

REPRESENTATIVE MAN

A NOTE ON

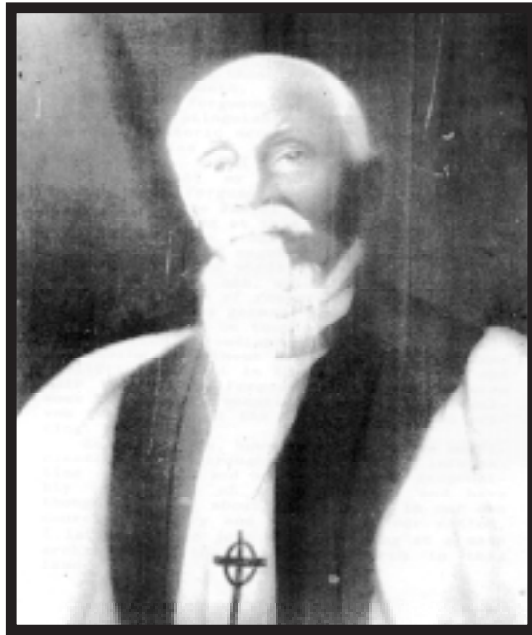
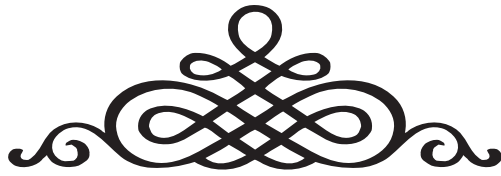
SAMUEL DAVID FERGUSON

America's 1st Black Episcopal Bishop

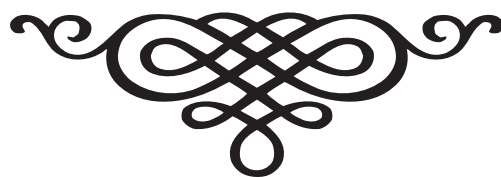
by

Seward Montgomery Cooper





THE RIGHT REVEREND SAMUEL DAVID FERGUSON, D.D., D.C.L.



*“ . . . [W]hen I was called to this responsible office...I knew that I stood as a **representative man** and prayed to Almighty God to enable me to succeed.”¹*

- Samuel David Ferguson

PREFACE

This Note, in the form of a pamphlet, is issued in honour of the Rt. Reverend Samuel David Ferguson, D.D., D.C.L., missionary Bishop of Liberia (1885-1916), who was the first black person elected a bishop by the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.² Bishop Ferguson was also the first black member of the House of Bishops and the General Convention. A more propitious occasion could hardly arise, therefore, for writing this Note than these dedicatory ceremonies for the African-American Episcopal Historical Collection, which will henceforth be housed in the Bishop Payne Library at Virginia Theological Seminary.

The Note has two objectives. It seeks to add to the rather sparse literature by contemporary writers about Samuel David Ferguson. Also, it seeks to compile some pertinent information about Bishop Ferguson in a single document that could be easily used as the basis for further research on him.

Why write about the Bishop of Liberia for an occasion dealing with African-Americans and the Episcopal Church in the United States of America? The nexus is clear. Ferguson, himself, was first an African-American. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and immigrated to Liberia with his parents and thus became a Liberian. Liberia itself, of course, was established as a haven for free and freed black people. Liberia's historical roots lie in the United States of America, where prominent whites, including Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, John Marshall, Francis Scott Key and others, for various reasons, philanthropic and otherwise, decided that the anomalous situation of having free blacks (who

¹ Bragg, George F. *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church*. Baltimore, Maryland: Church Advocate Press, 1922, p.206

² *Handbooks on the Missions of the Episcopal Church Number IV Liberia*, published by The National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Department of Missions, New York, 1924, p. 50

were neither citizens nor slaves) co-existing side by side with enslaved blacks was undesirable. To many slaveholders the presence of the free blacks posed a threat to their iniquitous but profitable institution of slavery.

Colonization was deemed a solution. So, Liberia was established as a home for free blacks and for those who would subsequently be manumitted by slaveholders on condition that they leave North America. The country itself, Liberia, and its capital city, Monrovia, were both named by the American Society for the Colonization of Free People of Colour – the ACS. The ACS was established in 1816 under a charter granted by the Congress of the United States under the gavel of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Henry Clay. The American Government provided the initial resources for the acquisition of land in Africa and for the establishment of the colony. No history of the African-American people is therefore complete without reference to Liberia.

