CONSTITUTIONAL AND PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BY
JAMES M. BUCKLEY

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EXPLANATORY

THIS volume is not intended to be a *general* history of Methodism, nor of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

It is divided into two unequal parts. The first, and by far the larger, is devoted to the history of the Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, tracing it from its incipiency through the vicissitudes of the one hundred years of its existence. It deals with documents, debates, and persons, with officers and orders, General, Annual, and Quarterly Conferences, with the United States, South America, Europe, India and other parts of Asia, and Africa, and islands of the sea, so far as Churches and Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church in those countries are affected by the Constitution.

The second part relates to the parliamentary history of the denomination; but in no sense is it intended to be a complete discussion of that subject. It does, however, attempt to emphasize the importance of debate, its methods and its generic rules, and to show that frequently parliamentary tactics exert almost—and sometimes entirely—as much influence in the final disposition of resolutions as the intrinsic value of the subject under consideration.

Quotations are complete upon the subjects they treat, and are numerous to prevent the misunderstanding so common when the words of an author are substituted by those of the writer of the book.

It will be observed that in most cases academic and honorary titles have been omitted. This was done for the

purpose of brevity; and the names are so well known, in most instances, as to make titles superfluous.

With respect to this work:

If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired: but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.—2 Maccabees, chapter 15, verse 38.

FROM EMBURY TO COKE

CHAPTER I

John Wesley and Wesleyan Methodism

Who, among those that heard John Wesley forbidden to preach in the church of which his father had been rector for forty years, and of which he himself had been curate, could have dreamed that above twenty-five millions of adherents to the society which he founded would, in every part of the habitable globe, on the two hundredth anniversary of his birth, gratefully mention his name and accord to his memory the reverence due a genuine apostle of Christ? Or who, among those that followed him to the grave, could have imagined that Episcopal Methodism, organized under his auspices in the United States of America, would, at the dawn of the twentieth century, number nearly twice as many communicants as the thirteen colonies had inhabitants when they declared themselves to be "of right free and independent"?

THE FOUNDATION BUILDER

The civilized world recognizes John Wesley, an alumnus of Oxford University, sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, and a presbyter of the Church of England, as the founder of American Methodism. On the paternal side, descended from a line of scholars and clergymen, and of devout and intellectual Christians on the maternal, both ancestral traditions and personal training contributed to his religious development and choice of the ministry. His brother Charles was the originator of the movement at Oxford to which was applied the then opprobrious term "Methodist," and with him were associated a num-

ber of students, of whom the most famous was George Whitefield.

John Wesley's was the strongest, and proved to be the dominating, personality. At the beginning of his ministry he was a High Churchman and as ascetic as a monk. Controlled by those views, and almost fanatical in the reduction of them to practice, he came to the continent of North America as a missionary to the Indians of Georgia and also to act as rector of the Church of England in Savannah. There the sternness of his rule, together with various extravagances of speech and judgment, so embarrassed his work that he returned to England, reaching there early in 1738. Having met on his voyages and while in Georgia certain German Christians, Lutherans, and especially several Moravians, he came to the conclusion that he had not yet understood the conditions or the nature of genuine Christian experience, and thereafter concentrated his intellectual and moral powers upon its attainment.

After various mental and spiritual conflicts, on the evening of Wednesday, May 24, 1738, in a society of earnest Christians in London, he "felt his heart strangely warmed," and "an assurance was given" to him that Christ had taken away his sins. The full account of this transformation belongs to the universal literature of the Christian Church.

Not long after this he visited the Moravians in Germany, and on his return to England began to attend meetings of societies similar to that in which he found peace, speaking therein whenever he could obtain a hearing. These were small associations organized in London and vicinity, to promote a deeper religious life than was commonly attained or sought for, and were composed chiefly of members of the Church of England.

Whitefield had already begun to preach in the open air,

but Wesley, as yet, preached only in the churches which invited him; and though he was seldom admitted for a second time, some hearers eagerly followed him. The Archbishop of Canterbury cited Charles Wesley to Lambeth, and threatened him with excommunication for preaching in the open air; but, encouraged by Whitefield, both he and his brother did so almost incessantly. As the societies increased in number Wesley prepared a plan for those who were ready to work, involving preaching by each one every evening, sometimes in the afternoon, and at least three times each Sunday.

Wesley being an Arminian, and Whitefield a Calvinist of rigid type, they soon separated on account of doctrinal differences. As Wesley's organization was much stronger than that of Whitefield, it grew faster and was the object of greater hostility. Mobs spontaneously arose against outdoor preachers, and especially against Methodists, and others were frequently instigated or promoted by parish priests and civil officers. Charges were made against the Methodists of sympathy with the Roman Catholic efforts to restore the house of Stuart to the English throne; nevertheless, the movement spread rapidly, and within three years there were twenty-three itinerant preachers under the superintendence of Wesley, besides local preachers, who supported themselves and held meetings in adjacent towns and villages. Several clergymen of the Church of England publicly gave him their countenance by attending his services, preaching in them, contributing financially to their support and inducing others to do so, and also defended the Wesleys from false accusations.

John Wesley had already formed the class meeting, which, beginning as a means of collecting funds for the support of the movement, was transformed, by the visits of the leader and the regular meetings of the members,

into one of the most valuable agencies for guarding and training young converts and developing local and itinerant preachers.

ORIGIN OF METHODIST CONFERENCES

As an aid in preserving unity, encouraging those who most suffered from mobs or social ostracism, maintaining the organization of the societies, and systematically transferring the preachers from one point to another, Wesley wrote letters to several clergymen and to his lay assistants, inviting them to meet in London and give him their "advice respecting the best method of carrying on the work of God." In this way originated that characteristic institution, *The Conference.*

This first Methodist Conference was held on Monday, June 25, 1744, and was composed of John and Charles Wesley, four other regular clergymen of the Church of England, and four lay preachers.

After adopting resolutions for the government of the Conference, and a season of prayer, the members took up the two fundamental questions: first, "What to teach"; second, "What to do," or "How to regulate the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the ministry and the society." Two days were spent in discussing the theology which must be the basis of their preaching, and three days were devoted to rules of discipline and methods of preaching. The relations of the Methodist society to the Church of England were discussed. Wesley at this time was opposed to encouraging a lay ministry. The Minutes record that "lay assistants are allowable only in cases of necessity."

The twenty-second of these Annual Conferences convened at Manchester, England, August 30, 1765. There were then 25 circuits, with 71 preachers in England, 4 circuits, with as many preachers in Scotland, 2 with a

preacher for each in Wales, and 8 with 15 preachers in Ireland, and about 20,000 members in all. While the Conference discussed with freedom every question and expressed its sentiments by votes, the final decision in every case was with John Wesley; his rule was absolute.

WESLEY'S DEFENSE AGAINST THE CHARGE OF USURPATION

At the close of the Conference in 1766 he delivered a remarkable address, describing the manner in which the societies and Conferences had involved him in his responsibilities, and said:

> I did not seek any part of this power; it came upon me unawares; but when it was come, not daring to bury that talent, I used it to the best of my judgment. Yet I never was fond of it; I always did, and do now, bear it as my burden, the burden which God lays upon me, and therefore I dare not yet lay it down. But if you can tell me any one, or any five men, to whom I may transfer this burden, who *can* and *will* do just what I do now, I will heartily thank both them and you. Preaching twice or thrice a day is no burden to me at all; but the care of all the preachers and of all the people is a burden indeed.

It should never be overlooked that Wesley, though a clergyman of the Church of England, was engaged in forming societies and not a Church; he instructed those whom he baptized to be confirmed in the Church of England, but did not require members of other communions who affiliated with him to disconnect themselves with the body in which they had been trained. The societies were of his creation; he was the sole arbiter, rule-maker, judge, and administrator. Hence his government was not a usurpation, and those who disliked it were under no moral or religious obligation to remain with him.

CHAPTER II

Wesleyan Methodism in America

The year 1739 is universally recognized as the one in which the general Methodist awakening and movement in England began; and it flourished there twenty-one years before a single Wesleyan Methodist appeared in the territory now included in the United States of America.

A company of emigrants from Ireland arrived in New York on August 10, 1760. Among them were several followers of John Wesley. One of these, Philip Embury, a carpenter by trade, with an unusual degree of education for one in his position, had served as a Wesleyan local preacher. Five years later another vessel brought over five families, most of whom were related to Embury; these also settled in New York. Nothing concerning any of them as Methodists is known prior to an event which, though small in itself, proved to be critical.

EMBURY AND BARBARA HECK

How Mrs. Barbara Heck, who came over with Embury, her cousin, surprised, while they were playing cards, some of the last to arrive; how she threw the cards into the fire, and having warned the players of their danger and duty, went to the house of Embury, told what she had seen and done and appealed to him to cry aloud and spare not, and show the people their sins, and gaining his consent, collected four persons, who with herself made the congregation, is many times more than a twice-told tale; but, like the act of the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment, it will be told round the whole world while Methodism lasts.

After the sermon Embury enrolled the five in a class. The exact date of this first Methodist class meeting is not known, but that it was in the latter part of the year 1766 is certain. The congregation soon became too large for the house. Embury fully understood and scrupulously followed Wesley's plan, and in a few months two classes of adherents were formed, one of men and the other of women. A room to be used for religious services was rented near the British army quarters. The singing was so much more spirited than that of the Established Church that three musicians attended the service to hear and participate, and were converted. Embury promptly licensed them as exhorters.

The poor furnished the majority of the followers. The superintendent of the almshouse invited Embury to preach there, many paupers were converted, and the superintendent himself yielded to powerful appeals which were supported by the conduct and testimony of the inmates.

CAPTAIN WEBB

An event of the first importance to the infant society was the appearance at one of the meetings early in 1767, of a British officer in uniform. The Methodists were somewhat startled, fearing that he was there to question them about the conversion of the musicians and others connected with the army. Taking no part in the exercises, he, nevertheless, bore himself so reverently as to show that he was not hostile. At the close he informed Embury that he was "Captain Thomas Webb, of the King's Service," that "he was also a soldier of the cross," and "a spiritual son of John Wesley," and that he had been "authorized by John Wesley to preach." Three years previously he had heard Wesley and become a zealous Christian; he joined the Methodist Society,

and being in a congregation at Bath when the circuit preacher failed to come, advanced to the altar and recounted with thrilling effect the facts of his personal experience. Wesley heard of it and licensed him as a lay preacher. His services to the growing society and to Methodism were not surpassed, except by those of Rankin and Asbury, by any Englishman who came to this country in the earliest period.

In 1768 the society leased the site in John Street, New York city, purchasing it two years later. There was no expectation of founding a religious denomination; indeed, they avowed the contrary Webb retired with full pay as captain and settled in Jamaica, Long Island, and there started a Methodist society. On his first visit to a town he usually formed a class, and on the second or third organized a society. He planted Methodism in Trenton, the capital of New Jersey; in Burlington, and in Philadelphia, where he preached in a "sail loft" and enrolled a class of seven members. He introduced Methodism into Delaware and continued his tour to Baltimore.

ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE

During this period a Methodist movement had been spreading in Maryland, of which the Methodists in New York had never heard. Robert Strawbridge and other Irishmen had settled in Frederick County, then a backwoods country. It is maintained by some that Strawbridge preached the first sermon, formed the first society, and built the first preaching house for Methodism in Maryland and in America at least three years before Wesley Chapel in John Street was built. Strong testimony is adduced on both sides of this question. This controversy, being of no importance to the purpose of this work, is merely recognized here. Those who wish to see

it more fully discussed may do so in the author's *History of Methodism in the United States,* published in two volumes by Harper & Brothers, and published in one volume by Charles Scribner's Sons; in Stevens's *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church,* and at great length in *The Beginnings of the Wesleyan Movement in America,* by John Atkinson, D.D., and in *Lost Chapters Recovered from the Early History of American Methodism,* by J. B. Wakeley, D.D.

Strawbridge built the "Log Meeting House" on Sams Creek, Maryland, and the society there established soon contributed four preachers to Methodism. He also founded the first Methodist societies in the Counties of Baltimore and Harford, Maryland, and Richard Owens, the "first native preacher" of the continent, was one of his converts. Substantial citizens, as well as the more emotional part of the community, responded to his appeals.

Whatever view may be taken of the question of priority, Barbara Heck, Philip Embury, Robert Strawbridge, and Captain Webb should always be mentioned in every account, however brief, of the origin of Methodism in America.

A NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN LAYMAN

Thomas Taylor, a layman, arrived in this country October 26, 1767, and made the acquaintance of Embury and other Methodists. Six months later he wrote to Wesley a more important communication than the latter had previously received from America. He described Whitefield's three visits, and the reaction which followed, and spoke of its having pleased God to "rouse up Mr. Embury to employ his talent [which for several years had been hid, as it were, in a napkin] by calling sinners to repentance, and exhorting believers to let their light shine be-

fore men." Also he depicted the favorable result of the presence of Webb, detailed plans for erecting a chapel, and said: "There is another point far more material, in which I must importune your assistance, not only in my own name, but in the name of the whole society. We need an able and experienced preacher; one who has both gifts and grace necessary for the work." He commended the preaching of Webb and Embury as useful, and testified that their hearts were in the work, but added that "the progress of the gospel here depends much upon the qualifications of preachers."[1] He implored Wesley to send a man of wisdom, of sound faith, *and a good disciplinarian.* Thus feelingly he implored him:

> Dear Sir: I entreat you, for the good of thousands, to use your utmost endeavors to send one over. With respect to money for the payment of the preachers' passage over, if they could not procure it, we would sell our coats and shirts to procure it for them. I most earnestly beg an interest in your prayers, and trust you, and many of our brethren, will not forget the Church in this wilderness.

The services of Taylor to American Methodism should never be forgotten; he was the forerunner of a long line of laymen, wise, spiritual, self-sacrificing, and persevering. Webb and Thomas Bell also wrote. Private correspondence with various persons had circulated the news of the progress of Methodism. Robert Williams applied to Wesley for authority to go over and preach. This Wesley granted, on the express stipulation that when the "regularly commissioned missionaries" to be sent by Wesley should arrive, he would labor under their direction. Ashton, a friend of Williams, accompanied him on the voyage to Norfolk, Virginia.

WESLEY'S PREACHERS ARRIVE IN AMERICA

In the twenty-sixth English Conference, which began

[1]Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. i, pp. 52-58, Letter of Thomas Taylor to John Wesley.

at Leeds on the third day of August, 1769, Wesley said: "We have a pressing call from our brethren at New York, who have built a preaching house, to come over and help them. Who is willing to go? Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor. What can we do further in token of our brotherly love? Let us now take a collection among ourselves." This was immediately done, and out of it about twenty pounds was given for their passage and fifty pounds was allotted to the payment of the debt incurred in the building of the preaching house. These evangelists, differing in gifts and temperament, were able men, especially Pilmoor. Full of their mission, they speedily sailed for America, disembarking at Gloucester on the Delaware River, a few miles below Philadelphia. In the Minutes of the English Conference for 1770 the American continent was mentioned in the appointments for the first time, and stood thus: "America: Joseph Pilmoor, Richard Boardman, Robert Williams, John King." The number of members reported in 1771 for the "great continent of North America" was three hundred and sixteen. On the ground of such progress Wesley asked for willing missionaries to send to the United States, and five responded. Only two, Francis Asbury and Richard Wright, could be spared.[1]

FRANCIS ASBURY

Asbury was born near Birmingham, England, August 20, 1745, learned the trade of a blacksmith, was religiously impressed and instructed by his parents, chiefly his mother, came under the influence of certain clergymen of the English Church who sympathized with Wesley and the revival of pure religion, and was early converted and became a devout Bible student and an industrious reader of all good and useful books. Later he

[1]Wright's career in this country was comparatively insignificant, and he remained but two or three years.

visited a Methodist society, and in 1760 was ready to testify to an experience similar to the strange warming of his heart which Wesley felt. Before his seventeenth year ended he was made a class leader; at the age of eighteen he was authorized to act as local preacher; when he was twenty-one he was made a member of Wesley's Conference.

The administration of the Discipline by Boardman and Pilmoor was too lax to suit Asbury's views, the enforcement of which aroused much opposition among the members. About a year after his arrival, a letter came from Wesley in which he required a strict attention to discipline, and appointed Asbury to act as Assistant. This placed him in charge of all the preachers, including Boardman and Pilmoor. But, when the beneficial influence of discipline began to be seen and felt, many who had rejected his rigorous methods returned to confess their errors and express gratitude for his fidelity.

In the meantime the work of Strawbridge had widely extended in eastern Maryland (particularly throughout his own county of Frederick), Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Many able men were led to Christ through his preaching and that of Williams and King.

The historic situation presents Asbury as the vicegerent of Wesley, superintending preachers and confirming preachers and people in the Wesleyan Discipline. In the meantime Webb, having labored about six years, had returned to England in 1772 to obtain more missionaries. His enthusiastic descriptions of the condition and prospects of the American people led Charles Wesley to regard him as a fanatic. Webb requested, almost demanded, that Christopher Hopper and Joseph Benson, two of the foremost men in the Conference, should be sent to America, which convinced Charles Wesley that "the Captain had lost his head."

RANKIN, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETIES

When the English Conference met in August, Webb was permitted to address the preachers, and exhorted with such effect that George Shadford, highly esteemed by Wesley, and Thomas Rankin, one of the chief men of the Wesleyan movement, offered themselves to go in the spring of 1773. At once Wesley appointed Rankin General Assistant, or "Superintendent of the American Societies." This was done on three accounts: Rankin was Asbury's senior in the itinerancy; he had had wide experience as a disciplinarian; and, according to his own correspondence with Wesley, Asbury's difficulties had seriously increased.

Rankin was a Scotchman, thoroughly instructed in the Catechism, and also—"although his father was a very upright man—in music and dancing." This last accomplishment Rankin declared tended "to obliterate the good impressions that from time to time had affected his mind." At the death of his father, when he was about seventeen years of age, he became profoundly interested in experimental religion.

John Haine, in 1745, had wrought miracles of grace in the British army in Flanders, and the converted troops returning to England, planted Methodist societies wherever they went. One of these was established in Dunbar, Scotland, and there Rankin first heard Methodist doctrine; although it was under the preaching of Whitefield that he was converted. He also heard Wesley and Alexander Mather, and when he was sent to America had been an itinerant minister for twelve years, wonderfully successful in preaching, skillful in governing the societies, and even more unyielding than Asbury.

Rankin and Shadford reached America on June 12, 1773.

CHAPTER III

American Methodism Organized

Rankin's credentials being both definite and comprehensive, Asbury received him with due respect, and endeavored to adapt himself to a subordinate position where he had been the highest local and visible authority. This, under any circumstances, one of the hardest tests of faith and singleness of mind, was made more severe by the fact that Rankin was an autocrat and endowed with a full measure of Scotch tenacity, while Asbury was an Englishman of a time when firmness in the whole British nation was easily intensified into obstinacy. Wesley had employed Rankin where the sternest discipline was required, and Asbury had aimed to imitate Wesley in the control and regulation of Methodism in America.

FIRST AMERICAN CONFERENCE

The first *American* Conference was held in the city of Philadelphia, beginning on July 14, 1773, and continuing in session three days. It opened with nine preachers, but Asbury, who had been detained on the New York Circuit, appeared on the second day, thus making the number correspond to that at Wesley's first Conference in England twenty-nine years before.

All in attendance were natives of Europe; they were Thomas Rankin, Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, Francis Asbury, Richard Wright, George Shadford, Thomas Webb, John King, Abraham Whitworth, and Joseph Yearbry. The aggregate returns of membership were 1,160, of whom 500 were in Maryland, 100 in Virginia, 180 each in New York and Philadelphia, and 200 in New Jersey. These were enrolled in classes. Prob-

ably as many more considered themselves adherents, for the preachers had often formed societies without classes.

This Conference unanimously adopted the foundations of organized American Methodism. For the sake of clearness the English style of questions and answers was adopted. The three main questions were:

Question 1. Ought not the authority of Mr. Wesley, and that Conference, to extend to the preachers and the people in America as well as in Great Britain and Ireland?

Answer. Yes.

Question 2. Ought not the doctrine and Discipline of the Methodists, as contained in the Minutes, to be the sole rule of our conduct, who labor in the connection with Mr. Wesley in America?

Answer. Yes.

Question 3. If so, does it not follow that if any preachers deviate from the Minutes, we can have no fellowship with them till they change their conduct?

Answer. Yes.

The following rules were agreed to by all the preachers present:

1. Every preacher who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
2. All the people among whom we labor, to be earnestly exhorted to attend the church, and to receive the ordinances there; but in a particular manner to press the people in Maryland and Virginia to the observance of this minute.
3. No person or persons to be admitted into our love feasts oftener than twice or thrice, unless they become members; and none to be admitted to the society meetings more than thrice.
4. None of the preachers in America to reprint any of Mr. Wesley's books without his authority (when it can be gotten) and the consent of their brethren.
5. Robert Williams to sell the books he has already printed, but to print no more, unless under the above restrictions.
6. Every preacher who acts as an assistant to send an account of the work once in six months to the general assistant.

The first question and answer determinately expressed the allegiance of preachers and people to Wesley; the second determined doctrinal standards and practical rules of government, and the third made adherence to the doctrines and discipline and obedience to Wesley a condition of membership.

The first rule is explained by the previous European and American history of the first Quarterly Conference of which any account has been preserved, which met at the house of a member on the western shore of Maryland, December 23, 1772. *Asbury's Journal* (page 57) relates that the fifth proposition considered was this: "Will the people be contented without our administering the sacraments?" J. K. (John King) was neuter; Brother S. (Strawbridge) "pleaded for the ordinances, and so did the people, who appeared to be much biased by him."

On this point Wesley had required his followers in England to submit to the Established Church and to receive the Holy Communion from the parish priests. Asbury strove to preserve in this country similar submission, therefore he told them he would not agree to their administering the ordinances at that time and records that he insisted on "our abiding by our rules. But Mr. B. [Boardman] had given them their way at the quarterly meeting held here before and I was obliged to connive at some things for the sake of peace!"[1] Reinforced in the Conference by Rankin, this first note was passed; and such was the influence of Asbury that the second was passed. The third explains itself; the fifth explains the fourth; and the sixth explains itself.

From *Asbury's Journal* we learn that though this first rule is in such unequivocal terms, it was adopted with the understanding that "no preacher in our connection shall be permitted to administer the ordinances at this

[1] *Asbury's Journal*, p. 57.

time; *except Mr. S.* [Strawbridge] and *he under* the particular direction of the Assistant."[1]

Of the fourth and fifth rules Jesse Lee, the first historian of American Methodism, says, "Robert Williams . . had reprinted many of Mr. Wesley's books, and had spread them throughout the country." But notwithstanding much good had been done, "it now became necessary for the preachers to be united in the same cause of printing and selling our books, so that the profits arising therefrom might be divided among the preachers or applied to some charitable purpose."[2]

Boardman and Pilmoor, whose names do not appear in the list of appointments, remained in the country nearly six months after the adjournment of the Conference. Although they had not participated in the political controversies of the time, being loyal Englishmen, when they perceived that war was inevitable, "after commending the Americans to God," they took their departure, January 2, 1774.

Notwithstanding the rigor of Rankin's administration, the society had become thoroughly consolidated, and had largely increased in membership, about a thousand being added in ten months. But Rankin's manners were so abrupt, he was so monarchical in spirit, and his course was frequently so destitute of tact, that Asbury confessed himself to have been sorely tried.

At the second Conference, held in Philadelphia, May 25, 1774, no regulation of permanent importance was passed, attention being concentrated on the appointments, the working of the machinery of the society, and financial ways and means.

SERIOUS DISAGREEMENTS

Asbury writes of this Conference: "The overbearing

[1] *Asbury's Journal*, vol. i, p. 80.
[2] *History of the Methodists*, pp. 48, 49.

spirit of a certain person had excited my fears. My judgment was stubbornly opposed for a while, and at last submitted to."[1]

Contrary to Asbury's wish, Rankin removed him from Baltimore to New York, "to exchange with himself at Philadelphia."

It is evident from *Asbury's Journal* that he was not as submissive to the authority of Rankin as he had required others to be to his own. He records: "It is somewhat grievous that he [Rankin] should prevent my going to Baltimore, after being acquainted with my engagements, and the importunities of my friends there." He also says: "I spoke my mind to Mr. R., but we did not agree in judgment. And it appeared to me that to make any attempt to go to Baltimore would be all in vain."[2]

Asbury was so dissatisfied that he wrote to Wesley concerning this matter, but his fairness of spirit was manifested by his showing his letter to Rankin before sending it. Wesley addressed a letter, March 1, 1775, to all the preachers, telling them that they were never in their lives in so critical a situation as then. Some of his sentences are worthy of perpetuation: "Do all you can to help soften all; but beware how you adopt another's jar. The conduct of T. Rankin has been suitable to the Methodist plan. I hope all of you tread in his steps."

The Conference of 1775 took no action modifying the proceedings of its predecessors.

The Conference of 1776 assembled in Baltimore on May 21. Asbury being ill, could not attend. Among those received on trial was Freeborn Garrettson, who was to become one of the noted men of American Methodism, and an authority on its history and traditions. The

[1] *Asbury's Journal*, vol. i, p. 112.
[2] Ibid., vol. i, p. 138.

membership had increased more than fifty per cent during the year. This large advance was in the South; New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, overrun by soldiers and agitated by war and rumors of war, showed an alarming decline, and Baltimore made but a slight increase.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

July 26 was appointed as a fast day to pray for the peace of America and the prosperity of the work of God. Before that day came, the Declaration of Independence, which affected every law and civic interest of the colonies, and was destined to produce immeasurable effects upon Methodism, had been submitted to the judgment and sympathy of the world. Notwithstanding the troubled condition of the public mind, Methodism so devoted its energies, chiefly to increase and consolidate, that when the Conference of 1777 convened in a rural circuit in Maryland, the registry showed large gains in the membership and preaching staff.

It being now considered certain that the war between England and the colonies would not cease for years, most of the preachers who came from England contemplated returning if opportunity should occur. To provide against such a contingency a committee of five was appointed by the Conference to act in the place of the General Assistant. Such a superintendency by committee had been proposed at a preceding informal meeting of leading preachers, including Asbury. In Stevens's *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church,* and in Lednum's *History* there are discrepancies between the accounts of the appointment of this committee, but it is plain that it was appointed; and that the unpopularity of the English preachers—who were stigmatized as Tories—accounts for the absence of Asbury's name from the committee of five.

WESLEY'S UNFORTUNATE INTERFERENCE

The unfortunate interference of Wesley, in the American question on the English side, had made it almost impossible for Methodist ministers, natives of England, to obtain a favorable hearing; and in various sections they were subject to insults, personal assaults, and arrest.

There being but few ministers of the Church of England to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, the question was raised, in this Conference, whether it would not be permissible and wise for the preachers to do so. Lee observes: "We were only a religious society, and not a Church, and any member of any Church, who would conform to our rules, and meet in a class had liberty to continue in their own Church."[1]

While a majority of the preachers and many of the members considered themselves members of the Church of England, documents and authentic traditions show that by birth, training, and associations many of the early American Methodists were Baptists and Presbyterians. There were also not a few birthright members of the Society of Friends.

Though the official Minutes make no reference to the question of sacraments, the *Journal* of Philip Gatch records that the question, "What shall be done with respect to the ordinances?" was propounded, and the answer was, "Let the preachers pursue the old plan, as from the beginning." There being dissent, another question was raised: "What alteration may we make in our original plan?" And the answer was, "Our next Conference will, if God permit, show us more clearly."

All the English preachers, except Asbury, asked for certificates of ministerial character, that they might return home honorably.

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[1] *History of the Methodists*, p. 47.

1778

The Conference of 1778 was held at Leesburg, Virginia. The province of Virginia then contained nearly two thirds of the members of the Methodists in the colonies. Because of current report that Methodists sympathized with Great Britain—which grew largely out of the writings of Wesley, and also in part from the retreat of the English ministers—Asbury, unjustly suspected of Toryism, was in concealment at the house of Judge White. Asbury says in his *Journal:*[1]

> The reason of this retirement was as follows: From March 10, 1778, on conscientious principles I was a non-juror, and could not preach in the State of Maryland; and therefore withdrew to the Delaware State, where the clergy were not required to take the State oath; though, with a clear conscience, I could have taken the oath of the Delaware State, had it been required; and would have done it, had I not been prevented by a tender fear of hurting the scrupulous consciences of others.

Philadelphia and New York were occupied by the British, and the English fleet had taken possession of the waters of Maryland. William Watters, the senior native itinerant, presided. All the ministers were young; Watters himself was in his twenty-seventh year.

Of the fourteen admitted on trial several were destined to become extraordinarily useful. Among these was John Dickins, whose subsequent career alone, though brief, would have made the Conference famous. For the first time a decline was shown in members; it amounted to eight hundred and seventy-three. As Asbury was not present, and no word was received from him, and no appointment could be filled by him, his name does not appear in the Minutes.

After debate the question of the sacraments, referred to this Conference by the preceding one, was again postponed to the next Conference for definite settlement.

[1] Vol. i, p. 272.

CHAPTER IV

The First Ecclesiastical Conflict

More serious troubles than any which had yet invaded the societies were now knocking loudly at the door. The continued seclusion of Asbury led to the appointment of two Conferences in 1779. One was at the house of Judge White, Kent County, Delaware, on the 28th of April, and was attended by the preachers east of the Potomac; the second at Fluvanna, Virginia, three weeks later, attended by those west of the Potomac. The Minutes contain separate records, but practically they were one Conference.

Asbury had never presided in any Conference recorded in the Minutes previous to the one at the residence of Judge White; but at that meeting, it was voted and declared that Asbury should "act as General Assistant in America." "Helpers" were forbidden to alter the boundaries of any circuit, or to appoint preaching in any new place without consulting the Assistant. Every exhorter and local preacher was required to obey the directions of the Assistant, "going where and only where" he should appoint. The term for members on trial was lengthened from one year to two. Traveling preachers were instructed to meet the class whenever possible. The preachers "determined to guard against a separation from the Church directly or indirectly."

A SIGNIFICANT RESOLUTION

The most significant resolution was this: "On hearing every preacher for and against what is in debate, *the right of determination shall rest with him* [Asbury], *according to the Minutes.*" This revealed the fact that

Asbury desired to have the same power in the American Methodist societies and Conferences which Wesley wielded over and in the British society and Conference. It also showed that the preachers conceded it. He was to hear debate solely to enable him to form his imperial will, and though the form of voting took place, and the General Assistant usually acquiesced, the power of deciding even against a unanimous vote was recognized and recorded as fundamental law. These were the principal acts of this Conference, and weighty transactions they were, especially as no one had any legal right to call that Conference.

SELF-ORDAINED PREACHERS

Without the manuscripts of some who attended the Fluvanna Conference, we should be in ignorance of a transaction of extraordinary importance. This Conference, having had the sacramental question referred to it by the preceding regular Conference, took up the matter and appointed a committee consisting of Gatch, Foster, Cole, and Ellis, and constituted it a presbytery, "first, to administer the ordinances to themselves; second, to authorize any other preacher or preachers, approved by them, by the form of laying on of hands." They did this on the ground that *"the Episcopal establishment is now dissolved in this country; and therefore, in almost all our circuits the members are without ordinances."*

Considerable discussion arose as to whether the Conference held in Kent County or that which met at Fluvanna was the regular Conference. That the latter was the only legitimate one is manifest.

The following entry is in the Minutes of the Kent, or Delaware, Conference.

1. Why was the Delaware Conference held?

Answer. For the convenience of the preachers in the Northern

stations, that we all might have an opportunity of meeting in Conference; it being unadvisable for Brother Asbury and Brother Ruff, with some others, to attend in Virginia; it is considered also as preparatory to the Conference in Virginia. Our sentiments to be given in [to the Virginia Conference] by Brother Watters.

Basing his reason on this action, Stevens thus concludes, Asbury had "no previous official authority to call that Conference, nor could his new appointment be considered legal until the majority of his brethren, who were within the Fluvanna Conference, should confirm it. Not till five years later did Asbury receive any such appointment from Wesley."[1] In harmony with these facts, Lee, in his *History of the Methodists,* numbers the Fluvanna Conference as the "seventh regular Conference," merely alluding to that called by Asbury as "preparatory."

The Fluvanna session, being the "regularly appointed" Conference, organized under the authoritatively appointed Committee of Superintendence, presided over by one of these, and "composed of the majority of the preachers from a majority of the circuits and comprising a majority of the members," was the legal and rightful session of the body. And being so, it adjourned to meet at Manakintown, Virginia, May 8, 1780.

After the adjournment of the Fluvanna Conference the majority of the preachers in the South proceeded to administer the sacraments wherever the people were willing to accept them. There was, however, a division of sentiment even in the South, for some of those who had been Methodists from the beginning and had been trained to regard themselves as members of the Church of England, would not commune with them. Yet both parties feared, and shrank from, a final separation.

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[1]Stevens's *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church,* vol. ii, p. 63.

ASBURY'S BALTIMORE CONFERENCE

Notwithstanding efforts made during the whole of the preceding year to prevent it, the regular Conference met according to adjournment, although no mention is made of it in Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Asbury, however, having been designated at the preparatory irregular meeting of a minority of the preachers to the office of General Assistant, called a Conference of "the more Northern preachers" to meet in Baltimore on April 24, which was two weeks before the regular Conference was to convene at Manakintown.

The Conference appointed by Asbury took the following action:

Question 12. Shall we continue in close connection with the Church, and press our people to a closer communion with her?

Answer. Yes.

Question 13. Will this Conference grant the privilege to all the friendly clergy of the Church of England, at the request or desire of the people, to preach or administer the ordinances in our preaching houses or chapels?

