

The Episcopal Church's Mission  
Among African-Americans in Raleigh, North Carolina 1866-1896  
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Before the Civil War, the Episcopal Church's ministry among African-Americans in Raleigh and throughout the South principally reflected the long-held tenets of slave evangelization. These tenets were set forth from the pulpit of Christ Church by the rector, George W. Freeman, in his 1836 address on "The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders." As the title suggests, ministry to African Americans was framed as an appeal to the enslavers to see to the Christianization of the enslaved. Freeman noted the solemn duty of Christian parents to provide for the religious welfare of their children. By extension, he argued that the solemn duty to oversee the religious welfare of the enslaved was even greater:

But as for our slaves, their state of pupilage never ceases; they are always with us; they are always members of our families; they are always subject to our authority and control; and what is further and more to the point, though ever so far advanced in years, they are, from the very nature of their condition, always children; they are but children in intellect, children in wisdom, children in understanding and judgment!

Thus, Freeman laid upon his slaveholding listeners a duty first to baptize the enslaved and then to provide religious instruction, which he said could be accomplished by using an oral catechism to teach the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup>

The Parish Register of Christ Church in the years before the Civil War reflects the fact that Freeman, and his successor Richard Sharpe Mason, did indeed see to the baptism and confirmation of the enslaved. This included, for example, the 1839 confirmation of John Stark, an enslaved member of Freeman's own household.<sup>2</sup> In addition to slave evangelization, however, there was also outreach to free Blacks. In the records of Christ Church there is evidence of occasional free black baptisms and confirmations as well.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that at least some Blacks voluntarily embraced membership in the Episcopal Church. In any case, it means that antebellum Christ Church was a bi-racial congregation, with both Whites and Blacks worshipping together and claiming membership in the same church, albeit spatially segregated within the building.

The Civil War brought defeat to the Confederacy and emancipation to the enslaved. What impact would it have on the Episcopal Church, and on Christ Church in particular, with respect to ministry among African Americans? Slave evangelization was no longer viable, but what

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<sup>1</sup> George W. Freeman, *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders* (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1836) 32; 35-42.

<sup>2</sup> Christ Church Raleigh, North Carolina, *Registers I and II (1821-1874)*, Compiled by Charles P. Blunt IV (Raleigh, 2013) 40. Perhaps John Stark was so named in tribute to the bishop and one-time Christ Church rector, John Stark Ravenscroft.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* See record of the confirmation of "Eliza Ann (a free colored person)" on October 9, 1836, p. 40. Note that at the same service, "Harriet (a slave belonging to Mrs. S.L. Hogg)" was also confirmed.

would replace it? What would form the basis of a new effort to minister among the newly-emancipated?

The answer was educational outreach. General Convention met in the aftermath of the Civil War and created the Episcopal Church Freedman's Commission, a new third branch of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. By early 1866, the Freedman's Commission was prepared to start sending teachers to the South to open schools for the newly-emancipated.<sup>4</sup>

No southern bishop was a greater proponent of the work of the Freedman's Commission than North Carolina's Thomas Atkinson. Indeed, Atkinson had been a member of the General Convention committee that recommended the creation of the commission in the first place, and at his urging, the first teachers were sent to New Bern. Schools in Wilmington and Raleigh were soon to follow.<sup>5</sup>

Several aspects of this new educational outreach are crucial for understanding its subsequent development. One is the partnership in this enterprise between the Freedman's Commission and the local Episcopal community where the school was placed. Simply put, the Freedman's Commission took responsibility for recruiting the teachers and paying their salaries; the Commission expected the local parish to help in procuring school buildings, lodging for the teachers, and in providing other forms of practical support for the enterprise. For this reason, the General Secretary of the Freedman's Commission, the Rev. Dr. J. Brinton Smith, repeatedly noted that the Freedman's Commission only operated in southern dioceses with the bishop's approval and in parishes with the rector's support.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the Commission expected that these schools would become the nuclei for new Black congregations. The schools would provide religious education and catechetical training as part of the daily curriculum, and then the schools would host Sunday Schools and worship for the children and their families, along with others in the Black community. This meant that in addition to the schoolteachers, there would need to be ministers to conduct worship. The Freedman's Commission would help underwrite the cost of clergy to lead these new congregations, but only if the minister was principally engaged in weekday teaching at the same time.<sup>7</sup>

The growth and development in New Bern set the pattern for what was to follow in other communities. Two northern white female schoolteachers were sent to establish a school. Their work was well-received by the Black community and attendance quickly grew to 140 students.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Protestant Episcopal Freedman's Commission: Occasional Paper, January, 1866*. (Boston, 1866) Transcribed by Wayne Kempton and posted to Project Canterbury, 2010: 1, 2; *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (February, 1866): 93-95. For an overview of the work of the Freedman's Commission, see H. Peers Brewer, "The Protestant Episcopal Freedman's Commission, 1865-1878," *The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* Vol. XXVI, No. 4, (December, 1957), 361-380.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (March, 1866): 155, 156.