Significantly also for Episcopalians, the first person to establish an outpost of the Episcopal Church in Africa was James M. Thomson, a black man, who, in 1836, planted the seeds of the Episcopal Church in what was then the colony of Maryland in Africa (presently Maryland County, Liberia). Perhaps coincidentally, that was the same year John Payne was graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary and was recruited for missionary work in Liberia. These facts link Ferguson, Liberia, African-Americans and Episcopalians in a unique historical chain.

Immediately after the Introduction, which follows this Preface, is a re-print of a Lecture delivered by this author for the Centennial Celebrations of the consecration of Bishop Ferguson as the first black bishop. The Lecture was delivered at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Monrovia, Liberia in 1985 – exactly twenty years ago. It speaks about the man, his works, and his ideas. Additional research undertaken since then has revealed relevant information that was not included in that Lecture. Hence, I have tried to cover some of that in the Introduction.

Ferguson, having been born in the South during the days of official racial segregation and slavery in the United States, could not have gained admission into Virginia's top schools. During that period the 'High School' (Episcopal High School); the 'College' (the College of William & Mary); the 'University' (University of Virginia); nor the 'Seminary' (Virginia Theological Seminary), as Virginians proudly refer to them, accepted blacks. But times have changed. Progress has been made. Today, at least three of Ferguson's descendants have attended and been graduated from the High School; one is now completing the College; four have been graduated from the University; and one, by marriage, has been graduated from the Seminary. Most of this has happened since 1980, when civil insurrection and war in Liberia forced some of his descendants to re-locate to Virginia.

Amidst these changes we now witness the placement of the African-American Episcopal Historical Collection in the once exclusive Seminary. Significantly, the Collection will be lodged not just in any part of the Seminary but in the Bishop Payne Library – a Library named in memory of the Bishop Payne Divinity School, which, from Petersburg, Virginia, until its merger in 1953 with Virginia Theological Seminary, served only black seminarians, and bore the name of the first Bishop of Liberia, the Virginian, John Payne.

Interestingly, the links of the historical chain are strong and numerous. Bishop Payne helped rear Samuel David Ferguson after Ferguson's father died shortly after the family emigrated to Liberia! Ferguson was educated in Episcopal schools. He was ordained as a deacon in 1865 and consecrated as a priest in 1868, both times by Payne. Moreover, when much later, as bishop, Ferguson was hampered in ministering to the various church stations along the Atlantic coast in his diocese and obtained, through the Board of Foreign Missions, a twenty-five foot launch for travel, the boat was named '*the John Payne*'. And as Providence would have it, during Ferguson's first return trip to the United States, he visited Virginia during the last days of Bishop Payne's life and witnessed Payne's death in October 1874.

These facts of history make it imperative to issue this Note. I hope ardently that it would in a small measure contribute to the literature and provide some insight to many, including my children Seward Banii, Shon Montgomery, and Shanda Anne-Louise. I am grateful to my late first cousin (my sister in our African culture), Eugenia Cooper Shaw, for stimulating my interest in the Bishop. In writing this Note, I also hope it would help ease the pressure on me from my brother, Gerald Ferguson Burns Cooper, and from my darling wife, Anne Fredericks Cooper (VTS '04), to record more of what I have learned about Bishop Ferguson.

Perhaps I should add that this interest in Bishop Ferguson is natural. It stems from our bloodline. Bishop Ferguson was my paternal great-grandfather. His daughter, Cynthia Sivia Ferguson (a product of the Bishop's marriage to Mary Leonora Montgomery) married my grandfather, Randolph Cassius Cooper (an Episcopal priest), and from that union, on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1894, was born my father, Daubeny Bartholomew Cooper, Esq.

Seward Montgomery Cooper, Esq.
Tunis, Tunisia
February 24, 2005

INTRODUCTION

On June 24th 1885, when Ferguson was consecrated bishop at Grace Church, New York, only one person from Liberia was able to attend. That representative was the Rev. Dr. Alexander Crummell, an African-American priest educated at Cambridge University, England, who for almost twenty years served the Church in Liberia. Subsequently, Crummell established St. Luke's Episcopal Church in northwest Washington, D.C. Crummell was one of two attending presbyters when the Presiding Bishop Alfred Lee, Bishop of Delaware, examined bishop-elect Ferguson on the day of consecration.

