Congregation. From REV. WILLIAM MORRISON.
6. Address to the Throne of Grace for Past Mercies. By REV. RICHARD WEBB.
7. Special Remarks. From REVS. J. E. L. HOLMES and RICHARD WEBB.
8. Anthem of Praise. By the CHOIR.
9. Reading of the Scriptures. By REV. ANDREW NEYLE.
10. Hymn by the Congregation. From REV. F. WASHINGTON.
11. Ordination Services. By all the Ministers of the Presbytery.
12. Doxology and Benediction. By REV. J. L. JAMES.

The building was filled to overflowing ; the services were grand, impressive, and orderly in the highest degree, and seemed to meet the approval of the most high God in its solemnity and perfect success, and from men by the commendation of people and of press.

And now, considering what has been accomplished by our predecessors laboring in the vineyard of our Lord, to whom he intrusted this glorious inheritance, his kingdom of grace below ; what they have suffered for him ; what they have achieved for his glory and our good, struggling in the darkness of the last closing century and the early glimmering and later glowing brightness of this in which we succeed and have been so wonderfully blessed, shall we not live and labor to build a structure of other human benefits as a crowning victory of their hopes and prayers, and an adornment to the gospel of Christ and our Christian religion by closer unity as a race, a denomination, a peculiar people, especially favored by God, one in every common interest, in the blending together of our resources, for the glory of Christ and the building up of each other, seeing that by the conversion of one man and three women of our race a church grew and flourished to the present day, out of its prayers, sufferings and labors? Our blessings have come, which we now enjoy only in part, though the higher and holier joys eternal yet await us above ;

and out of this one church builded as a temple to God so many others have come. Jesus the great Head of the Church has truly said that "I am the vine, ye are the branches." We note the branching out from this older graft: the Second Colored Church in the year 1802; the Ogeechee Church in 1803. Branching again from the Second, the First African Church at Philadelphia, organized by Rev. Henry Cunningham, with twelve members dismissed from the First Baptist Church of that city, Dr. Henry Holcombe, pastor, and whose influence called Rev. Mr. Cunningham to that work. This church was constituted in 1809; the Abercorn and White Bluff in 1831, the First African going out from this old plant in 1832; Drakey (now White Oak) in 1836; Oakland in 1848; Clifton out of the First African in 1849; Skidaway branch from White Bluff in 1850; St. Mary's, branch from the Second Colored, in 1850; Bethlehem, branch from First African, in 1860; St. Catharine's, branch directly from this old church, in 1862; and the First Bryan, West Broad and Waldberg Streets, going out in 1872;—all of which are bringing forth fruit for God in their fields of labor and usefulness. Some of them were organized by our white brethren, missionaries, yet each from members of some of the colored churches, dismissed under their direction, and so connectively to this first branch of God's right hand planting, known originally as the

First Colored Baptist Church, and in these later days as the First Bryan Baptist Church, whose God is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," for her and with her in this world, his kingdom of grace below, and to whom be "blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, unto our God; and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen."

The present (1888) officers of the church are:

Pastor.—Rev. Ulysses L. Houston.

Deacons.—Honorary Brethren Grant, Simpson, Hazard, McPherson.

Active.—William Rivers, Edward Wicks, George B. Lewis, Amos Denslow, Henry R. Rahn, Oliver Foster, Hosea Green, Benjamin H. Renier, Daniel B. Gadsden, John W. Black, Lewis Holmes, W. H. Royal, Moses White.

Trustees.—Rev. James M. Simms, Rev. David Waters, Deacon George B. Lewis.

Treasurer.—Deacon Daniel B. Gadsden.

Clerk.—Deacon Edward Wicks.

The membership is over two thousand.



PRESENT DEACONS OF THE CHURCH.

O. Foster, Edw. Wicks, Wm. Rivers, A. Benson, G. B. Lewis, H. B. Babo,
M. White, W. H. Royal, E. Holmes, J. W. Black, D. B. Gadsden, R. H. Reuter, H. Green.



COVENANT, CONSTITUTION, AND BY-LAWS.

COVENANT.

HAVING been, as we trust, brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give ourselves wholly to Him, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other, to walk together in Him with brotherly love, to his glory as our common Lord : we do, therefore, in His strength engage :

That we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish each other as occasion may require.

That we will not forsake the assembling ourselves together, but will uphold the public worship of God, and the ordinances of His house. That we will not omit closet and family worship at home, nor neglect the great duty of religiously training our children, and those under our care, for the service of Christ and the enjoyment of heaven.

That, as we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, we will seek divine aid to enable us to deny ungodliness and every worldly lust, and to walk

circumspectly in the world, that we may win the souls of men.

That we will cheerfully contribute of our property, according as God has prospered us, for the maintenance of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, for the support of the poor, and to spread the gospel over the earth.

That we will, in all conditions, even till death, strive to live to the glory of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. Through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

CONSTITUTION.

This Church shall be called the **FIRST BRYAN BAPTIST CHURCH** of Savannah, Ga., and shall consist of such persons as have repented of their sins and have been baptized according to the faith of the Baptist denomination, and shall consist of a Pastor, two or more Deacons, a Secretary, and Treasurer as its officers.

ARTICLES OF FAITH.

We believe in one Triune God,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—in the inspiration of the Scriptures, in the depravity of man, in the electing love of God; that salvation is by grace, that believers are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; in the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment, in the eternal reward and punishment of man; that the immersion of the body in water is the only Christian baptism, and is a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper; that these foregoing principles are the true doctrines of the Bible.

