

# The Star of Zion.

ORGAN OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH IN AMERICA.

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## SEARCHLIGHT SCENES.

### Rev. H. C. C. Astwood's False Claims—Church Statistics.

BY REV. J. HARVEY ANDERSON, D. D.

"Figures play fantastic tricks." The sparse membership of the Northern colored churches before the war of the rebellion rendered it easy to ascertain the exact statistics; but immediately after the war there was a flow of Negro immigration from the South into the Northern churches, and this element, while a feeder to the churches, operated also as an uncertain quantity since of its instability.

The immigrating freedmen were either curiosity or employment seekers, and changed residence in the North as circumstances offered advantage. This state of affairs still obtains, but not to the same extent. Many people from the South refuse to remove their membership North, it being uncertain as to their remaining North, and many others find it convenient to their purpose and ideal of religious life not to place themselves under church responsibilities and obligations, especially where their denomination is poorly or not represented at all; and yet lay plausible claim to church membership in a distant part of the country, while many others claim to be Christians and church members in order to find introduction into the best social circles.

The unsettled state of affairs in the South immediately after the war made it quite difficult to obtain statistics of colored religionists as there was a rush of the Negro religious communities formerly controlled by the individual master and the white churches to the independent Negro denominations entering the South; and even now, the deficiency among the freedmen to make and keep statistical or any other records operates as a stubborn menace to securing correct figures.

The A. M. E. Church took advantage of these confused conditions and began a system of exaggeration of her figures; and the rapid flow to the Zion denomination because of her position on the subject of slavery greatly alarmed Bethel so that she made a continuous "jump" of numerical strength to attract attention and share honors with Zion in catching members and churches in the religious flood-tide.

Without studied estimate, computation or summary she "jumped" her figures so far ahead of the facts as to completely disgust the more conscientious men, as the late Bishops Payne, Campbell and Ward, and Revs. J. B. Stansbury, Hunter, (formerly of Boston), Dr. Stewart (formerly of Metropolitan, Washington, D. C., now Chaplain in the U. S. Army), J. H. A. Johnson and many others, and placed the Church in humiliating, compromising attitude before the reasoning public.

It required the labor of ten years and an expenditure of over two hundred dollars to straighten out the statistical accounts of the A. M. E. Zion Church, previous efforts to facilitate the work notwithstanding, but it was thought better to do this rather than give out estimates; yet the estimates given were but an item of difference to the correct findings. The statistics of the A. M. E. Church are still published by estimates and given out in abnormal "chunks" that shock the public sense of reason because of such reckless imposition of false claims; nor is this loose system consistent with the intelligence, progressiveness, and "boasts" of this representative Christian body of a race trying to establish religious and moral character.

If the A. M. E. Church would follow the example of her elder sister and establish a statistical system commensurate with her possibilities, it would largely atone for her spirit of exaggeration, and the public would condone her errors and impose confidence in the authoritative utterances of the Church.

The Church published in 1896 over 600,000 members, counting baptized children, outsiders who pay "dollar money," the Christian element from other denominations worshipping permanently with the local congregations and the straggling and floating membership. All these are reckoned together and thrown out in "guess" numbers which can appear in no other than exaggerated figures, and "leaping reaches" quadrennially; and it is this method deplored by the ablest, most influential and leading Bethel Bishop, H. M. Turner, who says his Church "should stop lying." The withdrawal of the B. M. E. Church from the clandestine union with Bethel lost to that Church 28,000 members. The withdrawal in the Sawyer split has lost to it 18,000 more. The split in Georgia and Florida, led by Rev. George Hopkins, who has established an independent church, is a loss of 50,000 more, aggregating a loss of 91,000 members. The membership in Africa is composed of native polygamists and semi-Mohammedan population who are simply "covered" by the A. M. E. Church with the understanding that they retain their social and civil forms "regardless" of the doctrines and Discipline of Bethel Church, the power of the A. M. E. Church being impotent to Christianize the natives like the M. E. and A. M. E. Zion denominations. This character of membership, whatever its numbers, is an uncertain quantity.

Should it become necessary, we shall show the numerical strength of Bethel. Just now it is not justified. This little reminder may occasion the Cuban Missionary to leave statistics alone, especially Zion's.

Binghamton, N. Y.

## REV. J. T. MATTHEWS.

### A Brilliant Divine—A Sketch of His Life and Work.

A SUCCESSFUL MINISTER.

The subject of this sketch, Rev. John T. Matthews, was born Nov. 7th, 1863, in Calvin county, Mich., to Henry and Susan Matthews.



REV. J. T. MATTHEWS.

He attended the public schools of his county. After the death of his father he was taken to Mill Brook, Mich., and from there to Stanton in the same State where he was employed by a white family named Richards. In this family he received his first religious training. He was entrusted with the affairs of his employer, being the leading clerk in a hardware store.

He afterwards moved to Johnstown, N. Y., where he was employed as a coachman by Hon. David A. Wells. While in the employ of the above named gentleman he professed faith in the Lord Jesus. At a revival meeting under the pastorate of Rev. C. D. Hazel he joined the church and served in every capacity from trustee to local preacher.

In 1892 Rev. Matthews was admitted to the Genesee Conference at Binghamton, N. Y. He was afterwards appointed to our church at Oneida where he served three and a half years during which time he was ordained both deacon and elder by Bishop A. Walters, (1894-95.) His success at this point was unprecedented; his labors were blessed by a large and glorious revival and many of the present members were converted and joined the church at this time.