<sup>6</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (March, 1866): 156, 157; (April, 1866): 219, 223; (July, 1866): 401; *The Spirit of Missions* 32 (February, 1867): 157.

<sup>7</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (June, 1867): 483.

<sup>8</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (June, 1866): 341.

The rector of Christ Church, New Bern, the Rev. Edward M. Forbes, provided support for the teachers and helped in locating a suitable schoolroom.<sup>9</sup> In June, 1866 the Freedman's Commission supplied Forbes with an Assistant, the Rev. Henry Skinner, who by agreement, provided religious instruction in the school, and organized a Black congregation, St. Cyprian's. The congregation of St. Cyprian's consisted of the children and families at the school, along with the Black communicants formerly members of Christ Church. But Skinner hastened to add: "The organization of this congregation is by no means intended to render it independent of the Parish of Newbern, indeed it could not do so, as the canons and constitution of this Diocese now stand. St. Cyprian's Church, as we have named the Freedmen's congregation, is therefore under the control of the rector of the Parish of Newbern. But seeing the need of organization, a Vestry was appointed informally, and the Freedmen encouraged to enter harmoniously upon Church work."<sup>10</sup>

A similar development took place in Wilmington. Here again, northern white female schoolteachers were sent to establish a school, which quickly grew in enrollment from fifteen students in March to 152 students a month later.<sup>11</sup> But in Wilmington, the need for a schoolhouse and worship space were met by utilizing St. Paul's Church, formerly home to a bi-racial congregation but forced to close during the war. At Bishop Atkinson's insistence, St. Paul's was now converted for use as the Freedman's School. Atkinson also arranged for a deacon, Richard Jones, to be reassigned from mission work in Edgecombe, Nash, and Halifax Counties to come lead the new Black congregation. In this case, the membership of the Black congregation drew from three antebellum parishes—St. James', St. John's, and St. Paul's—in addition to the new families affiliated with the day school.<sup>12</sup> Because Atkinson resided in Wilmington, and because he was a strong advocate for this initiative, he effectively provided the requisite local clergy support for the school and congregation, both of which were up and operating by the spring of 1866.

In Raleigh, however, the implementation of school and congregation developed more slowly. Whereas in New Bern and Wilmington, the Freedman's Commission sent white female teachers (who were also Episcopalians) to staff the schools; in Raleigh, the Commission utilized a Black teacher, listed as "John Henry Harris."<sup>13</sup> Nothing is known about the condition of the school during that first year, save Harris's name and his racial identity. It may even be the case that the name is incorrect, and that "John Henry Harris" is really "James Henry Harris," a Black schoolteacher in Raleigh at the time, who would later be connected to the school as one of the

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<sup>9</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (August, 1866): 467.

<sup>10</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (October, 1866): 588,589.

<sup>11</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (May, 1866): 290.

<sup>12</sup> *Journal of the Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of North Carolina, 50<sup>th</sup>* (1866): 42. Hereinafter abbreviated *NCDJ*.

<sup>13</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (December, 1866): 728. For a profile of the women of the Episcopal Church who responded to the Freedman's Commission appeal for teachers, see Mary S. Donovan, "Educating the Former Slaves: Episcopal Freedom School, 1866-1877," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 87 (September, 2018), 295-306.

trustees of the property at Lane and Dawson when the City of Raleigh conveyed it to them for educational purposes in 1869.<sup>14</sup>

In any event, Harris's leadership of the Raleigh Freedman's School would not continue into 1867, when Miss S.G. Swetland was placed in charge.<sup>15</sup> We get a snapshot of the school and its operations in 1867 from the parochial report which Richard Sharpe Mason filed on behalf of Christ Church in May of that year. Mason wrote:

Connected with this Parish is a school for colored children, taught by a competent and faithful instructor employed by the Freedmen's Commission in New York. The number who attend is 70, of whom 50, as reported, attend the Sunday School. Great difficulty has hitherto existed in procuring a suitable room for the instruction of the colored people, but through the liberality of the Freedmen's Bureau, and especially of Gen. Howard, it is hoped a building, to be erected for the purpose, will be permanently obtained.<sup>16</sup>

From this report, it is clear that a partnership between the Freedman's Commission and the local parish had been established in Raleigh. The Commission had supplied the teacher, and Mason had taken an active interest in securing an adequate schoolhouse. Moreover, Mason included the 50 catechumens at the school in his parochial report. All this was very similar to reports from New Bern and Wilmington, except that so far there was no mention of forming a Black congregation at the school—only a Sunday School—presumably for lack of clergy resources to do so.