RULES OF ORDER.

1st. It shall be the duty of the Pastor to preach the gospel, watch over the spiritual condition of the Church, and counsel the members in love, administer all the ordinances of the Church, preside at her conferences, meetings, and visit the sick; and it shall be his privilege to visit the members, inquiring into their spiritual condition, when he shall deem it proper or expedient.

2d. It shall be the duty of the Deacons to assist the Pastor, to watch over the members and counsel them

in love, to provide for the church and the wants of the poor of the Church, keep a correct account of all funds of the Church, and make quarterly returns of receipts and disbursements.

3d. The Clerk shall keep a correct record of the proceedings of the Church in a book kept for that purpose, and one also containing the names of the members with dates of their admittance, which at all times shall be subject to the inspection of the Church or any member; he shall collect all dues to the Church, paying the same over to the Treasurer, and taking his receipt for the same.

4th. The Treasurer shall take charge of all the funds of the Church, whether consisting of moneys, checks, drafts, property of the Church, and pay them out as directed by the Church, keep a correct account of his receipts and disbursements, and make annual returns to the Church, or oftener, if called upon to do so.

5th. All the members of the Church shall be subject to the rules of the Church, and partake of its temporal and spiritual benefits.

6th. The appointed services of this church shall be on each and every Sabbath, and as often during the week as may be found practical or beneficial to its members. But the ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be administered on the afternoon of the fourth

Sabbath in each and every month, meeting at three o'clock for the same, after which, before adjournment, each member will contribute twenty-five cents for defraying the expenses thereof, and providing for the poor or sick members of the Church, and public collections may be taken up at any of these meetings, when found necessary for the maintenance of the Church.

BY-L A W S.

Article 1st. The regular Church discipline-meeting shall be held on the third Sunday morning in each and every month, at half-past ten o'clock, when the punctual attendance of every member shall be required. But a called or extra conference may be held at any time, when necessary, the Pastor and two or more Deacons consenting to the same, and giving due notice to the members, but, in the absence of the Pastor, the Deacons shall call or hold conferences.

Article 2d. All conference meetings shall be opened and closed with religious services.

Article 3d. All persons speaking in conference shall first arise and address the Moderator, and, in any re-

marks that may be made, due regard shall be had for the feelings of the members.

Article 4th. No subject shall be legally before the body until a motion to that effect has been made and seconded; when the subject shall be open for calm, deliberate discussion, before the vote upon the same is taken.

Article 5th. No person shall rise to speak more than twice upon the same motion without especial permission from the Moderator, but a majority of the votes in the meeting may suspend any rule for the time being, if found necessary.

Article 6th. When a member is speaking, no one shall engage in audible conversation or otherwise interrupt the meeting; and if they do, the Moderator shall call them to order, and if persisted in, their names shall be taken, and they be cited to answer to the Church at some subsequent meeting for such disorder; and if they refuse to give the Church satisfaction, such member or members shall be expelled from the fellowship of the Church.

Article 7th. If two members arise at the same time, preference shall be given to the one farthest off

from the Moderator, but he may decide upon the privilege, and any decision of the chair may be subject to appeal.

Article 8th. All questions, excepting Church fellowship, shall be decided by a majority of the members present at the meeting; and where the question involves Church fellowship it should be so considered as to strive to make the vote unanimous upon so sacred a subject.

Article 9th. Any member or members that shall neglect or refuse to commune with the Church shall be called upon to give the reason of such refusal or neglect, and they should be labored with to bring them back to their duties; but if they still refuse or neglect their duties, they shall be expelled from the fellowship of the Church.

Article 10th. Any member reported being in disorder shall be waited on by the deacons or a committee appointed for that purpose, and labored with to bring them back to their duties in the spirit of meekness and love; but if they are incorrigible they shall be expelled from the Church.

Article 11th. No one shall be called or elected to the office of a Deacon that cannot read the Holy Bible.

Article 12th. In cases of delinquent, refractory, or disorderly members, suitable committees shall be appointed, whose duty it shall be to inquire into the cases of such members, obtaining all the facts that can be legally had, and report the same to the Church at the discipline meetings.

Article 13th. All the foregoing Rules and By-Laws may be added to, altered, or amended by a two-third vote of the members present, at two consecutive meetings of the Church.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

1st. The members having assembled and religious services held, the first business in order shall be to call the meeting to order and read the Rules.

2d. Read and confirm the minutes of the last or previous meetings.

3d. Open the door of the Church for the reception of members by letters or experience or recommendation.

4th. Call for the report of committees appointed at the last or previous meetings, or general committees of the Church.

5th. Call for new business, when it shall be in order for any member to make known any grievance, or report anything coming under their notice against the discipline of the Church, or any subject of interest or utility.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE PASTORS.

REV. ANDREW BRYAN.

THE FIRST PASTOR.

REV. ANDREW BRYAN was born a slave upon a plantation near Goose Creek, South Carolina, and about twenty miles from Charleston. Nothing is known of his early life or who his owners were at his birth; he is only brought into notice and history as he is born of God through Jesus Christ, and only from his second and new birth do we know him and what has brought him so very prominently before mankind and the world. From his superior natural qualities, mental and physical, we judge that he has come from that line of his race that was brought from Africa early in the history of this country and landed in Virginia, which State in time sold them to others of later settlement, especially the Carolinas; and, of course, coming in contact with the civilization of the whites for several generations, were more enlightened and improved than the later importations of slaves from that country. It is a part of history that the first slaves in Georgia

came from South Carolina, and the most intelligent, with some exceptions, are those and their posterity. Thus, in the planting of this first church of the negro race, the prime actors and instruments in the hands of God we trace back to Virginia and South Carolina,—Brother George Leyle from the former, and Fathers Andrew Bryan and Andrew C. Marshall, both from the latter.

