

# How Our Church Came to Our Country

## X. HOW OUR CHURCH CAME TO GEORGIA

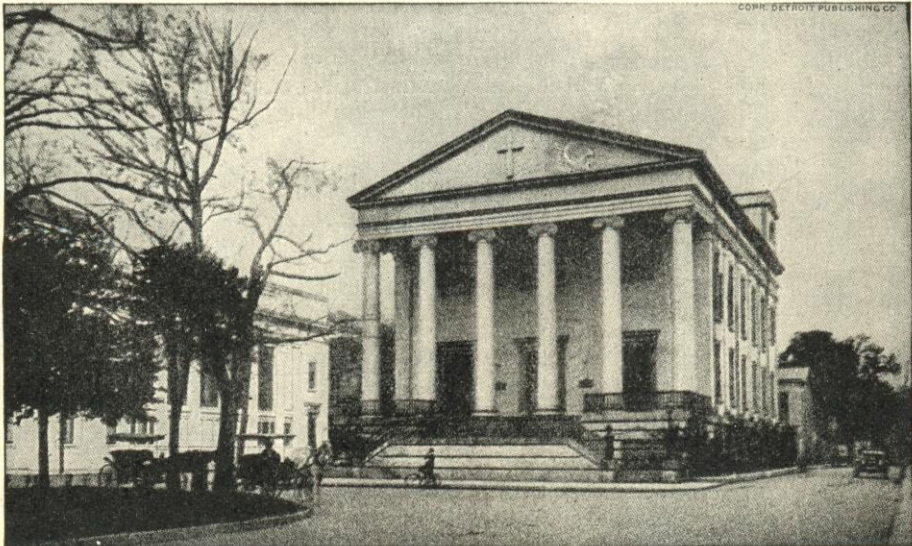
*By the Rev. James B. Lawrence*

### *I. Colonial, 1733-1782*

ON November 17th, 1732, the *Ann*, a galley of two hundred tons, set sail from Gravesend with the first emigrants to the Colony of Georgia. The Rev. Henry Herbert, D.D., with the single purpose of caring for the spiritual needs of the colonists, and without fee or hope of reward, accompanied them on the voyage. On January 13th, 1733, they first sighted land, and on the 20th they landed at Beaufort, S. C. Here they were hospitably entertained until January 30th, when they embarked on a sloop of seventy tons and on five plantation boats for the place where General James Oglethorpe had chosen a site for the new colony. Thus, on

February 12th, 1733, they finally landed at Yamacraw Bluff on the Savannah River, and having offered thanksgiving to God for their prosperous voyage and safe arrival, they set about the work of building what is now the city of Savannah. Dr. Herbert remained three months in the colony, when, on account of illness, he set sail for England. He died on the return voyage and his body rests in its watery grave until that great day when the earth and the sea shall give up their dead.

A site was appointed for a church and a sufficient glebe for the minister. Of the many missionaries who gave their services to the church in Savannah, only one remained any consider



OLD CHRIST CHURCH, SAVANNAH, GA.

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able length of time. Of the others, two did work whose influence lasts to this day.

John Wesley arrived in Savannah in February, 1736, and remained until December, 1737. It was during this time that a Sunday-school was organized under the superintendence of Mr. Delamotte, which—still in operation—is the oldest Sunday-school in the world. It was also during this time that thirty or forty persons met at Wesley's house—a meeting which he afterwards described as the second period in the rise of Methodism.

In December, 1738, the Rev. George Whitefield came to Georgia, the church in Savannah being the only parish he ever had. He devoted most of his time and eloquence to building a home for orphans, which he named "Bethesda" and placed in charge of James Habersham. On March 25th, 1740, Whitefield laid the first brick of the main building. This work absorbed him. He made thirteen voyages across the Atlantic when voyages were dangerous, and ten distinct visits to Georgia, chiefly in the interest of Bethesda. Of a sermon preached in behalf of the home Benjamin Franklin says: "I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved that he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles of gold. As he proceeded, I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper. Another stroke of oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."