But a decisive new development for ministry among African Americans was soon to occur. In the spring of 1867, the General Secretary of the Freedman's Commission, J. Brinton Smith, was already working on plans to expand the Church's educational mission by adding a normal—or teacher training—school to the outreach of the Commission. Smith was likely inspired to pursue this course by hearing General O. O. Howard of the Federal Freedmen's Bureau speak on the subject at the December 1866 meeting of the Pennsylvania Branch of the Freedman's Commission. At the meeting, Howard argued that the only effective way to achieve lasting results in educating the newly emancipated was to equip African Americans to become teachers themselves.<sup>17</sup> In the spring of 1867, Smith went to meet with Howard, who promised him \$5,000 toward the establishment of a normal school, provided the Episcopal Church sited it in North Carolina. Smith came to North Carolina to scout locations and returned to tell Howard that he had chosen Raleigh as the most suitable place to establish the normal school.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Roberta Sue Anderson, "Harris, James Henry (1832-1891)," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 6 volumes, edited by William S. Powell. Copyright ©1979-1996 by the University of North Carolina Press. Available on-line at <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/harris-james-henry> On the 19 February 1869 act to grant a town lot in the city of Raleigh to trustees to be used for the education of children, see *Public Laws of the State of North-Carolina, passed by the General Assembly 1868-1869*, Chapter 51:125.

<sup>15</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 32 (July, 1867): 563.

<sup>16</sup> *NCDJ 51<sup>st</sup>* (1867): 68.

<sup>17</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 32 (January, 1867): 82.

<sup>18</sup> "J. Brinton Smith's sworn testimony before the House of Representatives regarding the founding of St. Augustine's Normal School," *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the 2nd session of the Forty-first Congress 1869-1870*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870): 255

In a matter of months, the prospect of a teacher training school in Raleigh became reality. Bishop Atkinson quickly recruited four members of the clergy (including Mason) and five members of the laity to join him and Brinton Smith as the Incorporators (Trustees) of the new school, formally named St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute, the articles of incorporation being executed on July 19, 1867.<sup>19</sup> The trustees then met and asked Brinton Smith to accept the position of Principal of the new institution. Smith resigned as head of the Freedman's Commission, moved to Raleigh, and opened the school in time for classes to begin in January 1868.

Closely allied with the new St. Augustine's Normal School, but distinct from it, was a second initiative, also directed by Brinton Smith, but organized under different auspices: a training school for Black clergy. The latter was not authorized by the Freedman's Commission, but was instead a diocesan project, organized under the authority of Bishop Atkinson and staffed by Smith and the other resident clergy of Raleigh. The relationship between these two efforts was spelled out in an October 1867 announcement regarding St. Augustine's from the Freedman's Commission Executive Committee:

It gives the Committee great pleasure to announce that, as the outgrowth of the Normal School, it is proposed to establish at Raleigh, under the authority of the Bishop of the diocese, and the direction and control of the resident Clergy, a training school for the education of colored ministers. The importance and value of such an institution must be apparent to all, and should command the sympathy and cooperation of the Church at large. Although not strictly within the line of their operations, it is most intimately connected with the education and elevation of the Freedmen, giving to the work completeness and symmetry, and they cannot, therefore, but wish the projected institution God speed.<sup>20</sup>

Brinton Smith confirmed this understanding in his own announcement to the larger church of his transition from directing the work of the Freedman's Commission to taking up his new position in Raleigh:

Before this number of the *Spirit of Missions* reaches many of our readers, our official relation to the Freeman's Commission, as Secretary and General Agent, will have ceased. We give up the work, in this form, only to resume it in another, and shall enter at once upon our duties as Principal and General Agent of the St. Augustine Normal School and Collegiate Institute, to be established in Raleigh, North Carolina, under the auspices of this Commission. In addition to this school we propose, in connection with the resident clergy, to inaugurate a Training School, for the education of colored ministers, and to found a church for colored persons.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For a photocopy of the original articles of incorporation, see Thelma Johnson Roundtree, *Strengthening Ties that Bind: A History of Saint Augustine's College* (Raleigh: Spirit Press, 2002): 4; note this was executed just ten days before Atkinson embarked on a 2nd trip to England to attend the first Lambeth Conference. *NCDJ 52<sup>nd</sup>* (1868): 23.

