



Daniel Alexander Payne
Bishop, Educator, and College President
(1811-1893)

Daniel was born to London and Martha Payne in Charleston, SC in 1811. More fortunate than most, he learned to read and write. But more importantly, he learned how education could help him and his people to better themselves and their lives. In 1829, Daniel opened his first school. In 1831, after the Nat Turner Rebellion, South Carolina passed legislation which made teaching literacy to both free Black people and slaves illegal, and Daniel was forced to close his school in 1835.

That same year, Daniel sailed from Charleston north to Philadelphia in search of further education. He landed at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and was the first Black person to be educated and ordained in 1835 by an American Lutheran Church. By 1840, Daniel had started another school. He joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) where he worked to improve education for AME ministers, teaching a wide variety of classes, so they could effectively lead their people. At the following AME General Conference in 1844, Daniel, now a pastor, called for a "regular course of study for prospective ordines", in the belief they would lift up their people in the "Peace of God and the light of learning."

In 1848, Pastor Payne was appointed the historiographer of the AME Church. In 1852, he was elected and consecrated as the sixth bishop of the AME Church where he served until his death.

Bishop Payne served on the founding board of directors which purchased Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio, in 1856. He was chosen to lead it making him the first Black president of a college in the United States. By quickly organizing AME missionary support of freedmen in the South after the Civil War, Bishop Payne gained 250,000 new members for the AME church where he founded congregations all over the South. In 1891, Bishop Payne wrote the first history of the AME church, a few years after publishing his memoir. He died on November 2, 1893, having devoutly served the African Methodist Episcopal Church for more than 50 years.