

ARCHIVES

BX

6480

.P86

G96

1890

Accomack Bap. Asso.
and
Pungoteague Church
Gunter

895

A. B. H. S.
COLLECTION

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
Wake Forest, North Carolina

This book is
from the Library
of



SOUTHEASTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Photomount
Pamp
Blnc
Gaylord
Maki
Syracuse
PAT. JAN 2

AMERICAN BAPTIST
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Benjamin T. Gunter
22 925

1790.

ADDRESS:

MADE AUGUST 14, 1890,

BY JUDGE BENJAMIN T. GUNTER,

AT THE

ACCOMACK BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

VIRGINIA,

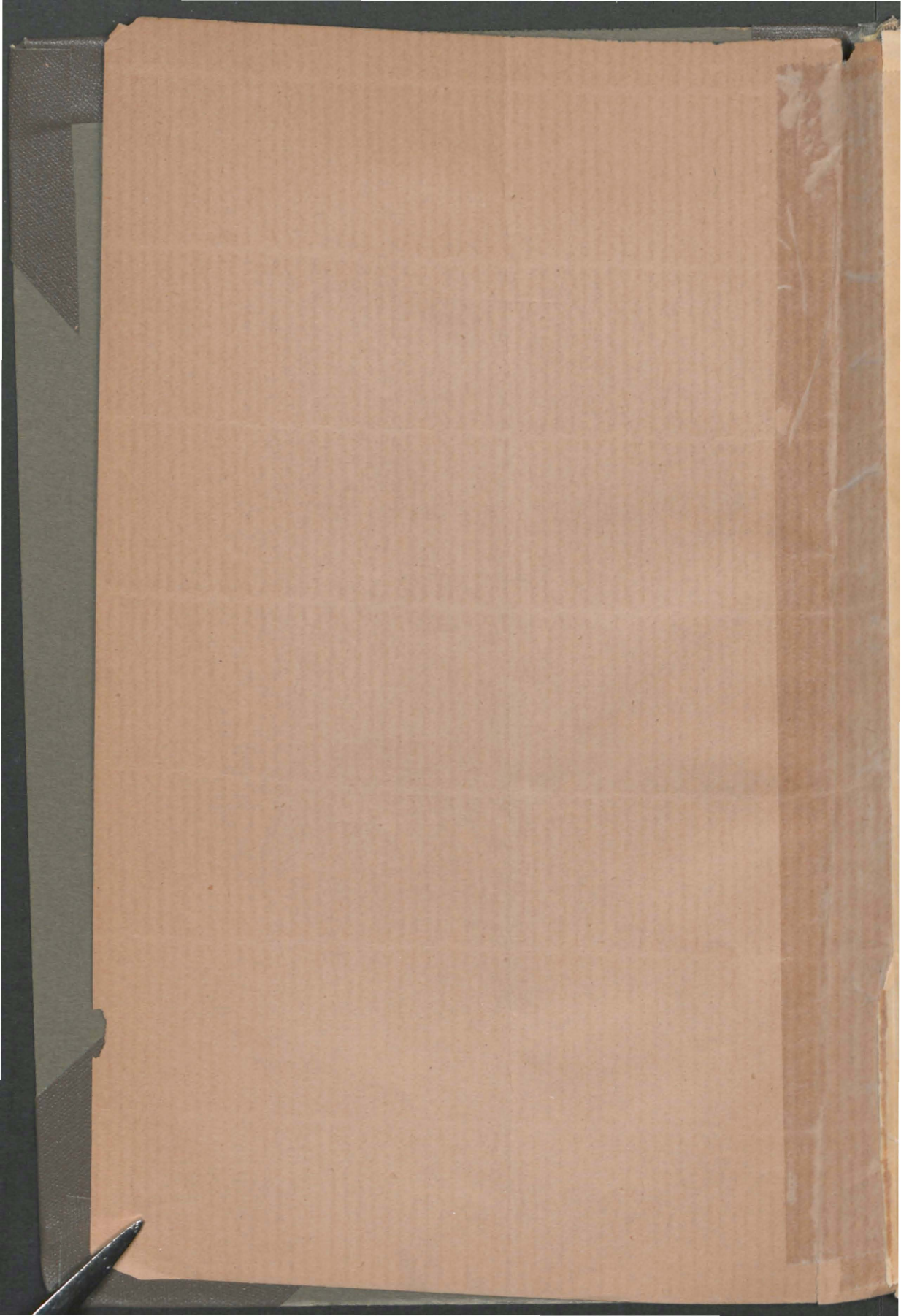
HELD WITH THE

PUNGOTEAGUE CHURCH

THE CENTENNIAL YEAR

OF THAT CHURCH.

1890.



ADDRESS:

MADE AUGUST 14, 1890,

BY JUDGE BENJAMIN T. GUNTER,

AT THE


ACCOMACK BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

HELD WITH THE

PUNGOTEAGUE CHURCH,

THE CENTENNIAL YEAR

OF THAT CHURCH.



BALTIMORE:
PRINTING OFFICE OF J. F. WEISHAMPEL,
No. 413 N. FULTON AVENUE.

ADAMS

W. B. ADAMS

W. B. ADAMS

W. B. ADAMS

W. B. ADAMS

W. B. ADAMS

W. B. ADAMS

ARCHIVES

BX

6480

P86

696

1890

A D D R E S S .

MY BRETHREN AND FRIENDS:

I appear before you in this, the centennial year of the Pungoteague Baptist Church, in response to a resolution unanimously adopted, to speak of its history for the one hundred years of its existence. I feel proud and grateful that you should deem me worthy to represent you on this interesting occasion. I have no difficulty in understanding why you selected me rather than others, who could more happily entertain this large and intelligent audience, and do more honor to the occasion. My selection was doubtless due to the fact that I have been intimately associated with this church from my childhood days; and that I sprang from the loins of a father who was received into its membership as early as 1792, in less than two years after its organization. One who was true to it in prosperity and adversity, and in old age, when life's flickering lamp ceased to burn, died a triumphant death, one of its honored deacons, after more than *forty-eight* years service in the cause of his Lord and Master.

It was on this sacred spot in old Holly's meeting-house, with its high boxed pulpit, more like a prisoner's box than a place for God's servants to deliver *His* message to the people, with its unceiled walls, the rays of the sunlight beaming through the cracks and knot-holes in the weather-boarding; with its seats not more than eight inches wide and no support to the back; heated by an old ten-plate stove, with the light of the wood-fire shining through its badly connected joints, that I, when but a child, first entered a house dedicated to the worship of the living God. It was here that I first heard that grand old hymn,


"Alas, and did my Saviour bleed.

And did my Sovereign die?"

sung by that heavenly choir of brothers and sisters who then occupied the "amen corners" of that old meeting-house; the last but three of whom have gone to sit with Christ and sing the songs of the New Jerusalem around the throne of God.