Mr. Bryan in early life may have worked in the fields among the common laborers until his better qualities were developed; but this is only supposition, we do not know it. He might have been—and it is more than probable that he was—about the house with his parents, and as he grew up became waiter, etc.; but when introduced to us, he was coachman and trusted body-servant to his owner, to whom he was sold from Carolina, or perhaps received as part of an estate by marriage, as was frequently the case.

He seems to have been of unmixed, pure African blood, with a smooth, smiling face, bright inquiring eyes, and pearly white teeth,—characteristics of the pure and best tribes of Africa. He was slightly above the medium height, had a finely-poised head upon broad shoulders, somewhat rounded, with muscular limbs, and was moderately corpulent. In delivery his speech was clear and deliberate, his voice musical, his manner in preaching impressive and per-

suasive. At times his soul seemed to knit itself to other souls, and enabled him to draw them to Christ by his gospel, to comfort them in affliction, to strengthen them when in trouble, to warn them when in danger, and to guide them in the discharge of their duties. No man of his day was more trusted by his owners or more loved by his people; and he became then, and lives in memory now, an example of manhood, purity, and piety.

All we know of his marriage relations is that he had a wife, Hannah by name, and that she must have been in loving harmony and concord with her husband. As they went down in the water together and received baptism, it is fair to suppose, as they received Christ together, so walked they in him. They had but one child, as we know, a daughter, from whom came the family of the Whitfields, of Savannah, and whose son, Sampson Whitfield, was a representative of the church at times in the Association, and died but a few years previous to this writing, leaving also a daughter, Mrs. H. J. Ward. It seems that in the vicissitudes of life his religious change came quite late. How long he had been converted before his baptism we do not know; but he must have been about sixty years of age when he was baptized, as he died in about his ninetieth year, having labored in the Lord's vineyard for twenty-nine years, and served as pastor from

1788 to 1812, twenty-four years. He was certainly of a healthy body, and seemed to enjoy that blessing nearly to the end of his life.

Mr. Bryan's style of preaching must have been very admirable, as some of the older ministers of a later day, whom we have heard preach, often alluded to him in their discourses, and seemed very desirous to emulate him. By the favor of Almighty God he was instrumental in converting many to Christ among his race, and founded for them the greatest institution for their good in the world. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, forever and ever." And this truly may be applied to his glorious life in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

REV. ANDREW C. MARSHALL.

THE SECOND PASTOR.

ANDREW COX MARSHALL says that he was born in the year 1755. His mother, in determining his age, always referred to the year of Braddock's defeat by the French and Indians. She was an unmixed negro. His father was an Englishman, the overseer upon a plantation in South Carolina, where Andrew was born.

His father went back to England, where he died soon after Andrew was born. He was sold to Colonial Governor John Houston, of Georgia, who died when he was about twenty-one years of age.

Mr. Marshall was twice married, the first time when he was sixteen years of age. By his two marriages he had twenty children, only one of whom survived him.

Governor Houston bequeathed him his freedom at his death, on account of having at one time saved his master's life. The executors failed to carry out the bequest, and he was again sold, being separated from his wife. He had run away to evade the decision of the executors, and was bought by Judge Clay while at large.

While in the service of Judge Clay he accompanied his master, who several times visited the Northern States in the capacity of member of Congress, and perhaps on other occasions. On these visits he was the coachman, and was enabled frequently to see General George Washington, of whom he was fond of relating striking incidents. At a later day, when General Washington visited Savannah, Mr. Marshall was honored with the appointment of body-servant to the President.

He was an eye-witness to many of the scenes around Savannah during the Revolutionary war, and had distinct recollections of General Nathaniel Green, who re-

moved to Savannah in 1785, possessed valuable grants of land near the city, and died the next year, June 19, 1786. He frequently gave incidents of his great funeral.

Mr. Marshall's force of character seemed to have been chiefly expended on worldly interests until he was about fifty years of age, when he became converted to Christ, and soon after his conversion he also acquired his freedom. He was at that time owned as a slave by Mr. Robert Bolton, of Savannah. The venerable mercantile partner of Mr. Bolton, Mr. Richard Richardson, advanced him two hundred dollars, which, with what he had saved by economy, enabled him to purchase his own freedom; and by diligence and economy he purchased his whole family, consisting of his wife, four children, his wife's father, and his own stepfather.

He became converted through the preaching of a white minister in the Savannah Baptist Church from the text: "But now they have no cloak for their sins."—John xv. 22. Upon conversion he joined the Second Colored Church, and was baptized by Rev. Henry Cunningham. Shortly after that event he began to preach, and frequently he would drive his mistress to church in her carriage, then drive the carriage to his own church, get some one to look after his horses, go in and preach a sermon, leaving the closing service to

the pastor, return to the Episcopal Church with the carriage, and drive Mrs. Bolton home,—such was his anxiety to serve his heavenly Master after his new birth. In 1806 he became the assistant pastor of the First Colored Church under his uncle, Rev. Andrew Bryan. The church then had about one thousand members. In his religion he was entirely free from superstition, and gave no countenance to marvellous relations of experience, even in a work of grace. He could penetrate beneath disguises, and few men, white or black, of any age could surpass him in reading human character.