But the man who in those days devoted the influence of his life to the Church in Savannah, was the Rev. Bartholomew Zouberbuhler. Born in St. Gall, Switzerland, educated in

Charleston, ordained deacon and priest by the Bishop of London, he arrived in Savannah in January, 1746, and remained in charge of the church until his death in December, 1766. It was during this time that the first Christ Church was built. In 1746 President Stephens wrote: "The roof of it is covered with shingles, but as to the sides and ends of it, it remains a skeleton." Finally, on July 7th, 1750, the seventeenth anniversary of the establishment of the first court of judicature in Georgia, and the eighth anniversary of the victory gained by Oglethorpe over the Spaniards at Frederica, the building, "large, beautiful, and commodious," was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. This building was enlarged in 1766, burned in 1796, rebuilt during the years 1801-1806, and replaced in 1838 by the one which now stands, a memorial to the sacred history of the state.

When, on February 15th, 1736, General Oglethorpe began to build the fort and town of Frederica, St. Simon's Island, as a protection against Spanish aggression, he was accompanied by his secretary and chaplain, the Rev. Charles Wesley, who until his departure in the following July supplied the regiment and inhabitants with the services of the Church. A tabby building with basement, lower and upper stories was built, and in the upper story the services were held. This mission, like those in Savannah and Augusta, was supplied with clergy by the S. P. G. until the close of the Revolution.

It was organized into a parish in 1808 by several planters who had settled on the island for the purpose of cultivating indigo at first, and afterwards the more lucrative crop of cotton. In 1840 the church was greatly in need of repairs; but there was not enough money for doing the work. One day a swarm of bees was found busy about the steeple of the church. Investigation proved that the steeple

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was filled with honey. This was sold, and money enough realized to do the necessary repairs. Owing to the suggestion of this incident, the "Bee-Hive Missionary Society" was formed which emulated the busy bee in its work for missions.

After the war between the States this church was given services by faithful lay readers until 1879, when the parish was reorganized by the Rev. A. G. P. Dodge, Jr. This devoted priest and fervent missionary gave his services for the upbuilding of the work until 1898 when he closed his earthly career and generously left an endowment for the continuation of the parish, and also a fund, the income of which has been instrumental in founding and maintaining fully two-thirds of the missions in the diocese of Georgia.

On March 22d, 1916, St. Paul's Church, Augusta, was burned to the ground by a disastrous fire which destroyed a large portion of the city. This irreparable and historic loss is mourned by the entire diocese and the church at large. The church thus destroyed was built in 1819 and took the place of the second building which was finished in 1786. The first St. Paul's was built in 1750 and is best described by the following letter addressed to the Trustees for establishing the Colony of Georgia in America:

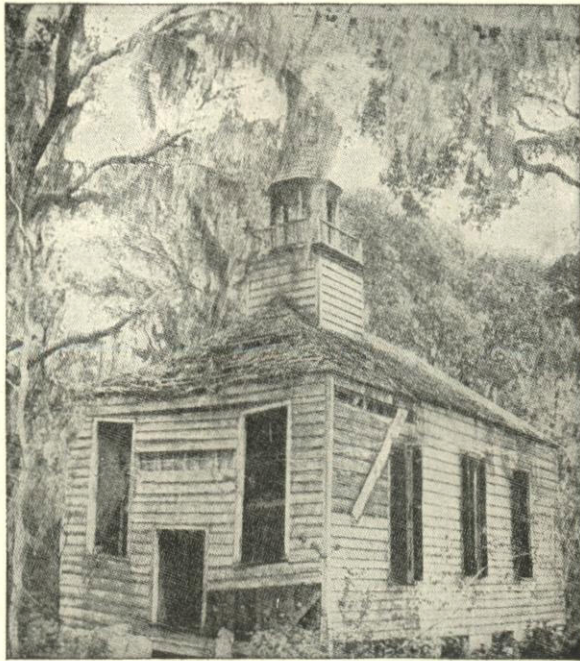
"The following Memorial in behalf of the Inhabitants of the Town and Township of Augusta is humbly presented:

"The principal Inhabitants at a General Meeting here, having taken into Consideration the Number of Settlers, and the daily Increase of them, together with the

many Traders and Servants by them employed in the Indian Countries round us (who twice a year reside two months each Time in this Place) the Necessity of a Place of Divine Worship was too evident not to be taken notice of by them, more especially as those People for many Years had quite been Strangers to the Church Service, till lately at the Fort.