Answer. Yes.

Question 20. Does this whole Conference disapprove the step our brethren have taken in Virginia?

Answer. Yes.

Question 21. Do we look upon them no longer as Methodists in connection with Mr. Wesley and us till they come back?

Answer. Agreed.

Question 22. Shall Brothers Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters attend the Virginia Conference, and inform them of our proceedings in this, and receive their answer?

Answer. Yes.

Question 26. What must be the conditions of our union with our Virginia brethren?

Answer. To suspend all their administrations for one year, and all meet together in Baltimore.

CONDITIONS OF UNION

According to *Asbury's Journal,* the Conference in

Baltimore at first concluded to renounce the Southern brethren. Then he offered conditions of union; that they should ordain no more, that they should come no farther than Hanover Circuit, that the Conference which he represented should have delegates in their Conference; that they should "not presume to administer the ordinances where there is a decent Episcopal minister," and that without delay they should make preparations for a union Conference.

He records that "although it was like death to think of parting," after a long debate they came back to their original determination. "At last," he testifies, "a thought struck my mind; to propose a suspension of the ordinances for one year, and so cancel our grievances and be one." It was agreed on both sides, and Philip Gatch and Reuben Ellis, who had been unyielding, came into it and thought "it would do."

The account in *Asbury's Journal* of his journey to the Conference held at Manakintown indicates deep grief. Everywhere he went "the people were full of the ordinances." On reaching the place he writes: "I spoke with my countryman, John Dickins, and found him opposed to our continuance in union with the Episcopal Church. William Watters and Freeborn Garrettson were conversing with the different members, but found them inflexible." Finally, Asbury, Garrettson, Watters, and Dromgoole were invited into the Conference. Asbury read Wesley's "Thoughts against Separation," showed his private letters of instruction from Wesley, set before them the sentiments of the Delaware and Baltimore Conferences, read some correspondence with Gatch and Dickins, and then withdrew. The Conference at first refused to accept Asbury's proposition to suspend for one year the operation of the measures they had taken.

These men were all in earnest and thoroughly sin-

cere. "The ambassadors on each side," says Asbury, "wept like children, but kept their opinions." Asbury returned to take formal and final leave of the Conference and depart immediately to the North, but found that while he had been praying *"they were brought to an agreement."*

He thus sums up the matter: "Surely the hand of God has been greatly seen in all this." "There might have been twenty promising preachers and three thousand people seriously affected by this separation." In view of this reconciliation the stations of the preachers in Virginia were included in the Minutes of the year 1780; but they are placed after all the other proceedings. Stevens notes that the names of several men of marked influence disappeared from the record.

UNFORTUNATE OMISSION

The Minutes of the Conference at Manakintown are not known to exist. Because of the partial union previously described the official Minutes of the Church give all the proceedings of Asbury's Conference, and at the close, in a separate question, state where the preachers in Virginia, who attended the regularly adjourned Conference, were stationed.

Stevens justly stigmatizes the omission or suppression of the Manakintown Minutes as a grave defect in the official records of the denomination. Tigert also considers this "an essential injustice," though he thinks that other sources, principally *Asbury's Journal* and the *Life of Watters,* "have afforded information concerning everything of value."

This view is not supported by the situation. The discussions that lasted for parts of several days, in the absence of Watters and Asbury, and the various motions made, discussed, adopted, amended, or rejected, might

have shed much light upon the early history of Methodism, as well as upon its principles.

According to Watters the proposition accepted was "that there should be a suspension of the ordinances for the present year, and that our circumstances should be laid before Mr. Wesley and his advice solicited; also that Mr. Asbury should be requested to ride through the different circuits and superintend the work at large." This came from one of those who had favored the ordinances. Two letters appear to have been written to Wesley, asking his advice: one drawn up by Dickins for those who had administered the ordinances, spoken of by Garrettson as "a circumstantial letter," the other by Asbury, who in his *Journal* for the 16th of September, 1780, says, "Wrote to Mr. Wesley at the desire of the Virginia Conference, who had consented to suspend the administration of the ordinances for one year."

A preparatory Conference was held by Asbury on April 16, 1781, at Judge White's, at Choptank, in Delaware. It consisted of about twenty preachers. Lee speaks of this somewhat satirically: "But previous to this [the regular Conference] a few preachers on the Eastern Shore held a *little conference* [the italics are his] to make some arrangements for those preachers who could not go with them, and then adjourned, as they called it, to Baltimore."

THE CONFERENCE OF 1781

The "ninth regular Conference" met at Baltimore April 24. Garrettson states that a response from Wesley to Asbury's letter, and to Dickins's circumstantial account of the case was received and read. Garrettson records that the reply was "we should continue on the old plan until further direction." He adds, "We unanimously agreed to follow his counsel, and went on harmoniously."

Of thirty-nine preachers, all but one responded affirmatively to the following question:

What preachers are now determined, after mature consideration, close observation, and earnest prayer, to preach the old Methodist *doctrine*, and strictly enforce the Discipline, as contained *in the Notes, Sermons, and Minutes published by Mr. Wesley*, so far as they respect both preachers and people, according to the knowledge we have of them, and the ability God shall give, and firmly resolved to discountenance a separation among either preachers or people?

ESTIMATE OF THE SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY

The more closely this situation is studied the more clearly it appears that those brethren are entitled to an exalted place in the pantheon of Methodist history who "concluded that if God had called them to preach, he had called them also to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper." That this conclusion is sufficiently supported appears from the account given of these brethren by Lee, who was conversant with all the circumstances. He says:

Most of our preachers in the South fell in with this new plan, and as the leaders of the party were very zealous, and the greater part of them very pious men, the private members were influenced by them, and pretty generally fell in with their measures. The preachers in the South were very successful in their ministerial labors, and many souls were brought to God in the latter part of that year; and the Christians were very lively in religion. These things all united to confirm the preachers in the belief that the step they had taken was owned and honored of God. And at that time there was little room to hope that they would ever recede from their new plan, in which they were so well established. But, after all, they consented for the sake of peace, and the union of the body of Methodists, to drop the ordinances for a season till Mr. Wesley could be consulted[1]

Lee was a native of the South, in sympathy with its

[1] *History of the Methodists*, Jesse Lee, pp. 69 and 70.

spirit and, though not involved in the transaction, it might be thought that he looked too favorably upon those who had originated ordination and administered the ordinances. But the three delegates sent by the Northern preachers to the Virginia Conference "to bring them back if possible to our original usages" were Asbury, Watters, and Garrettson." Watters and Garrettson concurred with Lee, and Garrettson commended them in an exalted strain, taking occasion to do so in his Semi-centennial Sermon:

> I do not think that Drew in his *Life of Coke*, has in several particulars, done justice to our American brethren. He represents them as very refractory, and supposes that Asbury had much trouble with them; whereas they went forth in the power of the Spirit, disseminating divine truth, and suffering much persecution and many privations, while Asbury had a quiet retreat at Judge White's; and that during the hottest time of our conflict. It is true, our Southern brethren, to satisfy the people and their own consciences, did administer the ordinances in what they thought an extreme case. The leading members of the Pluvanna Conference were Dickins, Gatch, Yeargain, Poythress, Ellis, Tatum, etc.—all faithful, pious, zealous men of God, who would have done credit to any religious connection. I admired their goodness in cordially agreeing to consult Wesley, and to follow his judgment, and till they should receive his advice, to suspend the administration of the ordinances. If I am prolix on this subject, it is to show that our Virginia brethren were undeservedly accused of schism.

If the course of Asbury, in counter-working the efforts of the majority of the preachers to secure the sacraments for themselves and the people was in several particulars arbitrary, the unsettled condition of the times, both in Church and State, palliates it. The branches of visible Methodism in this country had been broken from the parent stem, Wesley, except as Asbury, with or without authority, held fast to it. Nor should it be forgotten that he alone of all the preachers sent out by Wesley

remained in America. And, though from the beginning of the controversy he had been dictatorial and severe, it was he who made the proposal which enabled the sacramentarians to yield at last without a deeper humiliation than human nature, when conscious of no wrong, could reasonably be expected to bear.

AGITATED STATE OF THE COUNTRY

Throughout the remainder of the year 1781 and early in the following year, the ravages and distractions of civil war were grievously felt by the Methodists. Lee, who experienced them heavily in his own person, gives a graphic account of the exigencies in which they were placed. Many members were drafted, and joined the army to fight for their country. Some were killed, "some made shipwreck of the faith, and but few returned home with as much religion as they formerly possessed." Some of the Methodists "were bound in conscience not to fight; and no threatening could compel them to bear arms, or hire men to take their places." In consequence of this "some were whipped, some fined, and some imprisoned; others were sent home, and many were much persecuted."

In Virginia numerous battles were fought, which kept the people agitated, and prevented them from meeting at their usual times and places. When they did meet for worship their conversation chiefly concerned the troublous times. The pathetic testimony of one who went through it all, better than many pages of fine writing, enables one to realize what the situation was before there were trains, telegraphs, steamboats, or even regular mails: "Before meeting would begin, and as soon as it was closed, the inquiry was, 'What is the news of the day?' One would say, 'My son is killed'; another, 'My husband is wounded or taken a prisoner, or sick and

likely to die.'" Nevertheless, there was an increase of twelve hundred and forty-six, and a gain of five preachers.

It was soon found necessary to have two Conferences per year, and a singular rule was made. As the Conference in the North was of longer standing, and its preachers the older, in making rules for the societies, it was given a *veto upon the proceedings of the Southern.* Lee reports it as working in practice thus:

> When anything was agreed to in the Virginia Conference, and afterward disapproved of in the Baltimore Conference, it was dropped. But if any rule was fixed and determined on at the Baltimore Conference, the preachers in the South were under the necessity of abiding by it.[1]

1782

The Conference held two sessions in 1782, one at Ellis Chapel, Sussex County, Virginia, April 17, and "adjourned to Baltimore May 21." Jarratt, a Church of England clergyman, friendly to Asbury, preached every day at the session in Virginia and administered the Lord's Supper to preachers and people.

The session in Baltimore unanimously recognized Asbury as "General Assistant" "according to Wesley's original appointment," which was before Rankin arrived. The use made of that appointment, *without the ratification of Wesley,* is quaint, but it had the force of a recommendation by Wesley.

1783

Two Conferences were held in 1783 at the same places as in the preceding year, and in the same order of succession. No action having an important bearing upon the constitutional or legal development of the society was transacted. In the latter part of the year a letter of much importance was received from Wesley:

[1] *History of the Methodists*, pp. 78, 79.

BRISTOL, October 3, 1783.

1. Let all of you be determined to abide by the Methodist doctrine, and discipline, published in the four volumes of Sermons, and the Notes upon the New Testament, together with the large minutes of the Conference.

2. Beware of preachers coming from *Great Britain* or *Ireland*, without a full recommendation from me. Three of our traveling preachers here eagerly desired to go to *America*, but I could not approve of it by any means; because I am not satisfied that they thoroughly like either our discipline or doctrine: I think they differ from our judgment, in one or both. Therefore, if these or any others come without my recommendation, take care how you receive them.

3. Neither should you receive any preachers, however recommended, who will not be subject to the *American* Conference, and cheerfully conform to the Minutes both of the *English* and *American* Conferences.

4. I do not wish our *American* brethren to receive any who make any difficulty of receiving *Francis Asbury* as the General Assistant.

Undoubtedly the greatest danger to the work of God in *America*, is likely to arise either from preachers coming from Europe, or from such as will arise from among yourselves, speaking perverse things, or bringing in among you new doctrines, particularly Calvinism. You should guard against this with all possible care, *for it is far easier to keep them out than to thrust them out.*

I commend you all to the grace of God, and am your affectionate friend and brother, JOHN WESLEY.

THE TWELFTH CONFERENCE

On April 30, 1784, the twelfth Conference began at Ellis's Chapel and closed in Baltimore May 28. No new principle of law was introduced, and no rule made. The 21st question was, "How shall we conduct ourselves toward European preachers?" And the answer is necessary to the explanation of subsequent events:

If they are recommended by Mr. Wesley, will be subject to the American Conference, preach the *doctrine taught in the four volumes of Sermons and Notes on the New Testament*, keep the

circuits they are appointed to, follow the direction of the London and American Minutes, and be subject to Francis Asbury as General Assistant, while he stands approved by Mr. Wesley *and* the Conference, we will receive them; but if they walk contrary to the above directions, no ancient right or appointment shall prevent their being excluded from our connection.

Few, if any, in America or Europe foresaw the events in Methodism which were soon to occur first in England and then in the United States.

CHAPTER V

A Commissioner with Extraordinary Powers

The Wesleyan Methodist societies in America were organized into the Methodist Episcopal Church in December, 1784. As respects its origin, the personal elements of which it was formed, the principles upon which it was founded, the spirit which it endeavored to perpetuate, and the circumstances under which the organization was effected, it has no parallel in ecclesiastical history.

WESLEY'S TREMENDOUS PROBLEM

Representations from America had convinced Wesley that, though apparent unity upon the question of the non-administration of the sacraments had been attained, the truce would be but temporary.

Most of the clergy of the English Church had returned to England during the Revolution. The Presbyterians would not baptize the children of Methodists unless at least one of the parents professed faith in their doctrines, nor admit them to the communion unless they became members of their Church. The Baptists fellowshiped none except those who had been baptized on profession of faith and by immersion. The opposition of Methodists to the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees and the final perseverance of the saints caused them to be generally regarded as heretics. The jurisdiction of the English Church had ceased in the United States and the Protestant Episcopal Church had not been organized.

The membership of the Methodist societies was rapidly growing. It was obvious that individual withdrawals would take place in increasing number and disintegration occur unless relief should be speedily given.

DOCTOR THOMAS COKE

A person hitherto unknown to American Methodism was now to appear upon the scene. In 1776 Wesley arrived at Kingston, England, where he met a clergyman named Thomas Coke, who had ridden twenty miles to meet him. Coke was a native of Wales, the only child of wealthy parents, and an alumnus of Jesus College, Oxford. He had been intended for the profession of law, but became a clergyman, though after his examination the degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by Oxford. As a preacher he displayed rare gifts. Possessing a fortune, he enlarged the church of which he was rector at his own expense, to accommodate the crowds who gathered to hear him. At that place he met Thomas Maxfield, a preacher originally sent out by Wesley, but ordained by the Bishop of Londonderry, who in the ceremony used this language: "Sir, I ordain you to assist that good man [John Wesley], that he may not work himself to death." Maxfield, knowing the reputation of Coke, sought his acquaintance and explained to him the necessity and nature of conversion. Coke became the subject of conscious spiritual regeneration, and discarded his notes in preaching; and such unction attended his first sermon without them that hearers were awakened. Crowds now followed him wherever he spoke. He instituted lectures in the adjacent villages; and neighboring clergymen complained to the Bishop, who said that "all he could do would be to suspend him, which would make him a martyr," and therefore "he thought best not to do it." An accusation was laid before the Bishop of Bath and Wells, who merely admonished him. Finally, the rector of the parish, Coke being a curate, was besought to dismiss him, which was done.

It was shortly after this event that Wesley met him;

and after the interview they carried on a correspondence for about one year, when Wesley recorded in his journal: "I went forth to Taunton with Dr. Coke, who, being dismissed from his curacy, has determined to bid adieu to his honorable name and cast in his lot with us." As Coke had become one of the most attractive preachers in England, Wesley appointed him, in 1780, to superintend the affairs of the London Circuit. Toward the close of the same year Wesley designated him to visit the societies in Ireland alternately with himself once in every two years, leaving him free to take such journeys in England as prudence might direct. By virtue of his legal knowledge and training he was of great value to Wesley, who appears to have consulted him upon every important step.

WESLEY AND COKE CONFER

In February, 1784, Wesley invited Coke to his private chamber, and after general conversation said to him in substance: "The Revolution in America has separated the United States from the mother country forever. The episcopal establishment is utterly abolished; the Methodist societies are in a most deplorable condition; and an appeal has been made to me, through Mr. Asbury, to provide some mode of Church government suited to their needs." He also said that he had long revolved the subject in his thoughts, and would now unfold to him the plan; that he did not intend to deviate from the Bible; that, keeping his eye on the conduct of the primitive Churches in the ages of unadulterated Christianity, he had much admired the mode of ordaining Bishops which the Church of Alexandria had practiced; that that church would never suffer the interference of a foreign Bishop in any of their ordinations, but on a death of a Bishop the presbyters of that venerable apostolic Church ordained

another from their own body by the laying on of their own hands, and did this for two hundred years.

Wesley said that, being himself a presbyter, he wished Coke to accept ordination from his hands, and "to proceed to the continent of America, there to superintend the societies in the United States."

Coke, in reporting the conversation, said that he "was startled by a measure unprecedented in modern days, and expressed doubts as to the validity of Wesley's authority." But after considering the matter two months he wrote to Wesley that his objections were silenced; therefore, in harmony with this, at the Leeds Conference, in July, 1784, the Rev. John Fletcher, a distinguished clergyman of the Church of England and a devoted friend of Wesley, being present with Wesley and Coke, the question was brought to an issue and the measure was decided upon.

Wesley stated his intention to the preachers present, and from that period he considered the appointment as actually made. At this Conference Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey offered their services to accompany Coke in the character of missionaries.

COKE ORDAINED SUPERINTENDENT

Wesley wrote in his *Journal:* "On Wednesday, September 1st, being now clear in my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed, and appointed three of our brethren to go and serve the desolate sheep in America, which I verily believe will be much to the glory of God." At Bristol, Wesley, assisted by Coke and the Rev. James Creighton, each of them being a presbyter of the Church of England, ordained Whatcoat and Vasey presbyters for America. Wesley also ordained Coke a Superintendent, giving him, under his hand and seal, a certificate of which the original is extant:

To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late

Fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greetings:

Whereas, many of the people in the Southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the usages of the same Church; and, whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers:

Know all men, that I, John Wesley, think myself to be providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And, therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to His glory, I have this day set apart as a Superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer (being assisted by other ordained ministers), Thomas Coke, Dr. of civil law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

JOHN WESLEY.

WESLEY'S EXPLANATORY LETTER

Wesley gave Coke a letter intended to explain the grounds on which he had taken this step, which letter he instructed Coke to print and circulate among the societies upon his arrival in America:

BRISTOL, September 10, 1784.

To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America:

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2. Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that Bishops and presbyters are the same order, and, consequently, have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our traveling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national Church, to which I belonged.

3. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers: so that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.

4. I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury, to be joint *Superintendents* over our brethren in North America. As also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as *elders* among them, by baptizing and ministering the Lord's Supper.

JOHN WESLEY.

COKE'S ARRIVAL IN AMERICA

Coke, as Superintendent, accompanied by the presbyters, Whatcoat and Vasey, sailed for America on the 18th of September, and, after struggling with tempests, reached New York on the 3d of November. Soon after, they met John Dickins, the Methodist preacher of the city. To him Coke unfolded the plans of Wesley and his own relation to them. Dickins, though he had been in full sympathy with the proceedings of the Fluvanna Conference, approved these plans without reserve.

Coke preached his first sermon in John Street Chapel on the night of his arrival, and after two or three days set off for Philadelphia, arriving on Saturday evening, November 6. As he was a clergyman of the Church of England, he preached by invitation the next morning for Dr. McGaw, in Saint Paul's Church. In the evening he preached to the Methodist society at Saint George's. Concerning this he writes: "After preaching I opened to the society our new plan of Church government and I have reason to believe that they all rejoice in it." Dr. White, afterward Bishop of Pennsylvania, called upon him and invited him to occupy his pulpit on the ensuing

Sabbath. The news of Coke's arrival spread, and on the 14th of November, when he and Whatcoat reached Barratt's Chapel, Delaware, Asbury was present in the congregation. After the sermon Coke and Whatcoat administered the Holy Communion, which, being the first time that it was done with Wesley's authority, made the occasion "memorable as one of solemn joy."

COKE AND ASBURY MEET

Asbury introduced himself to Coke and they had a private conversation concerning the affairs of the society in America. Asbury said that he had collected a number of the preachers to form a council, and if it should be deemed expedient, they would immediately call a Conference. As all considered it necessary, Garrettson was sent with instructions to members to notify all accessible preachers to meet in Baltimore on Christmas Eve.

During the interval Asbury continued his journeys over the western shore of Maryland, accompanied by Whatcoat and Vasey, and Coke traveled according to the plan agreed upon between himself and Asbury. Coke, Asbury, Whatcoat, Vasey, and William Black, founder of Methodism in Nova Scotia, met at Abingdon and, with the exception of Whatcoat, journeyed to Perry Hall, the residence of a wealthy Methodist, about nine miles from Baltimore. On Friday, December 24, they rode into Baltimore.

Differences of opinion have arisen as to the date on which the Conference which transformed the dependent society into an independent CHURCH began its session. Lee and the published Minutes represent that it was on the 27th of December, Bangs and Wakeley on the 25th, but Coke's Certificate of Asbury's Ordination, *Coke's Journal, Asbury's Journal,* and *Whatcoat's Journal* make it the 24th. On their authority the historian Stevens accepts that date.

A CHURCH IN THE MAKING

CHAPTER VI

Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church

In this chapter is recorded only the series of events involved in the transformation of a cluster of societies into a Church. The significance of these events in subsequent constitutional and legislative action will be emphasized in the development of the new communion of Christians.

MEMBERS OF THE "CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE"

Coke records that, of the eighty-one preachers in the connection, nearly sixty were present in the assembly that performed the momentous deed; but only the names of twenty-nine have been ascertained. These are: Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, William Black, Caleb Boyer, James O. Cromwell, LeRoy Cole, John Dickins, Edward Dromgoole, Ira Ellis, Reuben Ellis, Joseph Everett, Jonathan Forrest, Freeborn Garrettson, William Glendenning, William Gill, Lemuel Green, John Haggerty, Jeremiah Lambert, Richard Ivey, James O'Kelly, William Phœbus, Ignatius Pigman, Nelson Reed, Francis Poythress, John Smith, Thomas Vasey, Thomas Ware, William Watters, Richard Whatcoat.[1]

ACCOUNT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

The Conference convened at ten o'clock; Coke presided; Wesley's letter was read and each part critically considered, Coke naturally being an expert commentator. Thomas Ware states that it was "cordially approved."

[1] The evidence of the presence of the twenty-nine whose names are here given may be found in the clearest and most condensed form in the *Centennial History of American Methodism*, by John Atkinson, D.D. Published by The Methodist Book Concern, 1884.

The next step was to form themselves into "an independent Church"; Asbury says, "An Episcopal Church, and to have Superintendents, Elders and Deacons."

The statement by Asbury that the Conference spent its time "debating freely, and *determining all things by a majority of votes,*" marks a new era, and raises a presumption that in all its actions the body understood precisely what it was doing.

The accounts of those present concerning what was enacted concur in all essentials. Whatcoat's is that the Conference "agreed to form a Methodist Episcopal Church, *in which the Liturgy* [as presented by Wesley] *should be read,* and the sacraments be administered by a Superintendent, Elders, and Deacons." Watters writes:

> We formed ourselves into a separate Church. This change was proposed to us by Mr. Wesley after we had craved his advice on the subject; but could not take effect till adopted by us, which was done in a deliberate formal manner, at a Conference called for that purpose, in which there was not one dissenting vote.

Asbury refused to accept the office of Superintendent *merely on the appointment of Wesley,* but desired an election by the Conference. Both Coke and Asbury were unanimously elected.

WARE'S DESCRIPTION

The account given by Ware being the most lucid and, on the points covered, the most definite, it is here inserted in full.

> At the Christmas Conference we met to congratulate each other, and to praise the Lord that He had disposed the mind of our excellent Wesley to renounce the fable of uninterrupted succession, and prepare the way for furnishing us with the long-desired privileges we were thenceforward expecting to enjoy. The announcement of the plan devised by him for our organization as a Church filled us with solemn delight. We,

therefore, according to the best of our knowledge, received and followed the advice of Mr. Wesley, as stated in our Form of Discipline. After Mr. Wesley's letter, declaring his appointment of Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury joint Superintendents over the Methodists in America, had been read, analyzed, and cordially approved by the Conference, the question arose, "What name or title shall we take?" I thought to myself, "I shall be satisfied that we be denominated, 'The Methodist Church,'" and so whispered to a brother sitting near me. But one proposed—I think it was John Dickins—that we should adopt the title of "Methodist Episcopal Church." Mr. Dickins was, in the estimation of his brethren, a man of sound sense and sterling piety, and there were few men on the Conference floor heard with greater deference than he. Most of the preachers had been brought up in what was called, "The Church of England"; and, all agreeing that the plan of general superintendence, which had been adopted, was a species of episcopacy, the motion on Mr. Dickins suggestion was carried without, I think, a dissenting voice. There was not, to my recollection, the least agitation on the question. Had the Conference indulged a suspicion that the name they adopted would be, in the least degree, offensive to the views or feelings of Mr. Wesley, they would have abandoned it at once, for the name of Mr. Wesley was inexpressibly dear to the Christmas Conference, and especially to Mr. Asbury and Dr. Coke.[1]

ORDINATION OF ASBURY

On the second day of the session Coke, assisted by Vasey and Whatcoat, ordained Asbury a deacon, and on the third day an elder; the day after that he was consecrated a superintendent, Coke and the elders being assisted by the Rev. Philip William Otterbein, of the German Reformed Church. The invitation to participate was extended to Otterbein at the request of Asbury, who had long been on friendly terms with him.

Several days were spent in perfecting a Discipline, in the selection of preachers on whom to confer "orders," and in the ordinations of those chosen. The first Discipline was adopted by this convention.

[1] *Life of Thomas Ware*, pp. 105, 106.

In anticipation of this event Wesley prepared and had printed for the use of the Church in America a Liturgy abridged from that of the Church of England, and a collection of Psalms and Hymns. The Liturgy was entitled "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, with other Occasional Services." The Hymn Book was entitled "A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Lord's Day."

The Articles of Religion of the Church of England were reduced from thirty-nine to twenty-four, and those which were retained so altered as to eradicate all traces of Romanism, High Church ritualism, and Calvinism.[1] A new article was adopted, as follows:

XXIII. Of the Rulers of the United States of America.

The Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the general act of confederation, and by the constitutions of their respective States. And the said States ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

THE BINDING MINUTE

After the organization, the ordinations, and the perfecting of the Discipline, the most far-reaching and perplexing act of this convention was the passage of the following "binding Minute":

Question 2. What can be done in order to the future union of the Methodists?

Answer. During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, ready *in matters belonging to Church government*, to obey his commands. And we do engage, after his death, to do everything that we judge consistent with the cause of religion in America and the political interests of these States, to preserve and promote our union with the Methodists in Europe.

[1]The doctrinal standards of American Methodism and the various provisions of the Discipline are discussed under their appropriate titles.

CHAPTER VII

The Initial Years of the Church

Eighteen thousand members, one hundred and four "traveling preachers," at least as many "local preachers," and twice as many "exhorters" represented, but only in part, the results of the eighteen years of toil, travel, and hardship of preachers and people since Embury and Strawbridge flung out the banner of Methodism in the New World. Sixty chapels had been purchased or built, and there were more than eight hundred recognized preaching places. Stevens estimates that to the eighteen thousand members should be added ten times as many hearers. "Thousands," says Ware, "pressed to him [Coke] to have their children dedicated to the Lord in baptism, and to receive themselves the Holy Supper at his hands." Asbury makes similar representations. Stevens finds no evidence of recorded dissent to the organization of the Church or to any of the proceedings therewith connected.

The office of presiding elder without the name appears in the Minutes of 1785. The legislative powers of the Church reposed in the traveling preachers; and the business originating in any one Conference was submitted by the Superintendents to the other Conferences in their successive meetings. No legislation of permanent importance took place during that year.

In the latter part of 1786 Wesley addressed the following letter to Superintendent Coke:

London, September 6, 1786.

Dear Sir: I desire that you would appoint a General Conference of all our preachers in the United States to meet at Baltimore May 1, 1787; and that Mr. Richard Whatcoat may be

appointed Superintendent with Mr. Francis Asbury. I am, dear Sir, your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

To the Rev. Dr. Coke.

This was not acceptable to the American Methodists, and the General Conference was not held.

COKE'S ADMINISTRATION CRITICIZED

At the Baltimore Conference, in 1787, the preachers criticized Superintendent Coke on two grounds: First, he had assumed a right which had never been given him, having written from Europe a letter, altering the time and place of holding the Conference after it had been determined at the previous Conference; second, he had written to some of the preachers letters which were calculated to stir up strife and contention.

Lee remarks that Coke saw "that the preachers were pretty generally united against him." He magnanimously acknowledged these faults, begged pardon of the Conference, and promised not to meddle with the affairs of American Methodism while he was out of the United States; and gave a writing to that effect. The state of mind of the Conference is obvious from the fact that it was discovered necessary to have the names of three witnesses attached to this certificate.

On receiving this the Conference agreed to overlook what had occurred, provided the condition should be expressed in the Minutes, which was done in this form:

Who are the Superintendents of our Church for the United States?

Answer. Thomas Coke (when present in the States) and Francis Asbury.

WESLEY'S CHOICE OF GARRETTSON, AND RESULT

Another remarkable circumstance occurred in connection with this Conference. Wesley had sent out a letter

directing that "Freeborn Garrettson be ordained a superintendent for Nova Scotia." When the subject was taken up, the point was made that, if he was ordained for that station, he should confine himself wholly to that place for which he was set apart, and not be at liberty to return again to the United States. Lee says that Garrettson "did not feel freedom to enter into an obligation of that kind, and chose, rather, to continue as he was, and therefore was not ordained."

Garrettson's account of the affair is:

> Dr. Coke, as Mr. Wesley's delegate and representative, asked me if I would accept of the appointment. I requested the liberty of deferring my answer until the next day. I think on the next day the doctor came to my room, and asked me if I had made up my mind to accept of my appointment; I told him I had upon certain conditions. I observed to him that I was willing to go on a tour, and visit those parts to which I was appointed for one year; and if there was a cordiality in the appointment with those whom I was requested to serve, I would return to the next Conference, and receive ordination for the office of superintendent.[1]

He says that Bishop Coke replied, "I am perfectly satisfied," and that he gave him a letter of commendation to the brethren in the West Indies. As soon as the Conference closed Garrettson intended to go to the West India Islands and afterward to visit Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. He adds: "What transpired in the Conference during my absence, I know not; but I was astonished, when the appointments were read, to hear my name mentioned to preside in the Peninsula."[2]

The fact was that the Conference did not want to lose Garrettson, who was one of the most loved and trusted of the early preachers.

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[1]Bangs, *Life of Garrettson*, p. 166.
[2]Ibid., p. 166.

OPPOSITION TO WESLEY

Wesley had also directed that Whatcoat be ordained a joint superintendent with Asbury. The preachers objected on grounds summarized by Lee as follows: First, that he was not qualified to take charge of the connection; second, they were apprehensive that if Whatcoat was ordained, Wesley would recall Asbury to England.

Ware says, "Mr. Wesley had appointed Mr. Whatcoat a superintendent, and instructed Dr. Coke to introduce a usage among us to which I may safely say there was not one of the preachers inclined to submit, much as they loved and honored him." He refers to the fact that Wesley "had called *his* preachers together *not* to legislate but to *confer*." The Conference, when formed into a Church in 1784, had passed and inserted in the Minutes this statement: "During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley we acknowledge ourselves as sons in the gospel, ready in matters belonging to Church government to obey his commands." Wesley, conformably to his own usage, had instructed Coke to put as few questions to vote as possible, saying, *"If you, Brother Asbury, and Brother Whatcoat are agreed, it is enough."*

"COKE UPHOLDS BINDING MINUTE"

Coke contended that on the basis of that "binding minute" they were *obliged* to receive Whatcoat. Many of the members argued that they were not at the Conference when that engagement was entered into, and did not consider themselves bound by it. Other preachers who were at the Conference that organized the Church, said that at that time they were ready "to obey his commands," but they "did not feel ready *now* to obey."

Ware remarks: "To place the power of deciding *all* questions discussed, or *nearly* all, in the hands of the Superintendents was what could never be introduced

among us." The brethren concluded that the issue was vital, and that the rule binding them to obey Wesley must be rescinded. Ware testifies, however, that he did not vote in favor of rescinding. *"Some thought it would be time enough to do so when our Superintendents should claim to decide questions independently of the Conference, which, it was confidently believed, they never would do."*

COMMENTS OF LEE AND ASBURY

Lee's comment on the proceeding is: "This step of receding from the above engagement was afterward considered by some disaffected persons as improper. If there was anything improper in the business, it was in entering the engagement, and not in departing from it."

Asbury in his journal, alluding to the minute, writes:

> *I* never approved of that binding minute. I did not think it practical expediency to obey Mr. Wesley, at three thousand miles distance, in all matters relative to Church government; neither did Brother Whatcoat, nor several others. At the first General Conference I was mute and modest when it passed, and I was mute when it was expunged. For this Mr. Wesley blamed me, and was displeased that I did not rather reject the whole connection, or leave them, if they did not comply. But I could not give up the connection so easily, after laboring so many years with and for them.[1]

Wesley was greatly displeased, and the next year, writing to Asbury, said: "There is indeed a wide difference between the relation wherein you stand to the Americans and the relation wherein I stand to all Methodists. You are the elder brother to the American Methodists; I am, under God, the father of the whole family."

The value of these historic facts inheres in the light that they shed upon the estimate of the power of the Conference, and of the Superintendents in relation to them.

[1] *Asbury's Journal*, vol. ii, p. 322.

FIRST USE OF THE TERM "BISHOP"

In the Minutes for the year 1788 the first question is, "Who are the Bishops of our Church for the United States?" Wesley's name is not mentioned, and the answer to this question is, "Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury." The Minutes were published by the Superintendents (practically by Asbury), and this, although the word "Superintendent" had appeared, was the first time that they had ever given themselves the title of Bishops.