At the consecration, the Presiding Bishop preached a sermon that reflected the significance of the occasion and the nature of the times. The text of the sermon was from Romans chapter 1 verse 14: *'I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise.'* A few excerpts from that sermon must be quoted here. Bishop Lee:

“There are other debts besides the pecuniary obligations of which the law takes cognizance, and [which are] not less binding. It is not merely for figures written in the ledger or specified in the bond that we are holden. There are several liabilities which, although not enforced by legal process and human tribunal, are real and valid – debts of equity and charity, mutual obligations which heart and conscience are constrained to acknowledge.” He continued, “The indigent cannot sue me at law for shutting my ear to his cry of distress, nor the neighbour for churlishness and supercilious contempt; but there is a powerful maintainer of every righteous claim, a pleader for the weak, the wronged and the wretched.” He declared: “While the debt owing to the unevangelized by the whole Church is worldwide and general, a particular Church must select portions of the great field upon which its efforts are to be expended. The providence of God may open this door or that, or convictions of duty may point with special urgency in certain directions. Are there not considerations, forcible and weighty, that command to us our African mission? As citizens of these United States we find in our midst millions of African descent. How came they here? Not of their own will, nor are they the descendents of voluntary emigrants. Their ancestors were forcibly torn from their native land and transported across the ocean with most cruel indifference to their anguish and suffering; and those who survived the horrors of passage were doomed to wear out their lives in hopeless servitude, and bequeath to their children an inheritance of bondage and degradation. It is not for us now to apportion the measure of guilt and accountability incurred by governments or people, or to boast that if we had lived in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in this inhuman traffic. Men's minds have greatly changed within the last hundred years upon this as upon some other questions. God be thanked that in some things certainly the world has been advancing, and that claims of justice, mercy, and human brotherhood are better understood. We desire not to revive painful memories in the way of stigma and denunciation. But there is one point of view in which it becomes us to look back at the past. Is it in the power of this generation to do something to redress this great wrong, and to repay this immense debt?”

By the unrequited labours of those who were brought here manacled captives, and of their descendents, immense tracts of our country have been reclaimed and cultivated, and rich harvests reaped and garnered. There has been a prodigious development of our resources, and the benefits have not been confined to one section of the land. How great a proportion of the wealth of which the nation boasts accrued from the toil of this people God only knows. We, at the present day, cannot obliterate the past, or undo the wrong, or recall to life the sufferers, or return the debt in kind. But what we can do is to send heaven's choicest gift, the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation, to the shores where once the slave-trader embarked his living cargo, and thus carry blessings to the kindred and countrymen of those who toiled and died in a land of strangers. To the millions of this race among ourselves, as well as to those beyond the sea, we should count ourselves debtors."

Turning to bishop-elect Ferguson, Presiding Bishop Lee said: "In helping us to do something in this requital of Christian love, we call upon you, brother beloved in the Lord, to be our agent and co-operator. The fullest authority of the Gospel is now to be confided to you. Great is the trust, arduous the work, wide the field." After further elaboration, the Presiding Bishop said to Dr. Ferguson: "Enviably is the privilege, my brother of bearing a part, however humble, in such an enterprise – of doing something to help forward and hasten the regeneration of Africa. It was a son of Africa who bore the Saviour's cross on the way to Calvary. Be it yours patiently and lovingly to carry the same hallowed burden for the same dear Master. The task of Simon the Cyrenian is not yet done. We rejoice in the belief that you are here to-day in obedience to a higher call than that of man. Trusting that you will not labour unsustained by the presence, uncheered by the smile of our gracious Saviour, and that with enlarged powers abundant success will crown your efforts, we this day devoutly wish you God speed."³

Twenty-seven years later, in a Report to the Board of Foreign Missions, Ferguson revealed how he felt about the Presiding Bishop's sermon that day. He recalled the words of Bishop Lee as having sent a 'thrill through my soul'. That they: "Fired me with zeal as never before. I then vowed that I would go forth in the name of God and do my best"⁴

Bishop Ferguson's first Episcopal act following his consecration was in Virginia. In Norfolk, at the request of Bishop Whittle of Virginia, he confirmed an all black confirmation class at what was then the Church of the Holy Innocents, later Grace Church. As the first black member of the House of Bishops, he was accorded the same respects and courtesies as all other bishops. George Bragg in his book on the *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* reports that Ferguson conscientiously made it a point to be present and occupy his seat in the House of Bishops and remain alert and participate in the transactions. His attire and appearance were 'immaculately neat and attractive'. Although he came to the United States every three years for General Conven-

³ *The Churchman*, New York, Vol. 51-52, reel 25, July 4, 1885.