There was a period of about two years—from 1819 to 1821—when Mr. Marshall became somewhat unpopular with the whites of his denomination, on account of his extreme views of theology which bordered on antinomianism (or denying the obligation of the moral law), and again, later, he receded to the opposite extreme of sacramentalism in baptism, as held by Dr. Alexander Campbell.

During that time, and while engaged in his secular avocations as a drayman, he violated the laws by contraband dealings with the negro slaves. He purchased from them without having tickets with leave to sell and trade, and, though it was common for the whites to lay the foundation of a fortune by this illicit trading, advantage was taken of Mr. Marshall's inadver-

teney, together with his temporary unpopularity, and he was prosecuted and sentenced to be whipped in the market-place; but his kind friend, Mr. Richardson, who had before assisted him in getting his freedom, with the sympathy of many of the best citizens by whom he was employed, would not allow him to suffer; and many of those who witnessed the execution of the sentence attest that the whipping was only a semblance, his former master being at his side to see that the constable did not scratch his skin or draw any blood.

Mr. Marshall delighted in alluding to his uncle, Rev. Andrew Bryan, as a preacher, and his great deference to the white people; yet he never hesitated in his firm and respectful declaration of the rights of conscience in matters of religion. Mr. Marshall owned a considerable number of books, and among those evidently the most used were Dr. Gill's commentaries. The bent and tone of Mr. Marshall's mind were of the old Calvinistic order. His clear intellect was equal to the best distinctions of theology. In his treatment of a subject in some of his pulpit performances there was observable the grasp of a mind which would be deservedly called great.

Very often, indeed, in preaching he intermingled incidents of his personal experience, and then would seem to run into a rambling style, but even then these discursive qualities served to keep alive the

attention of his simple flock. His voice was so deep, sonorous, and tender, that its capacity for the expression of pathos was unsurpassed. His favorite hymns and selections of Scripture were sometimes pronounced with such effect that the most highly educated and discriminating persons would never forget the impressions of such readings.

His appearance was commanding, though neither stout nor tall, compared with the average of well-formed men. His partly African skin and hair were compensated by a face of intelligence superior to the limitations of race. His hair was of the clearest white, and though leaning to the African, it rose in unwonted profusion, giving him the presence of a venerable patriarch. His teeth were sound and beautifully clear. In some of his glowing pulpit efforts, his face and whole person were irradiated with intelligence, and one could not hear him at such times without feeling himself within the influence of a superior mind. He was pastor of this church from 1815 to 1832,—seventeen years.

“EXTRACT FROM ‘ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN PULPIT,’ BY WM. SPRAGUE, D.D. A LETTER WRITTEN BY REV. JOHN M. KREBS, D.D.*

“NEW YORK, June 4, 1859.

“MY DEAR SIR,—You ask me for my recollections of the Rev. Andrew C. Marshall, the centenarian colored preacher of Savannah.

“On a certain Lord’s Day in May, 1855, I was in Savannah on my way to the General Assembly. After preaching in the morning for the late Rev. Dr. Preston, then pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church, I attended in the afternoon, in company with a respected Ruling Elder of the First Presbyterian Church, and several other Christian friends who were lodging at the same hotel with me, the worship in the African Baptist Church, which was under the pastoral care of Mr. Marshall, celebrated for his great age, his protracted evangelical labors, and his genuine Christian eloquence.

“On entering the church, which was a neat, substantial structure, accommodating, as I supposed, from eight hundred to a thousand persons, we were conducted to the pews reserved for white visitors in the

*The letter of Rev. Dr. Krebs is given as an evidence of Mr. Marshall’s recovery from past errors, and how glorious was his closing years. He was by far the most highly gifted and successful in his ministry of all his contemporaries; and so continued to his death, and fully deserves the extended space in this biography.

middle tier (immediately in front of the pulpit), which were occupied by some twenty or twenty-five white persons. The house was crowded in every part with colored people, whose neat and appropriate dress and decorous behavior could not be surpassed by any congregation. It happened to be their communion service, and the exercises were just beginning with a hymn, which was nobly read by the pastor, and nobly sung by the people. The venerable minister was seated under the pulpit which was only a few feet from us. His locks were gray with age, but his form was apparently robust, though the furrows were in his cheeks. As he rose to offer prayer, he steadied himself upon his cane, while gradually he attained an erect position, every feature and every limb trembling, it may be not more with the weight of years than with powerful emotion. The prayer uttered with clear articulation and with strong voice was somewhat long, but it was rich with Christian thought and feeling, appropriate in expression, and attracting the sympathy of the worshippers. The aged man of God proceeded with an address bearing upon the special service in which he was engaged. He made a modest remark in reference to his own illiteracy; but, although there was here and there a quaintness and homeliness of expression, neither out of place nor out of taste, which, nevertheless, I could not here repeat without exciting a smile, it was

not for a moment deficient in force or devotion, nor left any other impression than that of deep and tender solemnity. And if the preacher modestly estimated his own ability, it was clear to his hearers that he was a 'man of one Book,' mighty in the Scriptures and taught of God. The subject of his address was the indispensable importance of the death of Christ and the astonishing results which it accomplished. There might occasionally seem to a very fastidious critic to be a slight incoherence of fragmentary observation; but it was not so, there was a clear, full, consistent vein of thought running through the whole.