To do justice to the subject of which I am to speak, it is necessary that I should go beyond the date of the organization of this Church, and take a brief review of the times which preceded it, and the circumstances which surrounded that small but heroic band of Christians, who, taking Christ as their Saviour, and his teachings and that of his Apostles as their guide, have existed from the very foundation of the Christian religion. It is claimed by some that the Baptists have no history, and by others that they date back only to Roger Williams, and were unknown until his day. Doubtless many who make that assertion are honest in their opinion.

It is true that in the days of Christ and his Apostles, there was no church or denomination known as Baptist, and it is equally true, there was no church or denomination known as Roman Catholics or Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists or Lutherans. Such a designation is not given within the lids of the Bible, to any body of believers. But there were independent organizations, such as the Church at Corinth, the Churches at Galatia, and many others, constituted and organized,


SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
Wake Forest, North Carolina

under the great Commission of our Saviour, given to his Apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned:" and composed of Christian believers taught and instructed in the doctrines preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost, when "there were added unto them about three thousand souls" of those who were instructed by him to "repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ."

These were the doctrines taught by Christ and his Apostles, and that church which now teaches and most nearly adheres to them and whose members more nearly follow the example of our Saviour, "when he went from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him," "and when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water," can truly and honestly claim to antedate all others.

It is equally true that our Saviour had not long ascended into heaven, before his followers were persecuted, and contentions and corruptions crept into the churches, constituted under the eye and supervision of his Apostles. And the Apostle Paul not twenty-five years after the death and ascension of Christ, in writing to the Galatians, deploras the fact that "there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

In the earlier periods of Christianity, power, authority and influence were in the hands of believers, but as time passed, the original constitutions of the primitive churches were lost sight of and their simplicity corrupted, by an alliance with civil government. The churches, forgetting the teaching of our Saviour "to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's," having allied themselves with the civil government, soon, we are told by an eminent man, "the churchmen became the statesmen, the rulers, the administrators, the jurists, diplomatists and even the warriors of stormy days." It is very easy to see how quickly the churches lost sight of their primitive character, and how soon those that adhered to the teachings of our Saviour, were driven into obscurity by the great ruling church, with all power under its control; and it is quite as easy to see how soon the church, when it became the doorway to place and power, became corrupt and profligate. In these degenerate days those that adhered to the teachings of Christ and his Apostles, *although some there were*, were driven into obscurity and have no place in history. The doorway to place and power was through the church, and no position or place could be held by others than those who were allied with the church. And even "when the Reformation occurred and peoples and rulers revolted against the corruptions and usurpations of the See of Rome, still they stopped short of the New Testament doctrines," and as we are told, "the countries which renounced the Pope committed the error of substituting something in lieu of that dominion or supremacy which the Pope had exercised." "The authority which was denied to Rome was arrogated by Protestant governments and religious organizations."

Whosoever reigned established the religion. "Spiritual dominion resting on grace and truth" was comprehended by few, and the religion of the civil ruler, however corrupt, was the religion of the nation. Then a religion founded upon the New Testament and believers who took it for their guide, were driven into obscurity.

In England, severe pains and penalties were prescribed against all who failed to recognize the established church. And when this now free land of America was discovered, and many of our ancestors sought its inhospitable shores that they might worship God according to the dictates of their consciences, the greatest woes were pronounced against them.

In the charter of Virginia granted November 20th, 1606, "the presidents and councils and the ministers of the several Colonies were charged with all diligence and care to provide that the true word and service of God and Christian faith be preached not only within every one of the said Colonies and plantations, but also among the savage people, according to the doctrine, rights and religion now professed and established within our realms of England, and that they should not suffer any person to withdraw any of the subjects or inhabitants from the same. And if they should find any so offending they should with all diligence cause him or them so offending to be imprisoned until he should thoroughly reform himself, or otherwise when the cause so requireth, that he shall, with all convenient speed, be sent into our realm of England, here to receive condign punishment for his or their said offence or offences." (1 Hen. Stat. p. 69.)

As early as 1639 to 1642, laws were enacted against the Puritans, "to prevent the infection from reaching this country." Another law forbade a minister to officiate who had not received ordination from some bishop in England, and under this law ministers were expelled the colony. Severe laws were enacted against those refusing to have their infants baptized; one of which declared that "many schismatical persons, out of aversion to the orthodox established religion, or out of new-fangled conceits of their own heretical inventions, refusing to have their children baptized, should be amerced two thousand pounds of tobacco, half to the parish, and half to the informer." (II Hen. Stat. p. 165.) Glebes were established by forced assessments. Marriages unless celebrated by Episcopal ministers were invalid, and as a consequence the issue of those so married bastardized.

And this intolerance and bigotry was not confined alone to Virginia, for in Georgia offence was taken at John Wesley the great founder of Methodism, for his rigid adherence to the custom of baptizing by immersion. (Curr Establ't and Disestabl't. p. 43.)

Is it strange then that during all these times the little band of Baptists then existing should be without a written history? From the earlier centuries, when civil and ecclesiastical government were united, they were denied the privilege of worshiping God, except in secret; required to conform to the ecclesiastical authorities of the country in which they were, or accept persecution in its worst form; denied the privilege of holding even the most menial office or position, their marriages unrecognized and their children bastardized.

But with all these persecutions, they did exist and have existed from the days of Christ and his Apostles; and to them be the honor and glory, through the providence of God, of first declaring the inalienable right of all men to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience; of establishing a government in whose charter or fundamental law, for the first time was announced the doctrine that no person shall "be in any wise molested, punished or called in question for any difference of opinion in matters of religion; but that all and every person

and persons may, from time to time, and at all times thereafter, freely and fully have and enjoy his and their own judgment and consciences in matters of religious concernment." "It was in little Rhode Island that religious liberty first found a home, its only home, in the wide world." And it is to the honor of Roger Williams, a Baptist, banished from Massachusetts for a difference of religious opinion from the civil powers, an exile for conscience' sake, that religious freedom first had a home in the Colonies of North America. In 1636, he obtained the charter from Charles II granting these privileges.

Notwithstanding the restraints upon religious liberty imposed both in England and in this country, although there were many complaints, it is a remarkable fact "there was really less difference of opinion between the Colonies and the mother country upon this than upon almost any other subject relating to the administration of government. There was a marked absence of complaint on this subject. Even the Declaration of Independence, in its indictment against the King of Great Britain for his attempt to establish an absolute tyranny over the States, omits reference to this injury."

The Baptists, in their efforts to secure religious liberty and the absolute separation of Church and State, at first met with but little sympathy, even among those who were prominent in their efforts for the independence of the Colonies. In 1774, in Massachusetts, eighteen men were imprisoned in jail for declining to pay ministerial rates in support of the established church. An agent was sent to Congress which met in Philadelphia in September of that year, bearing a letter, in which the petitioners allege that they had "long been denied the free and full enjoyment of their rights as to the support of religious worship." John Adams said to the agent that "we might as well expect a change in the solar system as to expect they would give up their establishment," and that "the Baptists might as soon expect the people to submit to the Port Bill and the Murder Bill, as to their demands for religious liberty." And it was not until 1833, by an amendment to her Bill of Rights, that Massachusetts put herself square on the principle of soul liberty.