⁴ The Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America 1911-1912

tion and was treated as a celebrity, he never once brought Mrs. Ferguson with him although she travelled frequently with him to Europe. He reportedly did not want to risk the possibility of any racial discourtesies to his wife.⁵

Bishop Ferguson's impact as the first, and indeed experimental, black Bishop was widespread and profound. One student of the Liberian Church concludes that: "The outstanding feature of the Church was clearly the leadership of Bishop Ferguson, whose length and strength of administration have not been duplicated elsewhere in the history of the Liberian Church."⁶ J. Carleton Hayden in writing about Afro-Anglican Linkages between 1701 – 1900 makes the following assessment: "In the United States . . . the esteem and respect accorded the venerable Ferguson – inspired the national caucus of black Episcopalians known as the Conference of Church Workers among the Coloured People to press for a racial episcopate. Beginning in 1889, they conducted a strong campaign to convince the Episcopal Church that mission work among blacks would not develop until a black bishop was at its head."⁷

Indeed as the Encyclopedia of African-Americans puts it: "The great respect that grew around the person of Ferguson and his work helped convince the Episcopal Church to consecrate a black person for work in the United States, which occurred for the first time with Edward T. Demby in 1918."⁸ The universally acclaimed success of Ferguson's tenure paved the way for other black bishops in the Episcopal Church.

In what was one of his valedictory addresses to members of his diocese in 1915 titled 'Thirty Years in the Harness', Ferguson wrote: "The time of my departure, if not 'at hand', cannot now be far off. God has been very gracious to me. When I was consecrated, seventy bishops were my seniors, now there are only seven: sixty-three have been called away and here I am a token of His mercy."⁹ May I dare to suggest that in addition to being a token of God's mercy, Ferguson has been an instrument of His inspiration to others!

The Lecture that follows details some of Bishop Ferguson's work in Liberia.

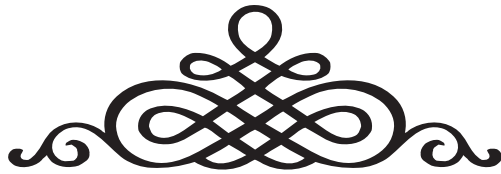
⁵ Bragg, p. 202

⁶ Dunn, D. Elwood *A History of the Episcopal Church in Liberia 1821-1980*, The American Theological Library Association and The Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J. & London 1992, p.155 (quoting J.W. Cason)

⁷ Hayden, J. Carleton, *Afro-Anglican Linkages, 1701-1900: Ethiopia Shall Soon Stretch Out Her Hands Unto God*, The Journal of Religious Thought, Vol. 43, Spring – Summer 1986, p.31

⁸ Encyclopedia of African American Religions, Garland Publishing, Inc. New York & London 1993, p. 266

⁹ Annual Report of the Board of Missions for the fiscal Year – September 1, 1914 to September 1, 1915, DFMS



Lecture Delivered on the Occasion

of the

Centenary of the Consecration

Of the

The Right Reverend Samuel David Ferguson

Bishop of the Missionary District of Cape Palmas

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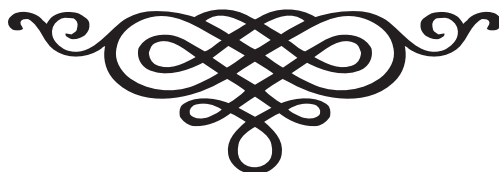
Parts Adjacent

Later

Bishop of the Missionary District of Liberia

By: Seward Montgomery Cooper, Jur. D.

Delivered on June 20th 1985
At Stephen's Episcopal Church
10th Street, Sinkor
Monrovia, Liberia



INTRODUCTION

To punctuate these ceremonies marking 100 years, this month, of the consecration of Samuel David Ferguson as Bishop of this Diocese, the distinguished committee, appointed for this historic occasion, has included this lecture series as an indispensable part of the program. And I have accepted, upon the designation of my family (descendants of Samuel David Ferguson) and upon the approval of Bishop George Daniel Browne, the delightful duty of lecturing at this appointed time.

What can one properly say that would not fall short of the magnitude of this occasion? By what choice of words can the life and work of such a pious man, which I have discovered after many hours of research, be articulated? Which of the many germane and important things he did ought to be touched upon in a lecture to so varied an audience as this, without being boring or without offending delicate sensibilities but yet in the process be just and fair to the man Ferguson? Indeed these were some of the hard questions that put themselves to my mind at the beginning of this writing.

Believing now, however, that I have sufficiently sifted through the historical information available; and have considered responsibly the nature of this audience; and have thought soberly about this moment in our own church's history and in that of our nation; I invite you to join me in looking at a main architect of the Episcopal Church in this land.