"For this therefore, and other Reasons, your humble Servants the Subscribers were appointed by all at the said Meeting, to act in the Nature of a Committee, in collecting Subscriptions, agreeing with proper Workmen, and superintending the building of a Church. Pursuant to the said Resolution, we have collected several sums of Money, and erected a Church, a Plan of which is herewith sent to your Honours; and we believe we may venture to say, that there is no Church so far advanced in the Indian Country as this, and as soon finished. But as Indian Friendship is sometimes precarious, we have built it opposite one of the Curtains of the Fort, that the Guns of the Bastions may secure it, and that it may be a place of retreat for the Inhabitants of the Place in sudden Alarms.

"What we have therefore to beg of your Honours is that you'll be pleas'd to procure for us a Clergyman of the Church of Eng-



THE "BEEHIVE CHURCH" AT FREDERICA



ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, AUGUSTA, GA.



THE RUINS AFTER THE FIRE OF MARCH 22, 1916

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land from the Society for Propagation of the Gospel, and a well-qualified one is not only necessary for the Instruction and Edification of the lower Sett of the Inhabitants, but may also in time assist the Religious Work for which that Society was first established, we hope He will be put on a good footing; and we assure your Honours, that our little Mites, and those of several other Subscribers shall not be wanting to make this Place agreeable to such a One.

"We beg also that your Honours will be pleased to grant to the Inhabitants of this Town the Ground on which the Church, the Churchyard, and Avenue leading to it, are, independent of the Commanding Officer of the Fort, excepting in Time of Danger, or in such Manner as your Honours shall think most expedient.

"We have already in some measure experienced the good effects of Divine Service being celebrated in the Officers Room in the Fort by a Layman, as numbers of the Inhabitants have regularly and decently attended every Sunday.

"We have nothing more to ask, unless your Honours are inclined to add some little decorations, viz't: Some glass for the Windows, Pulpit Cloth, Sacramental Ornaments, etc., which will be thankfully accepted, and always gratefully acknowledged by your Honours

Most Obliged, Most Obedient  
and Most Humble Servants,

GEO. CADOGAN JAS. CAMPBELL  
JOHN RAL DA. DOUGLASS  
JAMES FRASER."

"Augusta, April 12th, 1750."

### II. Organization, 1783-1840

Thus in Colonial days these three churches—Christ Church, Savannah, Christ Church, Frederica, and St. Paul's Church, Augusta—were founded. They had been supplied with clergy, who, sent out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, owed their allegiance to the Crown of England. Therefore when, on July 21, 1782, British rule came to a close in Georgia, the Church, without clergy and without support, was almost annihilated. Yet the seed sown was not dead, only buried; but it was some time before a fully organized Church was developed.

At a meeting of the Vestry of Christ Church, Savannah, held in December, 1793, we find a resolution passed

"That the 'Book of Common Prayer' of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, ratified by a convention of the said Church and made of force on the 1st October, 1790, be adopted for the present by this Church, subject to such alteration as shall hereafter be agreed by the officiating minister of Christ Church and the Vestry thereof."

Another incident, showing how the Church in Georgia was reaching out toward the organized life of the nation-wide Church, occurred when the Rev. John V. Bartow, rector of Christ Church, Savannah, presented to the General Convention which met May 23, 1811, in Trinity Church, New Haven, a certificate of his appointment to attend the Convention signed by the wardens and vestry of the "Episcopal Church in the city of Savannah, State of Georgia." The Convention passed a resolution stating that the "Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of Georgia, not being organized, and not having, in Convention, acceded to the constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, the Rev. Mr. Bartow cannot be admitted a member of this House, but he be allowed the privilege of an honorary seat."

It was not until the 24th of February, 1823, that the Primary Convention of the clergy and laity of Georgia met in St. Paul's Church, Augusta, for organization. Three clergymen were present, the Rev. Edward Matthews, rector of Christ Church, St. Simon's Island, the Rev. Abiel Carter, Rector of Christ Church, Savannah, and the Rev. Hugh Smith, Rector of St. Paul's Church, Augusta. Five lay delegates from Savannah and Augusta were present. Rules of order and a constitution and canons were adopted, and the Convention acceded to the constitution and canons of the Church in the United States. As clerical deputies to the General Convention, the Rev. Edward Matthews, the Rev. Abiel Carter,

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and the Rev. Hugh Smith were chosen; the lay deputies were George Jones, Anthony Barclay, and William W. Hazzard.