Virginia was the territory upon which the great battle for religious liberty was fought, and our Baptist fathers were the leaders in the struggle. There were undoubtedly a large number of the early settlers of this State who held Baptist views, but the severe laws which were enacted held them in check and kept them from a public acknowledgement of their faith.

About 1714, the Baptists appeared openly in this Colony, and Rives, in his *Life of Madison*, (pp. 42, 44,) says, "they fell particularly under the persecutions of the dominant authority, and were confined in close jail for publishing their religious sentiments." Dr. Hawks, the Episcopal historian, says, "they were subjected to unusual hardships."

Notwithstanding the Act of Toleration adopted in England in 1689, during the first year of the reign of William and Mary, which is entitled "An Act for Exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the Penalties of certain Laws," "the Colonial authorities contended that this was not operative in Virginia; and it was kept as much as possible from the knowledge of the people."

Baptist churches were first organized in southeastern Virginia, and soon after began to spread rapidly, not only in the country south

of the James River, but also in the territory north of it, and the persecutions to which they were subjected served but to increase their zeal. Relying upon the truth as taught in the New Testament, and taking none other for their rule of faith and conduct, they braved all the consequences. They began to spread rapidly, not only among the common people, but large numbers of the educated and influential, who had been brought up in the Episcopal Church, were impressed with the truth and flocked to the standard of the persecuted Baptists. This excited the envy and hatred of the establishment, and every means was resorted to by the clergy to destroy their influence and check their progress. The rulers who were necessarily adherents to the church, for none others were allowed to hold office, were appealed to, and upon the most frivolous pretexts Baptist ministers were arrested and cast into prison. (Curry, 54.) "Members of the House of Burgesses were expelled for their religious opinions; worshiping congregations were rudely dispersed; ordinances were interrupted and preachers were beaten, fined and imprisoned." The same historian of the Episcopal Church above referred to, Dr. Hawks, says "Cruelty taxed its ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance."

June 4, 1668, John Waller and others, for preaching the gospel, were arrested and imprisoned in Spottsylvania jail. In December, 1740, William Webber and Joseph Anthony, for the same offence, were imprisoned in Chesterfield jail, and there held until the next March: While in jail, they preached to crowds through the prison grates, and a great revival was the result. In August, 1771, John Waller and others were arrested and imprisoned in Middlesex jail, upon a warrant issued by Philip Montague; which warrant I have seen. It is now in Richmond College Library. It charges them "with being at a conventicle or unlawful assembly of many persons at the house of James Mehan, under the pretense of the exercise of religion in other manner than that according to the liturgy and practice of the Church of England," and because they had taken upon themselves to teach or preach, not having Episcopal ordination to teach or preach the gospel according to the canons of the Church of England. Others were imprisoned in Culpeper, the Baptist church now occupying the very spot where the old jail stood; and yet others in King and Queen, Hanover and Accomack, this county of ours not being free from such persecutions.

So far as was known there were no Baptists on the Eastern Shore until the advent of ELIJAH BAKER. He was born in Lunenburg County, Virginia, in 1742, was baptized in 1769 by Samuel Harris, the most distinguished Baptist minister of that day. Mr. Baker came to the Eastern Shore from Gloucester County, arriving on Easter Sunday, 1776. And we are told by Mr. Semple, a Baptist historian, "He immediately went to a church, where an established clergyman was that day to preach and administer the sacrament. Finding the preacher did not come, Mr. Baker told the people he would preach for them, if they would go down the road. Mr. Baker had no other pulpit but the end of a horsing tree, which having mounted, he began the most successful ministerial labors that has fallen to the lot of any man. He continued his labors from house to house, and when he left, he appointed to return again at Whitsuntide." When he returned he found that his preaching had created great excitement and had stirred up the parish clergyman who had appointed to preach against the Baptists. Mr.

Baker and his company went to hear him. The people followed Baker and that night he preached at a Mrs. Hunt's, supposed to be in the lower part of Northampton and whose descendants are believed to be now living in that part of the Peninsula. His labors were greatly blessed. He became at once a resident. After he married, he settled in Northampton. So great was the animosity created against him, that an atrocious attempt was made to kidnap and take him to Europe. Being on board the schooner he obtained permission of the captain to preach to the sailors, and the captain being so much impressed with his preaching, without delay landed him on shore. But his persecutions did not end here, although in the midst of the Revolution, in the county of Accomack, upon a charge of vagrancy made by the church wardens, he was arrested and carried before the court on the 27th of May, 1778, and was required to depart the county and that he should not presume to preach therein until he produced proper credentials. Failing to obey their behests, on the 1st day of July, 1778, he was committed to prison for a period of fifty-six days until the 25th of August following. Copies of these orders I have in my possession, having searched for and found them at the request of an eminent Baptist. Not daunted by these persecutions, he went forward with his work, multitudes flocked to hear him and gladly received the truth. That very year he organized the Lower Northampton church. He organized Messongo in 1779. Hunger's, now Red Bank, in 1783. Metompkin in 1785. Chincoteague in 1786. And in 1790, along with George Layfield, *Pungoteague*, whose centennial we now celebrate.

If time permitted, I would with pleasure, give you a more detailed history of the Virginia Baptists from the time of their first appearance and the organization of their first church to the Revolution; a more particular narrative of the struggles, privations and hardships with which they had to contend, and sketch the persecutions and means resorted to, to deprive them of their dearest rights. I would read to you fuller extracts from the laws adopted, imprisoning them for daring to teach and preach doctrines other than those taught by the establishment, or if they could not be reclaimed, sending them to England for punishment; laws requiring them to go to a minister of the establishment to give a true account of themselves; to attend the Episcopal services every Sunday; to pay their taxed assessments for the support of the Episcopal Church, with which they had no sympathy; laws punishing them if they taught any catechism but that contained in the book of common prayer; laws requiring them to conform to the church and fined if they failed to do so, and if not reclaimed in twelve months, imprisoned until they did conform; laws imposing heavy fines for failing to have their children baptized; requiring their dead to be buried according to the ceremony of the established church and all marriages to be celebrated by an Episcopal clergyman.

It would give me still more pleasure to describe to you the manner in which they met these persecutions; how they preached the gospel of Christ, from the barred windows of the jails in which they were confined and how they sang hallelujahs on their way to prison. How by the blessing of God these persecutions gave them strength, and the churches increased; how many of the educated and wealthy raised in the Episcopal church heard and believed and united their fortunes

with the oppressed and persecuted saints; and how by the blessing of God upon the truth, assisted by profligacy of the clergy of the established church, they became a large and powerful denomination even before the Revolution.

It would be a subject of interest to review the part taken by Baptists in that great struggle; and to read to you the address of the General Association of Virginia to the Virginia Convention adopted as early as August, 1775; declaring themselves in favor "of military resistance to Great Britain in her unjust invasion, tyrannical oppression and repeated hostilities." (Howell 143. Semple 62.)