SAMUEL DAVID FERGUSON

THE MAN, HIS WORKS, HIS IDEAS

Samuel David Ferguson was born on January 1, 1842, in Charleston, South Carolina, in the United States of America. His birth on New Year's Day was providential for not only did a new year dawn by his birth but so also did a new era in the history of the black race. His parents, Edward and Roseine Ferguson, thought he would die from a malady which afflicted him shortly after his birth; and, so on his mother's request he was baptized particularly early in life by Episcopal Bishop Christopher Gadsden.¹ When he was six years old, in 1848, the year after Liberia's independence; his family left the United States and moved to Liberia to join in the building of the first black Republic on the African continent. His father died sometime after their arrival. Hence, the Right Reverend John Payne, who, in July of 1851, was consecrated the first Missionary Bishop of the Episcopal Church to Africa, with his base in Cape Palmas, reared Sam Ferguson who acquired Bishop Payne's erudite and pious habits. So impressed was Bishop Charles Penick,² a successor to Bishop Payne, with the honesty of young Ferguson that he made him the Mission's Business Agent. Young Ferguson subsequently was made Deacon and ordained Priest.

On April 23, 1884, after an interregnum in the Bishopric, the Reverend Father Samuel David Ferguson, a black man, a Liberian, just over forty-two years old, was elected Bishop of the Missionary District of Cape Palmas and parts adjacent.

Then, a little after half past ten o'clock on June 24th, Saint John the Baptist Feast Day, in 1885, at Grace Church, in New York City, New York, with several Bishops including the Bishops of Delaware, of Pennsylvania, of Long Island, of Northern New Jersey, together with about fifty clergymen, thirty of whom were robed, and a very large congregation present, the ceremonies for consecration began with the church singing the hymn "The Son of God goes Forth to war." The Bishop of Delaware, the Rt. Rev. Alfred Lee, Doctor

¹ Ferguson's mother was Roman Catholic and his father was a Baptist deacon..

² 3rd Bishop of Liberia (previously rector of Church of the Messiah, Baltimore, Maryland.

of Divinity, Doctor of Law, then presiding in the House of Bishops, ascended the pulpit after the signing of the hymn “O Spirit of the living God” with its notable, appropriately appointed last stanza:

*“Convert the nations far and nigh
The triumphs of the cross record;
The name of Jesus glorify,
Till every people call him Lord”*

and preached what has been described as “an eloquent discourse, delivered in striking and choice language: from Romans 1:14: ‘I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise’.” The sermon ended, the Bishop-Elect was presented to the Presiding Bishop by the Bishop of Northern New Jersey and the Assistant Bishop of New York, who required the “usual” promise of conformity. The Certificate of Election was read by the Assistant Secretary of the House of Bishops and the Certificate of Confirmation of Election by the Standing Committees and the Bishops was read by the Secretary of Domestic Missions. The Presiding Bishop in keeping with the ordinals examined the Bishop-Elect, and after the prayer of the Consecration, the Presiding Bishop assisted by the other Bishops present laid hands on Dr. Ferguson. Communion was taken and the offerings which were gathered by six clergymen, half of whom were black, were designated for the work of the new Bishop and placed at his discretion.

The hymn “Rise, crowned with light, Imperial Salem, Rise” was sung at the Recession, and the young black man from the emerging black Republic left Grace Church, New York, that summer day with the honour of a burden then bestowed on none other of his race³, in the same year when on another continent, at Berlin, European leaders were balkanizing the African continent.

The Letters of Consecration affirmed that “... the Reverend Samuel David Ferguson, Presbyter and Doctor of Divinity, of whose sufficiency in good learning, soundness in the faith, and purity of manners... were fully ascertained” was ordained and consecrated “...into the sacred office of Bishop in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of God.” With letters of credence in hand and with the blessings of Almighty God, the young Bishop left New York as the first black person ever elected and ordained Bishop in the Episcopal Church, determined to meet the challenges of his office as Bishop of the Missionary District of Cape Palmas and parts adjacent.

³ Ferguson was the first black person to sit in the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church and was the first black bishop in the order of succession of the Episcopal Church. James T. Holly was consecrated by bishops of the Episcopal Church as Bishop of Haiti, which was not part of the Episcopal Church, USA, and therefore did not sit in the House of Bishops and was not in the Order of Succession.

THE CHURCH

Bishop Ferguson started his new assignment with zeal similar to that of Bishop John Payne and with the pioneering fervor which characterized James M. Thompson, also a black man, who on March 1, 1836, eleven years before Liberia declared independence, began the Episcopal Church's Ministry in this country with a school of five boys and two girls at Mount Vaughn, Cape Palmas.