Only the last-named clerical and the first-named lay deputy attended the session of 1823, at which the Church in the State of Georgia was received into union with the General Convention.

Although the diocese was now organized, there were to be many years before it was to have its own bishop. From 1798 until his death, October 28, 1801, the Rt. Rev. Robert Smith, D.D., Bishop of South Carolina, by correspondence kept in touch with the condition of the Church in Georgia. On April 26, 1815, his successor, Bishop Theodore Dehon, consecrated Christ Church, Savannah (the second building), and confirmed a class of about fifty. This is the first visit of a bishop to Georgia. His successor, Bishop Nathaniel Bowen, gave episcopal aid until the year before his death which took place in 1838. In that year Bishop Jackson Kemper visited Geor-

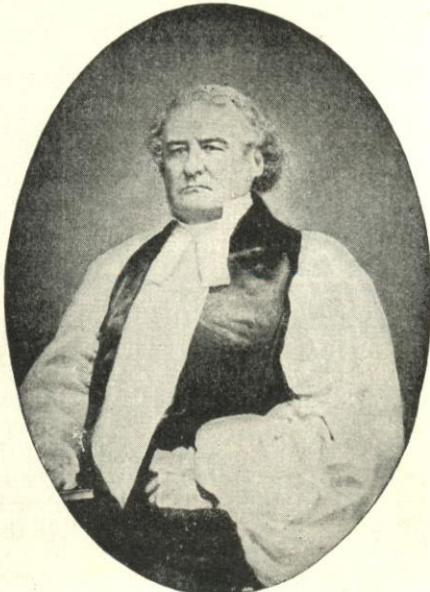
gia, confirmed classes, and consecrated Trinity Church, Columbus.

### III. Bishop Elliott, 1841-1866

Several efforts were made to solve the episcopal problem of the diocese. One of these was to have a bishop for the Southwest. Another was to unite Florida, Alabama, and Georgia under the episcopal care of one bishop. But the plans attempted all failed. At last the Convention which met in Grace Church, Clarkesville, May 5, 1840, elected the Rev. Stephen Elliott, Jr., and on February 28, 1841, he was consecrated first Bishop of Georgia. Born in 1806, he was not quite thirty-five years old at the time of his consecration. With the enthusiasm of youth, with splendid poise of mind and body, full of God's grace, and with a heart of oak, he began at once to devote himself to the difficult task before him. With a list of eight clergy, five churches, two missions, and 323 communicants, he undertook to build up the Church in the state largest in area east of the Mississippi.

He devoted much pains to the increase of a native ministry. John James Hunt, who had been made deacon on January 2, 1835, in St. Michael's Church, Charleston, and ordained priest in the same place on November 25, 1836, was the first native Georgian to enter the ministry of this Church. One day he gave a young man a Prayer Book. It was like leaven. The young man, Thomas F. Scott, came into the Church, and finally became the first Bishop of Oregon. Influenced by our beautiful liturgy and by the imposing character of Bishop Elliott, William Bacon Stevens entered the ministry, ultimately to become the fourth Bishop of Pennsylvania. Among many others, special mention should be made of Henry K. Rees, a prince of missionaries, who devoted his entire ministry to the diocese.

Together with the increase of the



BISHOP ELLIOTT

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ministry, Christian education occupied a large part of the Bishop's thoughts. The seminary for girls which he founded at Montpelier cost him not only anxious care but his private fortune; and although this school has long been abandoned, there are women yet living who are grateful for the lessons learned and the inspiration received there. Bishop Elliott, with Bishop Otey and Bishop Polk, formed that great triumvirate which founded the University of the South at Sewanee. He was careful for the instruction of the slaves, and St. Stephen's Church, Savannah, was one of the first parishes for colored people in the country.

At the time of Bishop Elliott's death in 1866, the clergy list shows twenty-five clergymen resident in the diocese, ministering to twenty-eight parishes and missions, whose communicants numbered more than 2,000. Bishop Stevens said of him: "His character, like his body, was majestic and symmetrical with manly strength and glory; it was the noble temple of a noble soul. His mind was of large calibre and cultivated with sedulous care. His eloquence was the outburst of a well-stored, well-trained intellect, pouring itself through lips, not wet merely with Castalia's dew, but touched, as by angel hands, with coals from off the Altar."