He was married to Miss Sarah E. Leggins, which union has been blessed with one son.

In 1896 he was transferred by Bishop Walters to the Virginia Conference and stationed at Norfolk where he is now serving his second year. Since he has been appointed to this charge the church has been greatly improved both spiritually and materially. The membership has been greatly increased. A large revival wave swept over his church last Winter which was said to have been the largest for a number of years.

The church has been re-carpeted

and thoroughly renovated. The increase of general fund last year was \$40 over previous years. The pastor and congregation anticipate rebuilding at an early date. Plans have been formulated and a sinking fund has been started for that purpose.

He has recently organized a V. C. E. Society which bids fair to add much to the spiritual and financial success of the church. He is loved and respected by his members and identifies himself with all the movements of his city which have a tendency to elevate and improve the race. He has won the esteem and respect of all denominations by his Christian bearing and pleasing manners. He is attracting attention toward Zion in the city of Norfolk as never before.

We venture the prediction that if Rev. Matthews is allowed to remain at this point another year, if not longer, Zion will have no cause to regret it, but such an event would add greatly to her status and prestige in this important seaport city around which clusters much historic interest.—*Varick Christian Endeavorer.*

## BISHOP HARRIS' APPOINTMENTS.

- August 26, Swanannoa, N. C., Rev W J Williams.
- " 28, 11 a m, with Rev J W Wright.
- " " 8 p m, West End Mission, Rev B J Hill, Asheville, N. C.
- August 29, 11 a m, Shaw Creek, Yole, N. C., Rev E Z Goodman.
- " " 31, Hendersonville, N. C., Rev W H Allen.
- September 2, Waynesville, N. C., Rev William Anderson.
- " 4, Leadvale, Tenn., Rev W C Vanhook.
- " 6, Dandridge, Tenn., Rev F N Neeley.
- " 7, New Market, Tenn., Rev R Williams.
- " Oakland circuit, Smithwood, Tenn., Rev M D Smith.
- " 11, 11 a m, Logan Chapel, Rev F R White.
- " " 8 p m, Clinton Chapel, Rev G W Brazelton.
- " 13, Middleboro, Ky., Rev E P Mayo.
- " 15, Pineville, Ky., Rev E P Mayo.

The Cape Fear district conference and Sunday-school convention will meet at Ingold, Sampson County, N. C., September 20th. You are invited to attend. S. B. Hunter, P. E.

The pastors of the Canton district expecting to attend the district conference at Glenarchy chapel, August 24th, will notify me at Sharon, Miss., the number of delegates they will have, in order that I may make the necessary preparation for them.—W. A. Garner.

Rev. A. F. Goslen, of Amite City, La., well known in North Carolina as a gospel preacher and sweet singer, is having a splendid success as presiding elder in Louisiana. He congratulates the Editor and Manager on the improvements made in the STAR and Publishing House and writes this poetry:

The STAR of ZION,  
As Judah's Lion,  
Is truly up to date;  
Small at the beginning,  
But it kept winning,  
And now it's shining,  
In golden lining,  
In pages I see eight.

## OUR ZION ADVANCING.

### Leading Other Negro Denominations On Several Lines.

BY REV. R. A. MORRISSEY, A. M.

Pioneer work in our Church is now being done almost exclusively by one man, namely Bishop Holliday. The missionary spirit sent him to the West and Southwest to plant the banner of the A. M. E. Zion Church where before her name was not known, and to build up the mission work already started. The Church as never before is spreading her borders in that section, mainly through his incessant labors, and the A. M. E. Bethel Church has begun to look "after her fence." Bishop Holliday, though an old man in years, is full of young blood and activity. He lives more and accomplishes more in the spread of the Christian Church and the elevation of the race in one month than one-half of the Negro preachers do in ten years. The one great need of Zion is more of the pioneer and missionary spirit as found in Bishop Holliday.

It is now conceded that the A. M. E. Zion Church is more progressive than any other Negro Church and some have begun to predict that she is advancing too rapidly ahead of other Churches along some lines; but let them remember that Zion almost invariably leads in every great measure looking toward the welfare of the cause of Christianity and the race. She was the first to establish Negro Methodism in this country. She produced the first great leader of the race—Frederick Douglass. She has now the greatest religious paper and Publishing House of the race, and hence there need be no uneasiness if she leads in other measures not inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and Methodism. And any who claim that she is violating the teachings of the Bible as she moves along progressive lines, it remains for them to prove conclusively from the Bible that Zion is in error before criticising or calling on her to vindicate herself.

Dr. J. W. Smith with singular ability and phenomenal success stands at the head of the Negro Editors of religious journals. He is a brilliant quill-driver, an irrepressible controversialist. The recent improvements make it to-day the leading Negro Church paper in the world.

The Publishing House, recently remodelled by Dr. G. L. Blackwell, is the greatest of its kind among Negroes in the world. The Doctor deserves great credit for the success achieved.

Birmingham, Ala.

Mrs. Baker, the helpful wife of Rev. C. E. Baker, of Montgomery, Ala., is very sick. Hope she is convalescing.

Mrs. S. Banks, of Mobile, Alabama, congratulates the STAR in her beautiful new dress and thinks it an excellent paper to be managed entirely by Negroes.