Lee says they "changed the title themselves without the consent of the Conference; and at the next Conference they asked the preachers if the word 'Bishop' might stand in the Minutes, assigning as a reason that it was a Scripture name, and the meaning was the same with that of Superintendent." Some opposed the alteration, but a majority agreed to let the word "Bishop" remain.

NOT A GENERAL CONFERENCE

It was maintained by some that the Conference held in Baltimore May 1, 1787, was a General Conference, and should be classed as such. This subject is discussed at length by Stevens, and it is demonstrated that it was not a General Conference, but simply the last Annual Conference of the year. The grounds on which it was affirmed to be a General Conference were that "Wesley asked Coke to appoint such a Conference"; that he "expected Whatcoat to be made superintendent," and "Garrettson superintendent for the British Dominions in America"; that "Coke wrote to the preachers to attend a General Conference"; that "the Baltimore Conference met at the time and place proposed by Wesley." These presumptions are answered in several ways. One is in the conclusion of Coke's letter to the General Conference of 1808: "We had at that time [1791] no regular General Conference; one only had been held in the year 1784."

WESLEY'S STATUS IN AMERICAN METHODISM

Wesley was sadly grieved that his name was left out of the Minutes; and the members of the Conference desired to insert it again as respectfully as they could without jeoparding their liberties. In the official Minutes of 1789, as published by The Methodist Book Concern from the reprint made in the year 1813, the questions relating to the episcopal office are published in this way:

Question 1. Who are the persons that exercise the *episcopal office* in the Methodist Church in Europe and America?

Answer. John Wesley, Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury.

But that answer is *not* as it was passed by the Conference, which was as follows: "John Wesley, Thomas Coke, and Francis Asbury, by regular order and succession." Bangs[1] discusses what was meant. He notes that there is no little ambiguity in this question and answer:

> Did they mean to say that these persons exercised a joint superintendency both in Europe and America? Certainly not; for neither Thomas Coke nor Francis Asbury exercised any episcopal powers in Europe. What they meant to say evidently was this, that Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury acted in this country as joint superintendents over the Methodist Episcopal Church, while Mr. Wesley exercised a similar power singly in Europe, and a general superintendence in America.

The second question and answer make this plain:

Question 2. Who have been elected by the unanimous suffrages of the General Conference to superintend the Methodist connection in America?

Answer. Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury.

The case is clear. The meaning of the Conference was: Wesley is revered and loved as the father and founder of Methodism, and to be consulted as an adviser, but is practically an executive head without power in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

[1] *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. i, p. 278.

CHAPTER VIII

A Hazardous Experiment

In the year 1789 eleven Conferences were held, several of them being within "thirty or forty miles of each other," "which," says Lee, "was pretty generally disliked; but at that time the Bishop had the right of appointing as many Conferences as he thought proper, and at such times as he judged best."

There were various reasons for this great number of Conferences and their proximity; it saved travel, time, and expense to the preachers. But it also made it certain that the number in attendance in several, if not a majority, of the Conferences, would be small, and "small bodies are more easily controlled than large, wherein numbers give courage."

A plan was devised by Bishops Coke and Asbury, chiefly by the latter, and accepted by the majority of the Conferences, which could never have been adopted had there been but five or six large Conferences. This was a provision for the establishment of a *council* to be invested in reality with extraordinary powers though not expressed in legal terms. The Bishops informed the Conferences that they "had made it a matter of prayer," and that it was the best arrangement to insure wise action, which they could propose. Debate followed, and there was strong opposition; but a majority of the preachers agreed to accept it.

As recorded in the Minutes, the Question which precedes the plan states the grounds on which it was advocated, and the character and composition of the council:

Whereas, the holding of General Conferences on this extensive continent would be attended with a variety of difficulties,

and many inconveniences to the work of God; and, whereas, we judge it expedient that a council should be formed of chosen men out of the several districts as representatives of the whole connection, to meet at stated times; in what manner is this council to be formed, what shall be its powers, and what farther regulations shall be made concerning it?

The first provision was that the council should consist of the Bishops and presiding elders, but no meeting should be held "with less than nine members."

If a presiding elder were unable to attend, he had authority to send another elder from his own district to represent him; but the elder so sent should not have a seat without the approbation of the *Bishop* or *Bishops* and *presiding elders* present.

But if after these provisions were complied with, or for any reason "the number was reduced to less than nine, the Bishop should immediately summon such elders as had not presided to complete the number."

The council was to have authority "to mature everything it thought expedient to preserve the general union," "to render and preserve the external form of worship similar in all our societies throughout the continent," "to preserve the essentials of the Methodist doctrines and Discipline pure and uncorrupted," "to correct all abuses and disorders"; and, lastly, it was authorized "to mature everything that they may see necessary for the good of the Church and for the promoting and improving our colleges and plan of education." It was, however, provided that nothing be "received as the resolution of the council, unless it be assented to unanimously by the council," and nothing so assented to be binding in any district until agreed upon by a majority of the Conferences held for that district. Authority was given to the Bishops "to summon the Council to meet at such times and places as they shall judge expedient."

PLAN PRESENTED TO ANNUAL CONFERENCES BY THE BISHOPS

When the Bishops presented this plan to the Conferences the preachers generally voted for it, but suspicion of its motive soon arose "*on account its being thought dangerous to their liberties.*" It was contended that as the council was composed of the Bishops and the presiding elders, and *those elders were appointed by the Bishops,* and removed at *their* pleasure, it was "virtually concentrating all the authority of the Church in the hands of the Bishops, thus creating an aristocracy of power incompatible with the rights and privileges of the entire body."[1]

Lee, speaking of the council, says the plan that nothing unanimously assented to should be binding until it was agreed upon by a majority of the Conferences held for that district was dangerous; for "if one should agree and another reject, the union between the two districts would be broken, and in process of time our united societies would be thrown into disorder and confusion."

FIRST SITTING OF COUNCIL

The council, consisting of Asbury and eleven presiding elders, met according to appointment, on the first day of December, 1789. The elders were Freeborn Garrettson, John Dickins, Nelson Reed, Philip Bruce, James O'Kelly, Reuben Ellis, Richard Ivey, Joseph Everitt, Lemuel Green, Edward Morris, and James O. Cromwell. They resolved that the council should be a permanent institution, but that the elders should be elected by ballot in every Conference, though at the request of the Bishop. The council then formed a constitution containing the proposition stated above, and passed certain important resolutions. One of these was that every resolution of the first council "be put to vote in each Conference, and not be adopted

[1]Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church,* vol. ii, p. 305.

unless it obtain a majority of the different Conferences." But if it obtain such a majority, it should be "received by every member of each Conference." One resolution was that every deacon should remain three years on probation before he could be elected to the eldership. After the council adjourned the number of Conferences was increased so that but a "small number of preachers could collect at any one place."

A SCHEME FOREDOOMED TO FAILURE

In the latter part of 1790, a second council met, consisting of Asbury and ten elders, seven of whom were members of the preceding council. They now boldly claimed a *new* power stated in Question 1 of their proceedings:

> *Question 1.* What power do this council consider themselves *invested* with by their electors?
>
> *Answer.* First, they unanimously consider themselves invested with *full* power to act *decisively* in all *temporal* matters; and secondly, to *recommend* to the several Conferences any new canons, or alterations to be made in any old ones.

The council determined to have another meeting two years from that time, "but," says Lee, "their proceedings gave such dissatisfaction to our connection in general, and to some of the traveling preachers in particular, that they were forced to abandon the plan. And there has never since been a meeting of the kind."

Asbury records of the Conference in Virginia June 14, 1790:

> Our Conference began; all was peace until the council was mentioned. The young men appeared to be entirely under the influence of the elders, and turned it out of doors. I was weary, and felt but little freedom to speak on the subject. The business is to be explained to every preacher; and then it must be carried through the Conferences twenty-four times, that is, through all the Conferences for two years.

ASBURY REBUKES WARE

An instance of the manner in which Bishop Asbury sometimes overcame opposition is found in the autobiography of Ware:

> An unwillingness to oppose Bishop Asbury led a majority of the preachers to yield, so far as to permit the experiment [of the council] to be made. A minority, however, opposed it from the first; and I happened to be one of that number. I had ventured to say, if there must be a council to consist of Bishops and presiding elders, the latter should be chosen, not by the Bishops, but by the Conferences, and everything done in council should be by a simple majority. Much as I respected our Superintendents, for one I could not consent to give them a *negative on all future proceedings.* I was not prepared to charge the projectors of the plan with any other than the purest motives. Others, however, I was persuaded, would do so. And, on the whole, it was better, in my opinion, to abandon the council altogether. He [Bishop Asbury] then gave me some *severe rebukes;* but, nevertheless, appointed me a presiding elder.[1]

COKE'S ATTITUDE

Bishop Coke from the beginning was not earnestly in favor of the council, and finally strongly opposed its continuance.

A writer explaining Coke's vacillation and subserviency in this and several other matters, says: "He was in a personal presence that had become awesome to him. To eat and sleep and travel with Asbury was to feel the strange magnetism of his reverent behavior, his persuasive logic, his unquestioned sincerity, and his dominating will."

THE TREATMENT OF LEE

Lee records that when the first council met he "wrote them a letter, in which he set forth his objections to their plan, and pointed out the difficulties that it would pro-

[1] *Life of Thomas Ware*, pp. 181, 182.

duce, and contended for a *General Conference;* which plan was disapproved of by all the council." How much he had to endure appears from the following letter which he received in answer to his frankly stated objections in his letter to the council. The italics are in the original, and it is a thinly veiled threat of expulsion.

IN COUNCIL, BALTIMORE, December 7, 1789.

VERY DEAR BROTHER: We are both grieved and surprised to find that you make so many objections to the very fundamentals of Methodism. But we consider *your want of experience* in many things, and therefore put the best construction on your intention. You are acquainted with the Discipline of the Methodist Church. If you can *quietly* labor among us under our Discipline and Rules, we cheerfully retain you as our brother and fellow laborer, and remain yours in sincere affection.

The council was dangerous to the liberties of the people, and had it become permanent there would have been no limits to its power. To Lee, Ware, and others who opposed it Methodism will ever be indebted.

CHAPTER IX

The First Regular General Conference

"The Christmas Conference," at which Asbury was ordained, and by which Methodists were organized into the Methodist Episcopal Church, though sometimes spoken of as the *General* Conference, was not actually such, for it had not been previously appointed and notice of it had not been given to all the preachers. As has been said by Bishop Soule and others, it was rather a convention, called under extraordinary circumstances to hear, through a commissioner appointed by him, a formal statement of "John Wesley's mind and will," and to take such action thereon as might seem wise. Wesley rightfully claimed authority over the Methodist societies on this side of the Atlantic, as well as in England; and from the day that he sent missionaries to America this authority, in every issue carried to a conclusion, had been conceded to him.

Until the time covered by the events to be detailed in this chapter a series of District Conferences, which had come to be known as Annual, had been the only authorized assembly of preachers. The extreme difficulty of securing concurrence in so many independent bodies, and the failure of the council, made it imperative to provide for a General Conference. The Annual Conferences discussed the subject, and with unanimity, authorized the Bishops to call such an assembly to meet in Baltimore November 1, 1792. The Minutes of this body are not in existence, and all known of its proceedings must be ascertained from the Discipline of 1792, the *Journals* of Coke and Asbury, Lee's *History,* and the reminiscences of Ware, Garrettson, and Colbert.

ORIGIN OF REGULAR GENERAL CONFERENCES

This raises the query, To whom is the Church indebted for the first *regular* General Conference? As has been shown, to Asbury belongs the credit of having suggested the convention that organized the Church; he had also proposed and worked out the scheme of the council.

The principal promoters of the calling of this Conference were Superintendent Coke, Jesse Lee, and James O'Kelly. Lee had proposed it, and by opposing the council had rendered it necessary; and O'Kelly had demanded it in order to settle certain serious difficulties which had arisen between himself and Asbury.

COKE'S RELATION TO GENERAL CONFERENCES

Coke described his part in the matter in a letter to the General Conference of 1808, of which the following is extracted:

> There are very few of you who can possibly recollect anything of what I am next going to add. Many of you were then only little children. We had at that time no regular General Conferences. One only had been held in the year 1784. I had, indeed, with great labor and fatigue, a few months before I wrote this letter to Bishop White, prevailed on James O'Kelly and the thirty-six traveling preachers who had withdrawn with him from all connection with Bishop Asbury, to submit to the decision of a General Conference. At this Conference, held, I think, the latter end of 1792, I proposed and obtained that great blessing to the American connection, a permanency for General Conferences, which were to be held at stated times.[1]

Coke is confirmed by Snethen's "Reply to O'Kelly": "It is nothing strange that Dr. Coke should be affected by Mr. O'Kelly's representation of Mr. Asbury's conduct; and, finding Mr. Asbury averse to a General Conference, it is not surprising that the doctor should insist upon

[1] The whole of this important letter may be found in Bangs's *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. ii, p. 207-211.

Mr. O'Kelly's request being granted. A few sharp words passed between the two Bishops on this occasion, but the heat was over in a minute."

ASBURY'S ATTITUDE

Asbury, however, in his *Journal,* speaking of Coke's opposing the council, and of James O'Kelly's letters having reached London, says, "I felt perfectly calm, and acceded to a General Conference for the sake of peace." Asbury also[1] commends and corrects his friend Snethen's answer to O'Kelly: "It is well done, and very correctly done, except in a few cases. There was no sharpness at all upon my side with Dr. Coke at Charleston respecting the proposed General Conference, which was afterward held (in 1792). I was fully convinced that nothing *else* would finish the unhappy business with O'Kelly; and that did finish it."

A complete demonstration of Asbury's attitude is found in a letter written to Ezekiel Cooper by him from Petersburg, Va., April 19, 1791:

> You, perhaps, have heard of the General Conference which is to meet instead of the next sitting of the council. A letter from Mr. Wesley, the reappointment of Brother Whatcoat, the strange spirit of murmur here, and what can be done to amend or substitute a council, and perhaps to implead me on the one part, and a presiding elder and Conference on the other. No court is sufficient but a General Conference; and perhaps such a trial may make me and others take care how we take such rash, if not unwarrantable, steps.
>
> You are a thinking, prudent man; a word to the wise—let it rest in thy heart.
>
> I am, as ever, yours,
>
> F. ASBURY.[2]

Thus it is clear that Coke, Lee, and O'Kelly were the principal promoters of a General Conference.

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[1] Vol. iii, p. 8.

[2] *Light on Early Methodism,* p. 129.

It is also established that, though Asbury, preferring a council, at first did not favor a Conference, for the sake of settling an originally local, though widespread difficulty, which threatened disruption, and determining an important principle, as well as to meet other emergencies, did later desire the Conference, and so stated more than a year and a half before it was held. By thus doing he conserved the unity of the denomination and rendered it a signal service, for his influence directed against a General Conference would have been sufficient to divide the Annual Conferences or to cause indefinite postponement.

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1792

The first regular General Conference, that of 1792, was composed of men profoundly impressed with the importance of the occasion and with their personal responsibility. The account given by Lee is the chief authority for many of the circumstances and for the sentiment of the Church. From him we learn that the "preachers who had been received into full connection, came together from all parts of the United States" with the expectation that there would probably never be another Conference at which all could attend. It was believed that this Conference would adopt permanent regulations which would prevent preachers from assembling in a General Conference. This persuasion caused more to attend than would otherwise have done so.

HASTY ACTION SOON REVOKED

Lee informs us that a committee was appointed, consisting chiefly of the oldest preachers, to consider all subjects which might require legislation, and "when a majority of them agreed to make any alteration, . . . they were to make report to the Conference."

This committee was afterward enlarged but was found to be of no real use, "for," says Lee, "if a few of the committee were opposed to anything that was adopted by a majority of their brethren, when the business was brought before the whole of the Conference, those that were dissatisfied before, would take an active part in the debates, and all the arguments that had been brought forward in the committee would be taken up again, which did not answer the end intended." The committee was given up, and any preacher was at liberty to bring forward any matter.

As the danger of hasty action in such a body, which had power to alter, obliterate, or revoke an existing rule and make any new rule or regulation, was ever imminent, it was therefore resolved that "it shall take two thirds of all the members of the Conference, to make a new rule, or abolish an old one; but a majority may alter or amend any rule."

GENERAL CONFERENCES MADE PERMANENT

At this Conference it was decided that a General Conference should be made an integral part of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and that all traveling preachers in full connection at the time of the holding of the Conference should be members of the same. The time and place of the next General Conference was fixed. Several days were spent in revising the Discipline, and many important changes and additions were made.

VITAL ACTION CONCERNING BISHOPS

Prior to the General Conference of 1792 it was possible for the yearly Conferences to elect Bishops; but this body enacted that in the first instance they should be elected by the General Conference, and if because of death, expulsion, or resignation, there should be no Bishop remain-

ing, the General Conference should elect one. And the elders or any three of them that should be appointed by the General Conference should ordain him. It was provided that "if they saw it necessary," the General Conference should have power to expel a Bishop for improper conduct; and a method was established for a "trial of an immoral Bishop in the intervals of a General Conference."

Until this time, the placing of a number of circuits in the charge of an elder had been done chiefly on the authority of the General Superintendency. Some objections having been made to this usage, and doubts respecting the authority of the Bishops to make such appointments, having been expressed, the General Conference authorized such appointment, and gave Bishops power to change presiding elders at their pleasure, introducing, however, the restriction that no Bishop should allow an elder to preside in the same district more than four successive years.

This Conference was the first to make an express rule giving the wives of traveling preachers a claim upon the funds of the Church.

LAW-MAKING POWER TRANSFERRED TO GENERAL CONFERENCE

Another result was that the rules, regulations, or laws of the Church were to be enacted by the General Conference, and not as heretofore by the Annual. Lee says:

> The proceedings of this General Conference gave great satisfaction to our preachers and people; and the divisive spirit, which had been prevailing in different parts of the connection, was considerably checked. And nothing that was done gave more satisfaction than the plan that was laid for having another General Conference at the expiration of four years from that time; to which, all the preachers in full connection were at liberty to come.[1]

[1] *History of the Methodists*, p. 193.

CHAPTER X

The Struggle, Defeat, and Secession of James O'Kelly

The most important act of the General Conference of 1792, and one which requires elucidation, was an attempt to place a *limitation on the powers of Bishops with respect to the appointment of pastors, and correspondingly to increase the power of Annual Conferences.*

It must be traced from its germ. In the Annual Conference held early in 1784 there was a transaction of much significance. William Glendenning, who had come from England in 1774 and entered the Conference on trial a year later, began a movement which Asbury described as "devising a plan to lay me aside, or at least to abridge my powers."[1]

His objections undoubtedly related to Asbury's power over the appointments. Glendenning had been one of the committee of five, appointed to act in place of a General Assistant in case the latter should return to England before the next Conference (in 1777). This incident, though brief, was troublesome, but a letter opportunely received from Wesley determined the point.

ASBURY'S COMMENT ON O'KELLY'S LETTER

But on January 12, 1790, Asbury received a communication from a preacher of the greatest influence, secured by energy, devotion to Methodism, shrewdness, unusual power of persuasion in personal intercourse, and remarkable oratorical gifts. To this letter Asbury refers:

> I received a letter from the presiding elder of this district, James O'Kelly: he makes heavy complaints of my power, and

[1] *Asbury's Journal*, vol. i, p. 473.

bids me stop for one year, or he must use his influence against me. Power! Power!! There is not a vote given in a Conference in which the presiding elder has not greatly the advantage of me; all the influence I am to gain over a company of young men in a district must be done in three weeks; the greater part of them, perhaps, are seen by me only at Conference whilst the presiding elder has had them with him all the year, and has the greatest opportunity of gaining influence; this advantage may be abused; let the Bishops look to it; but who has power to lay an embargo upon me, and to make of none effect the decision of all the Conferences of the union?[1]

The next reference to O'Kelly is dated August 21, 1791: "I received the olive branch from Virginia. All is peace—it was obtained by a kind letter from me to O'Kelly."

This truce was temporary. It was certain that O'Kelly would be present at the General Conference of 1792, and in a warlike attitude. In fact, the greatest attack that Asbury had experienced, and one which lacked but little of success, was impending.

O'KELLY'S AMENDMENT

On the second day of the session of the Conference O'Kelly offered an amendment to the law investing the Bishop with the power of fixing the appointments of the preachers for the several circuits, which amendment was as follows:

> After the Bishop appoints the preachers at Conference to their several circuits, if anyone think himself injured by the appointment, he shall have liberty to appeal to the Conference and state his objections; and if the Conference approve his objections, the Bishop shall appoint him to another circuit.

The debate on this amendment, called the "Appeal," continued three days. Influential men were arrayed against each other. James O'Kelly, Richard Ivey, Hope Hull, Richard Swift, Freeborn Garrettson, without a

[1] *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 69.

superior in the Church, and William McKendree, afterward a Bishop, argued for the right of appeal. Henry Willis, Jesse Lee, Thomas Morrell, Joseph Everitt, and Nelson Reed opposed the amendment.

WARE'S LUMINOUS ACCOUNT

There are several accounts of the debate, but that of Ware is, as usual, on every subject which he touches, the clearest. He says:

> When the adjustment of the powers of the officers in Church or State is the subject of reflection, we are not always certain how far we ought to yield ourselves in voluntary submission. We may give up too much—more than the object is worth, or the exigence of the case requires.

He expresses the opinion that "had Mr. O'Kelly's proposition been differently managed, it might possibly have been carried." That at first he (Ware) "did not see anything very objectionable in it"; but during the debate he "very much disliked the spirit of those who advocated it," and wondered at their severity:

> Some of them said that it was a shame for a man to *accept* of such a lordship, much more to *claim* it; and that they who would submit to this absolute dominion must forfeit all claims to freedom, and ought to have their ears bored through with an awl, and be fastened to their master's door, and become slaves for life. One said that to be denied such an appeal was an insult to his understanding, and a species of tyranny to which others might submit if they chose, but for his part he must be excused for saying he could not.[1]

ARGUMENTS AGAINST APPEAL

The arguments against the appeal chiefly related to the serious difficulties with which it would be encumbered, such as that if *one* preacher appealed and the Conference voted that his appointment should be altered, the Bishop

[1] *Life of Thomas Ware*, pp. 220, 221.

would have to remove another to make room for him, in which case the second might appeal, and the *first* might appeal from the *new* appointment; or others might appeal whose appointments these successive alternations made unsatisfactory.

At that time each had liberty to speak three times on any motion. Lee says:

> The arguments for and against the proposal were weighty and handled in a masterly manner. There never had been a subject before us that so fully called forth all the strength of the preachers. A large majority of them appeared at first to be in favor of the motion. But at last Mr. John Dickins moved to divide the question thus: First, Shall the Bishop appoint the preachers to the circuits? Second, Shall a preacher be allowed an appeal? After some debate the dividing the question was carried. The first question being put, it was carried without a dissenting voice. But when we came to the second question, "Shall a preacher be allowed an appeal?" there was a difficulty started, whether this was to be considered a new rule, or only an amendment of an old one. If it was a new rule, it would take two thirds of the votes to carry it. After a considerable debate, it was agreed by vote that it was only an amendment of an old rule.[1]

Those opposed to an appeal urged that Wesley, the father of the Methodist family, had devised the plan and deemed it essential for the preservation of the itinerancy. They said that, according to the showing of O'Kelly, Wesley, were he alive, ought to blush, for, to the day of his death, he claimed the right to station the preachers.

ASBURY'S LETTER TO THE CONFERENCE

During all this debate Coke presided, Asbury having retired. The entry in his *Journal*[2] is:

> I felt awful at the General Conference, which began November 1, 1792. At my desire they appointed a moderator, and preparatory committee, to keep order and bring forward the business with regularity. Some individuals among the preachers

[1] Lee's *History of the Methodists*, pp. 178, 179. [2] Vol. ii, pp. 172, 173.

having their jealousies about my influence in the Conference, I gave the matter wholly up to them, and to Dr. Coke, who presided. Meantime I sent them the following letter:

MY DEAR BRETHREN: Let my absence give you no pain—Dr. Coke presides. I am happily excused from assisting to make laws by which myself am to be governed: I have only to obey and execute. I am happy in the consideration that I never stationed a preacher through enmity, or as a punishment. I have acted for the glory of God, the good of the people, and to promote the usefulness of the preachers. Are you sure, that, if you please yourselves, the people will be as fully satisfied? They often say, "Let us have such a preacher"; and, sometimes, "We will not have such a preacher; we will sooner pay him to stay at home." Perhaps I must say, "His appeal forced him upon you." I am one—ye are many. I am as willing to serve you as ever. I want not to sit in any man's way. I scorn to solicit votes. I am a very trembling, poor creature to hear praise or dispraise. Speak your minds freely; but remember, you are only making laws for the present time. It may be, that as in some other things, so in this, a future day may give you further light. I am yours, etc., FRANCIS ASBURY.

This letter is just such an one as Asbury should have written (if he wrote at all), but it overthrows his *Journal* entry—"I gave the matter wholly up to them and to Dr. Coke, who presided."

No single speech, nor ten, in the debate could have produced an effect equal to that of this letter. It crystallized all the vital points in a few words. What argument is omitted? What string in the human heart is left untouched? Not in all the annals of Methodism, including the wonderful and voluminous letters of Wesley, is there one comparable with this.

During this long debate Sunday intervened. On Monday it was resumed, continued through the day, and, in the homely words of Lee, "At night we went to Mr. Otterbein's church, and again continued it till near bedtime, when the vote was taken, and the motion was lost by a large majority."

O'KELLY AND OTHERS SECEDE

The next morning O'Kelly, and certain other preachers who had determined to stand by him to the end, addressed a letter to the Conference setting forth that "on account of the refusal to incorporate the right of the preachers to appeal from an appointment which was oppressive, they could not in conscience take any further part in the proceedings." The Conference appointed a committee of three to persuade them, if possible, to resume their seats. Garrettson, who was one of the committee, says that the situation "gave great grief to the whole Conference." In the interview "many tears were shed, but we were not able to reconcile him [O'Kelly] to the decision of the Conference. His wound was deep, and apparently incurable."

After a day or two O'Kelly and Coke had a long conversation, in which the former brought forward many charges both against Coke's official acts and also against the Conference. This interview availing nothing, after staying in Baltimore one or two days longer, O'Kelly and "the preachers that were particularly influenced by him," set out for Virginia. Having left their horses about twelve miles from the city, they walked that distance, carrying their saddlebags, great coats, and other belongings on their shoulders. Lee, who gives these details, adds: "I stood and looked after them as they went off, and observed to one of the preachers, that I was sorry to see the old man go off in that way, for I was persuaded that he would not be quiet long, but he would try to be the head of some party."

THE RESULTS

The secession of James O'Kelly and the preachers who had adhered to him was no trifling matter. It seriously

embarrassed the Methodist societies in Virginia and the adjacent parts of the country. The Minutes of 1793 contain a Question and Answer which had not before appeared:

Q. What preachers have withdrawn themselves from our order and connection?

A. James O'Kelly, John Allen, Rice Haggard, John Robertson.

Many local preachers accompanied them. O'Kelly, whose services had been invaluable and whose labors and exposures had been unceasing, being in the seventh decade of his life, and weakened physically by advancing years and the effects of hard work and privation, Asbury proposed to the Conference, that it allow him forty pounds per annum, "as when he traveled in the connection, provided he would be peaceable and forbear to excite divisions."

O'KELLY FOUNDS A CHURCH

O'Kelly accepted the appropriation for a brief period, but finally relinquished it and exerted all his great powers to originate and build up a new Church. At the close of four years, notwithstanding many accessions, the Methodists showed a loss of 7,352 members. But, as Stevens recounts, not all went to O'Kelly, for the schism drew off many who did not affiliate with the new party. At that time the State of Virginia was politically divided into two parties, the Republicans and the Federalists, the former being largely in the majority. O'Kelly, with much shrewdness, having in view temporary effect, named his Church "The Republican Methodists." This beguiled numbers. The promises made to the people were "greater liberties to lay members," and "entire equality in the ministry." Lee, who was familiar with all the circumstances and the territory, sadly writes: "It was enough to make the saints of God weep between the porch and

the altar, and that both day and night, to see how 'The Lord's flock was carried away captive,' by that division."

In 1793 they formed a constitution and gave themselves the name before mentioned. Within eight years they threw away this constitution and changed their name to "The Christian Church," based on the principle of leaving every man to interpret the New Testament for himself.

A WAR OF PAMPHLETS

A pamphlet war raged for some time. It was begun by one published by O'Kelly attacking Asbury and "his Church." The title on which he relied to vindicate himself and the Church was "The Author's Apology for Protesting against the Methodist Episcopal Church."

Asbury collected facts and placed them in possession of the Conference, which appointed its ablest writer, Nicholas Snethen, to reply. He named his production, "A Reply to an Apology." O'Kelly speedily issued "A Vindication of an Apology." Snethen responded in "An Answer to James O'Kelly's Vindication of his Apology." In such hot discussions, the truth is usually economized according to the exigencies of the occasion and that often innocently. But a comparison of such documents enables the deliberative and impartial reader to ascertain the truth.

M'KENDREE INFLUENCED BY O'KELLY

Among the preachers who at first adhered to O'Kelly was William McKendree, who, having been a traveling preacher for three years, had been ordained an elder by Asbury. Tradition says that he was one of the most vehement advocates of the Appeal. He had long been associated with O'Kelly. In 1790 the latter visited McKendree and at a convention of preachers in Mecklenburg, a

Council was formed to demand a General Conference. The effect was that McKendree, thoroughly believing in O'Kelly, lost faith in "the Bishop and his creatures"! Young in the ministry as he was, he informed Bishop Asbury that he had lost confidence in him, to which the Bishop replied: "I don't wonder at that, brother; sometimes we can see with our eyes; sometimes we can see only with our ears." McKendree had traveled to the General Conference in company with O'Kelly.

Years afterward McKendree wrote: "The old gentleman [O'Kelly] broke off. I and some others obtained liberty of the Conference to return home, and set out for Virginia. We had many consultations, were often confused in our deliberations; and the rest of the company having left us, the old gentleman and myself traveled the greater part of the way together. He unfolded his plan. It was to be a 'glorious Church,' 'no slavery,' etc. But it was founded upon the supposition that a ruinous government was being introduced by the revolutionizing Conference he had left."

But within a short time McKendree consented to take a station. The preachers, who departed from the General Confernce, had done so before the Discipline was revised, and when it appeared McKendree said: "How was I surprised, in the course of the year, to find the form of Discipline entirely different from what I had expected, and also to find just cause to begin to withdraw my confidence from my old and best-beloved friend!"[1]

ASBURY TO MORRELL

Asbury shows in his correspondence that he was as much "wrought up" by the controversy as O'Kelly him-

[1]From McKendree's Autobiographical Letter written to Asbury in 1803; Paine's *Life and Times of William McKendree*, vol. i, pp. 58-66.

self, for soon after the Conference he wrote to his friend, Thomas Morrell:

I believe now nothing short of being an Episcopos was his first aim. His second was to make the council independent of the Bishop and General Conference, if they would canonize his writings. This could not be done. His next step was with the authority of a Pope to forbid me, by letter, to go one step further with the council, after carrying it once around the continent and through the first council, which ordered me to go round and know the minds of the brethren. His following step was to write against me to Mr. Wesley, who he knew was disaffected to me, because I did not merely force the American Conference to accede to Mr. Wesley's appointment of Brother Whatcoat, which I did submit to Dr. Coke only for peace with our old father. How moved he then to make himself independent of me and the general connection, and dragged in the little Doctor [Coke] whom, a little before, he would have banished from the continent. Then he stipulated with me through the Doctor to let him stay in that station, and consented to leave the decision to a General Conference, and when the decision went against him, went away. Now he, who was one of the greatest opposers they had, is suspected of raising a sedition among the local preachers. And, lastly, to set the people against us. Thus he has gone.

O'KELLY'S HERESY

Other reasons than opposition to the government of the Church may have actuated O'Kelly, for Lee states that, as he stood looking after O'Kelly, the preacher (to whom he said that he was sorry to see him go off in that way) informed him "that Mr. O'Kelly denied the doctrine of the Trinity and preached against it by saying that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were characters and not persons: and that these characters all belonged to Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The preacher further said that it was his intention to have had O'Kelly tried at that Conference for the false doctrines that he had been preaching; and he believed that his leaving the Conference was more out of

fear of being brought to trial than on account of the Appeal. Tradition and considerable evidence show that O'Kelly did preach, during the more than thirty years that he survived, doctrines contrary to those of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Asbury, with equal sagacity, courage, and self-denial, at once went among those likely to be affected by the schism where he held Conferences, love feasts, class and band meetings, preaching once or twice a day and riding forty or fifty miles almost daily.

Lee accompained him, using his very considerable influence, and had it not been for these labors of Asbury and Lee, a far larger number would have withdrawn.

A similar secession had been begun by William Hammett, the center of which was in Charleston, South Carolina, and the situation was seriously complicated with the O'Kelly faction. Hammett was a man of brilliant talents and had been a commanding influence in Charleston. According to Lee, he died in 1803, and the schism, which he had created, shortly after became extinct.

CHAPTER XI

The General Conference of 1796

The second regular General Conference—the first whose *Journal* was printed—convened in Baltimore. An address in the name of the General Conference, signed by the two Bishops, was communicated to the Church. It contains this important statement:

> In order to prevent hasty innovations, we have, therefore, on a former occasion, confined solely to the General Conference the work of revising our *Form of Discipline*, reserving for the yearly Conferences the common business of the connection, as directed by the form. Our General Conference is held once only in four years, and it is open to every preacher in full connection. Every such preacher has, therefore, ample time to weigh every subject of importance, to consult upon it with all his friends, and to be present at the General Conference, to give his vote, as well as declare his sentiments at large. Or he may deliver his thoughts, in confidence, to one or more of his brethren, who intend to be present.