At this very Association in 1775, long before the Virginia Convention instructed her delegates in the Colonial Congress to vote for the Declaration of Independence, the Baptists, as a body and unanimously, had taken the same position. At the same time, the General Association declared for "religious freedom," not alone for themselves, but also for the whole people. The other religious denominations also addressed the Convention. But none other came up to the full standard of an entire separation of church and state and for "religious freedom to all."

Of the Presbyterian petition Dr. Foote, their historian says: "They were for an ill-defined liberty of conscience, and the disseverance of religion from the civil power." (Sketches of Va., p. 323.) The Methodists, then not a separate organization, joined heartily the Episcopal church in all its struggles to retain its position as the established church of the colony. (Howell 145 to 150.)

It was the Baptists who through their organizations, first the "General Association" and next the "General Committee," formed for the express purpose of securing religious liberty, and breaking up the establishment, enlisted the sympathy of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, whom they ever after found steadfast friends. It was the Baptists who inaugurated as early as 1775, the movement, which, though postponed, was by the assistance of these two great statesmen, carried through, and in December, 1785, ended in triumph by the adoption of the bill for establishing religious freedom, drawn by Thomas Jefferson, and the authorship of which he regarded as one of the great acts of his life, so much so, that he directed it to be noted upon his tomb.

My brethren we have a glorious history, and if your ancestors had followed up the work so gloriously begun, by the education of their children and the preservation of their church history, your denomination now numbering more than any other in the State would be stronger than it is.

I fear that I have devoted too much time to our church history, and the times preceding the organization of this church but I could not pass by the opportunity, knowing as I do, that so little is known of it by, even, most of its members, and hoping I might be able to interest you in the subject, and induce you to seek more light upon it.

The PUNGOTEAGUE BAPTIST CHURCH, was organized in 1790, by Elijah Baker and George Layfield. Of its early history we have but little information. The church records up to the 15th of February, 1834, have been lost or destroyed. I have sought all the sources of information at my command, that I might be able to give you a reliable sketch of its history, and have great confidence that you will find the

statements made in reference to it, if not in all respects, absolutely correct, as nearly so as can be made.

The first pastor was George Layfield, who was born in Maryland, October 27th, 1749. Mr. Semple, in his history of Virginia Baptists, says: "He was a Presbyterian previous to his hearing the Baptists, and could not for some time after he heard them and loved them, bring his mind to be willing to give up his infant sprinkling. He finally yielded to the force of truth, and being baptized, commenced preaching. In point of talent Mr. Layfield may be considered as standing on respectable ground." He was a man of great piety, cheerful manners, and what would be styled in this day, of great personal magnetism. Some time after the organization of this church, he was invited to be its pastor, and sustained that relation to the end of his life in 1814.

As early as 1784, the *Salisbury Association* was formed of the churches planted by Elijah Baker on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, and this church after its organization united with it, and so continued until 1808, when the Virginia churches, were regularly dismissed to form the Accomack Association.

ACCOMACK ASSOCIATION.

The Accomack Association had its first meeting with this church, in 1809, and its then pastor George Layfield was its first Moderator and William Costan, Clerk. The churches forming the Association were Lower Northampton, Hungers (or Red Bank,) Pungoteague, Messongo, Metompkin, Chincoteague, Marshapungo. Of these, four belong now to this Association, two are extinct, and the remaining one, Messongo, adhering to the Old School Baptists, withdrew in 1831, and although it now exists in name, its vitality has long since disappeared. Metompkin torn asunder in the great Antinomian war, the threatenings of which were heard as early as 1809 or 1810, and which culminated in an open rupture in 1831, having its meeting-house destroyed by a tornado, dissolved in 1834; but the territory occupied by it is still held by the Baptists, and several large and influential churches have been formed within it. Marshapungo, (or Machapungo,) I believe, was organized by or through the influence of Elders Caleb and Alfred Fisher, and had its location in the old Union meeting-house about a mile below Bell Haven. After the deaths of these two brothers and before 1831, it ceased to exist.

When this Church was organized in 1790, the Baptist cause on the Eastern Shore, was in an extremely flourishing and hopeful condition. The Methodist church had been organized but a few years and the course of the Episcopal church had rendered it extremely unpopular. And Mr. Semple in his history says, that in 1809, Pungoteague was a "large and happy church." It numbered 135 members, but soon after began to decline; in 1831 numbering 93. In the interim between 1809 and 1831, George Layfield was its pastor until his death in 1814. Thomas Waters is also said to have served it in that capacity for a period and Stephen Woolford, Purnell T. Outen and James Rounds, as well as Captain Samuel Waples preached for it more or less often.

Noah Davis, the father of the distinguished and learned professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Virginia, was a member from March 28 to October 3, 1824, and I am confident preached for this church, during that time, possibly longer "and was probably succeeded by Purnell T. Outen and William Laws, the latter of whom was pas-

tor in 1831." It is also probable, that Alfred and Caleb Fisher, T. Dilastatius and Levin Dix preached for it occasionally during this period.

The most prominent laymen were Thomas Sturgis, Joseph Gunter and Charles Beloate and sisters Elizabeth Bradford, the mother of Geo. Bradford, Sabra P. Waples, the wife of Capt. Sam'l Waples, and others.

The history of the Pungoteague church between 1809 and 1831 is a sad one. Described by Semple as a happy church in 1809, before 1831, it was torn by dissension, characterized by the most intense bitterness. A majority of the Elders in the Association adopted the highest Calvinistic doctrines, and taught and preached them whenever occasion permitted; and instead of exhorting sinners to repentance, some of the more advanced, we are told, absolutely refused to preach the gospel to sinners, and opposed all missionary efforts. These feelings and sentiments being cultivated, became stronger and stronger until they absolutely tore asunder and alienated the dearest ties of blood as well as of brotherhood in the church. The great leaders in this war were among the ordained ministers, Thomas Walters, Purnell T. Outen and T. C. Dilastatius, whilst the opposition was led by Levin Dix and William Laws.

No church in the Association, perhaps, had more influential laymen, and in none was there more bad feeling. On the one side there were such men as Capt. Samuel Waples, Thos. Sturgis and Custis Northam, and on the other Jos. Gunter, Chas. Beloate, Thos. Mason, and others.