<sup>20</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 32 (November, 1867): 824.

<sup>21</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 32 (November, 1867): 819.

Thus, from its inception, Smith's work in Raleigh was to comprise not only instituting a teacher-training school on behalf of the Freedman's Commission, but also establishing a training school for Black clergy on behalf of Bishop Atkinson and the Diocese of North Carolina. Moreover, Smith saw his presence in Raleigh as providing the requisite clergy leadership for starting a new Black congregation.

Smith actually commenced holding Sunday worship before he launched his new school and training program. In a parochial report filed for 1868, Smith titled himself "Rector of the Church of St. Augustine, Raleigh" and noted the following:

The Rector commenced holding services for the colored people of Raleigh on the last Sunday of December, 1867. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, 1868, a church was organized under the title of St. Augustine.

Smith also reported conducting 13 baptisms—3 adults and 10 children—6 confirmations, and 130 catechumens. The communicant strength he listed as 17.<sup>22</sup>

The location for this new congregation was the already-existing Freedman's Commission School, still under Miss Swetland's direction. Smith described his work in the first report he filed with the Freedman's Commission, published in the *Spirit of Missions* for April 1868:

I commenced services for the colored people in the school-house occupied by Miss Swetland on the last Sunday of December, and have held two services regularly on Sundays since, administering the Lord's Supper on the first Sundays of January and February respectively. The congregation, small at first, has steadily increased, and the prospect is very encouraging for a large and flourishing Church. Our Sunday-school numbers one hundred and thirty pupils. Last Sunday night, Bishop Atkinson visited us, and administered the Apostolic rite of Confirmation to six persons, the Sacrament of Baptism having been administered by myself in the morning of the same day to two adults and ten children. Next week we shall organize a church, to be named after the great St. Augustine, adopting precisely the forms observed by the other Churches of the dioceses, white and colored.<sup>23</sup>

Smith went on to describe the antiphonal singing of the psalter at the confirmation service, noting "the colored people delight in music." Miss Swetland also commented on the quality of the singing in her report published the following month. "I know you would be pleased to see how nicely the service is conducted in our little church. The Psalter is sung finely. . . . Dr. S[mith] is gathering a fair congregation and everything is orderly and impressive."<sup>24</sup>

The fact that Smith was the one leading the new congregation, and that he saw this work as integral to his larger ministry to African Americans in Raleigh, accounts for the new congregation carrying the same patronal name as the new school: St Augustine. But the initial membership of the congregation and its location were determined by the prior establishment of

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<sup>22</sup> *NCDJ 52<sup>nd</sup>* (1868): 168, 169.

<sup>23</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 33 (April, 1868): 321,322.

<sup>24</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 33 (May, 1868): 402.

the Freedman's Commission School, staffed by Miss Swetland and supported by Christ Church. Indeed, it could not have been otherwise, since the new normal school opened in January 1868 with only four students, the ministerial training school was still seeking its first enrollee, and the 100-acre farm that would become the St. Augustine's Normal School campus had yet to be secured.<sup>25</sup>

As part of the formation of the new Black congregation, Mason transferred the membership of Christ Church's ten Black communicants to Smith's charge. In doing so, he was following the pattern already set in New Bern and Wilmington, where the Black members of the antebellum parishes joined the new Black congregations. Moreover, Mason also followed the New Bern precedent in continuing to provide support for the operation of the Freedman's Commission school and the new congregation after this communicant membership transfer.

Writing in the September 1868 issue of *The Spirit of Missions*, Miss Swetland observed that cooperation and support for education of the freedmen was something that set the Episcopal Church apart from other denominations.

So far as my knowledge extends, our Clergy are the only ones who offer a welcome to teachers, and our people never oppose, even if they do not cooperate with us. At this point, Dr. Mason and his excellent daughter have been indefatigable in their efforts to sustain and forward our work.<sup>26</sup>

According to Miss Swetland, then, Mason was certainly not washing his hands of further involvement with her school.

That Mason continued to consider the Freedman's Commission school and the St. Augustine's congregation as part of his extensive parochial cure is made evident in his 1870 report to diocesan convention:

Connected also with this Parish is a Missionary Station called St. Paul's and a congregation of colored persons named St. Augustine's. At both these places Divine service is held regularly on every Sunday morning and night, by young men of Christ Church, appointed by the Bishop to act as lay readers.