BOUNDARIES OF CONFERENCES

One hundred and twenty ministers were present, but their names are not recorded. The Church was divided into six Conferences; and, for the first time, their boundaries were fixed. The New England included the affairs of our Church in New England, and that part of the State of New York which lies on the east side of the Hudson River. (Permission was given to the Bishops to hold a Conference in the Province of Maine.) The Philadelphia Conference included the remainder of the State of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania east of the Susquehanna River, the State of Delaware and the rest of the Peninsula. The Baltimore comprehended the remainder of

Pennsylvania, the remainder of Maryland, and the Northern Neck of Virginia. The Virginia Conference included that State south of the Rappahannock, and North Carolina north of the Cape Fear River, also certain circuits on the branches of the Yadkin. The South Carolina Conference covered South Carolina, Georgia, and the remainder of North Carolina; and the Western Conference consisted of the States of Kentucky and Tennessee. "The Bishops were given authority to appoint other yearly Conferences in the interval of the General Conference if a sufficiency of new circuits were anywhere formed for that purpose."

REASONS FOR LARGER CONFERENCES

The General Conference explained this radical action of reducing the number and enlarging the territory of the Conferences by stating, that the Conferences had been very small, and that their dimensions were attended by many inconveniences:

1. There were but few of the senior preachers, whose years and experience had matured their judgments, who could be present at any one Conference.
2. The Conferences wanted that dignity which every religious synod should possess, and which always accompanies a *large* assembly of gospel ministers.
3. The itinerant plan was exceedingly cramped, from the difficulty of removing preachers from one district to another.

These fully justified the attitude against small Conferences taken by Lee and others long before.

The explanation further states that the Conferences were so arranged that all "the members respectively may attend with little difficulty, . .; that the active, zealous, unmarried preachers may move on a larger scale, . . while the married preachers, whose circumstances require them, in many instances, to be more located than the single men, will have a considerable field of action opened

to them." Also that "the Bishops will be able to attend the Conferences with greater ease, and without injury to their health."

A Deed of Settlement for the churches gave the protection of law to the trustees of every house or place of worship

for the use of members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, according to the Rules and Discipline which from time to time may be agreed upon and adopted by the ministers and preachers of the said Church, at their General Conferences in the United States of America; and in further trust and confidence that they [the trustees] shall at all times, forever hereafter, permit such ministers and preachers, belonging to the said Church, as shall from time to time be duly authorized by the *General Conferences* of the ministers and preachers of the said Methodist Episcopal Church, or by the yearly Conferences *authorized by the said General Conference*, and *none others*, to preach and expound God's Holy Word therein, etc.[1]

The necessity of this deed is explained and its provisions are defended in the *Journal.*

The Conference recommended, and engaged to promote, the publication of *The Methodist Magazine.*

The Chartered Fund was established, for the "benefit of distressed traveling preachers, for the families of traveling preachers, and for the superannuated, and worn-out preachers, and the widows and orphans of preachers."

Attention was given to the establishment of educational institutions; and an elaborate plan of education was prepared and recommended "to our seminaries of learning and to the public and members of our societies."

SETTLING THE STATUS OF COKE

While no reference is made to the election of another Bishop in the *Journal* of the General Conference of 1796, Lee says[2]:

[1] *Journal* of 1796, p. 13. [2] Lee's *History of the Methodists*, pp. 247, 248.

At that time it was thought proper to have another Bishop elected and ordained, and the Conference voted that it should be done during the sitting of that Conference. After the vote was taken, a difficulty arose about the manner of choosing, or electing a man to be ordained a Bishop; and before the point was settled, Dr. Coke begged that the business might be laid over until the afternoon, which was done. When we met in the afternoon the Doctor offered himself to us, if we saw cause to take him; and promised to serve us in the best manner he could, and to be entirely at the disposal of his American brethren, to live or die among them. The Conference at length agreed to the Doctor's proposal, and the former vote for choosing another Bishop was dropped.

The Doctor then gave us the following statement in writing:

"I offer myself to my American brethren entirely to their service, all I am and have, with my talents and labors in every respect; without any mental reservation whatsoever, to labor among them, and to assist Bishop Asbury; not to station the preachers at any time when he is present; but to exercise all the episcopal duties, when I hold a Conference in his absence, and by his consent, and to visit the West Indies and France when there is an opening, and I can be spared.

"(Signed) THOMAS COKE.

"Conference Room, October 27, 1796."

A CRITICAL DEBATE

The best authorities, next to Lee, for this General Conference are a letter of the Rev. John Kobler and the *Journal* of the Rev. William Colbert, who were present. Kobler's letter was written many years after the event, but he had kept memoranda. He says:

Lee was the best speaker in the Conference. He first showed that there were several members in our connection who were well qualified to fill the office, having been long and well proved; who were natives of the country, one of ourselves, and were well acquainted with the rules by which our civil and religious privileges were regulated. But his most powerful argument, I well remember was this, "That the Doctor was a thoroughbred Englishman; and an entire stranger abroad in the country (*out* of the Church); that the deep-rooted prejudice against British oppression, which by our arduous Revolutionary struggle we

had so recently thrown off, still hung heavily, and was operating powerfully upon the public mind; and that to select a high officer to govern our Church from that distant and tyrannizing nation, would, in his judgment, be a very impolitic step, and would tend to raise the suspicions and prejudices of the public against us as a Church." He further said he had frequently heard the same objections made against us as an American Church for having a native of England (Bishop Asbury) at our head; and now to add another, who, in many respects, had not the experience, prudence, nor skill in government that Bishop Asbury had, would operate very materially against the best interests of the Church.

According to Kobler, this debate lasted two days, during which time Coke "was secluded from the Conference room." "Mr. Lee and his party had the better of the cause in debate, and were gaining confidence continually.

When Bishop Asbury saw how the matter was likely to go, he rose from the chair, and with much apparent feeling said: 'If we reject him, it will be his ruin, for the British Conference will certainly know of it, and it will sink him vastly in their estimation.'" This, Kobler says, put an end to the debate. He also remarks that "during the debate, the Doctor came into the Conference and made a speech"—showing that his seclusion was not complete.

Colbert is brief but significant:

Yesterday there was much talk about another Bishop, and in the afternoon Dr. Coke made an offer of himself. It was not determined whether they would receive him. But to-day I suppose there were not a dozen out of a hundred that rejected him by their votes. This gave me satisfaction.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT

The Rev. William Phœbus, M.D., a notable character, brilliant and useful, though exceedingly eccentric, gives another account. In his *Memoirs of Bishop Whatcoat*[1] he says:

[1] Page 84.

The question before the house was, "If Francis Asbury's seat as Superintendent be vacated by death, or otherwise, was Dr. Coke considered, from the authority he had in the Church, as having a right to take the Superintendency in the same manner as it was exercised by Francis Asbury?" Dr. Coke was then asked if he would be ready to come to the United States and reside there, if he were called to take the charge as Superintendent, so that there might be a succession from Wesley. He agreed, as soon as he should be able to settle his charge in Europe, with all pleasure and possible dispatch to come and spend his days in America. The Rev. Superintendent Asbury then reached out his right hand in a pathetic speech, the purport of which was: "Our enemies said we were divided, but all past grievances were buried, and friends at first, are friends at last, and I hope never to be divided." The Doctor took his right hand in token of submission, while many present were in tears of joy to see the happy union in the heads of department, and from a prospect of the Wesleyan episcopacy being likely to continue in regular order and succession.

The phrases "heads of department," "token of submission," and "Wesleyan episcopacy" indicate the almost paralyzing influence exerted by Asbury on some minds. That there is no reference in the *Journal* to this important debate and its equally important conclusion is perplexing. The only rational inference is that Bishops Asbury and Coke did not wish it to appear.

After the close of the Conference, Coke, in perfect harmony with Asbury, continued in the work of the episcopacy. Both presided at the Virginia and South Carolina Conferences, Coke preaching frequently, to the delight of all. February 6, 1797, he sailed from Charleston, South Carolina, to preside over the English Conference.[1]

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[1]The General Conference of 1852, on May 25, ordered the Book Agents to publish the *Journals* of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church. from 1800 to 1836 inclusive. Five days later the instructions were enlarged by the requisition to include all extant Minutes from the organization of the Church up to 1800. Dr. John McClintock, to whom the supervision of the work was committed, closes the preface to the *Journals* from 1792 to 1836 inclusive with these statements: "The Minutes of the General Conference for 1792 were never printed to my knowledge, nor can I find the original copy. Those of 1796 were published *in a compendium form*, which is now reprinted."

CHAPTER XII

The General Conferences of 1800 and 1804

The General Conference of 1800 at once took on a very radical spirit. The first business was to elect a secretary, and the next to agree upon rules for the management of business and the preservation of order. The first motion relating to the Discipline was that "the yearly Conferences be authorized by this General Conference to *nominate and elect their own presiding elders.*" This was made the Order of the Day for the ensuing Tuesday, the regular business of the Conference having been begun on Wednesday.

PREPARING TO ELECT A BISHOP

Superintendent Coke "moved, that the new Bishop"—whom the Conference had voted to elect—"whenever he presides at an Annual Conference in the absence of Bishop Asbury, shall bring the stations of the preachers into the Conference and read them, that he may hear what the Conference has to say upon each station." But this was withdrawn the next day.

Then Wells "moved that the new Bishop, in stationing the preachers, be aided by a committee of not less than three, or more than four preachers, chosen by the Conference." A similar motion, but intended to govern all the Bishops "a majority determining," was made the next day by Buxton, and later one by Mansfield to the same effect, but with the additional point that the Bishops should still have the ultimate decision; but all three were defeated.

McClaskey moved "that the Conference determine, before the votes be canvassed, the powers of the new Bishop,

whether he shall be equal to Bishop Asbury, or subordinate to him." This was withdrawn by consent.

A motion was made by Roberts "that no man shall be eligible to the office of a Bishop who has not traveled fifteen years." But later he "obtained leave to withdraw his motion." Another was made by Wise "that the fifth section of the *Form of Discipline,* as far as it respects the appointment of presiding elders, be taken up and considered."

Mansfield moved "that the Bishops shall have full and equal jurisdiction in all and every respect whatsoever; that each and every Bishop shall attend each and every Conference, and then and there mutually preside, and station the preachers: *provided,* that in case they should unavoidably be prevented from all attending, the Bishop or Bishops then present shall be competent to discharge the duties of the office as fully and effectually, in every respect, as if they were all present; that at each and every Conference the Bishops present shall mutually determine and agree upon their several different routes to the ensuing Conference." This motion was lost.

On a day previously appointed, Ormond's motion with reference to the appointment of presiding elders was called up, and voted down.

WHATCOAT ELECTED

On Monday, May 12, the Conference voted to proceed to the election of a Bishop. The ballot was a tie, and was supposed to be defective. Upon the second ballot, the number of votes being 115, there were 59 votes for Richard Whatcoat, 55 for Jesse Lee, and one blank. Whatcoat was an Englishman, ordained by Wesley, but mild, unobtrusive, and aged.

The Conference evidently feared that there would be trouble if any other elder should be associated with As-

bury in the General Superintendency. That the first ballot was a tie, and that a change of three votes on the second would have elected Lee shows his high standing and influence.

William Phœbus represents that Lee was defeated because he had "a Presbyterian idea of the episcopacy"; but no other witness affirms this, and others assign different reasons. Subsequent events also render probable that Phœbus unconsciously allowed his own desires to suggest this reason.

The record of this Conference shows that all attempts to limit the episcopacy in making the appointments were either withdrawn or voted down, and that all efforts to determine and define the relations of Bishops, as to whether they were to be equal to Bishop Asbury or subordinate to him, were also voted down.

1804

This General Conference began with much discussion of proposed amendments to the Rules of Order.

The eligibility of five applicants for membership was challenged by a motion of McCaine that a committee be appointed "to inquire into the right of Knowlton, Taylor, Ryan, Jacob Gruber, and Lyon to seats in this Conference." A committee of seven was appointed, including Lee, Garrettson, and George Pickering. Lee reported for the committee that they "are unanimous in their opinion that the five brethren are not entitled to a seat in this Conference." It was then "resolved by vote, that the report of the committee be considered by Conference, separately and distinctly, with respect to the several persons objected against." The next record is:

> Determined, by vote, that the time of any preacher's traveling, under the direction of a presiding elder, shall not be reckoned as part of his probation, which shall commence from the time of his reception by Conference.

It was then referred to the committee with power, and at the next session Lee reported that the five brethren "have not a right to sit in this Conference."

Much time was spent in revising the Discipline section by section. In view of what followed, this was one of the most important pieces of work performed by any Conference. The results were incorporated in the Discipline, but the *Journal* of the General Conference omits the details.

The proposition to make local deacons eligible to ordination as elders elicited a long debate, and when put to vote was lost, the same number of votes (44) being cast for and against the motion.

Bishops Coke and Asbury took an active part in the proceedings. Coke made not less than fourteen motions, generally showing an orderly mind and an excellent judgment; Asbury introduced six resolutions; and it is significant that nearly all these motions made by the General Superintendents were carried.

Close attention was given to slavery, the Book Concern, and the Chartered Fund.

HEATED DISCUSSIONS

Every relevant question, great or small, seems to have been debated at length, and there are evidences that there were so much excitement and so many personalities as to make the Conference ashamed to admit spectators. The only reference found, in the *Journal,* to the devout and amiable Bishop Whatcoat (except his signature at the end) is in these words: "Bishop Whatcoat rose to recommend the suppression of passion or ill will in debate, and that reason should rule in every loving contest." Immediately after this remark by Whatcoat Asbury moved that "*the doors be closed,*" and by a second vote they were closed "against all except members of Conference." Again

it was voted that "all the *official* members of our Church" should be "admitted as *spectators.*" But later it was voted that "*no* person be admitted *as a spectator,*" and after this the doors were closed against all but *local elders.*

Asbury's references to this Conference are: "There were attempts made upon the ruling eldership. We had a great talk. I talked little on any subject. . The Lord did not own the ministerial labors of the General Conference, it was a doubt if any souls were converted. This made us mourn."

Lee laments: "There was very little stir of religion among us during the sitting of the Conference." It is remarkable that a man, of so democratic a spirit in most respects should assign such a cause as this: "One principal reason of our barrenness, I believe, was owing to an improper plan which was adopted by the Conference in the beginning of their business, which was this: to admit *men, women, and children* into the galleries of the meeting house to hear our debates."

This confirms the conclusion that there must have been much ill feeling, and many exhibitions of it; for decorous debates on the government and work of the Church cannot impede the growth of genuine religion.

SALIENT POINTS OF THE DISCIPLINE

At this Conference, Ezekiel Cooper, then everywhere recognized as one of the statesmen of Methodism, "moved an alteration in the twenty-third Article of Religion, viz., 'Constitution of the United States' for 'General Act of Confederation,' and 'are a sovereign and independent nation, and' to be inserted between the word 'States' and 'ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.'"

Cooper also moved the insertion of this question: "Who shall appoint the place of the Annual Conferences?

Answer: Each Annual Conference shall appoint the place of its own sitting"—which was carried.

The existence and powers of the presiding eldership were discussed. On the fourth day of the Conference "Thomas Syell moved the abolition of the whole fifth section, concerning presiding elders. This was afterward altered by the mover to that *there be no presiding elders.*" In the proceedings of the next session, the *Journal* is: "After a long debate, the motion 'That there be no presiding elders' was lost."

This will be seen to have a weighty bearing on future momentous events.

The next day McClaskey moved that "no presiding elder shall have power to remove the preacher who has the charge of the circuit or station, *without his consent.*" The motion was lost.

The Conference of 1804 is also celebrated for the rule forbidding the Bishops to allow any preacher to remain in the same station or circuit more than two years successively, except the presiding elders, etc.

CHAPTER XIII

Growing Demand for Equitable Methods of Legislation

Dissatisfaction with the composition of the General Conference had been for years manifestly increasing. It arose from several radical defects; one of these was that preachers of little experience, most dependent on leaders, and obsequious to authority, and often of the least ability, were equally eligible to seats and votes with those of independent opinions and thorough familiarity with the rules and needs of the Church. Another was the inequality of the representation of Conferences near to or remote from the place of meeting.

A plan to remove the first difficulty went into effect for the first time, in the General Conference of 1804. Prior to this all preachers who had traveled *two* years were eligible to membership, but by a rule made in 1800, "only preachers of *four* years' standing in the Annual Conferences" could be admitted to seats. Hence, though the number present in 1804 was less than before, Lee says, "We considered it of greater weight because of their age in the ministry."

UNBEARABLE INEQUALITY

The second difficulty was even more irritating. The Conference of 1804 was held in Baltimore, and thirty of the members of the Baltimore Conference were present, and of the Philadelphia thirty-seven appeared; from the large Conference of Virginia there were but seventeen; from New York but twelve; from South Carolina only five came; from the New England but four; while from

the great and growing Western Conference a meager contingent of three reported. In that early period neither steamboats nor railways diminished hardships nor speeded the traveler on his way.

Baltimore and Philadelphia together had a majority of thirteen in the body, and lacked but five of having two thirds. Lee remarks: "We saw the necessity of making an alteration in that point; but, after all, we let it remain as it was."

There were several additional vexatious elements in the situation. The central Conferences had had the opportunity of unifying sentiment, and great power had been exerted by the two largest Conferences, particularly by the Baltimore. When the General Conference assembled, the members from distant points found the business matured and a majority committed on almost every question.

The Virginia Conference, consisting of men of force—not a little jealous of the central Conferences and of the influence of the Bishops through them, and remembering the early sacramental controversy—stood to some extent between the remote and central section, and a considerable number in all Conferences were ready to join them or the majority according to their convictions or interests.

STEPS LEADING TO A DELEGATED GENERAL CONFERENCE

So far as can be ascertained from contemporaneous documents and tradition, the steps which led to the formation of a delegated General Conference are as follows; Asbury records in his *Journal:* "This day brother Jesse Lee put a paper into my hand, proposing the election of not less than two, nor more than four, preachers from each Conference, to form a General Conference in Baltimore, in December, 1792, to be continued annually."[1] This testimony gives Lee a foremost place in American

[1]Vol. ii, p. 128, July 7, 1791.

Methodism as a farseeing and sagacious man, the denouncer and destroyer of the aristocratic council, and the early perceiver that a delegated Conference, and that only, would provide for permanent, consistent, and satisfactory legislation.

In the General Conference of 1800, on May 8, James Folleson moved that,

Whereas, Much time has been lost, and will always be lost in the event of a General Conference being continued; and,

Whereas, The circuits are left without preachers for one, two, or three months, and other great inconveniences attend so many of the preachers leaving their work, and no real advantage arises therefrom,

Resolved, That instead of a General Conference we substitute a delegated one.

This motion was called up on May 15 and lost by a great majority. This resolution with the preamble was in terms so clear, concise, and conclusive, that it should have convinced the body and secured its purpose; but other experiments, some of them impracticable, were yet to be tried before the one rational and equalizing method could be enacted and put in operation.

In the Baltimore Conference, held in March, 1806, "it was recommended to the Annual Conferences to consider on the propriety of having a select, delegated Conference: the Eastern, Western, and Southern Conferences were counseled to take such measures as they, in their wisdom, might see best, to produce a more equal representation from their several bodies to the General Conference."[1]

A PECULIAR SCHEME

The New York Conference assembled May 16, 1806. Bishop Whatcoat was rapidly approaching the end of his laborious life, Coke was in Europe, and the entire

[1] *Asbury's Journal*, vol. iii, pp. 217, 218.

burden of the Superintendency was about to fall upon Asbury, far advanced in years. *Asbury's Journal* notes:

A paper was read, setting forth the uncertain state of the Superintendency, and proposing the election of seven elders from each of the seven Conferences, to meet at Baltimore, July 4, 1807, for the sole purpose of establishing the American Superintendency on a sure foundation: this subject will be submitted to the consideration of all the Conferences.[1]

Bangs says that they were to have "power to elect one Bishop or more, and also to provide for a future *delegated* General Conference, whose powers should be defined and limited by constitutional restrictions."[2] Bangs was a member of the New York Conference; but he did not publish his history of Methodism for more than thirty years after these events. It is probable that he recalled some of the remarks made in debate and considered them a part of the "plan." But Bishop Paine, the friend and biographer of Bishop McKendree, states[3] that he possessed the original document as issued by the New York Conference, and that it provided that the electors should assemble in Baltimore "with full powers to elect, organize and establish a permanent Superintendency, *and for no other purpose.*" To the original document were attached the following statements:

The New England Conference concurs with the proposal made by the New York Conference, for calling a delegated General Conference on July 4, 1807, for the express purpose of strengthening the Superintendency. Yeas, 28; nays, 15.

THO. BRANCH, *Sec'y.*

The Western Conference concurs with the proposal made by the. Unanimity. WM. BURKE, *Sec'y.*

The South Carolina Conference concurs. Two members only excepted. LEWIS MYERS, *Sec'y.*

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[1] Vol. iii, p. 224.

[2] *History of the Methodist Episopal Church*, vol. ii, p. 177.

[3] *Life and Times of Bishop McKendree*, vol. i, p. 185.

AN EFFECTUAL BLOCKADE

Virginia Conference, Newbern, Feb. 6, 1807.—The New York Conference having written a circular letter to the several Annual Conferences, proposing a plan to strengthen the Superintendency, the letter was read in this Conference yesterday, and a vote taken—"Shall we consider the subject?" Only seven were in favor of the motion. The subject was called up again to-day, and a second vote was taken: fourteen were in favor of it. It is therefore the decision of Conference not to be concerned in it.

Signed in and by order of the Conference.

P. BRUCE,
JESSE LEE,
THOMAS L. DOUGLASS, *Sec'y.*

There were 34 members at the Conference; 33 were present when the vote was taken, and the absent member said he would have voted for it if he had been in the room.

THOS. L. DOUGLASS, *Sec'y.*

A paper is also extant, dated "Newbern, North Carolina, February 8, 1807, expressing the dissent of *Philip Bruce, Stith Mead, Thomas L. Douglass,* and *John Buxton* to the action of the Virginia Conference in refusing to take into consideration the circular of the New York Conference." They protested on the ground that it was injudicious and impolitic to refuse hearing a debate on anything of such importance. They then attempt to explain the course pursued by the Conference by attributing it "to the state of our Conference, being composed of more than one third young men, and the vehement outcries of 'Rebellion'—'Worse than Burr'—'Of foreswearing'—'Dividing the connection'! etc., raised by two of our elder brethren (J. Lee and D. Hall), which so alarmed the young men that they were afraid to hear or see the letters, or submit to the debate upon the address from New York."

This is a singular method of discrediting an action. It implies that nearly two thirds were *not* young men, and they must have been in a strange state of mind if they could be overawed by cries of that kind.

Lee had extraordinary gifts as an orator. He opposed the plan on the ground, that it was an unwarrantable measure "to meet a contingency which did not occur before the meeting of the body which had the legal control of the question, and might have been a dangerous precedent." Bishop Paine justly says: "And it may well be feared that if this evident necessity for General Conference action had been anticipated in 1807, the attempt to introduce the representative principle in 1808, and to impose a constitutional check both upon the Annual and General Conferences, might not have been successful."

LEE'S POSITION

Lee is entitled to be heard for himself. He disposes of the question in his usual sententious manner: "In the course of the year 1806 there was a plan laid which would have overset and destroyed the rules and regulations of the Methodists, respecting the election and ordination of Bishops. It was said that the plan originated in the New York Conference, which was as follows."[1]

Here he gives an account of the plan, and says that it was adopted by four of the Conferences, who had taken for granted that it would succeed, and delegates were chosen. He accounts for the refusal to take it under consideration by its "being pointedly in opposition to all the rules of our Church. The Bishop labored hard to carry the point, but in vain: and the whole business of that dangerous plan was overset by the Virginia Conference. The inventors and defenders of that project might have meant well; but they certainly erred in judgment."

As it was understood that unless all the Conferences concurred in the expediency of this measure, no attempts should be made to carry it into effect, the refusal of the

[1] *History of the Methodists*, p. 344.

Virginia Conference to consider it was a deathblow to the enterprise.

PROMPT ACTION OF NEW YORK CONFERENCE

This scheme having failed, to the humiliation of the New York Conference, in which it took shape, and, according to Bangs, to "the great grief" of Asbury, that Conference, with its characteristic energy, and with praiseworthy devotion to the interests of the entire Church, sent out, in less than three months after the overthrow of its previous plan, a unanimously adopted and signed memorial to the Conferences, expressing its thorough conviction that "a representative or delegated General Conference, composed of a specific number, on principles of equal representation, from the several Annual Conferences, would be much more conducive to the prosperity and general unity of the whole body, than the present indefinite and numerous body of ministers, collected together unequally from the various Conferences, to the great inconvenience of the ministry and injury of the work of God."

They invited the brethren of the several Annual Conferences, which were to sit between then and the General Conference, to join and unite with them "in the subject matter of this memorial." This was adopted without a dissenting vote in the New York Conference, and sent out to the other Conferences under the date May 7, 1807. In the interval between that and the time fixed for the General Conference of 1808 it was submitted to the New England, Ohio, and South Carolina Conferences, and concurred in by them. The ministry of the Church were requested that "as full a representation as practicable should attend the session of the General Conference, that a full expression of the voice of the several Annual Conferences should be heard in regard to the measure."

It was under these circumstances, and with this weighty project before them, that the members of the General Conference of 1808 convened in Baltimore, already become the historic center of American Methodist ecclesiastical organization, and destined now to see perfected the work begun in the convention which, in 1784, gave to the world a new and independent Church.

CHAPTER XIV

The Last Nondelegated General Conference

Sad indeed was the situation when on May 1, 1808, the General Conference assembled. Bishop Whatcoat had finished his course, Dr. Coke was in Europe, and upon Asbury, wayworn and weary, rested the weight of the entire denomination, and the sole responsibility of presiding over the Conference. The times were out of joint; dissatisfaction and a sense of uncertainty were rife. All expected that important changes would be made; but none could forecast the temper in which they would be attempted, the length of the deliberations, or the character of the debates necessary for their elucidation and adoption.

Twenty-four years had passed since the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized—a period sufficient to develop orators, wise men, parliamentarians, and masterly leaders.

GREAT LEADERS

From the New York Conference came nineteen members; among them Freeborn Garrettson, Ezekiel Cooper, and Nathan Bangs. The New England was represented by seven members, the greatest in influence, then and afterward, being George Pickering, Joshua Soule, and Elijah Hedding; of the Western Conference there were eleven, all forceful and fervent, the most notable being William McKendree. South Carolina also sent eleven, useful, and most of them locally honored; but not conspicuous in the proceedings of the Conference. There were eighteen delegates from Virginia, two of whom can never pass from remembrance while Methodists read the

history of their own communion—Philip Bruce and Jesse Lee. When the roll was called, thirty-one members of the Baltimore Conference responded, among them Stephen G. Roszel, Nelson Reed, Asa Shinn, Enoch George, and Robert R. Roberts. Only one Conference exceeded that number, the Philadelphia, which had thirty-two. Here also were remarkable men—Thomas Ware, John McClaskey, Henry Boehm (who lived more than a century, and was an encyclopædia of early Methodist facts and traditions), and William P. Chandler, the last named being chosen secretary of the General Conference.

The appointments of all these (except Cooper, who had been elected editor and General Book Steward) were absolutely dependent upon the will of Asbury.

The Conference being ready for business, Asbury moved, and it was determined, that a Committee of Review and Inspection be appointed consisting of seven members, "one to be taken from each Annual Conference by the members present from each Conference respectively." To this committee were referred various questions of importance. Those chosen were Samuel Coate, of the New York Conference; Martin Ruter, of the New England; William McKendree, of the Western; James H. Mellard, of the South Carolina; Jesse Lee, of the Virginia; Nelson Reed, of the Baltimore; and Thomas Ware, of the Philadelphia. There was also a Committee of Three on Correspondence.

On the afternoon of Monday, May 9, the most important measure, since the organization of the Church in 1784, was launched upon an ocean of discussion. It was thus introduced:

> Brother William Phœbus moved, and was seconded by Brother Daniel Hall, that the Conference now go into the business relative to *regulating* and *perpetuating General Conferences in future*. The subject to be taken up to-morrow morning.

MEMORIAL FROM NEW YORK CONFERENCE

The memorial, a part of which was necessarily incorporated in the previous chapter, now sent to the General Conference by the New York Conference, was read. After an introduction describing the rapid growth and wide distribution of the denomination, the memorial thus proceeds:

When we take a serious and impartial view of this important subject, and consider the extent of our connection, the number of our preachers, the great inconvenience, expense, and loss of time that must necessarily result from our present regulations, relative to our General Conference, we are deeply impressed with a thorough conviction that a representative or delegated General Conference, composed of a specific number on principles of equal representation from the several Annual Conferences, would be much more conducive to the prosperity and general unity of the whole body than the present indefinite and numerous body of ministers, collected together unequally from the various Conferences, to the great inconvenience of the ministry, and injury of the work of God. We therefore present unto you this memorial, requesting that you will adopt the principle of an equal representation from the Annual Conferences, to form, in future, a delegated General Conference, and that you will establish such rules and regulations as are necessary to carry the same into effect.[1]

INDORSEMENTS

This was signed by the respective secretaries of three Conferences:

The Eastern Conference unanimously voted to concur with the New York Conference in the subject matter of the above memorial. THOMAS BRANCH, *Secretary.*

Boston Conference, June 3, 1807.

The Western Conference unanimously voted to concur with the New York Conference in the subject matter of the above memorial. WILLIAM BURKE, *Secretary.*

Chillicothe, O., September 16, 1807.

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[1] *Journal*, 1808, p. 77.

The South Carolina Conference, with the exception of five members, concur with the New York Conference in the above memorial. LEWIS MYERS, *Secretary.*

January 2, 1808.

From the absence of certificates from the Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Virginia Conferences it is inferred that they did not concur, though L. M. Lee declares that it was brought before the Virginia Conference of 1808, and adopted with great unanimity, and that "it is believed that all the Conferences adopted this memorial." Tigert holds that this is clearly wrong, "as it is not credible that when the memorial was read in General Conference, with the official certificates of the concurrence of the New England, Western, and South Carolina Conferences attached, the delegates of the other three Conferences should have failed to inquire why the official indorsement of their own bodies was omitted."

It is barely possible that while the three Conferences had not formally voted, the members present—a very large number—might have expressed a general approval. This would account for the absence of certificates, and also for the tradition that all the Conferences agreed; but as the memorial was probably laid before those Conferences at their sessions in 1808, and as no reference to their sentiments is made in the *Journal* in connection with later events, they may have concluded to await developments.

The next morning, "Bishop Asbury having called for the mind of the Conference, whether any further regulation in the order of the General Conference be necessary, the question was put, and carried in the affirmative."

COMMITTEE TO FRAME REGULATIONS

It was moved by Stephen G. Roszel and seconded by William Burke that "a committee be appointed to draw

up such regulations as they may think best, . and report the same to the Conference." The motion prevailed, as also did a resolution moved by Bishop Asbury, "that the committee be formed from an equal number from each of the Annual Conferences." Another that there should "be *two* from each Conference to be chosen by their respective Conferences" was carried. The following were elected:

From the New York: Ezekiel Cooper, John Wilson.
From the New England: George Pickering, Joshua Soule.
From the Western: William McKendree, William Burke.
From the South Carolina: William Phœbus, Josias Randle.
From the Virginia: Philip Bruce, Jesse Lee.
From the Baltimore: Stephen G. Roszel, Nelson Reed.
From the Philadelphia: John McClaskey, Thomas Ware.

After the committee was organized it appointed a subcommittee consisting of Cooper, Soule, and Bruce to draft a report to be submitted later for approval, alteration, or rejection. It was agreed that each of the three should prepare a scheme to be considered at the next meeting of the subcommittee. Cooper and Soule appeared with papers, but Bruce had committed nothing to writing. Cooper and Soule read their plans, and Bruce agreed with the main points presented by Soule, Cooper in the end concurring.

The whole committee was then called together; both plans were put before it, and after a few minor changes suggested by others had been made, the system of Soule was adopted.

COMMITTEE PRESENTS PLAN

At the morning session of the General Conference on Monday, May 16, the report of the committee "relative to regulating and perpetuating General Conferences" was presented and read. It was as follows:

Whereas, It is of the greatest importance that the doctrines,

form of government, and general rules of the United States societies in America be preserved sacred and inviolable; and,

Whereas, Every prudent measure should be taken to preserve, strengthen, and perpetuate the union of the connection;

Therefore, your committee, upon the maturest deliberation, have thought it advisable that the third section of the Form of Discipline shall be as follows, viz.:

SECTION III.—*Of the General Conference*

1st. The General Conference shall be composed of delegates from the Annual Conferences.

2d. The delegates shall be chosen by ballot, without debate, in the Annual Conferences respectively, in the last meeting of the Conference previous to the meeting of the General Conference.

3d. Each Annual Conference respectively shall have a right to send seven elders, members of their Conference, as delegates to the General Conference.

4th. Each Annual Conference shall have a right to send one delegate, in addition to the seven, for every ten members belonging to such Conference over and above fifty: so that if there be sixty members, they shall send eight; if seventy, they shall send nine; and so on in proportion.

5th. The General Conference shall meet on the first day of May, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and twelve; and thenceforward on the first day of May once in four years perpetually, at such place or places as shall be fixed on by the General Conference from time to time.