"I do not attempt to give more than a specimen of his utterance. Referring to the promise of the Saviour's coming, couched in the declaration,—'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come,' he said, 'My beloved brethren, when I read this promise, my poor, trembling heart sometimes sinks within me. The Lord shall be revealed in all the grace and glory of the Redeemer, and the King; but these aged eyes of mine will not continue their sight until that day. I am a hundred years old, and these tottering limbs of mine shall be laid in the dust long ere that bright vision shall gladden the face of his redeemed people. But I check myself and rebuking my impatient fear. Do I not read in his sure promise, that though I sleep in the dust of the

earth, I shall lose nothing of the perfect grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, even because he shall lose nothing of all that the Father has given him, for he shall raise it up at the last day. My dead body shall arise in the vigor and immortality wherein it shall be fashioned like the glorified body of Jesus. And these dull ears shall hear the archangel's trump, and these dim eyes shall see the King in his glory as clearly and to as good advantage as any that shall be alive and remain upon the earth to hail that glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ! Could anything have been more inspiring, more adapted to rouse up the faith and hope of the believer?

“Again, in allusion to the plotting of the great adversary to destroy Christ, he said, ‘At last he succeeded. He was nailed to his cross in agony and shame. Satan had bruised his heel, and thought that he had crushed his head. The fool! It was his own head that was broken then, and he has been a fool ever since; and the proof of all his wicked madness and folly in compassing the death of Christ became apparent. It was Christ that triumphed then and spoiled the spoiler. The thief was rescued from the kingdom of darkness. The heathen centurion acknowledged the Son of God. His death multiplied his disciples. The thousands of Pentecost bowed before the salvation of the cross.

Myriads upon myriads that no man can number have been delivered from the kingdom of Satan and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. That great salvation has made its way through the world ; its blessed fruits are gathered abundantly on these Western shores. Our skins are dark, but our souls are washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Nor is he the propitiation for our sins only. My brethren, the time was in this city and through this Southern country when you would scarcely ever see the face of our white masters in a house of prayer ; but how is it now ? How many of those to whom we are subject in the flesh have recognized our common Master in heaven, and *they are our masters no longer ?* They are fellow-heirs with us of the grace of life. They sit with us at the same table of our common Lord. They are our friends, our brethren, our guardians, our fathers, and we are travelling together to that blessed land where we shall dwell together in the presence of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.'

“ Who could but be affected with such stirring gospel eloquence ; and my only regret was this : When the old man was surrounded by the deacons, some ten in number, a body of fine-looking men, the most of them intensely black, to receive from him the elements for distribution, I felt a pang, because I supposed the Baptist principle of close communion would exclude

me from sharing in that feast of love. But this apprehension was quickly dissipated. Before proceeding to distribute, the aged servant of God announced, that that was not a Baptist table, but Christ's table, and that all who loved Him were welcome there. And when the bread and wine were handed round first to the white occupants of the pews, all of whom appeared to be communicants in Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Dutch Reformed, Methodist, and perhaps Episcopalian churches, and then to the six hundred colored communicants—as devout and tender as any congregation I ever saw,—I declare to you that never did I administer these emblems of my Saviour's love, nor never did I receive them from the hands of other ministers of Christ, with whatsoever canonical or apostolical authority ordained, with greater joy than I received them that day from the trembling hands of that poor bowed-down weeping *negro* minister of Jesus Christ.

“The service continued about two hours and a half, consisting variously of hymns, prayers, reading of the Scriptures, and exhortations. It was refreshment by the way, and it was all conducted by Mr. Marshall. But it was not long nor tedious, but food and strength for many days. And when at the close, as the assembly orderly broke up, yet seeming loth to part with each other, I went forward to introduce myself to

this aged father, I could rejoice, as speaking through tears, with steady, cheerful voice and happy heart, we exchanged the mutual prayer that it might be ours, with all the Israel of God, at our next probable meeting, to sit down together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God at the marriage supper, when the Lamb himself shall preside.

“This, however, was not our last interview. Among the respectful friends who gathered around him was the captain of a Philadelphia steamer regularly plying between that city and Savannah, who seconded my invitation to the venerable man to visit the North, by heartily offering him free passage in his ship both coming and going. I encouraged him to expect some help in building a larger and more commodious church, which his congregation were projecting. About a year afterward he made the visit. He spent some months in this city, lodging with a respectable religious family of his own race, but freely welcomed to the tables and pulpits of the brethren whose acquaintance he made (among whom was the family of a noble-hearted and wealthy Georgian, then residing here), who provided for his support while here and for his getting about from place to place,—for, of course, he was too feeble to walk or even to travel alone in omnibuses. Perhaps the long journey and the change of climate and habits contributed to bring upon him a disorder from

which he never recovered. He preached once for me to a large concourse of people whom the occasion attracted. The subject of his discourse was the fierce demoniac who had his dwelling among the tombs, out of whom Christ cast the unclean spirit by which he was possessed. Applying it to his own history he described his own early life as a careless sinner until the grace of God visited and rescued him from the power of Satan and led him from step to step until he became a preacher of the gospel. He detailed many interesting incidents of the Revolutionary war, including the siege of Savannah, and his own career as a servant, and his journeys as an express-rider, bearing dispatches from officers of the army to and fro between military stations, and eventually the purchase of the freedom of himself and family and his acquisition and then the loss of property. These incidents were wrought into his discourse not as a mere narrative, but as illustrations of the ways of Providence toward him. The sermon was richly evangelical, and experimental. But it had not the glow and copiousness, nor perhaps the stricter connection, which would have characterized it but for the evident pressure of increasing infirmity and unusual disorder of his bodily system. The audience, however, was deeply interested, and responded to his appeal for aid to rebuild his church, with a generous collection. But he did not live to accomplish

his object. Returning homeward by easy overland travel, his illness increased upon him, and he died on the way at Richmond. He had but little learning,—hardly beyond the knowledge of his Bible,—but he was shrewd, intelligent, and fervent in spirit, unassuming, but zealous, and useful among his own people, and greatly respected by all.