This controversy was waged with great bitterness, not only in this church but throughout the Association; so much so that when the Association met at Messongo, in 1831, "Elder Thomas Waters arose and assumed authority to dissolve the Accomack Baptist Association, and proclaimed that from that time the Accomack Baptist Association was no more." This occurred on Saturday. On the next Monday morning, Aug. 22, the Association again met, and was organized with Levin Dix as Moderator and Wm. Laws Clerk. The delegates from this Church at this stormy meeting, were Joseph Gunter, Chas. Beloate and Thos. Mason. Four churches were represented, who, together with Modest Town, then admitted, aggregated a membership of 450, and this number was still further reduced at the next Association. In 1833, the Association met at the house of Mrs. E. Barnes, near the meeting-house at Metompkin. The party represented by Purnell T. Outen, and others claiming also to be the Accomack Association, occupied the meeting-house. The separation of the Accomack Association then became a fixed fact. And the party to which this Church adhered, guided by such men as Levin Dix and William Laws, having present as advisers such visiting brethren as R. B. C. Howell, John Ker, J. B. Jeter and R. Lilybridge, were equal to the occasion; the "gordian knot" was cut. Resolutions excluding from the Association Purnell T. Outen and T. C. Dilastatius were adopted, and the churches were requested to exclude, without delay, their members who should adhere to that party and refuse to submit to discipline. In pursuance thereto, as appears from the minutes of the Association of 1834, nine were excluded from Pungoteague, most of whom had been prominent in the Church. But these, I presume from what is said in the minutes of 1833, had previously voluntarily gone off and ceased to affiliate with the others. Under the name of the "Pungoteague Church," those that went off assembled and held services in the "old meeting and school-house" situ-

ated in Slutkill New, near the spot where "Andrews' Chapel" is now located. This had previously been one of the outposts of Pungoteague Church.

In the report on the State of the Churches, in the minutes of 1834, it is said that Pungoteague had for years almost insurmountable difficulties to encounter. "They have been much annoyed by self-styled Old School Baptists; those of the antinomian principles went off; a general calm has prevailed. Some of the church members love the world more than God. At present, prospects are more encouraging; the congregations are large and serious. Elder Wm. Laws has had the pastoral care of this Church for about two years."

Prior to this time there was erected by this Church the "Cross Roads meeting-house," located at the Cross Roads, now Onley Station, afterward removed on the Locustville road to a place now occupied by a school house. This was used as a neighborhood school house and place of worship for the Baptists. Services were frequently held in it by Baptist Elders serving the Church, and other Elders and licentiates. A large number of the prominent members of this Church residing in that neighborhood, business and prayer meetings were frequently held in it. It was burnt down in 18—, by an incendiary as was supposed.

About 1833, "Zoar Meeting-house" was built by Joseph Gunter, on his farm, near Locustville, and dedicated to the Baptists. Services were regularly held in it during his life, and for a short period thereafter. Elders Wm. Laws, Joseph Walker, Wm. Wilkerson and Wm. Fisher are remembered as having held regular services there. The first business meeting of the Pungoteague Church, of which there is any record extant was held in this meeting-house, Feb. 15, 1834, Wm. Laws being present as pastor, and Asa Shield as clerk.

I come now to the history of the Pungoteague Church from 1831 to 1890: necessarily omitting many details I have secured, for fear of exhausting your patience.

Elder Wm. Laws was its pastor from 1831 to April 16, 1838. Abel Harwood was in May, 1836, employed to preach, I presume, as an assistant, or possibly as a supply for its pastor, during his absence, for Elder Laws held the position of pastor, as appears from the minutes of the Association of that year.

No sketch of the Association or of this Church, of which he was not only pastor, but a member from April 4 to Dec. 24, 1828, can be complete with a bare reference to this *grand and good man*. I esteem it one of the highest privileges of my life to have known him well and enjoyed his friendship from my early childhood to the day of his death, Oct. 19, 1861. He was born near Modest Town, in this county, Sept. 10, 1795, converted in September, 1816, and licensed to preach by Metompin Church in 1827, where his labors as pastor commenced. His education was limited, but his active mind was well stored with information gained by devoting such leisure hours as he could spare from his ever active vocations, but especially from observation and experience. He was not a learned theologian, but the man was to be sympathized with who engaged him in a discussion of the doctrines of the Bible, and especially of those which bore upon distinctive Baptist principles. His vocations were many, farmer, merchant and preacher. He was a success in all, and knew much of medicine and was well versed in law. His energy was proverbial, and many of the older persons who now hear

me could interest you with anecdotes of his busy and successful life. He was unswerving in his character, never feared an enemy or deserted a friend. While actively engaged in commercial and mercantile pursuits, nothing could induce him to violate the Sabbath. He believed there was a time for all things, as illustrated by his action in a severe storm at sea, when the only hands on board his schooner were its captain and one other. The captain deserted his post and went to the cabin to pray. Seeing him on his knees, he called aloud, "Captain Walker, come out of there! There's a time for all things. You ought to have done your praying in a calm; now is the time to work and save this schooner." The captain obeyed and the schooner was saved. This incident I have from his own lips. Being a Baptist, he imbibed the political principles of Jefferson, who had done so much to help the Baptists in their struggles for religious liberty, and along with them his notions of slavery. Known to be opposed to slavery, he did not fear to boldly proclaim his principles, but no one feared William Laws as an enemy of Virginia. On one occasion, at a large gathering of northern Baptists, when the subject of slavery was being discussed, he told them he was opposed to slavery, but it was none of their business; the South could and had a right to settle this matter for itself and in its own way. My brethren, his like will not be seen soon again in this Association. He has left an impress which none but a man of his godly character could.

During the pastorate of Elder William Laws, the Church was at first prosperous. In 1834, extricating herself from all her difficulties, by cutting off from her fellowship all that troubled her, in 1835 she was prosperous. God seemed to smile upon her during that year; twenty were added by baptism, and among that number many of its most active, energetic and godly members, both male and female. Among that number were George S. Savage and Margaret Savage his wife, and our honored deceased brother George Bradford, who died Dec. 29, 1888, and whose remains were laid to rest at this place. He was converted in 1835, and on Dec. 29 of that year, was by Abel Harwood, at the Warehouse, near here, baptized. On Oct. 24 of the same year, Thos. Mason, who had been for some time a prominent member of this Church, was licensed to preach, and on the same day preached his first sermon here. It was also in this year that the first Baptist campmeeting was held in a beautiful grove near Modest Town, belonging to Mr. John Turlington. There are now but three living who were members of this Church at that time, Asa Shields, Miss Harriet Bradford, the venerable sister of Elder George Bradford, and Mrs. Margaret Savage, relict of deacon Geo. S. Savage. In 1837, Elder Abel Harwood died, and a notice of his death appears in the minutes of the Association of that year. On March 31, Geo. S. Savage was made a deacon, which position he held during life. It was also in this year, these grounds were, by purchase from George Bradford, increased one-half an acre. After 1835, the Church did not seem to be so prosperous during the pastorate of Elder Laws. Much of its time seems to have been occupied in looking after its unfaithful members. In 1835 the Church numbered 107, in 1838 it numbered 92 members.

Elder Joseph Walker, that venerable servant and minister of the Most High, who still lives and is eighty-six years of age, made his first appearance in the Association at Lower Northampton Church in 1837,

and was in less than a month thereafter called to the pastorate of this Church and served it until June 20, 1840. On the day of his resignation, on motion of deacon Joseph Gunter, the Church "granted license to George Bradford to preach where God in his providence might cast his lot." Elder Walker preached faithfully to good congregations during his pastorate; he had the love and affection of his congregation as well as of his members. Many members were added by baptism during this period—in 1838 as many as sixteen, but the membership was reduced from 111 in 1837 to 101 in 1840, showing that many unworthy were excluded. In 1839, deacon Joseph Gunter for the last time appeared as delegate in the Association, which met with this Church. In 1840, though appointed as a delegate, he was too feeble to attend. The last church meeting attended by him was held in September, 1840. On the 8th of October following, he peacefully expired. He was my father, and whilst his life and character merit a more extended notice, my relationship forbids my saying more of him than I have.