The area over which Bishop Ferguson obtained jurisdiction was divided into four administrative districts according to the geographical counties, which then made up the Republic. They were the Cape Palmas District, the Bassa District, the Sinoe District, and the Montserrado District, which subsumed Cape Mount. Ten stations set up by the Church on the east side of the Cavalla river had been lost when the French took over that part of Liberian territory. And except for a station at Jundoo, Cape Mount, which was later devastated during a tribal war, not a single mission station existed in the interior.

Despite what ostensibly were dismal times for the nation and the Church, Samuel David Ferguson was steadfast and optimistic. He set a prospectus for the mission and pursued it resolutely.

In 1886, the year after his consecration, it was decided that the convocation of the jurisdiction would meet biennially. Thus the first general convocation was held from February 1st-5th, 1888, at St. Andrew's Church, Grand Bassa. Much earlier, in 1862, Bishop John Payne had tried to organize such regular convocations but his efforts had been unfruitful. Thus for twenty-five years, between 1862 and 1888, no convocation had been held; consequently several clergymen had not yet even become acquainted with their colleagues. Only ten chapels and churches were regularly organized then:

1. Trinity Memorial, Monrovia, under the Rev. Paulus Moort, assisted by the Rev. Garretson W. Gibson
2. Grace, Clay Ashland, - Rev. J. W. Blacklidge
3. St. Peter's, Caldwell, Rev. Blacklidge assisted by Rev. J. T. Gibson
4. Christ Church, Crozierville, - Rev. Edward Hunt
5. St. Andrew's Upper Buchanan, - Rev. J. B. Williams
6. St. John's, Lower Buchanan - Rev. J.B. Williams
7. St. Mark's, Cape Palmas - Bishop assisted by Rev. M.P. Keda Valentine and Rev. Robert Henry Gibson.
8. St. Paul's, Greenville - Rev. J. G. Monger
9. St. James, Hoffman Station - Rev. O. E. Himie Shannon
10. The Epiphany, Cavalla - Rev. M.P. K. Valentine.

The Bishop centered his address at that first convocation on the need for Christian unity, which he urged and advocated not simply to conform to the thinking of the majority in the House of Bishops, but because of his abiding belief. He complained that the Lord's money was wasted through superfluous expenditure by different missionary societies, each striving to ascend in a small community that could be easily supplied with Christian ministrations by one society alone.

The image to the heathen (meaning the unsaved) of a divided Christianity was bad, he maintained. So too was the open rivalry manifested by the sects which suggested hypocrisy and permitted practices widely different from true Christian tenets. He stressed that ties of Christian love should be stronger than the desire of sectarian ascendancy as the important work for God and the black race could only be done by a united effort. Bishop Ferguson noted that the various churches agreed on many essential points of Christian Doctrine. One Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God. This idea he pushed and on February 6, 1895, he formally communicated it to the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Between April 21st and May 1st 1890, the ecumenical conference of foreign missions met in New York City. The Bishop was physically not present, but the convening of the conference was of some consolation to him. An estimated 163,000 persons, including President William McKinley of the United States attended. There the participants recognized the bonds of each other's activity, and agreed finally to avoid rivalry or even the appearance of rivalry.

Feelings were widespread that the word of the Lord would be speedily spread.

At the missionary conference of the Anglican Communion held under the auspices of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England in 1894, Liberia played an innovative role. On the insistence of our Church's delegate, the conference adopted a practice of Mid-Day Prayer for missions that was to be universally observed so that by the diurnal revolution of earth prayers for the success of missionary work would never cease.

The *raison d'être* of the Church's work was and is to spread the word of God. Strategies were employed to convert and win more souls to Christ. At the 2nd General Convocation (1890) in St. Paul's Church, Greenville, the thorny question whether to admit practitioners of polygamy to the church with the view of converting them was broached.

Bishop's stance was unwavering: "...(L)et the work drag on at the old customary rate than fill the churches with people possessing a spurious Christianity that would not be worth the name", he ruled. That put the issue to an end. This was the character of the man Ferguson – unshakable was his belief in the holy Writ.

Work of the Church under Bishop Ferguson expanded further and faster than any previous period. Self-reliance was pushed. The Bishop felt it should not have been expected that the Foreign Board would provide all the Church's need. In fact, he thought it undesirable for the Board to do so even if it could. He told missionaries in a pastoral letter in 1900 that in his view the Foreign Board was just a stimulus to the jurisdiction's own independent efforts; self-pride made it imperative to hasten the Liberian church's own development so the Board could assist other missions.

The twentieth annual report by the Bishop to the Board of Missions, U.S.A., is realistic on this business of self-reliance. A definite nexus between lucrative employment and the spreading of God's Word is drawn.