“The following account of his ‘trial’ which I received from the lips of Dr. Preston, may be repeated in this connection: There was, and perhaps still is, a law of Georgia which requires that a preacher shall procure a recommendation from three reputable citizens of *his own denomination*, and upon it obtain a license from the county court before exercising his office. Mr. Marshall applied to Dr. Preston for a testimonial, which the doctor informed him would be useless inasmuch as he was a Presbyterian and Marshall a Baptist. For some reason—most likely because he did not understand the law—Mr. Marshall proceeded to preach without the license. Some officious person caused him to be indicted. When the day of trial came, it appeared that in his ignorance of the method of proceeding he had retained no counsel for his defence. Several of the lawyers in their kindness towards him solicited one of the most eminent of their brethren, Mr. McAlister (afterwards Judge McAlister, of California), to appear for him, as he was incompetent to plead his own cause.

Mr. McAlister immediately undertook the case, which looked very hopeless indeed. The prosecution proved the offence fully. At the proper time for introducing his witnesses, Mr. McAlister, observing Dr. Preston in the court, called him to testify. On the doctor's entrance upon the witness-stand the presiding judge interposed, inquiring of counsel for the defence what he expected to prove by Dr. Preston. The reply was: 'That Andrew Marshall was qualified to preach the gospel.' 'That,' said the court, 'is not the question. The accused may be never so well qualified *theologically*, but he is indicted for preaching without the *legal* qualification prescribed by the statute.' A little argument took place which resulted in, as a matter of course, the judge's decision to exclude the witness. Mr. McAlister immediately called another well-known citizen to the stand, when the previous scene was repeated. The counsel offered a third equally prominent witness, who was also rejected for irrelevancy. Meanwhile, the attention of the jury was fastened in this series of overtures, which was just what the astute counsel designed. On 'summing up,' he made an ingenious and eloquent speech in his defence, particularly and plausibly arguing 'the very embarrassing and disadvantageous predicament in which his poor client was placed by the *remarkable ruling* of the court, which on his offering, on behalf of the accused, the testimony of several of the

most respectable witnesses that the city could furnish, had refused even to let them be sworn.' The prosecuting attorney made a few brief remarks commenting upon the law and the testimony, and clearly established the guilt of the accused preacher in his breach of the laws of the State. The judge as pointedly charged the jury against him, for the fact was undeniable. The jury retired, and in a very little time returned with a verdict of 'not guilty.' The court gravely received it. The clerk quietly smiled as he recorded it, and the spectators a little more audibly tittered in token of their satisfaction. The prisoner was discharged and the jury dismissed. As they came out of the box some person present inquired of one of them, 'How it was possible for them to bring in such a verdict in the face of the law and the fact and their own oath?' 'Easily enough,' replied the juror; 'you will never catch a Georgia jury convicting him of crime for preaching the gospel.'"

REV. THOMAS ANDERSON.

THE THIRD PASTOR.

THOMAS ANDERSON was born in Chatham County, Georgia, of unmixed African blood, and a slave to the family from which he takes his name. He was ap-

prenticed and learned the carpenter's trade. He became a convert to the Baptist faith early in life, and was baptized by Mr. Bryan as a member of this church. He was dismissed to form the Second Church in Savannah, and became a deacon under Rev. Henry Cunningham, in which office he served until set apart to the ministry as an evangelist by that church.

He was a man of high moral character, grave of demeanor, and of strict piety. He married a manumitted slave, by whom he reared a large family of children. One of his sons, Adam Anderson, was for several years clerk of the First Church, until he left the State for Africa. Rev. Mr. Anderson was possessed of an intelligent mind, and could read very well. As a preacher, he was not fluent of language, but profound in doctrine and ardent in delivery. As a pastor, he was fatherly to his people, being well advanced in years before being called to that position. He was ever reverently honored for the purity of life and the high position he occupied more than for the ability he possessed.

He was called to the pastorate of this church in 1833, succeeding Mr. A. C. Marshall, and served the church until 1835, two years; when he resigned, to become the pastor of the Second Church, on the death of Rev. H. Cunningham, in which position he served very acceptably and with much success until he died.

REV. STEPHEN McQUEEN.

THE FOURTH PASTOR.