The Rector of the Parish gives his occasional but necessarily infrequent attendance. The congregation of St. Augustine's is much indebted to the Rev. Dr. Smedes, of St. Mary's School, for services rendered once nearly every month, especially for the celebration of the Holy Communion.

Baptisms at St. Augustine's—Adults 4; Confirmations—14. A great part of these were from the Normal School, presided over by the Rev. Dr. Smith. Connected with this congregation is a Sunday School, taught chiefly by members of Christ Church Parish.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 33 (April, 1868): 321, 322; (May, 1868): 401, 402.

<sup>26</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 33 (September, 1868): 727.

<sup>27</sup> *NCDJ* 54<sup>th</sup> (1870): 61.

This report indicates that Christ Church remained very invested in the ministry of the St. Augustine's congregation, supplying clergy oversight, lay readers, and catechists. Mason also took responsibility for recording the baptisms and confirmations at St. Augustine's. What this suggests is that Brinton Smith's leadership role with the St. Augustine's congregation proved more catalytic than constant. That is, he was more interested in getting the congregation organized than in seeing to its ongoing maintenance, which he was content to leave to the other Raleigh clergy and to the members of Christ Church. This was not so much due to a lack of investment on Smith's part than it was an indication of how his responsibilities at the Normal School were expanding considerably. By 1870, the student enrollment of the normal school had increased to 50, two of whom intended to stay on for ministerial training. The 100-acre farm on which to place the school had been purchased and a substantial school-building erected. Smith was now looking for funds to construct residence halls.<sup>28</sup>

By this time there had also been an important development with respect to the Freedman's Commission school property. In February 1869 the General Assembly conveyed the land and schoolhouse at Lane and Dawson to five trustees. The terms of this conveyance were "for the period of ninety-nine years, upon the express trust that the same shall be held and used for the purpose of a school for the education of children residing in and near the City of Raleigh." The five named trustees were James H. Harris, Alexis Long, Benjamin Rhodes, Oliver Roane and Moses Patterson. Precisely why these five men were named is not made clear, but as previously noted, James H. Harris was a Black schoolteacher in Raleigh and Oliver Roane may well have been the same man who was formerly a teacher and vestryman at St. Cyprian's, New Bern, so one can presume that all five were known to have an interest in schools.<sup>29</sup>

Late in 1870, the leadership of the congregation underwent a dramatic shift. A newly-ordained Black deacon, the Rev. William F. Floyd, was assigned as "Deacon in charge of the congregation of colored people worshipping in St. Augustine's Chapel, Raleigh." As with the Rev. Henry Skinner in New Bern and the Rev. C.O. Brady in Wilmington, Floyd came to North Carolina under the auspices of the Freedman's Commission, and he was expected to provide weekday religious instruction as well as conduct Sunday worship. His first published report to the Freedman's Commission appeared in the *Spirit of Missions* for May 1871.

My Congregation is growing; I have always a good attendance in Church and in the Sunday-school. I lecture to them, on Wednesday nights, on the Articles of our Church and on the Decalogue; and am now purposing to take up the Creed; and, when I am done with that (D.V.), I will take the Parables of our Saviour. On Friday evening, I meet the children of the day and Sunday-schools, and teach them music and singing. I have received one adult into the Church by Baptism, and four others are preparing for the same

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<sup>28</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 35 (January, 1870): 63.

<sup>29</sup> *Public Laws of the State of North-Carolina, passed by the General Assembly 1868-1869*, Chapter 51:125. On Harris, see Roberta Sue Anderson, "Harris, James Henry (1832-1891)," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 6 volumes, edited by William S. Powell. Copyright ©1979-1996 by the University of North Carolina Press. Available on-line at <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/harris-james-henry> . On Oliver Rone [Roane?], see *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (December, 1866): 717.

rite. I have seven receiving instruction for Confirmation. From this, you see I am heart and soul in my duty.<sup>30</sup>

What Floyd's report makes clear is that his work centered at the Freedman's Commission school and the congregation that met there on Sundays. There is no mention in Floyd's account of any connection with Brinton Smith and the operation of the Normal School. Rather, Floyd was assigned to Mason at Christ Church as his supervisor.<sup>31</sup> After a year, Floyd's agreement with the Freedman's Commission was not renewed. He remained in Raleigh and continued to serve another six months without remuneration until he received a call to St. Luke's, New Haven, Connecticut, where he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Williams.<sup>32</sup> Despite his relatively brief tenure, Floyd has the distinction of being the first Black clergyman to serve in Raleigh and assume leadership of St. Augustine's Church.