The Church already had some schools when Dr. Ferguson took over. He revolutionized and expanded them. The schools aspired to be places where the "principles of true Christians freed from taints and moral corruption" were instilled. That was essential from a religious and national standpoint because it was from such institutions that many who succeeded to manage the State evolved.

One deduces from studying the relevant literature that aside from the commonplace notion that the Church's schools are intended to win more converts, a brilliant, less-widely known reason is to train Christians intelligent enough to minister to others; and also skilled enough to generate good personal incomes, portions of which would be donated to enhance the work of the Church. (A sort of ecclesiastical economics, if you will).

During his tenure, Bishop Ferguson consolidated the high school which Bishop Payne opened and carried on at Mount Vaughn with the Hoffman Institute, which was started in 1868 at Cavalla by Rev. Dr. John Auer (later Bishop Auer), and moved them to what was a more central point five miles outside of Cape Palmas. (Today, this site is the home of the Bishop Ferguson High School). From the consolidation of these two schools emerged 'Cuttington'⁴ named after R. Fulton Cutting, once treasurer of the Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The pioneer superintendent appointed to head Cuttington was the Rev. M.P. Keda Valentine, a priest of Grebo ancestry. The first students from there were (from the theological department): Randolph C. Cooper, W. C. Cummings, B. Wade McKrae, M.W. Goda Muhlenberg, Colston M. W. Cooper and T. Momolu Gardiner⁵; and C.A. Lincoln; H. Too Wesley, Samuel J. Dossen, George T. Brewer, and P. J. Hutchins⁶.

⁴ Cuttington College & Divinity School

Four departments constituted Cuttington - a preparatory department, a collegiate department, a theological department and an agricultural department. Except for the preparatory department, it is especially significant that today's Cuttington University College campus at Suakoko houses a collegiate, a theological, and an agricultural discipline. (The Rural Development Institute of the campus houses the agricultural discipline).

Particular attention during this period was given to the women of the Church. Aside from establishing the women's auxiliary immediately after his consecration in 1885, the Bishop expanded opportunities for female education. The girl's school was removed from Cape Mount to the banks of the St. Paul River, about 12 miles from Monrovia, at Bromley. The entire united offering for Africa from the Women's Auxiliary of the Protestant Episcopal Church, three thousand five hundred dollars, was donated to help meet the \$14,000.00 cost of the new school. For this reason, when the main building was dedicated on December 8, 1909, it was named after Julia C. Emery, General Secretary in the United States of the Auxiliary. At the dedicatory service, performed by the Bishop himself, the President of the Republic, Arthur Barclay, the Vice President, high officials of government, and a large gathering of clergy and citizens were in attendance.

Meanwhile, in Cape Palmas, the orphan asylum and girls school in the Brierley Memorial Hall, at Mount Vaughn, about two miles east of Cape Palmas, continued operation. Twenty years after Bishop Ferguson's service, the statistics showed remarkable achievements in the Church's ministry. For example:

Total number of baptisms administered up to 1885	1,809
Total number of baptisms Administered during twenty years	5,019
Total number of persons confirmed up to 1885	1,035
Total number of persons confirmed during twenty years	2,482
Total number of communicants in 1885	419
Total number of communicants in 1905	2,038
Total number of boarding pupils in 1885	192
Total number of boarding pupils in 1905	480
Total number of day-pupils in 1885	145
Total number of day-pupils in 1905	1,034
Estimated value of mission property in 1885	14
Total number of catechists and teachers in 1905	64
Estimated value of mission property in 1885	\$ 22,668.00
Estimated value of mission property in 1905	\$82,600.00

⁵ All six later became Episcopal priests; Gardiner rose to be Suffragan Bishop of Liberia

⁶ All of these gentlemen became eminent statesmen. Wesley, who was Grebo, became Vice President of Liberia.

THE RACE, THE NATION

Samuel David Ferguson was an optimist, a nationalist, and a believer in the destiny of this nation and of this race.

Reporting to the 3rd General Convocation upon returning from a visit in 1893 to the Colombian exposition in Chicago, Illinois, he explained how awed he was by the inventions displayed at what was then the greatest exposition the world had ever seen. While the contrast between the height of civilization attained there and in Africa was glaring and might have discouraged other men, he exclaimed that however impossible it may have seemed for Africa to ascend to such heights, it was certain that “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God, and when God shall have taken hold of the hands untold blessings would follow.”

The Pan African Association which grew out of the conference of distinguished black people, spearheaded by Dr. W.E.B. Dubois, at Westminster Town Hall, London, England, during 1900, which sought, among other things, to secure for Africans and their descendants throughout the world their political and civil rights; to ameliorate conditions of the black race; and to foster friendly relations between the races, deserved fullest support. Therefore, Bishop Ferguson invited support from parishioners for these purposes. He believed extending Christianity and civilization was a sure method of helping to meet the ends desired by the Pan African Association.