It is probable that George Bradford preached for this Church in 1840, after the resignation of Elder Walker, though not ordained until after September, 1841, when the Church requested his ordination. Elder P. Warren, jr., also served it during the year, but whether as its regular pastor or not I do not know.

Elder P. Warren, jr., was its pastor in 1841, and so continued to April 8, 1843, when he resigned. The year 1842 was one of prosperity, the Spirit of the Lord was with his people, the church was revived, 37 were added by baptism, and the membership reported at 130.

Elder George Bradford was its pastor in 1842, and it was characterized by a great change. In the minutes of the Association for 1843, "Pungoteague is reported as in a languishing condition, with but few efficient members, and her meeting-house in bad order, insomuch that public worship is dispensed with during the cold season."

In 1844, 1845, 1846 and up to October, 1847, the Church was pastorless. This was a period of great religious depression and inactivity. With no pastor, no Sunday school, and the members cold and indifferent to the cause of Christ. In the Association in 1845, the committee on the state of the churches "recommended the appointment of a day of humiliation, and prayer that the Lord would revive his work in their midst." From May 14, 1844, to July 17, 1846, there seems to have been no church meeting, or if there was, no record was kept of it.

In 1846, her membership, white and colored, was reduced to 67, and her condition so deplorable, the committee on the state of the churches in the Association of that year, reported "that it knew not from her situation how she can be regularly supplied with the preached word; unless a missionary is put into the field, and instructed to pay particular attention to her." In 1847, no delegates to the Assoc'n were appointed.

In Oct., 1847, Elder P. Warren, jr., was called and accepted the pastorate again, and is recorded as its pastor in the minutes of 1848. During this short pastorate there was a more hopeful outlook.

Elder William Wilkerson was pastor in 1849. Of this period there is nothing of interest to tell. Bro. Wilkerson was a pious, good man, of moderate gifts, little education and poorly adapted to building up a weak church. He labored faithfully but with little visible effect.

There was no recorded church meeting from December, 1848, to July, 1850. The death of so prominent a member as deacon Charles Beloate

in 1845, is not even recorded. In 1849, the old meeting-house was turned around, improved and made comfortable. It is worthy of record here that during this whole period, those two faithful servants of God, George Bradford and Geo. S. Savage were never absent from the Association, whether the Church had appointed delegates or not.

In 1850, Rev. Wm. Fisher, who had come to the Baptists from the Methodist Protestant Church, as missionary of the Accomack Association served this Church. In 1851, Elder Fisher was called to its pastorate, and served until June, 1860, when he resigned to take a field in what is now West Virginia. He still lives. In 1850, the Association met again with this Church. It was during the ministry of Elder Fisher in 1850, the first dawn of hope appeared for many years. The Church was revived, the congregation increased, and in October of that year many converts were baptized and received into the Church. In 1851, there were twenty additions by baptism. Jan'y 18th, resolutions were adopted, showing that the Church was thoroughly aroused. About June of that year, the first Sabbath school was organized, and in September it numbered 70 members, with two hundred volumes in its library. And in this year also dawned the first general spirit of liberality. On Oct. 11, immediately succeeding a great revival, and on the day when thirteen were added by baptism, they recalled their pastor and voted him a large increase of salary. Thus you see it was true then as now, that when the Church is aroused and the spirit and love of Christ are in his people, they will be liberal in giving to promote his cause. A female benevolent society was formed in 1854, under the leadership of Miss Sarah T. Waples, which was the parent of the Onancock Sewing Society, which latter has proved a great blessing to that Church. Afterwards the salary of the pastor was again increased. The Church continued to prosper until the resignation of Eld. Fisher in 1860, after which for the balance of the year there were no regular services.

Elder George Bradford was again called to the pastorate in 1861, and served also in 1862. The blighting effect of the War was upon the Church, and in 1862 its letter to the Association reported "less interest in spiritual things." Elders John H. Phillips and Geo. Bradford supplied the Church in 1863. In 1864, Elder Phillips was pastor until October, when Rev. I. F. Stidham was called and filled the place until March 25, 1865, when his name last appears in the church record. If the Church had any regular meeting for business in 1863 and 1864, no record of it is preserved.

Elder G. F. Adams was called as pastor Feb. 10, 1865, and served in 1865 and 1866. The subject of introducing a melodeon into the Sunday school, which had been organized and kept up, mainly by the efforts of Bro. John L. Groton and his lovely christian wife, and Miss Sue Rogers, seems to have agitated the Church in 1867 more than the conversion of sinners. The minutes report Elder P. Warren as pastor in 1867. In 1868 she had no pastor. The colored members withdrew, leaving a white membership of 105. In 1869 there was no pastor, but thro' the efforts of the same christian workers, a Sabbath school was maintained.

Again in 1870, this church was unrepresented in the Association, as had previously been the case, in 1869.

Elder Drury A. Woodson, probably preached for the church in 1870, but there is nothing either in the church records or minutes of the As-

sociation, except that he was present at a meeting of the church, March 26, 1870, to establish the fact. At this time he appears as pastor of four other churches and could not have rendered much service here.

Rev. Henry Petty, as missionary of the State Mission Board, served the church for a short period of time in 1871; but his services seemed not to be appreciated; the church was cold and indifferent, its membership reduced to 60, and he withdrew.

In September of that year, *M. C. Rhoads* of North Carolina, whose exact status in the Baptist Church is, and was then unknown, was called to the pastorate. He seemed to have awakened some interest, for a short time, but his influence was not good, and in October, 1872, by a vote of the church his services were dispensed with. This year the Sunday school again disappeared.

It was in this year, the church met with a great loss, in the death of Deacon George S. Savage. For some years he had been unable to attend regularly the services of the church. Deeply grieved at the loss of several of his noble sons; reduced by the results of the War from wealth and competency to a scanty support; his homestead surrendered, to meet his pecuniary obligations, which he paid to the last dollar; broken down in health and depressed in spirits, but with a firm and unshaken faith in his Redeemer, he passed from earth to heaven.

Rev. E. M. Buynr, served as pastor in 1873 and 1874. The church records are very incomplete for these years. The Association met here in 1873. The congregations were large, the gospel was ably preached, but the pastor was impractical. The church membership was reduced in 1873, to 32 and in 1874, to 30, the lowest number since its organization.

Rev. F. R. Boston was called to the pastorate in 1874, commenced on the 4th Sunday in December of that year, and continued until November 16, 1876, when he resigned. With his pastorate commenced the longest period of uninterrupted prosperity Pungoteague church has ever known, extending to the present time. From 30 members in 1874 she now numbers 170, largely composed of young and energetic men and women. With his pastorate new life was infused; the congregations and contributions increased. The pastor and several boards of the Association were well sustained, and the Sunday school increased and prospered.