Following Floyd's departure in mid-1872, the leadership of both the Normal School and the congregation would again be in the hands of one man: the Rev. John E.C. Smedes. But this did not occur all at once. J. Brinton Smith, the founder of the Normal School and the organizing priest for the congregation was found dead, possibly murdered, on October 1, 1872. Within two weeks, the Rev. John Smedes, was asked to take Smith's place at the Normal School. He was subsequently requested to take charge of the congregation as well. In his 1873 parochial report Smedes stated: "Since the 1<sup>st</sup> of November last [1872], I have had pastoral care of the congregation of St. Augustine's Chapel, which is attached to Christ Church, Raleigh. I accept it gratuitously [that is, without payment for services], at the request of the Rector, the Rev. Dr. Mason."<sup>33</sup>

Smedes would continue to serve at the normal school and at the chapel for the next twelve years. But the relationship between the school and the chapel, and between the chapel and Christ Church parish would actually undergo significant changes over the course of Smedes' tenure. The first shift coincided with a transition of clergy leadership at Christ Church. Mason, who had been rector since 1840, died in early 1874. With him died the strong sense of personal and parochial commitment to the wellbeing of the school and congregation for African Americans. Thus, after Matthias M. Marshall succeeded Mason as rector, one no longer finds references to St. Augustine's in the parochial reports for Christ Church. Rather, the parish turned its mission efforts, first to St. Paul's mission and then to founding a new white congregation and school in northwest Raleigh, St. Saviour's.<sup>34</sup>

A second significant development was the closing of the Freedman's Commission parochial school in 1877. This coincided with a decision on the part of the Board of Missions to fund only normal and training schools.<sup>35</sup> Now all the educational outreach to the Black community was

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<sup>30</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 36 (May, 1871): 246.

<sup>31</sup> *NCDJ 55th* (1871): 24; 54,55.

<sup>32</sup> *NCDJ 56th* (1872): 74; George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group in the Episcopal Church*, (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1922): 267.

<sup>33</sup> *NCDJ 57th* (1873): 87, 88.

<sup>34</sup> Davyd Foard Hood, *To the Glory of God: Christ Church 1821-1996*, (Raleigh: Marblehead, 1997), 33; 52.

<sup>35</sup> *The Spirit of Missions* 42 (January, 1877): 41.

centered on the campus of St. Augustine's Normal School. But the St. Augustine's Church remained at its location at Lane & Dawson, even though it no longer functioned in concert with a parochial school.

In 1879 the congregation became formally independent of Christ Church parish. John Smedes placed before annual convention a petition for St. Augustine's to become a parish in union with convention. The convention ratified the request.<sup>36</sup> In making the request at this particular time, Smedes may well have had in mind the possibility that George A.C. Cooper be named as the first Black rector of the parish. Cooper, a native of the Bahamas, was a member of the faculty and had trained for the ministry under Smedes. Ordained a deacon in 1876, Cooper stayed on at the school to complete his preparation for becoming a priest. While there, he filed the following report:

Since my ordination on Whit-Sunday, 1876, I have continued my connection with St. Augustine Normal School as Principal's assistant; officiating regularly, on Sundays, in the colored congregation of St. Augustine's Chapel, Raleigh.

I make weekly, and sometimes, daily visits, in the parish, often going from house to house in some neighborhood, carrying the ministrations of the Church to many who attend no religious services, and who are therefore, either ignorant or unmindful of the priceless sacrifice offered by the Son of God for the sins of the whole world!<sup>37</sup>

This report reflects Cooper's considerable investment in taking the gospel out of the classroom and into the community. One can only speculate on what kind of vibrant congregation Cooper might have built in Raleigh had he not died in September 1879.<sup>38</sup>

By 1880, then, a profound shift had occurred in how St. Augustine's Church was supported. Initially it had been closely tied to the operation of the parochial Freedman's Commission school and had received considerable support from Christ Church, and especially the Rector, R.S. Mason. Now the parochial school was gone and the congregation relied primarily on support from the administration, faculty, and students of St. Augustine's School, some of whom, like George Cooper, were studying for the ministry.

Even though Smedes remained nominally the priest in charge of the congregation, Black faculty members and ministerial students actually carried out much of the ministry. Cooper's widow, for example, Anna Julia Haywood Cooper, was listed in one of Smedes' reports as the organizer of the Sunday School, in addition to her duties as a faculty member. And when, in the early 1880s, three Black faculty members prepared for ordination and became deacons, all three were listed as assisting at the church. They were William Rufus Harris, Hannibal S. Henderson, and Henry M. Joseph. Joseph taught classical languages and literature; Harris taught natural science

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<sup>36</sup> *NCDJ* 63<sup>rd</sup> (1879): 45, 47.

