

STRIFE IN THE RANKS

Members of the Harmony Grove Church
Are Not Harmonious.

THE CHURCH IN THE COURTS

One Faction Charges That the Other
Side Desires To Fellowship with
Their Negro Brethren.

The Harmony Grove Southern Congregational church, through its attorneys, Bishop, Andrews & Hill, has filed a reply to the answer of the defendants in the case of that church, which was recently brought against Rev. S. C. McDaniel and others.

The paper was filed yesterday with Clerk Tanner and will be used in the hearing of the dispute which originated some time ago among the members of the Harmony Grove church.

The suit now pending a hearing is a controversy between the Harmony Grove Southern Congregational church and other members of a church, which is styled the Harmony Grove Congregational church, as to the possession of the church building and premises. The last official act of Judge Richard Clark was the signing of an order restraining the defendants from interfering with the possession and occupation of the church house by the plaintiffs. This order was signed by Judge Clark on the day of his death and just as his name was written he was seized with the stroke which caused his death a few hours later.

It seems that the defendants in their answer denied all the allegations charged by the other members and claimed that the members of the plaintiff church had become disgruntled and had established a church of their own. The paper which has just been filed by the plaintiffs is a reply to the answer of the defendants and contains some very interesting allegations of church doctrine and church polity of the Congregational church.

Based Upon Doctrine.

In the paper it is alleged that according to church government in the Congregational denomination every separate and individual church society is a law unto itself, having no authority over or above it and to which it can in any wise be amenable.

It is also averred that this particular denomination is very strong from a numerical and financial standpoint in the northern states and is very weak in the southern states, therefore making it necessary to support nearly all of the southern churches, either partially or totally, from the fund raised from northern contributions and known as the missionary fund.

Rev. S. C. McDaniel is superintendent of this fund for Georgia, as well as one of the defendants in the case of the church members. It is within the scope of the office of Mr. McDaniel to pay out of this fund, as he controls the amount sent to the state and is authorized to divide it among the various churches as he thinks best.

Object to Colored Members.

The plaintiff avers that the Congregational church of the north is seeking to impose upon the Congregational church of the south a policy known as the "equal brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, without regard to race, color or condition," and that they are trying to use the missionary society as a leverage in the distribution of its patronage or the withholding thereof and with which to force the negro upon the white membership of the Congregational church in the south without their consent and against their will.

They say that this effort on the part of the northern churches to equalize the white man and the negro in southern Congregational churches has become so strenuous upon their part and so distasteful to the Harmony Grove Congregational church that the latter church made a bold stand against the fellowship of the races or social equality in the churches. In consequence of this action the Harmony Grove Congregational church was turned out of the Gainesville district conference in August, 1894, and as a result of which the Harmony Grove Congregational church held a meeting, regularly called, and passed a resolution changing its name to the Harmony Grove Southern Congregational church, maintaining in every other respect their former doctrines and faith.

The petitioner also claims in its reply that the abler and more prominent preachers of the Congregational churches in Georgia were born and educated in the north, filled by birth and education with the idea of the negro's right to associate as the equal of his white brother in the churches, so seeking to impress the missionary board of the northern Congregational churches that they were succeeding in their attempt to fellowship the negroes with the whites in the Congregational churches of the south, in order that financial assistance might not be cut off from them by the missionary board. On the other hand many of them attempt to explain away as far as possible their ideas of fellowshiping the colored with the white members of the churches of the south, well knowing the prejudice of the white men of the south against the idea of fellowshiping and associating with the colored man might be arrayed against them, thereby playing hot with the north and cold with the south.

Each church claims itself to be the original church and the other to be a set of seceders from the original church and no doubt many interesting facts will be developed at the hearing next Saturday, while it is quite certain that each side will be intensely concerned as to the final outcome, whatever it may be.