6th. At all times, when the General Conference is met, it shall take two thirds of the whole number of delegates to form a quorum.

7th. One of the original Superintendents shall preside in the General Conference; but in case no General Superintendent be present, the General Conference shall choose a president *pro tem.*

8th. The General Conference shall have full powers to make rules, regulations, and canons for our Church, under the following limitations and restrictions, viz.:

The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new standards of doctrine.

They shall not lessen the number of seven delegates from each Annual Conference, nor allow of a greater number from any

Annual Conference than is provided in the fourth paragraph of this section.

They shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government, so as to do away episcopacy, or to destroy the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency.

They shall not revoke or change the general rules of the united societies.

They shall not do away the privileges of our ministers or preachers of trial by a committee, and of an appeal; neither shall they do away the privileges of our members, of trial before the society, or by a committee of an appeal.

They shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern or of the Charter Fund to any purpose other than for the benefit of the traveling, superannuated, supernumerary, and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and children.

Provided, nevertheless, that upon the joint recommendation of all the Annual Conferences, then a majority of two thirds of the General Conference succeeding shall suffice to alter any of the above restrictions.

DISCUSSION

Immediately on its presentation the Conference voted to proceed to a discussion of the subject. According to Bangs, it was debated for a full day, when Cooper, seconded by Wells, moved "to postpone the present question to make room for the consideration of a new resolution, as preparatory to the minds of the brethren to determine on the present subject." This being carried, the same persons moved:

Resolved, That in the fifth section of Discipline, after the question, "By whom shall the presiding elders be chosen?" the answer shall be—"*Answer* 1st. *Each Annual Conference respectively, without debate, shall annually choose, by ballot, its own presiding elders.*"

This debate was continued, on the next day, when an attempt was made by Soule and seconded by Oliver Beale to terminate the discussion and take the vote. The motion was lost: nays, 61; ayes, 53. On the afternoon of the same day it was moved by Samuel Draper, of New

York, seconded by Elijah Hedding, of New England, that "the vote be taken immediately," but it did not prevail. Later a similar motion was made by Thomas Sargeant, of Baltimore, and seconded by James Smith, of the same Conference, and nearly prevailed, the nays being 59 and the ayes 56. To bring the question to a vote, another attempt was made by Soule and Pickering, but it was defeated by so large a majority that no count was taken.

THE TWO MOTIONS LOST

There were late evening and early morning conversations, and when the Conference convened an attempt was made by Sargeant and seconded by Francis Ward to eject the motion from the Conference by moving that "the motion for electing presiding elders be postponed until the *fifteenth* of August next." It did not carry, and debate was resumed. Finally Elijah R. Sabin, of New England, moved, and Soule seconded, that "the vote be taken without further debate." And it was *carried.* Immediately Garrettson, of New York, moved and Robert Sparks, of Philadelphia, seconded, that "this vote be taken by ballot." The vote being taken on the resolution for electing presiding elders, it was lost, the ayes being 52 and the nays 73. On the same day it was moved by McClaskey, and seconded by Daniel Ostrander, of New York, that "the vote on the first resolution of the report of the committee of fourteen (on regulating General Conferences, etc.) be taken by ballot." The motion was carried. The first resolution was as follows: "The General Conference shall be composed of delegates from the Annual Conferences." It was *lost;* ayes, 57; nays, 64.

DEFEAT CAUSES GREAT PERPLEXITY

This result produced consternation, those defeated being on the verge of desperation, and the victorious shrink-

ing from the possible, and even probable consequences, for this was equivalent to a rejection of the entire report, and left future General Conferences to be formed by the original, outworn, and odious method which assumed that all ministers of the legally qualified class were to assemble. In the manuscript *Journal* (which was the basis of Stevens's *Life of Bangs*) Bangs writes:

> I suppose some voted against it from a fear that, if adopted, they could never attend another General Conference; and others were jealous of their rights, fearing to intrust the affairs of the Church to so few hands; while some opposed it from opposition to Bishop Asbury, with whom it was a favorite measure, for, notwithstanding his great merits, he had his enemies.[1]

Jesse Lee, who had formerly been in favor of a delegated General Conference, was opposed to this report. Bishop Paine says that "Mr. Lee is understood to have opposed the whole thing upon the plea of Conference rights, leading to electioneering," etc. Probably no speaker had a greater influence on the floor of the Conference than Lee. The Rev. John Kobler, a member of the Conference, says of him that "he was a man of great penetration and could see through circumstances and read men well. He was the best speaker in the Conference."[2]

FOR A TIME DESPAIR

The defeat of the plan for a delegated General Conference boded no good for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Many of the preachers from remote Conferences began preparations to return home, and Bishop Hedding states that, had they left at this crisis, it would probably have been the last General Conference ever held. Bishop Clark says of Hedding that "all the members from the New England Conference, except himself [Hedding], were making arrangements to depart. In this emergency he entreated

[1] *Life and Times of Nathan Bangs*, p. 171.
[2] *Life and Times of Jesse Lee*, by Dr. Le Roy M. Lee, pp. 327, 328.

them to remain, and declared his own determination to remain until the close of the Conference, whatever might happen."[1]

Bishop Asbury also appealed to them, and to members of the other Conferences, who were about to leave. The delegates from the central Conferences, who had largely voted against the report of the committee, now saw that something must be done.

RECONCILIATION AND AGREEMENT REACHED

Much consultation ensued, the warring elements were reconciled, and on Monday, May 23, it was moved by Philip Bruce, of Virginia Conference, and seconded by Thomas Branch, of New York, that "the report of the Committee of Review lie on the table until we determine when and where the next General Conference shall be held." This being carried, Leonard Cassel moved, and Roszel seconded, that the motion for "considering when and where the next Conference shall be" should lie over until "it be determined *who shall compose* the General Conference." This prevailed.

Enoch George then moved, and Roszel (both of Baltimore) seconded, "that the General Conference shall be composed of one member for every five members of each Annual Conference." The *Journal* entry is, "Carried by a very large majority." Soule, seconded by Pickering, moved "that each Annual Conference should have the power of sending their proportionate number of members to the General Conference, either by *seniority or choice,* as they shall think best." This motion was not voted upon until the afternoon session. The introduction of the phrase "or seniority" disarmed Lee, who had been afraid of "electioneering," etc. The scene is graphically described in Lee's *Life of Jesse Lee:*

[1] *Life and Times of Elijah Hedding*, by D. W. Clark, p. 173.

Lee was a powerful advocate of independent rights of Conferences, also of this condition of seniority. By means of Soule's amendment the independence of the Conference was maintained, and to the custody of that independence was committed the very condition he defended as the proper basis of representation.

Lee said "that though he felt that he had lost a victory, he submitted." He walked up to his friend and whispered, "Brother Soule, you have played me a Yankee trick!"

Roszel moved that the next General Conference be held on May 1, 1812. This was carried, as was the motion that it be held in New York. This prevailed by a majority of eight. The next motion was made by Roszel, and seconded by Lee: "That it shall take two thirds of the representatives of all the Annual Conferences to form a quorum for business in the General Conference."

This essential rule prevailed by a majority of only seven. Without it the General Conference could by a majority of whatever number might be present enact any legislation, not prohibited by the restrictions, however trifling or destructive it might be.

On the next day Lee moved, and Burke seconded, that "the next General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government, so as to do away episcopacy or to destroy the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency." This prevailed.

On motion of Roszel, seconded by Pickering, it was enacted that "one of the Superintendents shall preside in the General Conference; but in case of the absence of a Superintendent the Conference shall elect a president *pro tem.*" Then followed a series of motions moved by Roszel, and seconded by Reed, namely:

The General Conference shall have full powers to make rules and regulations for our Church, under the following restrictions, viz.:

1. The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change

our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine. Carried.

2. They shall not allow of more than one representative for every five members of the Annual Conference, nor allow of a less number than one for every seven. Carried.

At this point it was moved by Daniel Hitt, of Baltimore, and seconded by Samuel Coate, of New York, that "a committee of three be appointed to modify certain *exceptional expressions* in the General Rules," but the motion was lost.

The series of restrictions, moved by Roszel and seconded by Reed, was taken up where it had been left and the third, "They shall not revoke or change" the "General Rules of the United Societies," was passed. The fourth restriction was also enacted:

4. They shall not do away the privileges of our ministers or preachers of trial by a committee, and of an appeal; neither shall they do away the privileges of our members of trial before the society, or by a committee, and of an appeal.

The fifth restriction was carried:

5. They shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern, or of the Charter Fund to any purpose other than for the benefit of the traveling, supernumerary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and children.

The sixth restriction as proposed and adopted was:

Provided, nevertheless, that upon the joint recommendation of all the Annual Conferences, then a majority of two thirds of the General Conference succeeding shall suffice to alter any of the above restrictions.

At the afternoon session, Ostrander moved, and Cooper seconded, that "The General Superintendents, with or by the advice of all the Annual Conferences, respectively, shall have power to call a General Conference, if they judge it necessary." This prevailed.

The next entry in the *Journal* is: *"Moved from the*

chair, that the General Conference shall meet on the first day of May, once in four years *perpetually,* at such place or places as shall be fixed on by the General Conference from time to time. Carried."

The last enactment on this subject, immediately before the final adjournment, was made by Joseph Totten, and seconded by Roszel: "That no preacher shall be sent as a representative to the General Conference until he has traveled at least four full calendar years from the time that he was received on trial by an Annual Conference, and is in full connection at the time of holding the Conference."

These were the provisions made by the General Conference of 1808 for the "*regulating* and *perpetuating* General Conference *in future.*"

CHAPTER XV

Comments on Preceding Chapter

In considering the momentous transactions detailed in the preceding chapter it should be noted that the provisions finally adopted were moved and seconded on a pre-formed plan to include, in the work of constitution-making, leaders from as many Conferences as possible, and also to demonstrate to the rank and file of the General Conference that substantial unanimity had been reached.

It should also be noted that important changes had been made in the original draft reported by the committee. The report of the committee, as first presented to the Conference for its action, provided that each Annual Conference respectively should "have the right to send *seven* elders, members of their Conference, as delegates to the General Conference," and that each Annual Conference should "have the right to send one delegate, in *addition to the seven,* for every ten members belonging to such Conference over and above fifty; so that if there be sixty members, they shall send eight; if seventy, they shall send nine; and so on in proportion"; whereas, *as adopted,* each Conference was allowed to send one delegate for every five members thereof, and no more; either to be appointed by "seniority or choice at the discretion of such Annual Conference," and that only those representatives could be eligible who had traveled at least four full calendar years from the time when they were received on trial by an Annual Conference, and were in full connection at the time of holding the Conference.

The original draft provided that one of the *original* Superintendents should preside in the General Conference.

This would have restricted the presidency to Asbury and Coke, so long as they lived and were present in the Conference.

As first presented, there was no provision made for the calling of a *special* General Conference.

The provision concerning the powers of the General Conference read as follows: "The General Conference shall have full powers to make rules, regulations, and canons for our Church, under the following limitations and restrictions, viz." As finally adopted, "and canons" was stricken out, and "and" inserted between "rules" and "regulations." There were also changes in the restrictions. In the original form, the first was, "The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new standards of doctrine." This was changed so as to read as follows: "Nor establish any new standards or *rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.*" A margin was introduced into the restriction concerning the number of members, so as to provide that, "They shall not allow of more than one representative for every five members of the Annual Conference, nor allow a less number than one for every seven."

These were important alterations and additions. In his *Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism,*" Tigert states that the word *"original,"* in the rule concerning the presiding officers, is probably a clerical error or misprint for "general." This is wholly improbable. In the year 1800, McClaskey, of the Philadelphia Conference, moved:

> *Whereas*, By vote of the Conference it is determined that another Bishop shall be elected,
>
> *Resolved*, That the Conference determine, before the votes be canvassed, the powers of the new Bishops, whether he shall be equal to Bishop Asbury, or subordinate to him.

This was withdrawn. Later, a motion was made "that the Bishops shall have full and equal jurisdiction in all and every respect whatsoever. That each and every Bishop shall attend each and every Conference, and then and there mutually preside, and station the preachers." To this was added a provision: "In case they should unavoidably be prevented from all attending, the Bishops then present shall be competent to discharge the duties of the office as fully and effectually, in every respect, as if they were all present." This motion was put to vote and *negatived.*

Nothing is more probable than that Bishop Asbury felt that he had a just claim to prominence and weight of influence among the Bishops. It is improbable that John McClintock, the eminent scholar and author, to whom was intrusted the publication of the *Journals* would allow so great a mistake as "original" for "general," or that it would have so long been left uncorrected

Pending the deliberations on the formation of a delegated Conference by the committee of fourteen, the regular proceedings continued.

The question whether the present General Superintendency needed strengthening was debated and voted upon; and a motion was made that one person be elected and ordained as "Joint Superintendent or Bishop with Bishop Asbury." It was moved by Ostrander, and seconded by Soule, that *two* be elected. McClaskey moved and Cooper seconded that *seven* Bishops be added to the Superintendency. Bangs speaks of this as follows. Before the motion for the election and consecration of an additional Bishop had passed,

> a motion for the election of seven additional Bishops, one for each Annual Conference, with *Bishop Asbury at their head,* was largely and ably discussed by some of the leading members of the Conference on each side. Those who were in favor of this

motion were also in favor of either abolishing or greatly restricting the office of presiding elder, and making the episcopacy so large as in a great measure to supersede the necessity of that office. But as it was finally settled by a large majority of the Conference that this *officer should be continued in the Church*, and likewise *continue to be appointed by the Bishop*, so the motion for adding seven additional Bishops, notwithstanding the plausibility with which the measure was urged upon the Conference, was finally rejected by a strong vote.[1]

The Conference finally decided to elect one Bishop; the choice to be by ballot. One hundred and twenty-eight votes were cast, and of these William McKendree received ninety-five, a choice which meant more to the Church than could possibly have been anticipated.

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[1]Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. ii, p. 235.

THE CREATION OF A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION

CHAPTER XVI

The Word "Constitution"

To prevent confusion of thought, the word "constitution" must be carefully considered. One of its definitions is, "A particular law, ordinance, or regulation, made by the authority of any superior, civil or ecclesiastical; specifically, in Roman law, what an emperor enacted, either by decree, edict, or letter, and without the interposition of any constitutional assembly: as, the Constitution of Justinian."

This defines the relation of Wesley to the British Conference. During the greater part of his career there was no constitutional assembly which could, in any degree, restrain or direct his will. Gradually there grew up a moral power which took on the form of a legislative assembly and exerted marked influence; nevertheless absolute power theoretically inhered in Wesley to the last. The early Methodist Conferences in North America submitted to Wesley, whose will was first exercised over them through Asbury, then by Rankin, Asbury being subordinate to him. After a period of struggle, power similar to that held by Rankin was given to Asbury; and this practically endured until the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784.

The word "constitutionally" was used in this sense by Asbury, in a letter which he sent to England in 1797: "We have to lament that our Superintendency is so weak and that it cannot constitutionally be strengthened until the ensuing General Conference." In that sense he meant that there was no means of securing an election of Bishops, the ultimate decision being with the General

Conference. In the same letter Asbury observes: "We have but one grand responsive body, which is our General Conference. No yearly Conference, no official character dare assume to answer for that grand federal body."

In this case the General Conference had all the power of Justinian or Wesley. Asbury speaks of traveling with an Assistant "who does everything for me he constitutionally can, but the ordaining and stationing of preachers can only be performed by myself in the Doctor's [Coke] absence." These observations rest upon the principle that the Discipline, then simply a series of mandates, must be observed. Tigert justly remarks, "It must not be forgotten, however, that, notwithstanding the unlimited powers of the General Conference, and the subordinate position of the yearly bodies, no hard-and-fast line had yet been drawn, in the mind of the Church, between the action of the ministry assembled in General Conference and the action of the ministry generally in the Annual Conferences."[1]

The second and commonly accepted significance of the word "constitution" is, "A system of fundamental principles, maxims, laws, or rules embodied in written documents or established by prescriptive usage for the government of a nation, state, society, corporation, or association." The preceding account of the formation of the Church is sufficient to clarify this point.

Assuming the power, by the implied consent and at the suggestion of Wesley, the preachers, in convention assembled, organized themselves into the Methodist Episcopal Church, selected Superintendents, ordained elders and deacons, and enacted a system of laws defining with more or less fullness the duties of all members and officers

[1] *Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism*, Revised Edition, p. 284.

composing the societies, implying in part and expressing in part their rights and privileges. They accepted and adopted doctrinal standards and liturgical forms, the power of government being invested entirely in the preachers.

The preachers who had not been present and the laity subsequently acquiesced in this action. No provision was made at that time for a democratic assembly of all the preachers at one time and place, but the subsequent proceedings were in harmony with the assumption that *absolute* authority inhered in the preachers. The difficulty of enacting rules for the government of the Church has been described, and also the futile experiment of the council and the establishment of General Conferences.

Each of these General Conferences was all powerful. They limited themselves only by parliamentary rules, which, however, they had power to change.

From 1784 to and including the General Conference of 1808 they had the power to depose a Bishop *without trial,* to transform the government into a strictly Presbyterian organization, or to resolve it into separate congregations; to modify or abolish every rule or custom, and to change the doctrinal basis, or to dissolve the General Conferences and resume the tedious method of submitting the business to the successive Annual Conferences. In short, *they had the power to revoke anything that had been done, either by any preceding General Conference, by the Annual Conferences, or by the convention which organized the Church.*

The official record of their proceedings demonstrates that they were fully conscious of absolute control.

In his work on *The Unwritten Constitution of the United States,* Christopher G. Tiedeman, professor of law in the University of Missouri, thus describes the

British Constitution: "The British Constitution, *being unwritten,* reflects accurately and promptly the mutations of public opinion; for Parliament, being subject *to no limitation,* with its hand constantly on the public pulse, in every case of permanent and effective legislation simply records the decree of the people; and if that decree involves the adoption of a new fundamental principle, a change is thus wrought in the British Constitution."

This was the nature of the Constitution existing between 1784 and the close of the General Conference of 1808. But the one formed by that body was a *written* Constitution. In this particular only it resembles that of the United States and those of the respective States.

EVERY ELEMENT OF A CONSTITUTION

As at various times the question has been raised whether the Church has a Constitution, it is necessary to give the subject a more detailed consideration. When not brought forward in the interest of some proposal plainly unconstitutional, or the constitutionality of which is open to reasonable doubt, this question is the result of a lack of acquaintance with the history of the Church.

As we have seen, prior to 1808 the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church was in the hands of an oligarchy of ministers. The *Discipline* was the book of laws, no distinction being made in the Conference between constitutional and legislative provisions and enactments.

Nevertheless, Bishops Asbury and Coke, with their "Notes on the Discipline," prepared by request of the General Conference of 1796, and published for a time with the *Discipline,* by order of the General Conference, under the title "General and Yearly Conference," referring to the unwisdom of holding a General Conference oftener than once in four years, said, "Nor do we think,

that the nature of a *religious* constitution renders it necessary to revise more frequently the regulations by which it is governed." Again: as *"The Bishops are bound to obey and submit to the General Conference,* so the preachers are bound to obey and submit to the General Conference; and also to the yearly Conference in everything except the stationing of them for their respective districts and circuits, and in this respect they are bound to obey and submit to the episcopacy." They reaffirm these statements thus: "This is the order of our Church: and as the New Testament is silent as to the Constitution of states, so is it in a great measure as to the Constitution of Churches; this does not in any degree prevent the due reformation of the Constitutions of Churches any more than of states."

When the General Conference met in 1808 the Church had this species of Constitution, and all power to change or repeal any part of it. Having *absolute* control, it could also arrange for *"the perpetuation and regulation of General Conferences;"* and this it did.

Since no question of constitutionality could arise—previous to the establishment of a delegated General Conference with restricted powers—we do not find the word "constitution" either in the *Journals* of previous General Conferences or in the Minutes of Annual Conferences.

But in the *second* delegated Conference a committee, to which the addresses of the Bishops were referred for examination, reported in favor of the appointment of a "Committee of Review and Revision." This committee was to be instructed that if "any rules and regulations made by the General Conference should be deemed *unconstitutional,* they should report the grounds of their objections to the General Conference in writing." This resolution, however, was not adopted, but the Minutes

also record that "the legality and unconstitutionality" of the proceedings of the Philadelphia Conference were called in question.

The General Conference of 1820 instructed the Committee on Rights and Privileges to inquire into the *"constitutionality* of the location of traveling preachers without their consent." In the General Conference of 1824, Peter Cartwright declared that "the majority of the Annual Conferences adjudged certain resolutions *unconstitutional."* The General Conference of 1828 discussed an important question from the point of view of *"constitutionality."*

The General Conference of 1832 declared that *"constitutional* difficulties" were in the way of settling with the Canadian brethren on the division of the Book Concern profits and property without its being submitted "to three fourths of the members of all the several Annual Conferences."

The great debates of 1844 were largely *constitutional* discussions wherein both sides assumed the existence of a "Constitution," and discussed its meanings, implications, and applications.

Prior to the consummation of the present Constitution by the final vote of the ministry and laity in the Annual Conferences, occasionally persons asserted that "no one knows what the Constitution is." The fact is, that there had been some dispute as to whether certain passages relating to the General Conference, but not in or referred to by the Restrictive Rules, belonged to the Constitution: such as whether the language of the *Discipline* which *provides for a General Conference* is a part *of the Constitution.* There were also questions as to whether one or two changes which had been made in the Constitution had been legally accomplished. Although proposals were made and votes taken, as if the General

Conference had supreme power over those provisions, the question, what the Constitution was, was never *definitely* and *denominationally* raised and discussed from the time of the promulgation of the Constitution in 1808 until 1868.

But from 1868 the Church without dissent has acted upon the assumption that those parts of the *Discipline* which declare that there shall be a General Conference; which establish the quorum; and the ratio of representation; the necessity of a Bishop's presiding, if there be one present, and if otherwise provide that the Conference shall elect a presiding officer *pro tempore;* the rule for meeting once in four years, and the date of opening, and the defining of the powers of the General Conference, are a *part of the Constitution* and *are alterable only by the method provided for changing the Restrictive Rules.*

Any apparent exceptions will receive due attention.

CHAPTER XVII

The "Constitution of the General Conference"

Some confusion arose in the Church from the peculiar use of the phrase "constitution of the *General Conference.*" Such a phrase cannot be found in the *Journals* of the General Conference for the first thirty years, except in one place, where it is used as it might be of the constitution of a Quarterly Conference, the Leaders and Stewards' Meeting, or, the constitution of "anything that ever was made." This is the reference: In the General Conference of 1816 a memorial from local preachers asked "that they may have representatives in the General Conference." This was referred to the Committee on "the State of the Local Preachers," which reported that the proposal is "inconsistent with the present constitution of the *General Conference.*" The committee based its report upon the proposition that the "Constitution *of the Church*" provided that the General Conference should be composed only of members of Annual Conferences.

The word "constitution" in this statement is used in two different and distinct senses, for the General Conference is formed or constituted a part of the "Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church." The Constitution of the *Church* consists of and includes *all laws or provisions* made by the said *Church* which the General Conference *alone has no power to repeal or change,* whereas the constitution of the *General Conference* consists entirely of rules *determining the qualifications of its members,* its *mode of organization,* and its *powers* and *limitations.*

It must be emphasized that the Constitution of the

Church includes the so-called constitution of the General Conference and all laws or declarations of the Church which the General Conference, acting alone, has no legal power to repeal or alter.

LITTLE GROUND FOR DISSATISFACTION

During 1820-1832 in the controversies between the Church and seceders the question was raised whether the General Conference of 1808 had power to compel the whole Church to obey its behests concerning future General Conferences. Could it have prevented another non-delegated General Conference, or an immediate call for a convention of all ministers and could it have prevented such a convention from denouncing the Constitution, or the Annual Conferences from repudiating the acts of other delegated General Conferences?

The answer to these natural inquiries is: All power was exercised by the *undelegated General* Conferences, but each acted for itself, and for itself only. The undelegated General Conference was theoretically the sum of all the votes of the ordained ministry.

If the Annual Conferences had refused by majorities to accept the Constitution of 1808, *and had acted in harmony with their refusal,* no delegated Conference could have been elected. What then? The ministers might have convened, as they had done in 1808, but if the jealousy of the extraordinary power exercised by the two central Conferences and the distance prevented the Conferences from assembling with them, then the forever tedious method of carrying the business from one Annual Conference to another, might have been resumed; or the solidarity of the Church would have given place to the splitting off of ecclesiastical asteroids forming their own orbits, and Methodism would have lived "at a poor, dying rate," or gradually disappeared.

But there was very little dissatisfaction; none, indeed, of a permanent type.

Bangs says: "The lively satisfaction too with which this act of the Conference was received generally, both by ministers and people, abundantly proves the wisdom which presided in that council which devised these resolutions, and applauds the prudence and caution with which they were cordially adopted." He also characterizes the previous situation in a single sentence: "Before this, each General Conference felt itself at full liberty, not being prohibited by any standing laws, to make whatever alterations it might see fit, or to introduce any new doctrine or item in the *Discipline,* which their fancy, inclination, discretion, or indiscretion might dictate."[1]

Notwithstanding the heavy debates in which Jesse Lee, the "Great Commoner of the Infant Church," participated, and his disappointment in some particulars, he observes in his *History of Methodists* (page 351), published in 1810—one of the frankest histories in the world: "There was a good deal of peace and union among the preachers of that General Conference; and there were one hundred and thirty members of that Conference. *Most of the preachers returned from that Conference well satisfied with what was done while we were together.*"

THE DISSENTING ARGUMENT OF SNETHEN

Nevertheless, the really great Nicholas Snethen, who later seceded from the denomination and became one of the founders of the Methodist Protestant Church—who was a member of the General Conference in 1800 and 1812, but not of 1808—when he was advocating the abolition of the episcopacy and the presiding eldership in 1822, denied that the Conference of 1808 could make a *Constitution.* His argument was as follows:

[1] *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church,* vol. ii, p. 234.

What is a constitution? According to the opinion of the most approved writers on the subject, it is an instrument that cannot be altered or abrogated by a legislative power; but by the united consent and authority of the whole community. The United States and each individual State of the Union have a written Constitution from which the legislative authority is derived. In other countries, where the form of government can be traced to any common act, the choice of the people, much pains has been taken and great learning displayed to prove that a constitution may exist without such choice or consent. Americans, however, think otherwise and act accordingly. In the Methodist Episcopal Church, no instrument was ever dignified with the name of a constitution; but in that year, 1808, six articles were framed under a denomination of limitations and restrictions, but the word "Constitution" is not found in the *Book of Discipline*. And if we may be permitted to think and speak as Americans, neither the General Conference, nor any body among us, was ever organized, or endowed with prerogatives, to make a constitution. The General Conference of 1808 might signify its opinion or wish to its successors, but the most that can be said of its limiting and restricting enactments is that their laws have no more binding authority upon its successors than legislative enactments. It is to be hoped that every preacher will admit that the General Conference of 1808 had none of the attributes or powers of constitution-makers, as all are infinitely interested in disavowing such a precedent and in having the origin and nature of a constitution clearly and distinctly defined.

The destructive difficulty with regard to Snethen's definition, in its application to the acts of the General Conference of 1808, is *that the whole Church had been prepared for such a work by preceding conditions and discussions.* The delegates, with few exceptions, perhaps with none, went to that Conference convinced that something was necessary to the preservation of the solidarity of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

It must, however, be admitted that the General Conference of 1808 had no more sovereign authority to dictate enactments to be forever binding upon its successors than the General Conference of 1804 had to bind that of 1808.

But Snethen became illogical when he said, "By a parity of reasoning, it was *under no sovereignty that would disbar the General Conference of 1812 from disannulling what it did as a lawmaking body.*"

The General Conference of 1812 was not such a body as were those of 1804 and 1808; it did not consist of the whole ministry (except such as were generally deemed to have not possessed sufficient experience), but *of a small part* who *were delegated under the acts of 1808.*

The inexpugnable fact is that the *authority of the General Conference of 1808 was never questioned.* After searching all accessible records, the author has been unable to find any protest of importance against the action of that body—until the Restrictive Rules *obstructed the aims of those who were proposing fundamental changes.*

The result was determined by the fact that *every Annual Conference elected delegates to the General Conference of 1812* under the conditions prescribed in the plan for *"regulating and perpetuating the General Conference in the future."*

CHAPTER XVIII

Radical Differences Between the Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church and that of the United States

The Constitution of the United States begins thus:

Article I

Section 1. All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Article 10 of the Amendments is as follows:

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are *reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.*

Upon its promulgation the Constitution of the United States did not give entire satisfaction. On the contrary, various States disliked it as a form of government, and others disfavored its provisions for maintaining such a government. Some ratified it with conditions.

In it *all* the powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial divisions of the government are *expressly named.*

The Constitution of the *Methodist Episcopal Church* declares, that "The General Conference shall have full power to make rules and regulations for our Church under the following limitations and restrictions."

The people of the United States substantially said to the *Congress,* the *Supreme Court,* and the *President,* "What *we have specified* in the Constitution you may do; all this but *nothing* more."

The Methodist Episcopal Church, through its ministers —then the only rulers—created the General Conference

and said to it, "You may do *all things,* except what we herewith *restrict you* from doing."

BISHOPS HARRIS AND MERRILL ON THE CONSTITUTION

William L. Harris (afterward Bishop), in *The Constitutional Powers of the General Conference,* states that it has been held by the highest judicial tribunal of the Church as well as the Supreme Court of the United States that "all powers not expressly reserved or excepted are delegated to the General Conference."

This is self-evident. Harris further says (page 21), "The powers couched in the granting clause are great enough to have the restrictions carved out of them; they would have embraced everything covered by the restrictions if the restrictions had not been imposed," and on pages 35, 36 he adds: "That is, if there is a necessity for the exception it is a proof that the rule would extend to the excepted cases if the exception did not exist."

Bishop Merrill, in his *Digest of Methodist Law* (pages 14, 15), presents the case with great lucidity.

> When the General Conference is convened and organized under this Constitution it is empowered to make "rules and regulations" for the Methodist Episcopal Church, subject only to the limitations in the six restrictions. Its grant of power is in general terms, and the limitations are specific. In this respect, it differs from the Constitution of the United States. In the latter the grants of power to the general government are specific, and the reserve power is with the several States and the people; but here the general grant covers all the ground of legislation, with the particular exceptions noted.

To this may be added the fact that the General Conference of 1808, as well as its predecessors, claimed and exercised the power to make any rule or regulation and to change or to repeal any regulation without any "limitation or restriction." Therefore the difference between the non-delegated and the delegated General Conferences is,

that the former were *absolute* in power, while those provided by the Constitution are supreme; that is, *absolute* except as *limited* by the restrictions.[1]

[1]The Bishops establish a firm foundation for these statements in their Address to the General Conference of 1840 (General Conference *Journal*, vol. ii, pp. 138, 139). "The Government of the Methodist Episcopal Church is peculiarly constructed. It is widely different from our civil organization. The General Conference is the only legislative body recognized in our ecclesiastical system. and from it originates the authority of the entire executive administration." Speaking of complaints against the Bishops' administration, they say: "In all such cases we have given the most unequivocal assurances that we should, with unfeigned satisfaction and the kindest feelings, submit the whole matter in controversy, with all official acts in the premises, to the enlightened deliberation and final judgment of this constitutional tribunal."

INTERPRETATION OF THE SEPARATE PARTS OF THE CONSTITUTION

CHAPTER XIX

Essentials of a Constitutional General Conference

The provisions for constituting a General Conference involve:

1. The qualifications for a seat therein.
2. The number of representatives to which the Annual Conferences respectively shall be entitled.
3. The frequency with which regular sessions shall be held.
4. The month and the day of the month on which the body shall convene.
5. The number necessary for a quorum.
6. A "President."
7. Measures for calling a special General Conference.
8. Rules of Order.

As published in the *Journal* of the General Conference of 1808, the qualifications for membership in the General Conference were:

> The General Conference *shall be composed of one member for every five members of each Annual Conference*, to be appointed either by seniority or choice at the discretion of such Annual Conference; yet so that such representatives shall have traveled at least four full calendar years from the time that they are received on trial by an Annual Conference, and are in full connection at the time of holding the Conference.

The fundamental fact in this provision of the Constitution is that its terms absolutely excluded the Bishops and the laity from *membership* in the General Conference.

In connection with this rule it is necessary to consider the second restriction: "They shall not allow of more than one representative for every five members of the Annual

Conference, nor allow of a less number than one for every seven."[1]

The Restrictive Rule gave the General Conference of 1812 power to decide whether the next Conference should consist of one delegate for every five, six, or seven members in each Annual Conference.

VARIOUS CHANGES IN THE RATIO OF REPRESENTATION

In the Conference of 1816 the ratio was changed to one in seven by the adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the next General Conference shall be composed of one member for every seven instead of one for every six of each Annual Conference.

The conclusion from the form of this resolution is that the General Conference of 1812 had changed the number from five to six, though the *Journal* does not record such change.

By 1824 the number of delegates had so increased that the General Conference of that year felt it to be burdensome both to themselves and others for so many to assemble together every fourth year. Therefore a recommendation had been sent the rounds of the Annual Conferences requesting them to empower the General Conference to diminish the number of delegates. At the ratio of one in seven, the New York Conference had fifteen, the New England fourteen, and several thirteen. A Conference of twenty-seven was represented by three delegates. This measure was defeated; but the manner of the defeat was the cause of creating a great change in the method of altering the Rules.

The General Conference of 1832 passed and sent down to the several Annual Conferences for their concurrence the following resolutions:

[1] In the revision of the Constitution this subject was placed in another part of the Constitution, and the Second Rule at present relates to the organization of Annual Conferences.