Rev. S. C. Boston succeeded his son as pastor, early in 1876, and continued until October 7, 1883. During this period the membership increased from 60 in 1875 to 103 in 1883. And all the benevolent objects of the church and the Sunday school were well supported. He served faithfully the church. But the pastorate of three churches required a younger and more robust man. Enfeebled by old age and ill health, he resigned his charge, to accept a call from Pocomoke church, which many years before he had organized, and under whose fostering care it had grown and strengthened. He died in 1887.

I come now to the period of its greatest prosperity.

Rev. John W. Hundley was called as its pastor on January 1, 1884, and continued as such until January 1, 1890. When called it had a membership of 103, on January 1, 1890, he left it with a membership of 170. During the whole period of his service the course of the church was onward and upward. When he commenced his pastorate, the services were held in a small, plain but comfortable, meeting-house, which

had been greatly improved in 1849. During his service this beautiful house was erected, and on September 2, 1888, free of debt, dedicated to the Most High, by its faithful member, Rev. George Bradford.

John W. Hundley, bade farewell to his church and a large congregation of his regular hearers, with tears of regret and a hearty God speed by all, in December, 1889. No church ever had a more lovely, faithful and godly pastor; and no pastor ever left a church more to the regret of its members and large congregation. They will ever rejoice with him in his rejoicings and mourn with him in his afflictions. Oh how sad it is that in God's providence, such a noble pastor should be called to separate from so loving a people. The prayers of the church will ever follow him and his family.

Of the present members of this church and its pastor I need not speak, my audience have abundant opportunity to observe. their zeal, their energy, their love for their brethren, for the cause of Christ, and their unbounded hospitality. But my fondness for the members of this church, and their friendship, partiality and love for me, authorize me before concluding to add a few words more. My brethren, there have been two great hindering causes to the success of this church, from its organization to the present time. The one a lack of liberality, the other of education. No people, no church, ever achieved great success for a long period of time, without these. I am happy to say, that, under the healthful influence of your pastors and your surrounding circumstances, there has been a great and decided improvement in both respects. The doctrines of the old Antinomian party, that so strongly impregnated this church in its earlier days, that God would do all and man nothing; that *He* would raise up ministers, to fill her pulpits, and prepare them for their work, unaided by human efforts, and that the gospel should be free, had its baneful influence upon this as well as upon other churches of this Association. While they were teaching and preaching these doctrines, our friends of that young and energetic church, the Methodists, which had hardly an existence when this church was organized, one hundred years ago; have, by their great energy, liberality and godly zeal, advanced ahead of us and almost possessed themselves of the land which was yours and won by the mighty efforts of your fathers in the great struggle for religious liberty.

What might have been the influence of Old Holly's church, had her early members educated their children, and sought to fill their heads rather than their pocket-books, Infinite wisdom alone can tell. Instead of this church in the one-hundred years of its existence, sending forth but one ordained and one licentiate minister, and neither of these, for want of education, fully equipped for their work; how many of her sons, with proper education and training, might have been in the gospel ministry, or holding other positions of honor and influence? And Oh! my friends, what an influence they might have exerted, both for the cause of Christ and the good of humanity.

Do you expect and desire that your children shall maintain respectable, much more prominent positions in society; and that the influence of your Church shall be felt in the community in which you live, and even throughout your State and country, then you must give your sons and daughters the opportunity, by educating them. Then it will not be, that they will be found ashamed of their friends and brethren, and seeking other associations and denominations, in order, as they

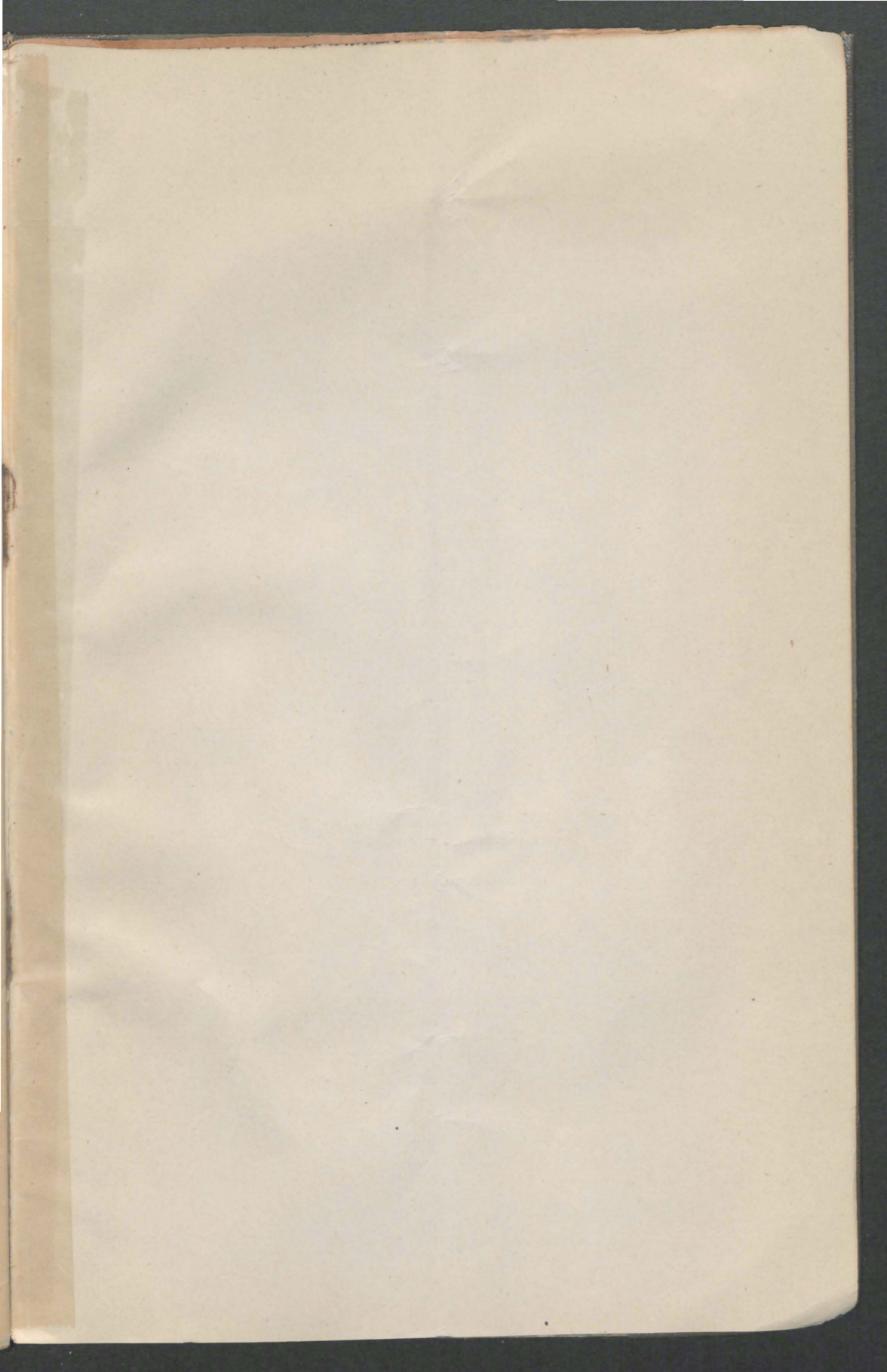
suppose, to hold more elevated positions and find better and more congenial society. You have your schools and colleges, as good as any in the land, and God in his providence has smiled upon you, and given you, if not great wealth, ample means for educating your children; *some* of you, in the very best manner.