STEPHEN McQUEEN was born a slave, upon the plantation of the white family from whom he took his name. As he grew he was selected as a house-servant, and becoming a favorite of his mistress, on account of his strict honesty and pleasant disposition, she taught him to read in her leisure moments. Removing to the city, he attended the church, and soon became converted to Christ. As a young man, he joined the church and was baptized by Rev. Andrew C. Marshall. Being intelligent and able to read tolerably correct, he would exercise his gifts among his fellow-servants upon the McQueen plantation, some five miles from Savannah, and the church approved of his preaching; and for a number of years he thus labored, as opportunities permitted, at different points around the city and country. It was late in life, about the age of fifty, before he was ordained as an evangelist. He was a man of fine physical appearance, above the medium stature with very pleasant countenance, but slow of speech, and very deliberate in preaching. He was called to the pastorate of the church in 1835, and served five years without any remarkable results. He was a man of strict piety and sound in the doctrines

so far as he was able to understand them. He continued to labor as an evangelist as long as he was able; but a few years after retiring from the pastoral care of this church he became much enfeebled, which compelled his retirement. His memory to the latest years of his life was good, and he furnished much information of the early days of this church, and of the others that were organized from it. He died rich in the faith of a glorious resurrection, to an inheritance among the saints in light, while his works do follow him.

REV. JOHN BENJAMIN DEVOUX.
THE FIFTH PASTOR.

REV. JOHN BENJAMIN DEVOUX was born in Savannah, Georgia, in a state of slavery, on October 15, 1774, and was thus fourteen years of age when this church was constituted. He was of mixed blood, and possessed, as among his race, rare qualities of natural ability. Though born a slave, he seemed to have been greatly favored by his owners. He was taught the trade of a house-carpenter and worked at it generally until his later days. As most of the young of his day he early became a professor of religion, joined the Savannah white church, and was baptized by Dr. Holcombe.

When the Second Colored Baptist Church was organized he was dismissed to it, and became one of the first deacons. He also organized its choir, and through his perseverance acquired for himself and associates a very fair knowledge of the theory of music, and thus became at that early day somewhat celebrated as a leader of church music. He became the father also of one of the most distinguished colored families in the city in his ability to partially educate his daughters, two of whom were his assistants in the church choir, and led the singing after his death, until the days of emancipation. He was a man of strict piety and upright deportment; a pattern of good works to all around him, yet very modest and seemingly diffident in his actions; and among the fathers he may in an eminent degree be called the Barnabas, for he was truly a good man and "filled with the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord by his labors in the church." He was often a representative of his church in the Sunbury Association while a deacon, and was licensed to preach, among others, about the year 1831. He was called to ordination by this church in 1842 as their pastor, and served two years. Though he did not possess much of force in preaching, he was, nevertheless, a good reasoner of the faith that was in him, and sound in the doctrines of his

church. He lived to a good old age, and died on September 16, 1845, honored and regretted by the whole community, and greatly loved and revered by his brethren and the church.

It is written, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." He also was one among the meekest of the Baptist fathers; and under his roof and by his noble wife and daughters, who were always nominally free, many colored children were clandestinely taught to read the Scriptures, which gave young Christian men a better knowledge of God and religion than they would otherwise have possessed; and also left their posterity in the possession of knowledge that at this day makes them possessors of prominent positions, with power to benefit their race,—and a living testimony of what faith in God, hope in immortality, and charity towards mankind can accomplish in the world, even after we sleep in death. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," as did Father Devoux.

REV. ISAAC ROBERTS.

THE SIXTH PASTOR.

REV. ISAAC ROBERTS was born in Savannah, of free parents. He learned the trade of a copper, and, in connection with John Cox, for many years carried

on the principal business of making barrels or tierces for marketing the rice grown upon the plantations near the city. Both himself and partner learned to read after they had grown to manhood, and, like all colored persons, were limited in their education. He was a man of great energy and industry. He was converted, and became a member of the Second African Church when about thirty years of age, and soon after was licensed to preach, exercising his gifts among the country churches. He was called as pastor of this church in 1846, and served three years very successfully and acceptably to the members. He did much to build up the church and arouse the spirit of its members to work for the Master's cause. Mr. Roberts was a very forcible preacher of the gospel, and was practical in his application of the Scriptures to the wants and condition of his people,—a thorough Baptist, whose principles he believed to be right and give the largest liberty consistent with righteousness. He, therefore, more than any other of our colored brethren, ever exhibited restlessness under the slave system. In our associational meetings and ministerial councils he frequently chafed under the humiliation of restraining what he and all our brethren felt was their due and dare not express relative to our Christian work; and many were the times when his colored brethren had fears that some sudden out-

burst of his feelings (which in private he gave vent to) would bring trouble upon them, and be the cause of silencing them from preaching; and among them all his was the most intense suffering of a suppressed manhood.

He married early in life a Miss Bourke, and had an interesting family of children, whom he greatly desired to educate, and therefore often encountered difficulties in procuring clandestine instruction for them. He was ambitious to become the successor of the aged pastor of the church of his first membership, which was then a body highly favored in the Savannah community, and, therefore, upon the death of Rev. Mr. Anderson, in 1849, he resigned the pastoral charge of this church, to the regret of all the members, with the belief expressed that as a son of that church they were most entitled to his services; but his church, upon making the call of a successor, chose his less brilliant partner in business, John Cox, as their pastor, who served them acceptably until his death. Rev. Mr. Roberts sold out his property and went to Liberia, Africa, where he continued in the ministry for many years.

REV. BRISTER LAWTON.

THE SEVENTH PASTOR.

REV. BRISTER LAWTON was born and raised in Beaufort District, South Carolina, and was little known in Savannah previous to his call to the pastorate, in 1850. He served the church only one year, and there were added to its membership, whom he baptized, twelve. He was an humble, godly man, of moderate talents, very little education, and did not seem suited to the wants of a city church. He was, too, unfortunate in having to become the successor of the brilliant Mr. Roberts, whose eloquence the church had sat under for three years previous; and so, when the year expired for which he had been called, he returned to Carolina, with a peaceful and pleasant parting.