Resolved, 1. That this General Conference recommend to the several Annual Conferences, for their concurrence and adoption, as provided in the Sixth Article of the Restrictive Rules, the following resolution to amend the Second Article of the said Restrictive Rules:

Resolved, 2. That the Second Article of the Restrictive Rules be so altered as to read: "They shall not allow of more than one representative for every fourteen members of the Annual Conference, nor allow of a less number than one for every thirty; *provided*, nevertheless, that when there shall be, in any Annual Conference, a fraction of two thirds of the number which shall be fixed for the ratio of representation, such Annual Conference shall be entitled to an additional delegate for such fraction; and *provided*, also, that no Conference shall be deprived of the privilege of two delegates."

Resolved, 3. That the secretary furnish each of the Bishops with a copy of those resolutions, and they are hereby respectfully requested to present the same to their several Annual Conferences, or cause them to be presented, at their next session for their concurrence; and when the Bishops, or any two of the Bishops, shall have ascertained that three fourths of all the members of the several Annual Conferences, voting in the case, have concurred with this General Conference, they shall certify the same, and cause such certificate to be printed in the Minutes, and published three successive weeks in The Christian Advocate and *Journal*.

Resolved, 4. That the ratio of representation for the next General Conference be one for every fourteen, provided the Annual Conferences concur in the alteration as above recommended by this Conference, and that the *Discipline*, in Section Three, Answer One, to Question Two, on page nineteen, shall thereupon be so altered as to read: "The General Conference shall be composed of one member for every fourteen members of each Annual Conference," etc.[1]

This amendment having been ratified by the Annual Conferences, the *Discipline* issued in 1836 was altered in harmony therewith, and from that day the fractional representation has been legal.

In the General Conference of 1836 the following reso-

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, p. 402.

lution was passed: "That the ratio of delegates for the next General Conference be fixed at one delegate for 21 members of each Annual Conference." This being allowable under the sliding scale, did not need to be submitted to the Annual Conferences.

In 1856 the Bishops directed attention to the propriety of reducing the ratio of representation. This part of the Episcopal Address was referred to the Committee on Revisals, which reported to the General Conference a Resolution inserting "27" instead of "21."[1] The same committee recommended the alteration of the Second Restrictive Rule, so as to insert, "One for every 45 in place of one for every 30." The adoption of the change from 21 to 27 required only a majority, but the proposition to change the Second Restrictive Rule required two thirds of all the members of the General Conference, and also a vote of three fourths of all the ministers present and voting in the Annual Conferences.

This in both cases was secured; but the Bishops, in their address to the General Conference of 1860, failed to *report the submission.* The body referred the subject to the Committee on Itinerancy, which reported that it was unable to make a correct report, as many of the *Journals* could not be examined, the delegates having sent them home. They, therefore, reported that the Bishops be authorized to make the report, so that the alteration might be made in the forthcoming *Discipline.* And the *Discipline* of 1860 shows that this was done; the rule reading "not allowing a less number than one for every forty-five." The General Conference of 1860, by resolution, also changed the ratio of representation from 27 to 30.

After the alteration in 1832-6, every Conference, however small, had at least two delegates.

[1]General Conference *Journal,* 1856, vol. iii, p. 193.

On May 24, 1864, the report of the Committee on Itinerancy contained a proposition to change the Restrictive Rule, and insert "one delegate," so that it might read, "*provided,* also, that no Conference shall be denied the privilege of one delegate." The proposition received the necessary two thirds and the action was approved by the Annual Conferences.

The *Bishops failed to mention the confirmation of the proposition by the Annual Conferences,* so that the important change did not appear in the *Discipline* until 1868.

In the Revised Constitution of 1900-1904, ARTICLE II, *ministerial delegates,* is as follows:

> Each Annual Conference shall be entitled to at least one ministerial delegate. The General Conference shall not allow more than one ministerial delegate for every fourteen members of an Annual Conference nor less than one for every forty-five; but for a fraction of two thirds or more of the number fixed by the General Conference as the ratio of representation, an Annual Conference shall be entitled to an additional delegate.

No change has been made in the original rule in the Methodist Episcopal Church requiring that the representatives "shall have traveled at least four calendar years from the time that they were received on trial by an Annual Conference, and are in full connection at the time of holding the Conference," and the section in the Revised Constitution reads as follows:

> Such delegates shall be elders, at least twenty-five years of age, and shall have been members of an Annual Conference four consecutive years, and at the time of their election, and at the time of the session of the General Conference, shall be members of the Annual Conference which elected them.

The General Conference of 1872 enacted that a transferred preacher shall not be counted twice in the same year as the basis of the election of delegates to the General Conference, nor vote for delegates to the General

Conference in any Annual Conference where he is not counted as a part of the basis of representation, nor vote twice in the same year on any constitutional question.

THE QUESTION OF "SENIORITY"

The original Article allowed each delegate "to be appointed either by seniority or choice at the discretion of such Annual Conference."

In the General Conference of 1812, on the 8th of May, Lee "moved that the members of the next General Conference come by seniority, and that the supernumerary and superannuated preachers shall not be included among the senior preachers; also that one for every six members shall come to the next General Conference, and in case there are two or more preachers of equal standing, then the first named shall have the preference. And in case any one of the above preachers shall fail by sickness or otherwise to attend the General Conference, then the next senior preacher shall come in his place."

This resolution was brought up several times, and discussion postponed; when the question was put to vote on the first paragraph, "That the members of the next General Conference come by seniority," it did not prevail.

As the Constitution permitted members of Annual Conferences to choose whether their delegates should come by "seniority or choice," had this motion prevailed, it would have been a deadly blow to the Constitution.

No delegate has ever been sent to the General Conference by seniority; nor could such a scheme have succeeded; for while the senior in a Conference may be its ablest and most devout member, it is obvious that he might be neither, or possess one quality and not the other. Also the difference between the actually chronological senior and the next in age might be but a day; or if determined by the years in actual ministerial service,

there might be a year only of difference according to the calendar and a practical difference of more than a decade in wisdom, intellect, and fitness for participation in the deliberations of the body. Yet the phrase "by seniority or choice" persisted in the Constitution until 1900.

REVISED CONSTITUTION ON MINISTERIAL DELEGATES

In the Revised Constitution all that relates to ministerial delegates is as follows, under "Organization and Government," Paragraph 38:

ARTICLE II

§ 1. Each Annual Conference shall be entitled to at least one ministerial delegate. The General Conference shall not allow more than one ministerial delegate for every fourteen members of an Annual Conference, nor less than one for every forty-five; but for a fraction of two thirds or more of the number fixed by the General Conference as the ratio of representation an Annual Conference shall be entitled to an additional delegate.

§ 2. The ministerial delegates shall be elected by ballot by the members of the Annual Conference at its session immediately preceding the General Conference. Such delegates shall be elders, at least twenty-five years of age, and shall have been members of an Annual Conference four successive years, and at the time of their election and at the time of the session of the General Conference shall be members of the Annual Conference which elected them. An Annual Conference may elect reserve delegates, not exceeding three in number, and not exceeding the number of its delegates.

§ 3. No minister shall be counted twice in the same year in the basis for the election of delegates to the General Conference, nor vote in such election where he is not counted, nor vote in two Conferences in the same year on a constitutional question.[1]

In all these references to the ratio of representation, the General Conference alone has the right to make any change not below the minimum nor above the maximum. To alter either of these numbers the vote must be taken as for other modifications of the Constitution.

[1] *Discipline*, 1908, p. 38.

CHAPTER XX

Dates of Regular General Conferences and Methods of Convening Them

The provision for the meeting of General Conferences as enacted in 1808 was:

> The General Conference shall meet on the first day of May, in the year of our Lord 1812 in the city of New York, and thenceforward on the first day of May once in four years perpetually, in such place or places as shall be fixed on by the General Conference from time to time: but the General Superintendents, with or by the advice of all the Annual Conferences, or if there be no General Superintendent, all the Annual Conferences respectively, shall have power to call a General Conference, if they judge it necessary, at any time.

General Conferences prior to 1808 met quadrennially, and this having proved satisfactory, there was entire agreement in continuing it. Occasionally propositions have been made to substitute eight or six years, but they have obtained little support.

It is apparent that evils might arise and additional legislation be required in less than eight or even six years. Were the term fixed at either of these periods, the result might be disastrous to the peace or the growth of the Church. This might necessitate frequent convening of extra sessions for a special purpose, at great expense, and often under excitement. Yet, if the General Conference were to assemble yearly—as is the case with the Presbyterian General Assembly, which has limited legislative powers, all important enactments requiring the votes of a majority of the Presbyteries before taking effect—the expense would be intolerable, and, the General Conference being the sole legislative body, the Church would be continually agitated, and any or every law

become a battle center for the defeated party in the hope of speedy repeal or radical modification. The present rule is the golden mean between the extremes of useless or harmful frequency and a hazardous length of interval.

SUITABILITY OF MAY FOR THE CONFERENCE QUESTIONED

The fitness of the month of May was questioned in 1832, when on the 25th day of that month Daniel Ostrander, of New York, seconded by William Winans of Mississippi, offered this preamble and resolution:

Whereas, Great inconveniences have been experienced, and always must be experienced, when the General Conference commences its session on the first day of May, on account of many of the delegates, especially from the North and East, having to start in a season when the winter is just breaking up, and the roads very bad, and when the navigation is still obstructed by ice; and,

Whereas, It is believed that it is perfectly within the province of this Conference to vary the time of its meeting, therefore,

Resolved, That the next General Conference will commence its session on the first day of June instead of the first day of May.[1]

The resolutions were tabled. Either the Conference was not dissatisfied with May, or believed that it had no right to make any change in the constitutional provision without the concurrence of the ministers in the Annual Conferences. The presumption is that both elements were involved, for Ostrander and Winans were influential. The former had been in every Conference from, and including, that of 1808. Winans had been in the Conference of 1828, and in this Conference was the leader of his delegation. A resolution proposed by such men would not have been disposed of so cavalierly without some obstacle other than that "the resolution was in the way of other business."

The month is the best that could possibly be selected,

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, p. 413.

following the harshness of spring and preceding the languorous heat of summer, and, with respect to the sessions of the Annual Conferences, immediately after the spring and not too near the fall.

The provision fixing the first day of May for the opening of the General Conference remained undisturbed until the West Wisconsin Conference, in the interval between the General Conferences of 1892 and 1896, passed the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Bishops presiding in the several Annual Conferences during the year 1894 are hereby respectfully requested to submit to all the Annual Conferences the following proposition, namely: To amend Paragraph 63 of the Discipline of 1892 so that it shall read as follows, to wit:

"¶ 63. The General Conference shall meet on the first Wednesday of May, in the year of our Lord 1900, and thenceforward on the first Wednesday in May once in four years perpetually, at such hour and in such place in the United States as the General Conference may from time to time direct; but the General Superintendents, or a majority of them, by and with the advice of two thirds of all the Annual Conferences, shall have power to call an extra session of the General Conference, to be constituted in the usual way. But if there shall be no General Superintendent, then two thirds of the Annual Conferences shall have power to call such extra session."

The resolution was duly submitted by the Bishop, with the result that 8,663 votes were cast in favor of the amendment and 167 against it. On the 13th day of May, in the General Conference of 1896, the report on the action of the Annual Conferences was acted upon, and the change in the Constitution adopted by a vote of 397 ayes to 19 nays.

METHOD OF CALLING SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCES

The constitutional provision was:

The General Superintendents, with or by the advice of all the Annual Conferences, or if there be no General Superintendent,

all the Annual Conferences respectively, shall have power to call a General Conference, if they judge necessary, at any time.

This provision remained until the General Conference of 1856. At the opening of that session the Bishops in their quadrennial Address to the Conference thus spoke concerning this rule:

The rule requiring the concurrent advice of all the Annual Conferences to authorize the Bishops to call an extra session of the General Conference, we think unnecessarily restrictive. We have now thirty-eight Annual Conferences, and a probability of more; yet any one of them, though the least of all, might defeat the wishes of all the others in regard to an extra session, whatever might be the necessity for it. We respectfully suggest that any state of affairs which would satisfy three fourths or even two thirds of the Annual Conferences, and the Bishops, that an extra session of the General Conference was really necessary, should be deemed a sufficient reason for calling it.[1]

This passage was referred to the Committee on Revisals and Unfinished Business, which reported as follows:

The committee having duly considered that part of the Bishops' Address which relates to the call of an extra session of the General Conference, recommend the insertion of the following in Part 1, Chapter iii, Section 2, Answer 2, in place of our present provision for calling an extra session of the General Conference:

"But the General Superintendents, or a majority of them, with the advice of two thirds of all the Annual Conferences, or, if there be no General Superintendent, two thirds of all the Annual Conferences, shall have power to call an extra session of the General Conference at any time, to be constituted in the usual way."[2]

There is no evidence that this change was submitted to the Annual Conferences. It was, therefore, clearly a usurpation of power by the Conference to enact it and an imposition upon the Church to change its *Discipline* without authority.[3]

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1856, vol. iii, 193.
[2]General Conference *Journal*, 1856, vol. iii, p. 153.
[3]Through neglect, no report of the discussion of this subject appears in the Daily Advocate for 1856.

This rule, as thus unconstitutionally amended, remained with only verbal changes until the revision of the entire Constitution.

REVISED CONSTITUTION ON TIMES AND CALLING OF GENERAL CONFERENCES

As found in the *Discipline,* all the regulations concerning the times and calling of sessions of the General Conferences, regular or extra, in force at the present time are comprised in the three sections of Paragraph 41, Part 2 of Division 3 of the Constitution, entitled "Articles of Organization and Government."

ARTICLE V. *Sessions*

¶ 41, § 1. The General Conference shall meet at 10 o'clock on the morning of the first Wednesday in the month of May, in every fourth year from the date of the first Delegated General Conference—namely, the year of our Lord 1812—and at such place in the United States of America as shall have been determined by the preceding General Conference, or by a Commission to be appointed quadrennially by the General Conference, and acting under its authority; which Commission shall have power also in case of emergency to change the place for the meeting of the General Conference, a majority of the General Superintendents concurring in such change.

§ 2. The General Superintendents, or a majority of them, by and with the advice of two thirds of all the Annual Conferences, shall have the power to call an extra session of the General Conference at any time, constituted in the usual way; such session to be held at such time and place as a majority of the General Superintendents, and also of the above Commission, shall designate.

§ 3. In case of a great emergency two thirds of the General Superintendents may call special sessions of the Annual Conferences, at such time and place as they may think wise, to determine the question of an extra session of the General Conference, or to elect delegates thereto. They may also, in such cases, call extra sessions of the Lay Electoral Conferences for the purpose of electing Lay Delegates to the General Conference.

The provision has been omitted which formerly existed, "in case there be no General Superintendent."

CHAPTER XXI

The General Conference Ready for Business

For many years, the method of organizing a General Conference was simplicity itself. The senior Bishop conducted religious worship.

The *Journal* of the last *un*delegated Conference of 1808 thus describes the opening: "Conference met at half-past eight o'clock. Francis Asbury, President. Members present as follows: ." As all preachers except "novices" could attend, there was no trouble concerning credentials. The record of the opening of the first delegated Conference is: "The delegated General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America assembled in the city of New York, agreeably to a resolution of the General Conference of 1808. Bishop Asbury opened Conference. William M. Kennedy was appointed Secretary *pro tem.* The forenoon was occupied in calling for and reading the certificates of the delegates from the several Annual Conferences." In the afternoon the record of the session is: "Conference met, agreeably to adjournment, and resumed the further examination of certificates of the delegates, in order to organize themselves."

Not till 1832 was the secretary of the last General Conference "requested by the chair to call the list of the delegates present." This has been the method until the present time. Prior to the revision of 1900-04, there was no constitutional prescription concerning organization. The order now is,

Article VII. *Organization*

¶ 43. When the time for opening the General Conference arrives the presiding officer shall take the chair, and direct the

secretary of the preceding General Conference, or in his absence one of his assistants, to call the roll of the delegates-elect. Those who have been duly returned shall be recognized as members, their certificates of election being *prima facie* evidence of their right to membership; *provided*, however, that in case of a challenge of any person thus enrolled, such challenge being signed by at least six delegates from the territory of as many different Annual Conferences, three such delegates being ministers, and three laymen, the person so challenged shall not participate in the proceedings of the General Conference, except to speak on his own case, until the question of his right shall have been decided. The General Conference shall be the judge of the election, returns, and qualifications of its own members.[1]

The calling of the roll being ended, the Bishop announces a quorum present, and the Conference is ready for business.

"POWERS" AND QUORUM

The body thus organized is not bound except by the Constitution. All that its predecessors have done in legislating, *except in constitution-making,* it has power to repeal. And this unique body, which, like its forerunners, must speedily die and have no resurrection, can enact all imaginable "rules and regulations" not forbidden in the organic law.

"Full power" is so capacious a phrase that it certainly requires "limitations" and "restrictions" competent to maintain the solidity of the foundations of the Church, but not so narrowing as to destroy or diminish the true liberty of Christian men.

To these salutary checks close attention must be given by legislators, and also by all *interpreters. For a false interpretation may make a good law of none effect, or transform a reasonable limitation into an instrument of intolerable oppression.*

The original regulation for the quorum reads:

At all times, when the General Conference is met, it shall

[1] *Discipline*, 1908, pp. 43, 44.

take two thirds of the representatives of all the Annual Conferences to make a quorum for transacting business.

This rule remained intact until the revision of the Constitution. Its present form is (italics added):

ARTICLE VIII

¶ 44. When the General Conference is in session it shall require the presence of two thirds of the whole number of delegates to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business; but a less number may *take a recess or adjourn from day to day in order to secure a quorum*, and *at the final session may approve the Journal, order the record of the roll call*, and adjourn *sine die*.[1]

In every legislative body at least two thirds of all elected should be necessary to a quorum. Were a less number allowed, a small minority might greatly wrong their constituents by neglect, folly, or the intentional making of disastrous changes. Even under this rule a majority equal to one third of the delegates plus one could bind the Church for four years.

General practice justifies what is allowed to a less number than a quorum, and there is a reason for each of the additions. The record of the roll call is a premium on fidelity and an individual indorsement of the integrity of the *Journal*.

PRESIDENCY

The Constitution, as first formed, provided for the presidency by the following direction: "One of the General Superintendents shall preside in the General Conference; but in case no General Superintendent be present the General Conference shall choose a president *pro tempore*." No change was made or proposed in this provision, which appears in the *Discipline* of 1900 precisely as in the original. In the revision of the Constitution the same prin-

[1] *Discipline*, 1908, p. 44.

ciple remains untouched, but two important additions are made. The Revised Constitution on this important point is in three sections:

ARTICLE VI. *Presiding Officers*

¶ 42, § 1. The General Conference shall elect by ballot from among the traveling elders as many General Superintendents as it may deem necessary.

§ 2. The General Superintendents shall preside in the General Conference in such order as they may determine; but if no General Superintendent be present, the General Conference shall elect one of its members to preside *pro tempore.*

§ 3. The presiding officer of the General Conference shall decide questions of order, subject to an appeal to the General Conference; but questions of law shall be decided by the General Conference.[1]

The provision that the Bishops shall preside "in such order as they may determine" is very useful, as it enables them, in a time of excitement or the discussion of intricate questions, to choose the one best qualified to preside.

The third paragraph is a valuable addition to the organic law, though no new principle or practice is involved. It teaches the Conference its rights and duty and the presiding officer his powers and limitations.

The prerogative of presiding does not inhere *in the office of Bishop.* As the Vice-President of the United States does not preside in the Senate by virtue of the fact that he is the Vice-President, but because the Constitution so provides, so the Bishop presides in the General Conference because the Constitution expressly declares that "a General Superintendent, if present, shall preside." Before the Constitution was formed the successive General Conferences had the power to elect their own presidents. Hence this provision, incapable of being misunderstood, was imbedded in the very foundation of the

[1] *Discipline*, 1908, p. 43.

legislative, executive, and judicial "power house" which the architects of 1808 were constructing.

That a Bishop shall preside is a wise measure. Had the election of a president been left to the action of successive Conferences, the session would begin with a struggle for the office, which might be protracted and incendiary, and the member elected might, and doubtless often would be, the representative of a party. Whereas, under the existing system, the Conference proceeds at once with a composure and dignity similar to that with which the Senate of the United States is opened. The hot contests in the House of Representatives, which elects one of its members Speaker, illustrate the difficulties with which the Conference would have to deal; for it has taken a longer time to elect one of the Speakers of the House of Representatives than the General Conference consumes in its entire session.

The fact that the Bishops in their turn, when present, are the only constitutional presiding officers of the body develops and maintains a generation of parliamentarians. Some have natural gifts superior to others, but consultation and harmony of views and decisions, with only occasional differences, result.

The rule, that in case no General Superintendent be present, the General Conference shall choose a president *pro tempore,* involves more than is at first glance perceived. Suppose the day and hour for opening a regular or special General Conference arrives, and a constitutional quorum is present, but no Bishop; without this provision no organization could be effected, no business transacted. But under this rule a member may be chosen, who will have power equal to that of the Bishop presiding in a General Conference. Should none appear, the proceedings could continue until, in the judgment of the Conference, all the necessary business should have been

transacted, and the Conference finally adjourned. The one elected, as a member of the Conference, in case of a tie, would have the right to give the casting vote.

It will be observed that, as originally framed, in the letter of this law there is no specification, that the one elected *pro tempore* should be a member of the body. For this reason the Constitution was changed at the time of revision so as to read: "but if no General Superintendent be present, the General Conference shall elect *one* of *its members* to preside *pro tempore.*"

CHAPTER XXII

The First Restrictive Rule

DOCTRINES

"The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, nor change our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine."

This rule is of the greatest importance, and therefore was the first enacted. For it is the sole protection of the Gospel as interpreted by the founders of Methodism, and preached with unction and effect almost equaling that of the apostles.

The "Articles of Religion," therein refered to, were prepared and sent to this continent by John Wesley at the time when his societies were transformed into the Methodist Episcopal Church. Several he took without change from the thirty-nine "Articles of Religion" of the Church of England, of which he was a presbyter until his death; some he took only in part, some he altered, and nearly a third he omitted.

The Articles entitled "Of Faith in the Holy Trinity," "Of the Word or Son of God, who was made very Man," "Of the Resurrection of Christ," "Of the Holy Ghost," "Of the Old Testament," "Of Free Will," "Of the Justification of Man," "Of Good Works," "Of Works of Supererogation," "Of Sin after Justification," "Of Purgatory," "Of Speaking in the Congregation in such a Tongue as the People understand," "Of the Sacraments," "Of the Lord's Supper," "Of both Kinds," "Of the one Oblation of Christ, finished upon the Cross," "Of the Marriage of Ministers," "Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches," "Of Christian Men's

Goods," and "Of a Christian Man's Oath" were adopted, with slight verbal changes and minor omissions.

The Articles entitled "Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation," "Of Original or Birth Sin," "Of the Church," and "Of Baptism" were retained with considerable omissions.

The following were rejected: "Of the Going down of Christ into Hell," "Of the Three Creeds," "Of Works before Justification," "Of Christ alone without Sin," "Of Predestination and Election," "Of Obtaining External Salvation only by the Name of Christ," "Of the Authority of the Church," "Of the Authority of General Councils," "Of Ministering in the Congregation," "Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers which Hinders not the Effect of the Sacraments," "Of the Wicked which Eat not the Body of Christ in the Use of the Lord's Supper," "Of Excommunicate Persons, how they are to be avoided," "Of the Homilies," "Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers," "Of the Civil Magistrates."

Wesley inserted in the Liturgy which he prepared for the American Methodists, a Prayer "For the Supreme Rulers of the United States" in the Order for Morning Prayer, which comes after the Third Collect:

> Then these Prayers following are to be read. A Prayer for the Supreme Rulers. "O Lord our Heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the only ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; we most heartily beseech thee, with thy favor to behold the Supreme Rulers of these United States, and so replenish them with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that they may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This was printed before the adoption of the Constitution of the United States; but at the time that the Church was organized an Article suited to the new situation was adopted.

The Prayer Book sent over by Wesley was printed in England, but in the next edition, which appeared in 1786, the Article entitled "Of the Rulers of the United States of America" was as follows:

The Congress, the General Assemblies, the Governors and the Councils of State, as the Delegates of the People, are the Rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the General Act of Confederation and by the Constitutions of their respective States. And the said States ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

The following Note was added:

As far as it respects civil affairs, we believe it the duty of Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to be subject to the supreme authority of the country where they may reside, and to use all laudable means to enjoin obedience to the powers that be, and therefore it is expected that all our preachers and people, who may be under British or any other government, will behave themselves as peaceable and orderly subjects.

After the adoption of the Constitution of the United States the words "The President" were placed before the words "the Congress," and the "Constitution of the United States" was substituted for "the General Act of Confederation."

A comparison between the thirty-nine and the twenty-five Articles is instructive. The object of Wesley was to expurgate the leaven of ritualism, Calvinism, and Romanism. The dictum of Bishop Harris that the Articles of Religion "are specially and strictly Arminian in all points which distinguish evangelical Arminianism from Calvinism" is sustained by the radical changes and the significant omissions.

"Wesley's opinions on the specific virtue of the sacraments, and especially on 'Baptismal Regeneration,' have," says Stevens, "been pronounced vague, if not contradictory." He adds:

His early intimations on these subjects are favorable to the views of High Churchmen; his later, unfavorable to them. It

must be remembered that he began his career a strenuous High Churchman, and, though he manfully broke away from many of his early errors, yet on the questions of baptismal regeneration and the consequent condition of baptized infants, it has been supposed that he remained ambiguous to the last.[1]

The changes he made in the Articles of Religion negatively, as Stevens remarks, decide this question. Number 25 of the English Articles declares the sacraments to "be certain, sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us." Wesley eliminated "sure" and "effectual." The 27th Article declares baptism to be "a sign of regeneration, or the new birth, *whereby as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost,* are *visibly signed and sealed; and faith is confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.*" All after the "new birth" was stricken out. The 16th Anglican Article is entitled "Of Sin after Baptism." Wesley changed it to "Of Sin after Justification." The Article reads, "Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism," etc. From this Wesley removed "baptism" and inserted "justification." The Article declares that "the grace of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after baptism." Wesley again substituted "justification" for "baptism."

These changes could not have been made by one who held to baptismal regeneration, or by any who believed that one could not be "justified" without baptism.

The twenty-five Articles of Religion certainly connect the Methodist Episcopal Church with that chain of fundamentals, which from the earliest times, though heavily strained, has not broken. They affirm the Trinity in Unity, the Union in Christ of God and Man, His Cruci-

[1] *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. ii, p. 207.

fixion, Death and Burial, and the Vital Relation of his Sufferings and Death to Forgiveness of Sins. They affirm his Resurrection and Ascension as objective facts; and prophesy the Judgment of all Men at the Last Day. They declare the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation, and name the Canonical Books. They maintain that the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, and defend the Old Testament from denial or desecration. They teach the Inability of Man, without the aid of the Spirit, to keep the law of God, and his consequent Need of Regeneration. They contain the doctrine of Justification by Faith only; and avoid Antinomian license by implying that without good works there is no proof of a lively faith. They justify the Reformation by denying the existence of works of supererogation. They offer hope to every repentant sinner, even though after justification he has fallen into sin. They do not justify those who say "they can no more sin as long as they live here," or those who deny forgiveness to such as truly repent. They affirm that the congregations "of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance," whatever the sign or name, to be the visible Church of Christ. They repel the doctrine of Purgatory; disapprove the administering of the sacraments and the offering of prayers in the Church in a tongue not understood by the people. They accept the two sacraments ordained of Christ, but not the five humanly appointed alleged sacraments. They speak clearly against the superstitious worshiping of them.

Baptism is ordained for adults and children. They reject transubstantiation, but revere the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, teaching that the means whereby Christ's body is received and eaten in the Supper is faith, and that it is partaken of only "after a heavenly and

spiritual manner." They affirm that the refusal of the cup to lay people is without scriptural authority. Also they maintain that the "sacrifice of masses is a dangerous deceit." The marriage of ministers is justified, but not commanded.

In dealing with Christian men's goods and Christian men's oaths and the rites and ceremonies of the Church, the Articles of Religion protect the individual and society.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that they do not contain special reference to some of the most precious doctrines held by the Founder of Methodism and by the Churches that derive their existence from the preaching, teaching, and example of those whom he instructed.

The Restrictive Rule provides not only that the General Conference shall not revoke, alter, nor change our Articles of Religion, but that it "shall not establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing established standards of doctrine."

THE STANDARDS

The vital question is: What are those Standards?

The first Conference held in the United States, after declaring that the authority of Wesley and the English Conference extended to the preachers and people in America, affirmed that "the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists, as contained in the Minutes," was to be the "sole rule of the Methodist preachers who labored in the connection with Mr. Wesley in America."

At the Conference of 1780 an order was given to the Assistant "that all the deeds be drawn in substance after that in the printed Minutes. The deed contained in these English or "printed" Minutes especially named "Wesley's four volumes of *Sermons*" and his *Notes on the New Testament* as the doctrinal Standards of Methodism. And this trust deed has been in existence since 1763.

In the Conference of 1781, the first question is, "What preachers are now determined, after mature consideration, close observation, and earnest prayer, to preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly enforce the discipline, as contained in the Notes, Sermons, and Minutes published by Mr. Wesley, so far as they respect both preachers and people, according to the knowledge we have of them, and the ability of God shall give ?" The thirty-nine preachers assembled in the Conference subscribed their names to an affirmative answer.

In 1784, at the Conference held previous to the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the twenty-first question is this: "How shall we conduct ourselves toward European preachers?" The answer was: "If they are recommended by Mr. Wesley, will be subject to the American Conference, preach the doctrine taught in the four volumes of *Sermons* and *Notes on the New Testament,* " (the rest of the answer refers to the *Discipline*), "we will receive them, but if they walk contrary to the above direction, no ancient rite or appointment shall prevent their being excluded from our connection."

In the latter part of the year 1784 and the early part of 1785 the societies were organized into the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a *Form of Discipline* for the government of the Church was adopted. This was substantially the same as the Large Minutes of the Conference of Wesley, the chief alterations being such as were needful to the situation in America.

There were various indirect references to the Standards of doctrine in the *Discipline* issued after the foundation of the Church. In the year 1789 the fifth edition was published. Appended to it were the Articles of Religion and *Doctrinal Tracts.* The *Doctrinal Tracts* were severally entitled: "Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, Election, and Reprobation," by the Rev. John Wesley; "Serious

Thoughts on the Infallible, Unconditional Perseverance of all that have experienced Faith in Christ"; "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," as believed and taught by the Rev. John Wesley, from the year 1725 to the year 1765. These tracts were inserted in the subsequent editions of the *Discipline,* except that of 1796, until 1812, after which they were omitted.

The question has arisen whether these Doctrinal Tracts were included in the other existing Standards. But as they were not recognized as Standards by Wesley or by the Wesleyan body, and as the *Sermons* of Wesley were specified, and also his Notes; and the Conference of 1808 knew this to be the fact, and as they also knew that Wesley had sent over the Articles of Religion and said nothing whatever about the *Doctrinal Tracts,* the most natural conclusion is that it was not intended to regard them as Standards. Nevertheless, like the "Notes" written by Asbury and Coke, they were valuable "advices" so far as they discussed subjects harmonious with and explanatory of the general doctrines and principles of Methodism. This seems the more reasonable as little or no proof can be adduced that they were ever regarded as official Standards.

The London edition of Wesley's *Sermons* was published in two volumes, under the editorial supervision of Dr. Jabez Bunting, and republished by the Book Concern in New York. In that edition, the *Sermons* referred to are the first fifty-three of the first volume, beginning with the discourse on "Salvation by Faith" and concluding with the sermon on "the death of Mr. Whitefield."

Further light may be thrown upon these questions by the following facts: On February 28, 1784, a deed was "enrolled in chancery under the hand and seal of the said John Wesley, and specified by name therein," that the trustees of Methodist chapels, while he, Wesley, lived

and after his decease should "at all times forever" "permit such persons and no others as shall be appointed at the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists to have and to enjoy the said premises for the purposes aforesaid: provided always, that the persons preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament,* and four volumes of Sermons."

This deed has been modified by the Wesleyan Church, but contains this provision: "No person or persons whosoever shall at any time hereafter be permitted to preach or expound God's Holy Word, or to perform any of the general acts of religious worship in the building or any part of the premises, nor in or upon the appurtenances thereunto belonging, who shall maintain, promulgate, or teach any doctrine or practice, contrary to what is contained in *Notes on the New Testament* commonly reputed to be the Notes of the said John Wesley, and in the first four volumes of *Sermons* commonly reputed to be written and published by him."

Various discrepancies have been pointed out with respect to the number of these *Sermons.* The Wesleyan Methodist Church of England and the Methodist Episcopal Church recognize fifty-three; the Methodist Church of Canada and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, recognize but fifty-two, omitting the fifty-third, which was upon the death of George Whitefield, for the reason that at the time (1763) when the four volumes were inserted, by name, in the Model Deed, Whitefield was living. Further, R. J. Cooke (on the basis of the fact that after Wesley inserted the four volumes, in the deed, as above stated, he added ten sermons to the books) assumes that only the preceding forty-three should be included in the Standards.