<sup>37</sup> *NCDJ* 62<sup>nd</sup> (1878): 99.

<sup>38</sup> *NCDJ* 64<sup>th</sup> (1880): Necrology (facing p. 14); Tribute from Bishop Lyman, 83. Bishop Lyman refers to Cooper's death as "a very serious loss to the Parish of St. Augustine, where he was statedly officiating, and to the interests of our Normal School, in which he was proving himself a most efficient teacher."

and mathematics; Henderson taught history and English.<sup>39</sup> They were ordained to the priesthood as a group on June 4, 1884, at St. Augustine's Church.<sup>40</sup>

Once ordained, Henderson left Raleigh for Kentucky, where he became principal of a public school and priest at St. Andrew's, Lexington; Harris, who did not enjoy good health, died within months. But Joseph stayed on in Raleigh and was named rector of St. Augustine's Church. By all accounts, the congregation and the Raleigh community responded positively to his ministrations, but they were unable to pay his salary. Within two years, Joseph left for New York, and St. Augustine's Church once again found itself relying on the principal and faculty of St. Augustine's School.<sup>41</sup> Evidently the time had not yet come to effect a separation of leadership between St. Augustine's School and St. Augustine's Church.

Meanwhile, the School was undergoing its own internal development. At the instigation of Bishop Lyman, who succeeded Bishop Atkinson in 1881, the ministerial training program was reorganized as the theology department. Lyman, who lived in Raleigh and became quite familiar with the operation of St. Augustine's during his time as Assistant Bishop, proposed that what had started as two separate but aligned entities, the normal school and the training school, now be fully integrated, with the training school become a department within the normal school itself. Lyman further proposed that a theological hall be built on the campus to house this new department and that a chapel be added. Lyman was even able to garner support for these initiatives from the Board of Missions and from many of his fellow southern bishops.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the public expressions of support for these initiatives, however, neither new building was constructed during Lyman's episcopacy. Interest in the theological department waned as the national church opened King Hall, an Episcopal house of studies at the Divinity School of Howard University in 1889, and as Virginia Theological Seminary continued to expand its own branch for African Americans, the Bishop Payne Divinity School in Petersburg.

Instead, the Board of Missions encouraged St. Augustine's to redirect its efforts and concentrate on collegiate-level offerings instead. The decision to close the theological department at St. Augustine's in favor of King Hall was made in 1894, at the behest of the Episcopal Church Commission charged with providing financial assistance to Black institutions. In exchange for St. Augustine's agreeing to disband its theological department, the Commission proposed to fund an additional faculty position in the collegiate department of St. Augustine's "so that our young colored men looking forward to the Holy Ministry may be better prepared to enter King Hall, the

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<sup>39</sup> Cecil D. Halliburton, *A History of St. Augustine's College 1867-1937*, (Raleigh: St. Augustine's, 1937): 12, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Bishop's Address, *NCDJ 69th* (1885): [separate pagination] 5.

<sup>41</sup> For Joseph's Parochial Reports on St. Augustine's Church, see *NCDJ 69th* (1885): 70, and *NCDJ 70th* (1886): 74,75. In 1886, Joseph states: "The offertory has increased, but either the poverty or the will of the members makes them fail to contribute to the support of the minister." The Rev. Robert B. Sutton, the Principal of the School, was appointed by Bishop Lyman to take charge of the Mission congregation in October, 1886. See *NCDJ 71st* (1887): 110,111. Sutton notes that W.G. Emanuel, a student at the Normal School, and Miss Jane E. Thomas have revived the Sunday School.

<sup>42</sup> See Bishop Lyman's report on these initiatives in his Address to Convention, *NCDJ 66th* (1882): 84-86; Halliburton, *A History of St. Augustine's College*, 12-14.

theological school established by the Commission in Washington, D.C.”<sup>43</sup> St. Augustine’s acceded to this proposal and the theological department ceased operation.