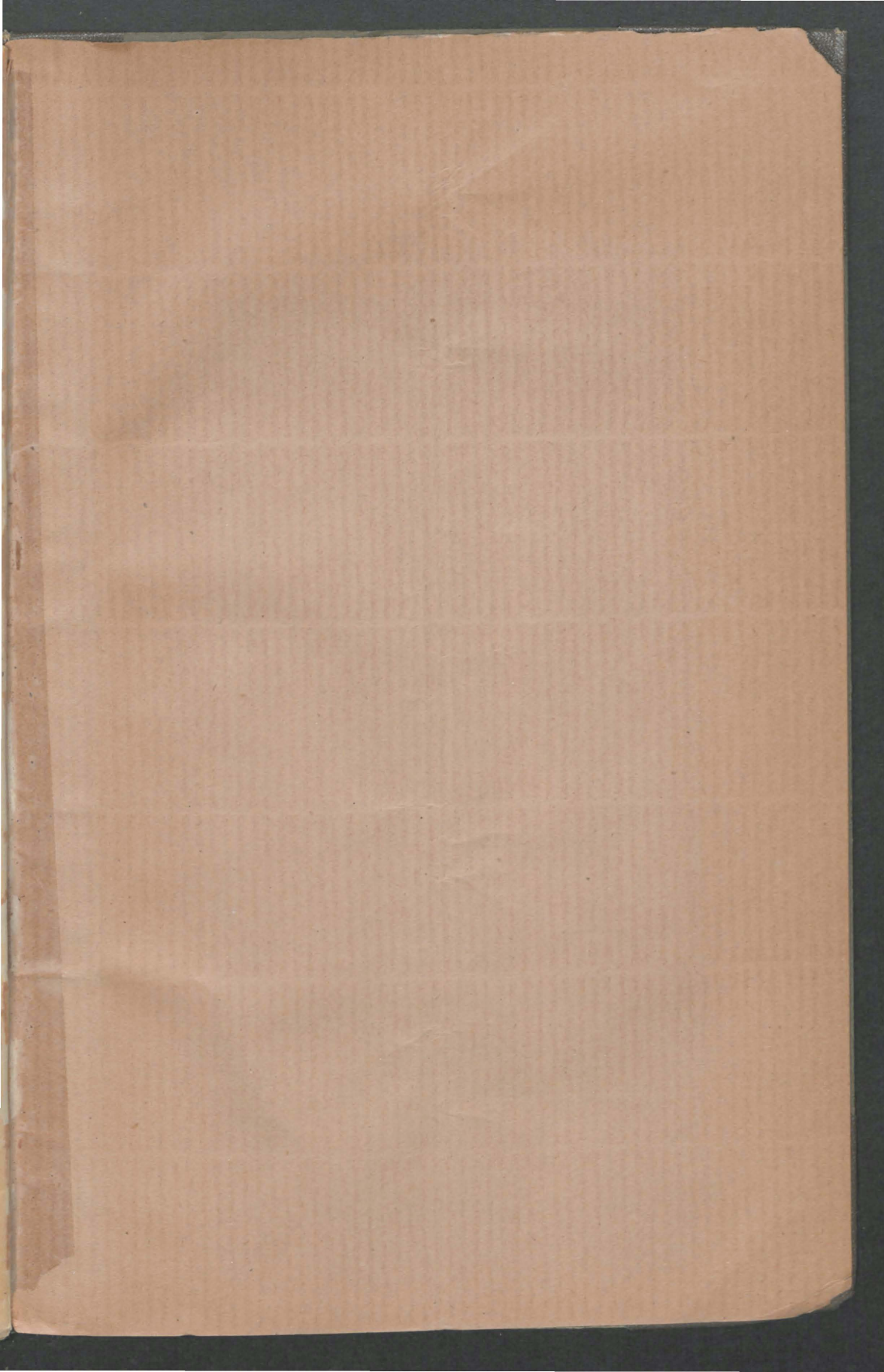
I would like very much, if time permitted, to refer more particularly to some of those godly men who have served this Church so faithfully at different times; and to whose efforts so much is due by our denomination; especially to Elders Levin Dix, Patrick Warren, jr., S. C. Boston and George Bradford, who are now dead. Also to its *old deacons* and to some of the younger offspring of the Church, who have done their duty well and now rest "beyond the river." I cannot forbear to refer especially to Louis Magoon Rogers, who was born almost in sight of this place, and whose mortal remains now rest near where he was born. He was the son of a pious sister of this church, baptized in the First Baptist Church in Richmond, while at Richmond College, educated in the best institutions of our land and was at the University of Virginia at the breaking out of the war. From there he returned home to share the fortunes of his family and friends. He served as Adjutant of the 3d Regiment of Virginia Militia, until the troops on the Eastern Shore, overpowered by numbers and unsupported by friends, were compelled to lay down their arms in the presence of overpowering numbers. Afterwards he made his escape in a small boat, with a few friends, through the Federal blockade, and united his fortunes with that of the rest of the Southern Confederacy. It was as ensign of the 46th Va. Reg't, with the rank of Lieutenant, on June 17, 1864, "with his battle flag clutched to his breast with one hand, and waving his sword with the other, he fell mortally wounded by a minie ball." Of whom his General, Henry A. Wise, said, "he was too high to do wrong himself, too firm to be tempted or misled by others. His company did never so well as when he was with it. He was the fittest man in it for its captaincy. A brighter, braver, better soul never took flight from earth to heaven, from time to eternity. I would write on the tablet of his tomb:

LIEUTENANT LOUIS ROGERS, JR.

His example taught that the best soldier of the Captain of Salvation made the best soldier of the Confederate camps. His eternal parole is that of the Prince of Peace."

And now my brethren and friends, to the best of my ability, with the means at my command, I have finished the work assigned me.





DATE DUE

JAN 04 1999

Brodart Co.

Cat. # 55 137 001

Printed in USA

ME456

P9G9 Gunter

Pam

Address: made August 14, 1890, at
the Accomack Baptist Association,
held with the Pungoteague church

Southeastern Baptist Seminary Library

BX6470.A3 G8 1890

Gunter, Benjamin.

Address : made August 14, 1890, at the A



B000949274