REV. GARRISON FRAZER.

THE EIGHTH PASTOR.

REV. GARRISON FRAZER was born in Virginia. He and his wife were brought to Georgia about the year 1850. He had been converted in that State and joined the Methodist Church, but becoming convinced that the Baptist faith was according to the Bible, as

he expressed it, he was baptized, and this church ordained him to the ministry as her pastor in 1852.

He was endowed with fair natural gifts, a commanding presence, and a good voice. As a preacher he was plain and impressive, and, while not learned in theology, he understood and could explain the doctrines of Christ quite clearly; and so served the church very acceptably for about seven years.

Upon the occupation of Savannah by the Union army, he was chosen by his ministerial brethren to speak for and introduce them to the commander, General W. T. Sherman. Soon after he became somewhat enfeebled from age, and, though he did some missionary work among the country churches a few years, died in 1873, triumphant in Christ.

REV. ULYSSES L. HOUSTON.

THE NINTH PASTOR.

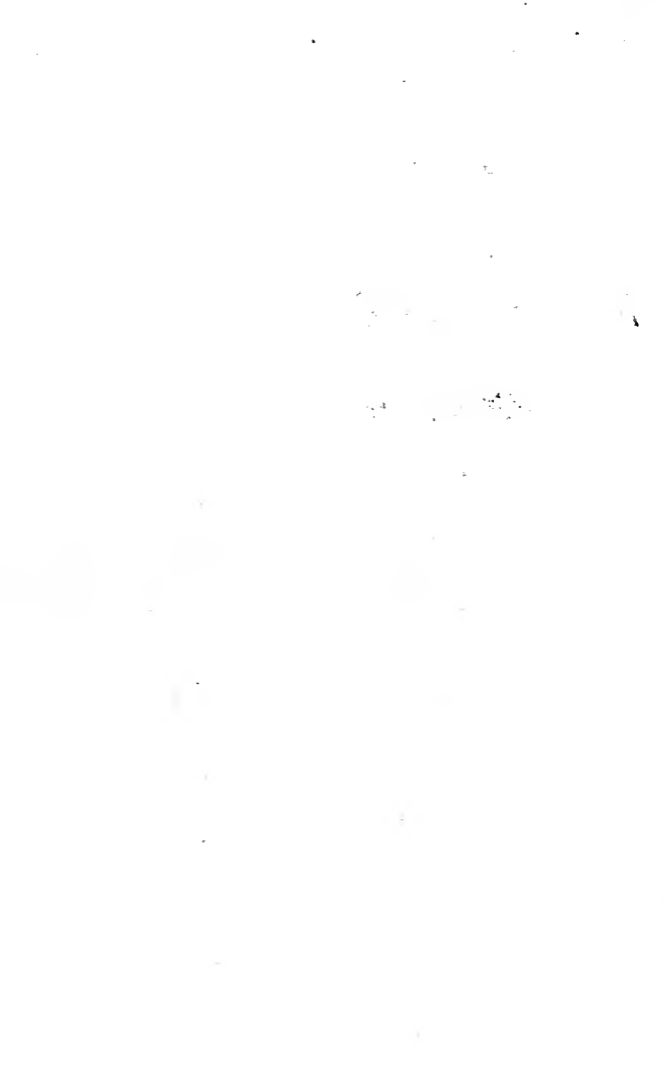
REV. ULYSSES L. HOUSTON was born in South Carolina in February, 1825, and is therefore now sixty-three years of age. He was raised as a house-servant by his master, James B. Hogg, a Baptist, who treated him with much care and kindness; and under whose pious teaching he early gave evidence of a new birth,

and became a member of this church June 27, 1841, being baptized by Rev. J. B. Devoux at the age of sixteen. He married his first wife when he was twenty-three. He was then a member also of the church's choir. He was called to the deaconships, November 3, 1851, and served four years, and until he was licensed to preach the gospel, in April, 1855. He was ordained in May, 1861, and was called to the pastorate of the church in October following. Though a son of the church he has ever been also a man of the people, loving and beloved; and since the death of Rev. Mr. Bryan, the only pastor directly from the membership of the church. In appearance, power of prayer, and preaching, Mr. Houston is the very counterpart of him.

In his public ministrations he has been remarkably successful, having the utmost confidence of his race and people, and also of the whites who know him. He became moderator of the Zion Baptist Association in 1872, and has held that responsible position successively to the present time. He has served a term in the State legislature, and has been three times elected vice-president of the Baptist Missionary Convention of Georgia, which office he yet holds; he is also vice-president of the Foreign Missionary Convention. He is possessed of fair executive ability for a man self-educated, like all the other pastors born in slavery;

reads well and writes a fair hand; and the present prosperous and highly blessed condition of the church is due largely to his energy, strong faith in God, and his call to the ministry of Jesus Christ, which he glories in. He is a forcible preacher, with much of the revival turn, and when in prayer thrills the souls of his hearers, his voice being sonorous but very smooth in tone, and his words clearly articulated. Under his ministry have been converted and baptized a greater number of persons than under any other in the State excepting that of Revs. Andrew Bryan and Andrew C. Marshall. He is the only pastor left who fitly represents that old school of the fathers who labored in this part of the vineyard of Jesus our Lord.

THE END.



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