Nevertheless, plans to erect a chapel on school grounds did move forward, and a handsome stone Gothic Revival building was erected in 1895 and consecrated in 1897. This development afforded a fresh opportunity to reconfigure the relationship between St. Augustine’s the School and St. Augustine’s the Church. With the approbation of Bishop Cheshire, a new mission congregation was formed on the campus. It would bear the name St. Augustine’s Chapel, and it was intended to serve both the school and its surrounding neighborhood. This new congregation would be placed under the leadership of the principal and faculty of the school, several of whom were priests—most notably, Henry Beard Delany. Moreover, it would be taken into union with convention and entitled to send its own delegates to diocesan convention.<sup>44</sup>

The existing congregation, still worshipping at Lane & Dawson, would now be renamed St. Ambrose’—but this was done simply to eliminate confusion when referring to the two congregations. No effort was made to reorganize the congregation in any way. That said, St. Ambrose’ would now embrace a new missional focus under the leadership of a new minister. The Rev. James King, a recent graduate of King Hall, was put in charge of St. Ambrose’ in 1896. Soon after taking the position, King launched a new parochial school in conjunction with the church.<sup>45</sup>

In the years since the initial establishment of Freedman’s Commission schools in the late 1860s and early 1870s, a new movement to open parochial schools at Black congregations had taken hold. Unlike the earlier movement, however, which had been staffed by white northern female schoolteachers sent south by the Freedman’s Commission, these new parochial schools were established by Black teachers and ministers, many of them trained at St. Augustine’s. Indeed, between 1880 and 1910 it was rare to find a Black priest who was not also a schoolmaster.

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<sup>43</sup> *NCDJ 79<sup>th</sup>* (1895): 132. King Hall itself proved short-lived. In 1905, as part of a further consolidation and streamlining by the white philanthropists who directed funding for black Episcopal institutions, King Hall was closed in favor of the Bishop Payne Divinity School. From 1906 until the 1950s, the Episcopal Church regarded St. Augustine’s as the school for the training of teachers and nurses; St. Paul’s in Lawrenceville as the school for mechanical and agricultural training, and the Bishop Payne Divinity School as the place for ministerial training. See Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999): 122-27.

<sup>44</sup> The first parochial report for St. Augustine’s Chapel lists 21 communicants and a Sunday school of 300 members. The Revs. A. B. Hunter and H. B. Delany are listed as the ministers in charge. *NCDJ 80<sup>th</sup>* (1896): 95,96.

<sup>45</sup> In the first parochial report for the Church of St. Ambrose, the Rev. James King is listed as “Deacon Officiating.” The communicant strength is listed as 102. The parish school enrollment is 61, with two teachers. *NCDJ 80<sup>th</sup>* (1896): 95. In the Archdeacon’s report for the same year, the Ven. William Walker states: “Mr. King has opened a parochial school in connection with his work. This is a new enterprise, and promises good results. The school rapidly increased in numbers since it opened in October [1895], and there are indications of its increased usefulness in the future.” *NCDJ 80<sup>th</sup>* (1896): 111. King would be ordained priest in 1904 and henceforth listed as Rector of the Church of St. Ambrose. *NCDJ 89<sup>th</sup>* (1905): 7,66. The school would grow in enrollment to 200 students in 1910 and then decline to 70 students in 1915. It closed in 1917 or 1918.

James King and his ministry at St. Ambrose' fit into this larger movement to grow the church among African Americans through educational outreach.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, the outcome of this 30-year period of development was to bring about two Black congregations and two Black schools. One, the Church of St. Ambrose, began with the 1866 establishment of a school for the newly-emancipated near the heart of Raleigh and was supported initially by the local white parish, Christ Church. Over time, it became increasingly aligned with the new normal and clergy training school and drew support from that relationship rather than from the white congregation. Finally, it gained an existence and a mission distinct from the normal school when James King took charge in 1895 and re-established a parochial school as part of the church's life and ministry.

The other congregation, St. Augustine's Chapel, was created in 1896 at the end of a long period of development during which the school, founded in 1867, went from becoming the principal source of leadership and support for the town congregation in the 1870s and 80s to having its own distinct mission identity, focused on the life of the school and its neighborhood.<sup>47</sup>

Because for much of this thirty-year period these various educational and congregational institutions were all given the name of St. Augustine, the process by which mission and ministry among African Americans in Raleigh evolved has been somewhat obscured. But when we do take a closer look and trace these various developments, what emerges is the story of an ambitious, multi-pronged program of education and ministry among African Americans that embraced theological education, teacher training, parochial schools, and worship, and that ultimately yielded St. Augustine's and St. Ambrose' as two independent, self-sustaining, distinctive, but closely-aligned institutions.

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<sup>46</sup> From 1896 on, St. Ambrose' begins to develop along the lines of other black congregations in NC that also feature robust parochial schools: Louisburg, Warrenton, Littleton, Pittsboro, Tarboro, and Charlotte.

<sup>47</sup> St. Augustine's Chapel continued to serve both as the center for campus religious life and as a mission of the diocese until 2012, when the mission was allowed to pass out of existence. In 2013, St. Augustine's became a Campus Ministry of the Diocese of North Carolina.