Concerning the *Sermons,* Wesley himself, when intro-

ducing them to the public, said: "The following *Sermons* contain the substance of what I have been preaching for eight or nine years past. During that time I have frequently spoken in public on every subject in the ensuing collection, and I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine, on which I am accustomed to speak in public, which is not incidentally if not professedly laid before every Christian reader. Every serious man who peruses these will, therefore, see in the clearest manner what these doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion." And it was for this purpose that Wesley made these *Sermons* so large and so vital a part of his doctrinal Standards

The question of the number of sermons might be of more importance were not Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* included in the Standards. As it is, all the essential truths of the system of doctrine on which Methodism depends are discussed in the forty-three discourses; and nothing additional of doctrinal value is contained in the appended nine or ten

In addition to the basal doctrines of Christianity, the distinctive features of Methodism, and its peculiar emphasis, are suggested by the titles of these sermons: "Salvation by Faith," "The Almost Christian," "Awake Thou that Sleepest," "Scriptural Christianity," "Justification by Faith," "The Righteousness of Faith," "The Way of the Kingdom," "The First Fruits of the Spirit," "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption"; two sermons on "The Witness of the Spirit"; one on "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," "Of Sin in Believers," "On Repentance of Believers," "The Judgment," The "Means of Grace," "The Circumcision of the Heart," "The Marks of the New Birth," "The Great Privilege of Those that Are Born of God," "The Lord Our Righteousness"; thirteen sermons on "The Sermon on the Mount" (the third being on

"Blessed Are the Pure in Heart"), "The Original Nature, Properties and Use of the Law"; two sermons on "The Law"; three on "Faith," The "Nature of Enthusiasm"; A "Caution against Bigotry"; two sermons on "The Catholic Spirit"; the fortieth sermon is on "Christian Perfection"; the forty-first on "Wandering Thoughts"; the forty-second on "Satan's Devices"; the forty-third on "The Scriptural Way of Salvation." The ten that follow treat respectively "Original Sin," "The New Birth," the "Wilderness State," "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," "Self-Denial," the "Cure of Evil-Speaking," "Use of Money," "The Good Steward," the "Reformation of Manners"; the fifty-third is "On the Death of the Rev. George Whitefield."

It is to be observed that these other establisned Standards supplement the Articles of Religion and go to make a great body of evangelical and Arminian doctrine.

The distinction between the Articles of Religion and the other existing established Standards is nowhere more clearly stated than by Dr. Burwash, professor of Theology in Victoria College, in his *Introduction to Wesley's Doctrinal Standards:*

> The relation in which Methodism stood to the Established Church in England during Mr. Wesley's life, provided for the doctrinal unity of Methodism with the Protestant Reformation. When, in the United States of America, Methodism became an independent Church, the same provision was made by the abridged and amended Articles of Religion. But the introduction of the *Sermons* and *Notes*, as the standard of preaching, into every trust deed of a chapel or church in the connection, assured, so far as human means can do so, an Arminian evangelical preaching and exposition of God's Word for all time.
>
> To interpret these Standards, or apply them after the manner of Articles of Religion, or creeds, or confessions of faith, which categorically define the doctrines to be professed or believed, would be contrary to their very nature. It is to the spirit

and type of this preaching that our obligations bind us. There may be in the *Notes* and *Sermons* many things, accidental and personal, to which no Methodist minister or layman would feel bound to profess assent. But Methodism demands that in all our pulpits we should preach this gospel, and expound the Word of God according to this analogy of faith.[1]

THE FAITH OF METHODISTS

All who acknowledge Wesley as their denominational father have reason to rejoice that he imposed no formal creed upon his converts and followers—no creed such as those formed and required by the Roman and Greek Churches, and by several Protestant communities, which broke from the Roman Churches by nations or races.

Since the time of Wesley the Christian world has never found any difficulty in ascertaining the faith of Methodists. The Articles of Religion, so far as they go, contain only the faiths of universal Protestant and evangelical Christendom, and the "other existing and established Standards" contain, in addition, those Methodist teachings which in substance or mode of statement are not universal among Protestant evangelical Churches.

As set forth in the *Notes* and *Sermons* of Wesley, they do not constitute an iron band which might enchain the mind, padlock the lips, or break the hearts of those who, on nonessentials, diverge from the common view, while they are sufficiently significant to maintain substantial unity of faith and teaching, and to serve as bulwarks of doctrine when the foundations are attacked.

Had Wesley prepared a written statement of doctrine, consisting of minute distinctions, it is reasonable to believe that long before this period it would have driven away many of the most intelligent, independent, and sensitive minds, and also would have been neutralized by glosses and fanciful interpretations. The nonexist-

[1] *Introduction to Wesley's Doctrinal Standards.* Part i.

ence of a mechanically precise creed, though not the sole, is the chief explanation of the fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church, and those which have the same or similar Standards of doctrine, have had, for the past hundred years, so few trials for heresy, and no secession on doctrinal grounds.

It also goes far to explain the fact that nearly every Methodist minister, who withdraws for the purpose of entering another communion, assigns other reasons than doctrine for the change. There must be Standards, but those of Wesleyan Methodism, while conserving "substantial unity," allow for "circumstantial variety."

CHAPTER XXIII

The Third Restrictive Rule[1]

"The General Conference shall not change nor alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away episcopacy, nor destroy the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency." Without this restriction it could legally abolish the episcopacy, or change it into a form of papacy, and by a majority of one blot out the whole system of Superintendency, and, as a quorum requires only two thirds of the whole body, the General Conference could abolish the episcopacy by a vote of one third and one of the whole membership.

The only method by which episcopacy could be "done away," or essentially modified, or the "plan" of our itinerant Superintendency "destroyed" is by a change of the Constitution requiring the combined action of the ministry and laity, in their respective Conferences, and confirmed by the General Conference; or, in the case of origination in the General Conference, it must be confirmed by the ministry and laity.

While this Restrictive Rule exists the episcopacy is sacredly protected in its fundamental nature and essential powers.

As the words "episcopacy," "plan of our itinerant General Superintendency," "part or rule of our government" are not defined in the Constitution, their meaning must be found in the *Discipline* of 1808, in which is not only the Constitution, but the characterization of "episcopacy" and every "part or rule of our government" necessary to "the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency."

[1]The Second Restrictive Rule was treated in Chapter XX.

THE EPISCOPACY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

What is that "episcopacy" which the General Conference must not "do away"? Is the episcopacy referred to a distinct order or an "office grafted upon the order of elder" or presbyter?

To settle all questions raised by the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent, assembled by the Roman Catholic Church, thus fulminated concerning Bishops, presbyters, and deacons: "If anyone denies that there is in the Church a hierarchy instituted by divine ordinance which consists of Bishops, presbyters, and ministers, let him be anathema." And, again: "If anyone affirm that Bishops are not superior to presbyters, or that they have not the power of confirming and ordaining, or that the power which they have is common to presbyters also, let him be anathema."[1]

Upon this deliverance of the Council, a Catholic authority, approved by the hierarchy, observes:

> The Anglican Church did not, at least formally, cast off belief in the divine institution of episcopacy, and learned Anglican divines, among whom Pearson is the most celebrated, have strenuously vindicated the episcopal authority.
>
> With most of the Protestant bodies it has been otherwise. *They do not pretend to have Bishops, or if they have Superintendents whom they call by that name, they attribute to them no authority except such as has been bestowed upon them by the Church.* They deny, in other words, that the episcopate is of divine institution, and directly impugn the definitions of Trent on this subject. They admit, of course, that Bishops (*episcopoi*) are frequently mentioned in the New Testament, but they urge that, in the Acts and the Epistles, Bishop and presbyter are two names for the same office. They suppose that, originally, there were three grades in the hierarchy, viz., the apostles, whose office ended with their lifetime, and left no successors; the Bishops or presbyters, corresponding to the ministers or clergymen of the present day; and deacons.

[1]Council. Trident. Sess. xxiii, Can. 6, 7.

The Roman Catholic authority quoted acknowledges that perhaps the Church of England did not cast off the "divine institution of episcopacy" in spirit; otherwise there would be no significance in the phrase "at least, formally, cast off," etc. But a minority, approximating a majority, did positively reject it, and made public declaration to this effect.

At the close of the Revolution, a large majority of ministers and members of the Church of England in the United States held one of two "moderate views" of episcopacy: One of these is that an episcopal form of government is good, but rests on the ground of human expediency and not on divine appointment. The other went further, and considered Bishops as a superior order to presbyters or elders, which they declared to be sanctioned by apostolic example, and that it was the duty of all Churches to imitate the example; but they did not consider it necessary to the existence of the Church, hence those who accepted either of these "moderate" views acknowledged as true Churches those communions who do not adopt episcopacy.

But a minority in the United States, with the exception of a few, "at first cautiously and occasionally asserted the High-Church theory, developed an exclusive feeling harmonious with pride natural to certain types of mind," and their numbers rapidly increased. A large proportion of the members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, which claims to be the only legitimate daughter of the Church of England, sympathize with the prevalent tendencies in that country concerning the episcopacy as a third "order, in direct succession to the apostles." The advocates of exclusion have become more bold, until it has come to pass that no Church puts forth more exclusive claims to apostolic succession than the Protestant Episcopal.

METHODIST EPISCOPACY DERIVED FROM JOHN WESLEY

That the American Wesleyan Methodist body derived its episcopacy from John Wesley none doubt. Nor do any question that the Methodist lay preachers, assembled in Baltimore in 1784, accepted Wesley's defense of the ordination of Thomas Coke as Superintendent, and the ordination of other elders as described in the account of the organization of the Church. This defense is fully stated in the letter which Wesley addressed to "Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America."[1]

TWO CONFIRMING LETTERS

Within a few years two letters have come to light, the originals of which are now the property of John F. Goucher, president emeritus of Goucher College, Baltimore. The recipient of these was Stephen Donaldson, of Leesburg, a prominent layman. The writer was Adam Fonerden, an active member of the Methodist Society in Baltimore and a local preacher. Concise, clear, and com-

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[1] "BRISTOL, Sept. 10th, 1784.

"To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America:

"2. Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that Bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently, have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our traveling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church, to which I belonged.

"3. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers: so that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end: and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.

"4. I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury, to be joint *Superintendents* over our brethren in North America. As also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as *elders* among them, by baptizing and ministering the Lord's Supper.

"JOHN WESLEY."

prehensive, they are invaluable, for they reveal exactly what the founders of American Methodism meant and what they did. The first was written three weeks after Coke arrived in New York. The first paragraph related to personal and commercial business; the rest is as follows:

To Mr. Stephen Donaldson, Leesburg.

Baltimore Nov'r 28th-1784.

much Esteemed friend

We have three English preachers arriv'd their names—Dr. Coke, Mr. Whatcoat, & Mr. Vasey. These three are ordain'd a presbytry by Mr. Wesley & his Clergy, who together with a new form of Church Government, Suggested by Mr. Wesley, are to Organize us as a Church, to have a Liturgy & administration of ordinances. But as this is not to be forc'd upon us, but left to our Choice—if we approve of it, they Stay and exercise their new functions—otherwise matters are left as they are at present, & after a little Stay they depart again for England. Mr. Asbury & Dr. Coke are Constituted Joint Superintendents, & as Mr. Asbury would not in a matter of such Importance do (anything) by himself, He has Call'd a Conference to deliberate thereon, which is to meet here on Christmas day. I hope if you can make it convenient you will be here at that time. mean while I hope you Still believe me to be with my kind Love to your Spouse

Y'r Sincere & affectionate friend & B'r.

Ad'm Fonerden.

Two weeks later Coke, who had been traveling in Delaware, Maryland, and elsewhere, appeared at Perry Hall, a few miles from Baltimore, to open the convention which founded the Methodist Episcopal Church. Donaldson not being able to attend, Fonerden wrote an account of what had been done in the Conference up to the date of his letter.

The great value of the second letter is much enhanced by its date. Its terms also show that certain lay members were admitted to the proceedings, and that all the principal facts and changes were public.

To Mr. Stephen Donaldson, Leesburg.

Baltimore Decem'r 30th-1784.

much Esteemed friend

We have at this Conference agreeable to Mr. Wesley's advice & direction, handed to us by that Worthy Man Dr. Coke form'd ourselves unanimously into an Independant Church under the title of the *Methodist Episcopal Church.* To be govern'd by Superintendent, Elders & Deacons, with a Liturgy Little differing from the Church of England. The Itinerant plan Still to be continued, & by the Church Government Adopted, somewhat Strengthened. Which will be printed Shortly. Mr. Asbury was Ordained Superintendent Last Sunday by the Dr. & the two Elders who came over with Him, which power of ordination being conveyed to them by three presbyters of the Church of England, Mr. Wesley being one, we think as Valid as any ordination whatever. It being now well known that in primitive times the Office of presbyter or Elder which are Synonimous Terms, & Byshop were one and the Same, with only this Small difference that the Chief or prime presbyter was sometimes called a Byshop. With us, The Superintendent answers to Byshop, Who is to have the Oversight of all & we think it a better name, because *modern* Byshops by being Lords are Generally devourers of the flock, & a curse to the people. & the very Name conveys a disagreeable Savour. Our Elders answers to presbyter which are the same in office. And Deacons are to assist the Elders in administering the Lords Supper, & may baptise in the Elders Absence. About 15 Elders will be Ordained before Conference breaks up, & Several Deacons. The Greatest Caution will be used in future in admitting of preachers into Connection, & any Elder who Loquates himself, is no Longer to Exercise the peculiar functions of his Office, without Consent of Conference, under the penalty of Expulsion. Enclosed I have sent you Mr. Wesley's Circular Letter—and for want of Time must Subscribe myself Y'r

Sincere & affec'e
friend & B'r

Ad'm Fonerden.

This letter demonstrates that the General Superintendency or "episcopacy," received from Wesley, through Coke, was not an "order" in the sense in which Wesley considered the eldership to be an "order," but an "office" filled by an elder, chosen and "set apart" for the purpose.

There is no dispute as to the meaning of the word "order" as applied by Wesley and Coke to elders or presbyters. It is a sacred rank of divine origin, a solemn setting apart, from laymen, however wise or good, of those "called of God" to the work of the ministry. The office of Bishop in this sense was not of "divine origin."

COKE'S TESTIMONY

Such was the belief of Wesley, and the words of Coke in his sermon at the ordination of Asbury were in harmony with this.

(Extract from Dr. Coke's sermon at the ordination of Bishop Asbury.)

"*But what right have you to ordain?*" The same right as most of the reformed Churches in Christendom: our ordination, in its lowest view, being equal to any of the Presbyterian, as originating with three presbyters of the Church of England.

"*But what right have you to exercise the episcopal office?*" To me the most manifest and clear. God has been pleased, by Mr. Wesley, to raise up in America and Europe a numerous society, well known by the name of Methodists. The whole body has invariably esteemed this man as their chief pastor, under Christ. He has constantly appointed all their religious officers from the highest to the lowest, by himself or his delegate. And we are fully persuaded there is no Church office which he judges expedient for the welfare of the people intrusted to his charge, but, as essential to his station, he has a power to ordain. After long deliberation he saw it his duty to form his society in America into an independent Church; but he loved the most excellent Liturgy of the Church of England, he loved its rites and ceremonies, and therefore adopted them in most instances for the present case.

Besides, in addition to this, we have every qualification for an episcopal Church which that at Alexandria (a Church of no small note in the primitive times) possessed for two hundred years, our Bishops, or Superintendents (as we call them), having been elected or received by the suffrages of the whole body of our ministers through the continent, assembled in General Conference.

"But don't you break the succession?" The uninterrupted succession of Bishops is a point that has been long given up by the ablest Protestant defender of episcopacy, Bishop Hoadley.

He grants the authenticity of the anecdote given us by Saint Jerome, which informs us that the Church of Alexandria, mentioned above, had no regular succession from the line of Saint Mark, the evangelist, the first Bishop of that Church, to the time of Dionysius, a space of two hundred years: but the college of presbyters, on the death of a Bishop elected another in his stead. And from the epistle of Saint Polycarp to the Church of Philippi,[1] written in the year of our Lord 116, we also find that the Christian Philippians were then governed only by a college of presbyters. So that the primitive Christians were so far from esteeming the *regular succession* as essential to the constitution of the Christian Church, that in some instances *episcopacy itself* was wholly omitted.

But of all the forms of Church government, we think a *moderate* episcopacy is the best. The executive power being lodged in the hands of one, or at least a few, vigor and activity are given to the resolves of the body, and those two essential requisites for any grand undertaking are sweetly united—calmness and wisdom in deliberating; and in the executive department, expedition and force.

WESLEY'S OWN VIEWS

The history of the evolution of Wesley from extreme High Church views to the principles on which the episcopacy of Methodism rests, overthrows the charge that he was overpersuaded in age and weakness, and that his real views were contrary to his conduct in ordaining. In his *Journal* for September 1, 1784, he records "being now clear in mine own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind and appointed Mr. Whatcoat and Mr. Vasey to go and serve the desolate sheep in America."

Thirty-eight years before the ordination of Coke, on Monday, January 20, 1746, Wesley wrote:

I set out for Bristol. On the road I read over Lord King's

[1]Polycarp, ad Philip, Salutat., Sec. v, vi, ix, pp. 186, 188, 189.

account of the primitive Church. In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draft; but if so, it would follow that Bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others!

In a letter to the Rev. Thomas Adams, under date of London, October 31, 1755, Wesley says:

It is not clear to us, that presbyters, so circumstanced as we are, may appoint or ordain others; but it is, that we may direct, as well as suffer, them to do what we conceive they are moved to by the Holy Ghost. Dear sir, coolly and impartially consider this, and you will see on which side the difficulty lies. I do assure you, this at present is my chief embarrassment. That I have not gone too far yet, I know; but whether I have gone far enough I am extremely doubtful. I see those running whom God hath not sent; destroying their own souls, and those that hear them; perverting the right ways of the Lord, and blaspheming the truth as it is in Jesus. Soul-damning clergymen lay me under more difficulties than soul-saving laymen![1]

In a letter to the Rev. Mr. Clarke, written July 3, 1756, he says:

As to my own judgment, I still believe "the episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical"; I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion, which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*. I think he has unanswerably proved that "neither Christ nor his apostles prescribe any particular form of Church government; and that the plea of divine right for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church."[2]

OPPOSITION OF CHARLES WESLEY

After the ordination of Asbury various controversies arose between John and Charles Wesley. On April 28, 1785, Charles Wesley addressed a long letter to Dr.

[1] *Wesley's Works*, vol. vi, p. 282.
[2] Ibid., vol. vii, p. 284.

Chandler, a clergyman of the Church of England, who was about to embark for America. Referring to his brother John, he said:

After our having continued friends for above seventy years, and fellow laborers for above fifty, can anything but death part us? I can scarcely yet believe it, that, in his eighty-second year, my brother, my old, intimate friend and companion, should have assumed the episcopal character, ordained elders, consecrated a Bishop, and sent him to ordain our lay preachers in America! I was then in Bristol, at his elbow; yet he never gave me the least hint of his intention. How was he surprised into so rash an action? He certainly persuaded himself that it was right.

Lord Mansfield told me last year that ordination was separation. This my brother does not and will not see; or that he has renounced the principles and practice of his whole life; that he has acted contrary to all his declarations, protestations, and writings; robbed his friends of their boasting, and left an indelible blot on his name, as long as it shall be remembered!

What will become of these poor sheep in the wilderness, the American Methodists? How have they been betrayed into a separation from the Church of England, which their preachers and they no more intended than the Methodists here! Had they had patience a little longer they would have seen a real Bishop in America, consecrated by three Scotch Bishops, who have their consecration from the English Bishops, and are acknowledged by them as the same with themselves. But what are your poor Methodists now? Only a new sect of Presbyterians. And, after my brother's death, which is now so near, what will be their end? They will lose all their influence and importance; they will turn aside to vain janglings; they will settle again upon their lees; and, like other sects of Dissenters, come to nothing.[1]

On August 1, of the same year John Wesley set apart three preachers to minister in Scotland, and the next year two more; he also ordained one for Antigua, and another for Newfoundland.

A year later five others were ordained, and in 1788 Wesley, being in Scotland, ordained two more; and at

[1]Tyerman, *Life and Times of Wesley*, vol. iii, pp. 439, 440.

the next Conference seven, including Alexander Mather, who was ordained to the office, as were the others, not only of deacon and elder, but of Superintendent; and in 1789 he ordained Henry More and Thomas Rankin.

Wesley's defense of "Separation" was published in the Methodist Magazine in 1786. Therein, with respect to those ordained for Scotland, he says that, to prevent their falling away,

> I, at length, consented to take the same step with regard to Scotland, which I had done with regard to America. But this is not a separation from the Church at all. Not from the Church of Scotland, for we were never connected therewith, any further than we are now: nor from the Church of England, for this is not concerned in the steps which are taken in Scotland. Whatever, then, is done in America or Scotland is no separation from the Church of England.

John Pawson, one of the most influential Wesleyans, said on this subject that "Wesley foresaw that the Methodists would soon become a distinct body. He was deeply prejudiced against presbyterian, and as much in favor of episcopal, government. In order, therefore, to preserve among the Methodists all that is valuable in the Church of England, he ordained Mr. Mather and Dr. Coke, Bishops."

INTENSE FEELING ELICITED

August 14, 1785, Charles Wesley wrote his brother, beginning by a reference to John Wesley's "Reasons against a Separation," printed in 1758, and proceeding:

> I intreat you, in the name of God, and for Christ's sake, to read them again yourself, with previous prayer, and stop, and proceed no farther, till you receive an answer to your inquiry, "Lord, what woulds't Thou have me to do?" Near thirty years, since then, you have stood against the importunate solicitations of your preachers, who have scarcely at last prevailed. I was your natural ally, and faithful friend; and, while you continued faithful to yourself, we two could chase a thousand.

But when you once began ordaining in America I knew, and you knew, that your preachers here would never rest till you ordained them. You told me, they would separate by and by. The doctor tells us the same. His Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore was intended to beget a Methodist Episcopal Church here.

He concluded pathetically:

So much, I think, you owe to my father, to my brother, and to me, as to stay till I am taken from the evil. I am on the brink of the grave. Do not push me in, or embitter my last moments.

Five days later, August 19, 1785, Wesley replied:

DEAR BROTHER: I will tell you my thoughts with all simplicity, and wait for better information. If you agree with me, well; if not, we can, as Mr. Whitefield used to say, agree to disagree.

For these forty years I have been in doubt concerning that question, What obedience is due to "Heathenish priests and mitered infidels?"[1] I have, from time to time, proposed my doubts to the most pious and sensible clergymen I knew. But they gave me no satisfaction. Rather, they seemed to be puzzled as well as me.

Obedience I always paid to the Bishops, in obedience to the laws of the land. But I cannot see that I am under any obligation to obey them further than those laws require.

It is in obedience to these laws that I have never exercised in England the power, which, I believe, God has given me. I firmly believe, I am a scriptural episcopos, as much as any man in England, or in Europe, for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable which no man ever did or can prove.

After arguing the question, What is the Church of England? he closes his letter thus:

I walk still by the same rule I have done for between forty and fifty years. I do nothing rashly. It is not likely I should. The high day of my blood is over. If you will go hand in hand with me, do. But do not hinder me, if you will not help. Perhaps if you had kept close to me, I might have done better.

[1]This was Charles Wesley's own line.

However, with or without help, I creep on; and as I have been hitherto, so I trust I shall always be,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

The letter of Charles in reply says:

That juvenile line of mine, "Heathenish priests, and mitered infidels," I disown, renounce, and with shame recant. I never knew of more than one "mitered infidel," and for him I took Mr. Law's word. That you are a scriptural episcopos, or overseer, I do not dispute. And so is every minister who has the cure of souls. Neither need we dispute whether the uninterrupted succession be fabulous, as you believe; or real, as I believe; or whether Lord King be right or wrong. If I could prove your actual separation, I would not, neither wish to see it proved by any other. But do you not allow that the Doctor has separated? Have you seen his ordination sermon? Is the high day of his blood over? Does he do nothing rashly? Have you not made yourself the author of all his actions? I thank you for your intention to remain my friend; herein my heart is as your heart; whom God hath joined let not man put asunder. We have taken each other for better for worse, till death do us—part? No; but unite eternally. Therefore, in the love which never faileth, I am your affectionate friend and brother,

CHARLES WESLEY.

In five days Wesley replied:

DEAR BROTHER: I see no use of you and me disputing together; for neither of us is likely to convince the other. Your verse is a sad truth. I see fifty times more of England than you do; and I find few exceptions to it.

I believe Dr. Coke is as free from ambition as from covetousness. He has done nothing rashly that I know; but he has spoken rashly, which he retracted the moment I spoke to him of it. To publish, as his present thoughts, what he had before retracted, was not fair play. I am, etc.

JOHN WESLEY.

These letters show that John Wesley was cognizant of what had been done in the United States, and unquestionably did not intend Coke to be called Bishop, but Superintendent. The word "Bishop," as spoken by Adam Fonerden, meant a professed divine order, and stood in popular opinion for "the mitered infidels." Consequently, when the American Methodists used the word "Bishop,"

Wesley wrote with severity to Asbury, under date of September 20, 1788:

But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid, both the Doctor and you differ from me. I study to be little; you study to be great. I creep; you strut along. I found a school; you a college; nay, and call it after your own names. O, beware; do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and "Christ be all in all!"

One instance of this, of your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you, suffer yourself to be called Bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content, but they shall never, by my consent, call me Bishop! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.

The reference to the Presbyterians derives its meaning from the fact that every Presbyterian, "teaching elder" styles himself a Bishop. This is their statement:

The pastoral office is the first in the Church both for dignity and usefulness. The person who fills this office hath in the Scripture obtained different names expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed Bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor. As he serves Christ in his Church, he is termed minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed presbyter or elder.[1]

The Presbyterians entitle their chapter on the pastoral relation and office, "Of Bishops and Pastors," and emphasize the use of the word "Bishop" by the following:

As the office and character of the gospel ministers is particularly and fully described in the Holy Scriptures under the title of "Bishop," and as this term is peculiarly expressive of his duty as an overseer of the flock, it ought not to be rejected.

They have no office corresponding to "General Superintendent," the name given to Thomas Coke and used by Wesley of Asbury.

[1]Tyerman, *Life and Times of Wesley*, vol. iii, p. 438.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Third Restrictive Rule *(Continued)*

Having shown by Wesley's words, and by those of Thomas Coke, that Wesley, as respects the question of "order," based his right to ordain wholly on the fact that he was a presbyter or elder in the Church of England; and that he relied on his peculiar relation to American Methodists, and their emergent situation, for the propriety of exercising the power inherent in the eldership to confer upon other elders a function or office which made them, in the exercise of power, "the first among equals," it is now in order to present in broad outlines the disputations to which his ordinations gave rise.

Writers in the Church of England, including Dr. Whitehead, Wesley's physician and biographer, perplexed themselves and others by reiterating that "if Wesley, who was merely a presbyter, could make a Bishop, then the greater was blessed of the less," and Wesley's own brother, Charles, wrote:

> So easily are Bishops made,
> By man or woman's whim;
> Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
> But who laid hands on him?

They begged the question, for the type of Bishop, that Wesley proposed to make, was not inherently greater in "order," but was superior only in special functions specially conferred.

Defense of Methodist Episcopacy by Watson and Dickins

Richard Watson, who came upon the scene before the death of Wesley, published in 1831 *An Apology for the*

People Called Methodists, in which he vindicated the attitude of Methodism as respects its relation to the National Church. He thus states the case:

> Wesley did not pretend to ordain Bishops in the modern sense, but only according to his view of primitive episcopacy, founded upon the principle of Bishops and presbyters being of the same degree, a more extended office only being assigned to the former, as in the primitive Church. For, though nothing can be more obvious than that the primitive pastors are called Bishops or presbyters indiscriminately in the New Testament, yet at an early period those presbyters were, by way of distinction, denominated Bishops, who presided in the meetings of presbyters, and were finally invested with the government of several churches, with their respective presbyteries; so that two offices were then, as in this case, grafted upon the same order.

It has already been shown that the American Methodists accepted this view and distinctly avowed it.

In answer to attacks, John Dickins, the first preacher whom Coke consulted after his arrival in America, and who proposed the name Methodist *Episcopal* Church, had forced upon him the necessity of defending it. Others had desired simply the name, "Methodist Church"; but the proposition of Dickins was accepted upon the ground that the having of Superintendents, etc., was a "species of episcopacy." In replying to the charges of William Hammett, Dickins wrote:

> Now, whoever said the superiority of the Bishops was by virtue of a separate ordination? If this gave them their superiority, how came they to be removable by the Conference? If, then, what you there plead for, will "sap the foundation of all arbitrary power," it has been sapped in our connection from the first establishment of our constitution.

Again he remarks, "We all know Mr. Asbury derived his official power from the Conference, and therefore his office is at their disposal." He declares that the superiority of our Bishops is derived not from their "separate ordination" but from "the suffrages of the body of

ministers," and exclaims, "Pray when was it otherwise, and how can the Conference have power to remove Mr. Asbury and ordain another to fill his place if they see it necessary on other grounds?"

CONCISE STATEMENTS

The testimony, written in his earlier years, of Joshua Soule, author of the plan for a delegated General Conference, is most definitely to the point. It is here quoted from a manuscript in the writing of Soule, the original of which is in the possession of the family of Dr. Tigert, who quotes the same in his *A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism* (revised edition, page 212):

> Dr. Coke was ordained *Superintendent* by Mr. Wesley and sent to America to act in Mr. Wesley's place and [he], consequently, vested him with ample powers to superintend and do the work of an evangelist in organizing the Church, and this he did on the plan recommended by Mr. Wesley, which was on the episcopal plan; consequently, no material change was made in the system first introduced. An *episcopacy* being recommended and appointed by Mr. Wesley, his recommendation was approved of and his appointment confirmed by the American preachers; and, in organizing the Church, they admitted of two orders in the ministry, *elders* and *deacons*.

When Nathan Bangs was charged with believing in and setting forth in his *Methodist Episcopacy* "three orders," he denied that he used the word "Bishops" in a prelatical sense, and said if anyone chooses "to say that we acknowledge two orders only and a superior minister, possessing a delegated jurisdiction chiefly of an executive character, he has my full consent; I will not dispute about words."

Bishop John Emory, in *The Defense of Our Fathers*, says, "In whatever sense distinct ordinations constitute distinct orders, in the same sense Mr. Wesley certainly intended that we should have three orders, for he undeni-

ably instituted three distinct ordinations." Yet he immediately adds: "At the same time we maintain that a third degree of ordination is perfectly compatible with the doctrine of two orders, if the term 'order' be used as implying divine right." That is to say, if the word "order" be used as Wesley used it. Elsewhere he says, "The idea that equals cannot from among themselves constitute an officer who as an officer shall be superior to any of those by whom he was constituted is contradicted by all experience and history, both civil and ecclesiastical, and equally so by common sense."

Perhaps the best summing up of the subject by any American writer is found in the *History of Methodism,* by Bishop McTyeire (page 394):

> No case can be better made out before a competent tribunal than that John Wesley, upon maturest deliberation and counsel, purposed and took all formal measures to establish and perpetuate an episcopacy for American Methodism, upon a presbyterial basis. Men, according to their notions, may differ and dispute about the sufficiency or the insufficiency of that basis, the scripturalness or the unscripturalness of that transaction; but there can be no reasonable doubt as to what was intended and done. John Wesley belonged to that class of Episcopalians who believed that episcopacy is not a distinct "*order*," but a distinct *office*, in the ministry; that Bishops and presbyters, or elders, are of the same "order," and have essentially the same prerogatives; but that, for convenience, some of this "order" may be raised to the episcopal *office*, and functions originally pertaining to the whole order—as ordination, for example—may be confined to them. The presbyter thus elevated is but *primus inter pares*—the first among equals.

In the eyes of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, and the High Church branch of the Church of England, and of the Protestant Episcopal Church, our "succession" is contemptible; but with John Wesley and our fathers we reject their hierarchical pretensions, attach no value to them, and have no sympathy

with them. Wesley, indeed, maintained his connection with the Church of England, but constantly avowed his Bishops to be only of the same "order" with *himself.* He certainly intended the General Superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church to be ordained by the English Church formula, yet *he opposed the name "Bishop," lest it should be taken to justify the unfounded claim of an uninterrupted succession* from the apostles by a third order instead of a Superintendent elected by the elders. This is conclusively proved by the fact that to harmonize the English Ritual with his principles he changed the title of the ordination service to "The Form and Manner of Making and Ordaining of *Superintendents,* Elders, and Deacons." Similar changes were made throughout, everywhere substituting the word "Superintendent" for "Bishop."

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN METHODIST EPISCOPACY AND THAT OF THOSE CLAIMING A "THIRD ORDER"

It is said by some that the "question is reduced to mere words, since Bishops in the Methodist Episcopal Church have *all the privileges and functions* which they would have were the episcopacy a third order, namely, life tenure, exclusive power to ordain others, and a third ordination themselves."

This is a palpable and inexcusable error, for there are many and grave differences. In the Methodist Episcopal Church the Bishops do not constitute a compact organization, with the power of vetoing all legislation.

They cannot boast descent in a continuous line (of Bishops) from the apostles, nor claim to be their successors; nor can they claim any *essential* superiority over the elders.

They have not the exclusive power of confirming converts, nor can one Methodist General Superintendent

exercise complete, sole, and permanent authority in any section exclusively.

Without any violation of the law of God, episcopacy could be abolished by a two-thirds vote of the ministry and laity voting separately, and a vote of two thirds of the members of the next succeeding General Conference; and episcopacy might be retained, yet the life tenure be removed by constitutional process.

There is also another important difference: Methodist Bishops are relieved from temptation to the exactions, eccentricities, and various forms of oppression which ecclesiastical history records of a hierarchy boasting "exclusive divine right."