In 1885, after his consecration, the Bishop announced his aim to harmonize relations between “the two classes” that made up the population of Liberia: (a) The Africans who returned from forced exile to their motherland and (b) the natives of the country. Samuel David Ferguson said then:

“They are to be united in the bonds of a common brotherhood, having a common interest.... No exceptional policy should be adopted.”

As a result, during his bishopric in all Episcopal schools, pupils shared the same advantages irrespective of background. It pleased him that when he became Bishop the number of communicants was equally divided between the two groups but within twenty years the number of communicants of tribal ancestry doubled those who had returned from exile.

In an attempt to avert hostilities between the two groups in the Cape Palmas area, Bishop Ferguson officially addressed a communication to the king and chiefs of the Grebo tribe and another to the settler community. History shows that unfortunately his advice was not heeded. Wars occurred. The populations of Big Town, Hoffman Station, and Puduke were decimated. Some churchmen felt the Greboes had brought trouble

upon themselves. They told the Bishop: “They (the Greboes) deserve to suffer. Let them suffer and die, body and soul.” In his biennial address in 1911, the Bishop was appalled at this attitude. He said that was an ungodly course to follow. The only way to succeed as a nation was by working together. To those who had returned from exile, he advised:

“We have not come to these shores as an alien people, but have returned to our own kinsmen whom we cannot discard while Negro blood courses through our veins.” Dr. Ferguson’s stance at that time was not a very comfortable one. It invited accusations of treason against him because, among other things, some graduates from the Episcopal schools joined the factions rebelling against the Government. The Bishop invited critics to examine the composition of both sides and they would find, he maintained, more graduates whose parents remained in Africa on Government forces.

In this year, 1985, momentous and historic both for our Church and our State, Episcopalians must bear in mind the words and thoughts of Bishop Ferguson, when St. James’ Church, Hoffman Station, almost perished during the elections around 1900; when houses and properties were destroyed; and many were left homeless.

Bishop Ferguson in a special publication: *Election Evils – A Charge to the Clerical and Lay Members of the Protestant Episcopal Mission in the Jurisdiction of Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent (1910)* said he thought that because majority of the politicians and statesmen were professed Christians, one would think political and social institutions would be safeguarded. Sad was he that holy Christian principles were sacrificed without restraint to get worldly ends. Bishop Ferguson felt that loyalty to political parties must always be subservient to the duty a citizen owes the State. He maintained: “Where party ascendancy or self-aggrandizement is paramountly important to the individual, and the interest of the State is secondary, the individual becomes a dangerous member of society.”

The election evils so angered the Bishop that he complained to the Christians that it could “chill one’s blood” to think of what transpired. Let me quote the Bishop for you: “Election frauds, open handed bribery, and utter disregard of all moral restraints seem to be the order of the day, Men,” he continued, “who at other times are recognized as Christian gentlemen, do not scruple on these occasions to perpetrate offences that are condemned both by God’s law and that of the State... they lose sight of, or completely disregard, their standing in the Church... and will stoop to do the meanest acts.” Now, here was a patriot, a child of God, irked and vexed by professed Christians who he thought set bad examples for non-believers to follow. Reflecting further on those elections, Bishop Ferguson said:

“While important interests were at stake, the interest of the nation, our civil institutions, the building of a Negro nationality on this dark continent, a rotten or sandy foundation of corrupt morals, low chicanery, perjury, bribery and election frauds” was developing. He warned: “A superstructure, reared on such a foundation, however showy, cannot stand.”

May God forbid that one hundred years after Samuel David Ferguson’s consecration, history repeats itself and professed ambassadors of Christ fall guilty of these transgressions!

CONCLUSION

At the general convocation held at Trinity in February 1906, sentiments prevailed to change the name of the jurisdiction from the more cumbersome title “the Missionary District of Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent” to “The Missionary District of Liberia.”

Bishop Ferguson continued as Bishop until 1916, when after 31 years as Bishop, he died at age 74.

I suggest to you, my friends, that Samuel David Ferguson not only looked like a Bishop. He lived an exemplary Christian life worthy of our emulation.

SEWARD MONTGOMERY COOPER’S FATHER, THE HONOURABLE DAUBENY COOPER WAS THE ELDEST SON OF
CYNTHIA SIVINIA FERGUSON COOPER, DAUGHTER OF BISHOP FERGUSON AND , HIS WIFE, MARY
MONTGOMERY FERGUSON.