### *IV. Later Days*

When the War between the States came to an end, there came to an end with it the old ideas, institutions and civilization. Bishop Elliott belonged to the old régime, and when it died he died also. There now dawned upon the South new times, new ideas, a changed condition of things. The times were hard for a quarter of a century. Stipends were difficult to raise, even in the larger congregations, while the missionaries were poorly and irregularly paid. One missionary in a small town ministering to a congre-

gation of sixteen communicants writes in 1873: "The minister would have starved, with his sick family, had it not been for the kind assistance of friends in Christ Church, Savannah, and of Col. W——, of Macon."

It has been seen with what courage Bishop Elliott began his episcopate. It required no less courage for the Rt. Rev. John W. Beckwith, D.D., consecrated second Bishop of Georgia, April 2d, 1868, to face the new conditions which confronted him. His task was to put faith and courage into men and women who were undergoing hard times and being trained in the school of adversity. Well did the new bishop do his work. His wonderful voice, bringing out the full meaning of the services, at once arrested the attention of his hearers. When Bishop Beckwith read, people listened. His oratory in the pulpit attracted large congregations wherever he went, and



BISHOP BECKWITH

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the course of his episcopal visitations was like a royal progress.

He continued the work of pushing the church into the smaller towns and villages, while in the larger cities the old parishes grew and new ones were formed, so that when he died, November 23, 1890, the number of communicants in the diocese had more than doubled. One of the distinguishing marks of his episcopate is the foundation of the Appleton Church Home for orphan children, in Macon, which will always be a monument to the greatness of the bishop, and to the liberality of the generous donor whose name it bears.

But we must bring our story to a close with brief mention of men still living. The Rt. Rev. Cleland Kinloch Nelson, D.D., consecrated on February 24th, 1892, as third Bishop of Georgia, developed an episcopate whose chief characteristic is its in-

tense missionary activity. The work in a few years grew to such an extent that it was too much for one bishop. Accordingly, on October 7, 1907, Georgia was divided. Bishop Nelson elected to administer the new diocese, the northern part of the state, and became the first Bishop of Atlanta.

On May 20, 1908, the Rt. Rev. Frederick F. Reese, D.D., was consecrated fourth bishop of the diocese of Georgia, in Christ Church, Savannah, and under his wise administration the great work goes on. In the diocese of Georgia thirty-one clergymen minister to seventy-three parishes and missions with 4,975 communicants; in the diocese of Atlanta thirty-two clergymen minister to sixty parishes and missions, containing 5,466 communicants. Compare these totals with those with which Bishop Elliott began his episcopate in 1841, and see to what success our Church has come in Georgia.

### CLASS WORK ON "HOW OUR CHURCH CAME TO GEORGIA"

#### PREPARATION FOR THE LESSON

**T**HE author of this article has kindly suggested the following books as sources of further information: "A History of Georgia for Use in Schools," by Lawton B. Evans; "A History of Georgia," by Bishop Stevens; "Statistics of the State of Georgia" and "Historical Collections of Georgia" by the Rev. George White. Also the Archives of the S. P. G.

For general background any United States history will give information as to early conditions. Those who have access to Tiffany's "History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America," will find in Chapter X, the story of the Colonial Church in Georgia.

#### THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES

Possible points of contact are: (1) Who ever heard of John Wesley? How many know whether he ever came to America? (2) What state of the Union bears the name of a King of England.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

##### I. Colonial Days.

1. Tell about the first missionary to Georgia?

2. What two famous men followed him?
3. Give the story of the "Bee Hive" Missionary Society.
4. Tell something of St. Paul's Church, Augusta.

##### II. Organization.

1. What was the state of the Church in Georgia at the close of the Revolution?
2. How did Georgia come in touch with the General Convention?
3. How was the diocese organized?
4. Who took care of it before it had a bishop?

##### III. Bishop Elliott.

1. Tell something about Bishop Elliott.
2. What well-known men did he bring into the Church?
3. What did he do for education?
4. Give some results of his episcopate.

##### IV. Later Days.

1. What did the Civil War do to Georgia?
2. Who was the second bishop?
3. What were his chief activities?
4. Name the present dioceses in Georgia, with their bishops.
5. What is the present condition of the Church in the State of Georgia?