The consciousness of being of a superior *"divine order,"* of having the possession of the sole power of ordination, the sole control of a diocese, and in coöperation with other Bishops, the power of preventing the enactment of laws restricting their authority, privileges, or emoluments, and thus assuring a life lease of all these distinctions and unparalleled prerogatives, form a congeries of temptations to vanity and indifference to public opinion unequaled except by hereditary royalty.

Yet it must not be suposed that the governments of the Presbyterian and the Methodist Episcopal Church are the same. They are indeed alike with respect to the "order" of elder and in denying that there is "of divine right" such an "order," of Bishops. It is on this ground that Presbyterian ministerial orders are recognized by the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the orders of the Methodist Episcopal Church are recognized by the Presbyterian Church. But the "orders" of neither are recognized as valid by the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, or the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Should the Presbyterian Church by its constitutional methods enact that there be one or more presbyters elected

as General Superintendents who should hold office for life or good behavior, and to them should be committed the power of ordaining; prescribing also that certain elders should assist, and that if by reason of death or other cause there should be no Superintendent, the General Assembly should elect one or more Superintendents and that the Presbytery ordain them, their system, so far as "orders" are concerned, would be similar to our own, except that the Presbyterian Church considers the deaconate a function of the laity; and ordains laymen as "ruling elders," and ministers as "teaching elders."

When Bishop McTyeire declared that our episcopacy rests on "a presbyterial basis" he meant that the office of Bishop is grafted on the order of elder or presbyter by the votes of the presbyters.

It was in the same sense that Bishop Levi Scott, at the closing session of the Indiana Conference in 1871, on rising to read the appointments, thus addressed the Conference: "Brother Presbyters, I rise as a presbyter-Bishop to give you your work for a year."[1]

Wesley much preferred episcopacy to Presbyterianism as possessing far more executive and cohesive force; but he based his right to ordain on the fact that he was a *presbyter.* And Bishop Scott meant that he was what Wesley himself was to American Methodists—a presbyter-General Superintendent.

A small minority of the Church have at intervals essayed to prove that the Methodist episcopacy is an "order" distinct from that of elders, and not merely a function conferred chiefly for executive purposes on certain elders.

In the General Conference of 1836 the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That the *Bishops be requested to select some suit-*

[1]James Mitchell, D.D., *Life and Times of Levi Scott, D.D.*

able and competent person to prepare for publication a vindication of our episcopal ordination.

THE OPINION OF THE BISHOPS

The Bishops themselves took the subject under advisement, and discussed it in their Address to the General Conference of 1844. What they said was both a testimony and an exposition:

Without entering minutely into the details of what is involved in the Superintendency, as it is constituted in our Church, it is sufficient for our present design to notice its several departments:

1. Confirming orders, by ordaining Deacons and Elders. We say confirming, because the orders are *conferred* by another body, which is independent of the episcopal office, both in its organization and action.

This confirmation of orders, or ordination, is not by virtue of a distinct and higher *order*. For, with our great founder, we are convinced that Bishops and presbyters are the same order in the Christian ministry. And this has been the sentiment of the Wesleyan Methodists from the beginning.

But it is by virtue of an *office* constituted by the body of presbyters, for the better order of discipline, for the preservation of the unity of the Church, and for carrying on the work of God in the most effectual manner.

The execution of this office is subject to two important restrictions, which would be very irrelevant to prelacy, or diocesan episcopacy, constituted on the basis of a distinct and superior order. The latter involves *independent action in conferring orders*, by virtue of authority inherent in, and exclusively appertaining to, the episcopacy. But the former is a delegated authority to *confirm orders*, the exercise of which is dependent upon another body. The Bishop can ordain neither a deacon nor an elder, without the election of the candidate by an Annual Conference: and in case of such election he has no discretional authority; but is under *obligation* to ordain the person elected, whatever may be his own judgment of his qualifications. These are the two restrictions previously alluded to.

This is certainly a wise and safe provision, and should never be changed or modified so as to authorize the Bishops to ordain without the authority of the ministry. With these facts in view,

it is presumed that it will be admitted by all well-informed and candid men, that, so far as the constitution of the ministry is concerned, ours is a "*moderate episcopacy.*"

The italics in the foregoing were so placed by the Bishops. The entire Board approved the deliverance and signed it. They were Joshua Soule, who knew Asbury and Coke and all the fathers, and who wrote this Episcopal Address; Elijah Hedding, who was a member of the Conference which formed the Constitution, and also knew Coke and Asbury; Beverly Waugh, James O. Andrew, and Thomas A. Morris.

To this "moderate episcopacy" American Methodism owes in largest part its solidarity and homogeneousness.

CHAPTER XXV

The Third Restrictive Rule *(Continued)*

"THE PLAN OF OUR ITINERANT GENERAL SUPERINTENDENCY"

This Rule speaks of the episcopacy as the equivalent of a General Superintendency.

While the General Conference cannot "do away episcopacy," it is also forbidden to destroy "the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency." This plan, together with the Constitution then formed and adopted, was set forth by the General Conference of 1808 in the *Discipline.* To ascertain the meaning, we must comprehend its separate parts so far as they relate to the prerogatives and duties of the General Superintendent.

The following questions and answers reveal its contents:

Question 3. Of the Yearly Conferences. Who shall attend the yearly Conferences?

Answer. All the traveling preachers who are in full connection and those who are to be received into full connection.

Question 4. Who shall appoint the times of holding the yearly Conferences?

Answer. The Bishops, but they shall allow the Annual Conferences to sit a week at least.

Question 4 was introduced into the *Discipline* in the General Conference of 1792, and the answer was then simply, "The Bishops." (In 1872, this part was so extended as to read: "The Bishops shall appoint the times of holding the Annual Conferences.")

In 1804, after twelve years of "hurried" Conferences, the Bishop often arriving but a few minutes before the time for the beginning of the session, and mounting his horse immediately after the benediction, having in the meantime reduced discussion to a minimum as nearly as

possible, the General Conference being determined to limit his power to adjourn the body, added, "But they shall allow each Conference to sit a week at least."

It should be remembered, that, in those early days, there were neither railroads nor steamboats, and except in the vicinity of county seats, few roads worthy of the name. Asbury's rides on horseback of three thousand miles per annum were performed under every form of hardship. Nevertheless, it is true that Asbury was impatient of discussion and desired as little voting as possible, unless he was the proposer or approver of the question. These facts account for the mandatory addition. The rule persists to this date, and should never be repealed; as it is, though the Bishop may adjourn a Conference at the end of one week, should he essay to do so before that time and depart without the consent of the Conference, that body could legally remain in session and avail itself of the rule for the presidency of an Annual Conference in the absence of a Bishop.

However, should the Conference attempt to adjourn before the Bishop had finished the work imposed upon him by the Constitution or the General Conference, he could refuse to put a motion to adjourn, however long the body had been in session. It is obvious that this power is essential to the working of the "plan" of General Superintendency; for could the Conference adjourn at will, it could prevent the performance of any or all of the duties imposed upon the Bishop by the "plan."

Question 5. Who shall appoint the places of holding the Annual Conferences?

Answer. Each Annual Conference shall appoint the place of its own sitting.

The foregoing rules are self-explanatory and self-defending. The Bishops alone can determine the days when they can arrive, and the Conference alone can de-

cide where it may be best accommodated, and where its sessions will be the most useful in promoting the interests of the denomination.

Question 6 concerns the method of conducting Annual Conferences. The answer shows that the Bishop shall, in the presence of the Conference, inquire what preachers are "admitted on trial"; who "remain on trial"; who "are admitted into full connection"; who are the "deacons"; who are the "elders"; who "have been located during the year"; who "have died in the preceding year"; who are the "supernumerary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers"; whether all are "blameless in life, in conversation"; who are "expelled from the connection"; what "numbers are in the society"; where "the preachers are stationed this year."

THE DUTIES OF A BISHOP

In the next section the *Discipline* of 1808 enumerates the "Duties of a Bishop." These are "to preside in our Conferences, to fix the appointments of the preachers for the several circuits," etc., and in the intervals of the Conferences, "to change, receive, and suspend preachers as necessity may require and as the *Discipline* directs."

In addition to this it requires the Bishop *"to travel throughout the connection at large."* This law has been unnecessarily mystified; and what the Bishops were then doing, and at the present time do to a considerable degree, reveals fully the meaning of the requisition. They are to attend and preside in the Conferences, and *when not so engaged* are not to remain exclusively in or near their residences until another list of Conferences demands their presence, but are expected to itinerate among the Churches, examining, instructing, and preaching.

The Bishop is the judge of how he employs his time and strength, if he does so in the interest of the Church;

but otherwise he is in danger of official censure from the General Conference. His influence depends upon his devotion to the "connection at large" and his fidelity in fulfilling the duties required in the answer, "To oversee the spiritual and temporal business of the societies." This phrase, "business of the societies," appears first in 1787, and was altered several times until it was adopted many years ago, as it now exists: "To oversee the spiritual and temporal business of our Church."

The *Discipline* of 1808 contained this question of great import:

Question. If a Bishop cease from traveling at large among the people, shall he still exercise his episcopal office among us in any degree?

Answer. If he cease from traveling *without the consent of the General Conference*, he shall not thereafter exercise the episcopal office in our Church.

In 1792, the answer was made more severe, the consequence of disobeying being "he shall not thereafter exercise any ministerial functions whatsoever in our Church." This was changed in 1804 to "in any degree the episcopal office in our Church." The penalty is still attached to such illegal neglect.

This is a stern but righteous decree. An indolent, uninterested Bishop is hardly endurable under a diocesan episcopacy, but in an itinerant General Superintendency he would impose additional labors upon his colleagues, and would be an incubus upon the episcopacy in the region where he resided.

In 1804 a time limit was for the first time placed upon the appointment of pastors to stations and circuits. It was in force in 1808, and was as follows:

To fix the appointments for the several circuits, provided he shall not allow any preacher to remain in the same station more than two years successively; except the presiding elders, the editors and general book steward, the assistant editors and

assistant book steward, the supernumerary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers.

Another rule prevented the Bishop from allowing an elder to preside in the same district more than "four years successively."

The foregoing questions and answers include the substance of "the plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency."

Unless the Bishop, presiding in the Annual Conferences, possessed the authority to fix the appointments of pastors and district superintendents, the Superintendency could not be complete, and neither pastors nor Churches could be constrained, the former to proceed to the Churches assigned to them, and the latter to receive the appointees. The restriction of the time of a pastorate arose from the eagerness of certain Churches to retain pastors and of certain pastors to be returned indefinitely. Although such instances were few, the clamor they made, the jealousy of others, the annoyance of Bishop Asbury, and the probability that the unity of the denomination would be jeoparded led to the limit of two years being imposed.

The restrictions of the term of the presiding eldership in one district grew largely out of the evil results of the protracted term of James O'Kelly, who had been presiding elder in the southern part of Virginia since the organization of the Church, and who had been stationed there continuously for several years before.

The time limit respecting pastors has been changed several times; beginning with two years in 1804, it was increased to three in 1864, to five in 1888, and in 1900 was removed entirely. Similar changes, though not so numerous, have been made in the time limit of district superintendents. However, these time limits have no connection with the Constitution. They are wholly in the jurisdiction of the General Conference.

With the growth of the Church, new responsibilities have fallen upon the Bishops in connection with the various denominational societies that have been founded. The General Conference has constituted them *ex officio* members of the General Committee of Foreign Missions and of the Board of Managers, of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension, and of other connectional societies. It has established the Judicial Conference, in which a Bishop must preside and decide all questions of law arising in its proceedings, subject to an appeal to the General Conference. They are also sent to countries of which the fathers were ignorant, and on journeys which the apostles of Christ never conceived possible.

Bishop Bowman, when asked what portion of the year he was able to spend with his family, after a moment's reflection, responded, "At the most, not more than three months." To their specially assigned work, which includes the general care for a large number of Conferences for successive periods of six months, and to their necessary semiannual meetings, must be added the many demands for the services of the Bishop in dedicating churches. This is a custom of incomparable value, since it impresses the Church and the community, where the dedication is performed, with the solidarity of Methodism, with its Liturgy and with the regard which its pastors and people entertain for their chief officers. The Bishops, however, are unable to perform all dedications, but there is no law nor reason why district superintendents or other ministers should not perform this function for the Churches.

All functions conferred by the General Conference on Bishops outside of the duties of the episcopacy, and all others that are now specially connected with the work of Bishops, could be changed, added to, or repealed. But as the General Conference cannot constitutionally so load down the Bishops, that they could not

properly perform their normal duties, so the Bishops cannot constitutionally assume functions, which from their nature would divert them from the performance of their episcopal duties without coming under the censure of the General Conference.

The Third Restrictive Rule does not prohibit the General Conference from legislating upon the episcopacy as it deems best; provided, it does not enact any rule or system of rules, which would do away that episcopacy which existed when the Constitution was adopted or prevent the exercise of its functions, or counterwork the effect of the same.

It can legislate concerning "the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency," provided, the principle or the operation of such enactments would not destroy, or tend to destroy, that "plan."

From the beginning the General Conference has reserved to itself the power of electing members of Annual Conferences to certain positions in the Church, not pastoral, such as the corresponding and assistant secretaries of our connectional societies, the editors of the Church periodicals. These are registered with the appointments by the presiding Bishop of the Conference to which they belong. Also the editor of Zion's Herald, chaplains of prisons, and the army and navy, and various sanitary or charitable institutions, secretaries and superintendents of city missions and the principals of institutions of learning, which are under our care, though not elected by the General Conference, are appointed and registered in a similar manner. In addition, the General Conference has enacted that a Bishop may, *if requested by an Annual Conference,* appoint an agent to distribute tracts, an agent or agents to promote temperance, an agent or agents for the benefit of institutions of learning, an agent for the German Publishing Fund, and agents for other

benevolent institutions, and also instructors in institutions of learning not under our care. He may also, *if requested,* appoint editors of unofficial papers or magazines, published in the interest of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and one or more members of an Annual Conference to do evangelistic work on charges.

At first glance the power exercised by the General Conference in connection with the foregoing appointments, especially those with which the Bishop cannot deal without being requested to do so by the Annual Conference, would seem to be an invasion of the constitutional rights of the Bishops; but it does not tend "to do away the episcopacy" or destroy "the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency"; and as it is often a relief to the Bishop, it comes under the "full power" to make rules and regulations for the Church, conferred by the Constitution on the General Conference.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Third Restrictive Rule *(Continued)*

POWERS OF THE BISHOP WHEN PRESIDING IN GENERAL CONFERENCE

For a full interpretation of this important question, an account of the original relation of the Bishops to the Conference is necessary. Early in the history of the Church the prerogatives of a Bishop became a matter of dispute. In 1797 Asbury had passed through the Annual Conferences, nominating Lee, Poythress, and Whatcoat for Assistant Bishops.

It was moved in the General Conference of 1800 by a prominent member:

Whereas, By a vote of the Conference it is determined that another Bishop shall be elected,

Resolved, That the Conference determine, before the vote be canvassed, the powers of the new Bishop, whether he shall be equal to Bishop Asbury, or subordinate to him.[1]

Bishop Asbury was strongly inclined to the idea that the new Bishop should be in some sense subordinate to him. Several motions of this nature were made. Asbury —one of the best of the men—fasted and prayed before he was ordained, and hoped that he would "not be exalted above measure." Nevertheless, he *was* greatly "exalted" by the honor, and in less than one month after he was ordained, he assumed full canonicals—gown, cassock, and bands; but this was so strongly opposed by preachers and people that he was soon compelled to resume his ordinary attire.

In 1805 Bishop Coke proposed that the seven Conferences should be so arranged that for the first year he

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, p. 35.

should have four, and Asbury three, and the next year, he three and Asbury four. Whatcoat was not mentioned, and the only reason ever assigned for the omission is, that "though he was legally equal, he was expected simply to assist the older Bishops."

In the General Conference of 1808, and in all preceding ones, the Bishops had the same right to speak, make motions, and enter into debates as had any person present. For Bishop Asbury, the patriarch, to recognize any restriction on this right was not easy. This was seen in the opening of the General Conference of 1812.

Bishop Paine, after eulogizing the integrity and sagacity of Asbury, says, that he "had heretofore exercised rather the prerogatives of a father than the office of a president, and *had never been remarkable for conducting business according to the strict Rules of Order.*"[1]

May 15, 1812, after calling the list, Bishop Asbury arose and *requested leave* "to address Bishop McKendree in the presence of the Conference." Leave was granted, and Bishop Asbury then proceeded to speak. Afterward Bishop McKendree was allowed to reply. The Rev. Henry Smith, of the Baltimore Conference, who was present, writing to Bishop Paine, described the scene as follows:

> As soon as Bishop McKendree had finished reading the plan of business which he had drawn up, Bishop Asbury rose to his feet and addressed the junior Bishop to the following effect: "I have something to say to you before the Conference." The junior also rose to his feet, and they stood face to face. Bishop Asbury went on to say: "This is a new thing. *I* never did business in this way, and why is this new thing introduced?" The junior Bishop promptly replied: "You are our *father*, we are your sons; *you* never have had need of it. I am only a *brother*, and have need of it." Bishop Asbury said no more, but sat down with a smile on his face.[2]

The statement that *"he* never did business in this way"

[1]Paine's *Life of McKendree*, vol. i, p. 263. [2]Ibid., vol. i, p. 264.

illustrates the ruling power that he had exercised. That the recognition of Asbury by the new incumbent as "father" pacified him, uncovered in him a common trait of human nature.

In the same Conference Bishop McKendree asked "if the *Conference* thought he had authority to give the secretary orders to change some phrases in journalizing, provided there are no changes of the sense." It was voted that "he be allowed to give the secretary orders."

In 1840 the New York Conference, by resolution, requested the president of the next session of that body to deliver a discourse before the Conference on the administration of the *Discipline.* This devolved upon Bishop Hedding. The Providence, New England, and Maine Conferences afterward asked that the same discourse might be delivered before them, and all these desired it published. It was received and generally approved throughout the Church. The Notes of Bishop Hedding are of great value. As a member of the General Conference of 1808, he was one of the founders of the delegated General Conference, and was elected Bishop in 1824. He heard all the discussions, attended every General Conference, and passed through the troublesome times from 1820 to 1848. His exposition of the Constitution and of the legislation of the Church clarified them as they had not been before.

Bishop Osmon C. Baker entered the ministry in 1839, and was elected to the episcopacy in 1852. He wrote extensively upon the *Discipline,* and his work is still regarded as an authority. In this he states that a "Bishop sustains the relation of *moderator* to the General Conference. He represents no section or interest of the Church; he can claim no right to introduce motions, to make speeches, or to cast votes on any question. As president, he can neither form rules nor decide law questions in the

General Conference; and, on mere questions of order, there is an appeal from his decision to the deliberative body."[1]

Bishop Baker refers for his authority to his own experience and his conversations with the "fathers," to the writings of Bishop Hedding, and especially to the Address of the Bishops to the General Conference of 1844.

Bishop Merrill, in his *Digest of Methodist Law* (pages 72, 73), correctly gives the relation of the Bishop to the General Conference in these words:

> But in presiding in the General Conference the Bishops do not decide questions of law. That body is supreme in its sphere, with only the limitations of its Constitution upon it, and as it enacts the rules and regulations of the Church, it puts its own interpretation upon them. The Bishop in the chair decides questions of order, subject, of course, to appeal, but he strenuously refrains from any ruling that involves a construction of the law. As the constitutional president, while the Bishop may not participate in debates, he may lawfully suggest what is expedient in the order of business, in the interest of regularity, consistency, or economy of time.

To this judicious and judicial statement Bishop Merrill adds a paragraph, which is contrary to the Constitution and contrary to the previous statement, and contains a doctrine which, if attempted to be carried out by any Bishop, would make a breach between the episcopacy and the General Conference, introduce irremediable confusion, and jeopardize the unity of the entire denomination. This is the passage:

> Yet if action were proposed which, in his [the Bishop's] judgment, involved a violation of the law without a formal modification of it, or a breach of the limitations of power imposed by the Constitution, it would be his duty to call attention to the supposed infraction, and restrain the action of the Conference if possible. Indeed, a condition of things is supposable in which

[1]Baker on the *Discipline*, p. 38.

it would be the duty of the Bishop to *refuse to entertain a motion*, and *decline having any part in the transaction of the body.* If action should be proposed which is contrary to the Constitution, or violative of vested rights protected thereby, the Bishop is bound to object, and use all the power of his office to preserve the organic law in its integrity. He has the right to assume that the proposed action has been hastily introduced, and to insist upon more careful investigation, and finally to protest against it in the interest of law and consistency. If overruled, his right to be heard, and have his protest entered on the *Journal*, could not be denied without the most flagrant departure from justice, such as is not conceivable. Although not a member of the General Conference, technically speaking, the Bishop is its lawful president, with rights superior in that position to a mere acting chairman, and he may not be displaced or deprived of his rights without formal action suspending him or deposing him from his office. Such a conflict has never occurred, and probably will never occur, and yet it is supposable, and the consideration of its bearing is not improper in the study of the legal rights and duties of the parties under the *Discipline* of the Church.[1]

But he would not have the right "to call attention to the supposed infraction" without the consent of the Conference. If he had that right or power, it is clear that by exercising it he would practically enter into debate and his protest would involve a "construction of the law," which, according to the Address of the Bishops to the General Conference of 1844, is not within his sphere of authority.

It would be indeed his privilege to ask the Conference to allow him to make a statement; or he could communicate his feelings to a member of the body, who would have the right to move, that the Bishop "be requested to give his views." This motion has frequently been made, and usually the Conference has unanimously invited the Bishop to make a nonpartisan representation.

The expression, that it would be his duty to "restrain

[1] *Digest of Methodist Law*, pp. 72, 73.

the action of the Conference if possible" is unfortunate. If it mean anything more than accepting the courtesy of the Conference, after it had given its consent for him to speak, it involves an attempt at usurpation.

The statement that "a condition of things is supposable in which it would be the duty of the Bishop to refuse to entertain a motion" is to assume for the Bishop a power that he has not.

The implied warning that he might "decline having any part in the transactions of the body" must have been made without the recognition of the fact that, if he refused to continue in the chair, one of the other Bishops could take his place. Were all the Bishops successively to refuse to take the chair, the Constitution directs the General Conference, in the absence of a Bishop, to elect from its own number a president *pro tempore.*

"All the power of his [episcopal] office," when acting as president, is limited to the right to preside, and to leave the Conference to put its own interpretations upon its actions. Had not the Constitution required a Bishop, if present, to preside, the *office* of Bishop would not have given him the right to preside. The powers which he has as a Bishop, in the absence of such a separate requisition, cannot be applied to the presidency.

As a presiding officer in the General Conference he may think that "the proposed action has been hastily introduced," but he has no right "to insist upon more careful investigation," and no right "to protest against it in the interest of law and consistency," *except the Conference by vote ask him to express his views.*

The declaration that "if overruled, his right to be heard, and have his protest entered on the *Journal,* could not be denied without the most flagrant departure from justice" is incongruous with the Constitution. The additional statement, that "although not a member of the General

Conference, technically speaking, the Bishop is its lawful president," is without bearing upon the claim made. The Bishop, when presiding, is "a lawful president," and also a minister or a lay member would be a "lawful president" if elected by the General Conference in the absence of a Bishop.

The futility of such an assumption may be seen in the fact that a presiding officer, attempting to restrain or constrain a General Conference, would leave the chair at the adjournment of the session. He might be succeeded by a Bishop wholly out of sympathy with his views, and the very measures that he had denounced might immediately be passed. Furthermore, if a Bishop were to be so unreasonable as to attempt such usurpations, he could be at once suspended and put upon trial, and this method could be taken with his successors in the chair, if they pursued a similar course.

In concluding his remarks Bishop Merrill says, "*Such a conflict has never occurred, and probably will never occur.*" But this is a serious error, for, as is hereafter shown, such a conflict did occur, and came within a hairbreadth of disrupting the Church.

The only constitutional way that a Bishop can be actively connected with the proceedings of the General Conference is by *presiding*. When not acting in that capacity, he is an interested spectator, ready to take the chair when it is assigned to him by his colleagues. Nevertheless, such is, and should forever be, the veneration of the Church for its General Superintendents that a message from the Board of Bishops is respectfully received at any time; and a motion to invite one of them to address the Conference on a subject of importance to the episcopacy or the General Conference would not be voted down, except in such rare cases as to make it plainly obvious to a majority of the members of the Conference that,

either in time or substance, such an address would not promote reverence for the episcopacy or the welfare of the Church.

The immovable foundation for the foregoing exposition of the "Powers of the Bishop when presiding in the General Conference" is constructed from the history of the Church, and the following united episcopal utterance in the Address of the Bishops to the General Conference of 1844:

Presiding in General and Annual Conferences

There is a marked difference in the relations the president sustains to these two bodies. The General Conference, being the highest judicatory of the Church, is not subject to the official direction and control of the president any further than the *order* of business and the preservation of decorum are concerned; and even this is subject to *rules* originating in the body. The *right* to transact business, with respect to matter, mode, and order of time, is vested in the Conference, and limited only by constitutional provisions; and of these provisions, so far as their official acts are concerned, the Conference, and not the president, must be the judge.[1]

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, p. 155.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Third Restrictive Rule *(Continued)*

THE AMENABILITY OF BISHOPS

The Bishop's amenability to the General Conference for his conduct is protected by this Restrictive Rule.

Trial and acquittal, or reproof, suspension, and deposition or expulsion, come within the scope of the "full power" given to the General Conference. But it would be unconstitutional to suspend, to depose, or to expel a Bishop without a trial, upon a charge of improper conduct, and conviction for the same.

Unless properly guarded and vigilantly watched, the office of a Bishop—as in the case with a life tenure in the state—is as dangerous in the hands of the unwise, unconscientious, or tyrannical as it is beneficial when possessed by discreet and good men, who use their power wholly for the advantage of the Church or the nation; for, in all ages, there have been occasional instances, arising from the growth of years, of exaggerated individual peculiarities; and under all forms of episcopacy, some Bishops have been tyrannical and some have substituted personal government for official, thus manifesting obstinacy rather than genuine episcopal firmness. Hence, only self-controlled, sympathetic, spiritual, and well-tried men should be intrusted with so great an office. Their administration should conform strictly to the laws of the Church, not only for consistency's sake, but as an example to the clergy and laity; and should a Bishop become heretical in vital points, immoral, or neglectful of his work—disagreeable as it is—for self-protection, charges should be made and minutely examined, and if found true, such

Bishop should be convicted and reproved, suspended or deposed. Therefore the *Discipline* of 1808 contained the following:

Question 4, § 4. To whom is the Bishop amenable for his conduct? *Answer.* To the General Conference, who have power to expel him for improper conduct if they see it necessary.

In 1872 the answer was altered by striking out after the words, "who shall have power" the words "to expel him for improper conduct if they see it necessary" and inserting "to order the manner of his trial."

The original answer was retained for more than eighty years; but from the *Discipline* of 1908 the *question* is omitted, and under title "The Trial and Appeal of Bishops," the first paragraph is "A Bishop is answerable for his conduct to the General Conference, which shall have power to order the manner of his trial."

The preliminary steps to the trial of a Bishop are, in substance, as follows: When a Bishop is accused of *immoral conduct,* the district superintendent within whose district the said immorality is alleged to have been committed, should call to his aid four traveling elders, who shall carefully inquire into the case, and if they, or a majority of them, should conclude that there is reasonable ground for such accusation, they, or a majority of them, shall prepare and sign the proper charge and notify the Bishop of the same, and shall give notice thereof to another of the Bishops. Said Bishop, so notified, shall convene a Judicial Conference, which shall have full power to try the accused and suspend him from the functions of his office, depose him from the ministry, or expel him from the Church, as they may deem the offense requires. One of the Bishops shall preside at the trial.

In the case of imprudent conduct, the district superintendent within whose district the alleged offense occurred, must take with him two traveling elders and

admonish the offending Bishop. In the case of a second offense, one of the Bishops, together with three traveling elders shall call upon him and reprehend and admonish him; or, if he still persists in his imprudence, he shall then be tried in the manner ordered above.

If it is alleged that immorality or imprudence has been committed without the bounds of any district, the district superintendent within whose district the Bishop resides shall proceed as hereinbefore specified.

When a Bishop disseminates, publicly or privately, doctrines contrary to the Articles of Religion and other Standards, the same process is to be observed. A complaint against the administration of a Bishop may be forwarded to the General Conference, and entertained there, provided that, in its judgment, the Bishop has had due notice that such complaint would be made.

The *Discipline* also provides that:

If charges of immoral conduct are made against a Missionary Bishop during the interval between the sessions of the General Conference, the Board of Foreign Missions shall appoint eleven of their number, being ministers, to investigate the case. A General Superintendent shall preside over the Committee of Investigation, and shall cause a correct record of the charges, specifications, proceedings, vote, and judgment in the investigation to be kept and transmitted to the next General Conference. If the Committee of Investigation find the charges sustained, they may suspend the accused Missionary Bishop until the meeting of the next General Conference.[1]

The foregoing conditions and manner of the trial, not being in the Constitution, are determinable by the General Conference, and therefore are matters of legislation.

The Address of the Bishops to the General Conference of 1844 contains the following:

There are several points in this system which are of primary importance, and on that account should be clearly understood. The office of a Bishop or Superintendent, according to our eccle-

[1] *Discipline*, 1908, pp. 227, 228.

siastical system, is almost exclusively executive; *wisely limited in its powers*, and guarded by such checks and responsibilities as can scarcely fail to secure the ministry and membership against any oppressive measures, even should these officers so far forget the sacred duties and obligations of their holy vocation as to aspire to be lords over God's heritage.

So far from being irresponsible in their office, they are amenable to the General Conference, not only for their moral conduct, and for the doctrines they teach, but also for the faithful administration of the government of the Church, according to the provisions of the *Discipline*, and for all decisions which they make on questions of ecclesiastical law. In all these cases this body [the General Conference] has *original jurisdiction*, and may prosecute to final issue in expulsion, *from which decision there is no appeal.*[1]

It is a notable fact that during the one hundred and twenty-eight years of the existence of the Methodist episcopacy, the trial of a Bishop has not been found necessary.

RESIGNATION OF BISHOPS

The first to propose the resignation of his episcopal office was Bishop Asbury. In his *Journal* Asbury wrote as follows:

I must confess I never felt so great a resolution to resign the General Superintendency as I do now; and if matters do not work more to my mind, it is highly probable I shall: my prayers and counsel will be turned this way until next General Conference.[2]

Jesse Lee, so far as he goes, is fully as reliable as the *Journals* of that early time, and frequently where he differs from them in the descriptive aspect of complicated business, he is suported by other leaders of Methodist legislation. In his *History of the Methodists* (page 265) he says:

Some time previous to the meeting of the preachers in that Conference [the third regular General Conference, which began

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, p. 154.
[2]Ibid., vol. ii, p. 416.

in Baltimore on the 6th of May, 1800, and continued until the 20th] Mr. Asbury had said that when they met he would resign his office as Superintendent of the Methodist connection, and would take his seat in the Conference on a level with the elders. He wrote to several of the preachers in different parts of the connection, and informed them of his intention, and engaged other preachers to write to their brethren in the ministry, and to inform them of his intention to resign. Withal he wrote his resignation with an intention to deliver it in to the Conference as soon as they met, and to have it read in their first meeting. He said he was so weak and feeble both in body and mind, that he was not able to go through the fatigues of his office.

When Conference met and proceeded to business, they first took up Mr. Asbury's case thus:

"*Q.* *Whereas*, Mr. Asbury has signified his intention of resigning his official station in our Church on account of his weakness of body, what is the sense of the Conference on this occasion?

"*A.* 1. The General Conference consider themselves under many and great obligations to Mr. Asbury for the many and great services which he has rendered to this connection.

"2. This Conference do earnestly entreat Mr. Asbury for a continuation of his services as one of the General Superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church as far as his strength will permit."

Mr. Asbury told the Conference that he was still feeble both in body and mind, but was much better than he had been for some time before; and, notwithstanding he had been inclined to resign his office, he now felt willing to do anything he could to serve the connection, and that the Conference might require of him.

The record in the *Journal* of the General Conference of 1800 differs from the report in Lee's *History*, but does not conflict with it, the former having more particulars.

In the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church but one elder, elected and ordained to the episcopacy, has resigned the office. Joshua Soule, having been elected in 1820, declined ordination. Wilbur Fisk and James R. Day also declined ordination and remained elders in their respective Conferences.

On the tenth of May, in the General Conference of 1852, three of the General Superintendents—Beverly Waugh, Thomas A. Morris, and Edmund S. Janes—presented a communication from Bishop Hamline tendering his resignation of the episcopal office. This was read to the Conference, as was a letter from his physician. His parchment of ordination to the episcopacy was also presented.

The Conference referred the communication to the Committee on the episcopacy, which on the following day, reported:

Whereas, It has pleased Almighty God deeply to afflict our beloved Bishop Hamline; and,

Whereas, He has been laid aside from active service thereby; therefore,

Resolved, 1. That we sincerely sympathize with our beloved Superintendent in his afflictions.

Resolved, 2. That, having fully examined his administration for the last four years, his administration and character be, and hereby are, approved.

Whereas, Bishop Hamline has tendered his resignation in the following language, to wit: "And now I think that the circumstances warrant my declining the office. Eight years ago, I felt that the Divine Spirit had strangely called me to the office. I now feel that the same Providence permits me to retire. I therefore tender my resignation, and request to be released from my official responsibilities, as soon as the way is prepared by the Episcopal Committee;" therefore,

Resolved, 3, That the resignation of Bishop Hamline of his office as a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, be, and the same hereby is accepted.[1]

The first and second resolutions were unanimously adopted. While the third resolution was pending J. A. Collins submitted the following, as a substitute for the said resolution:

Resolved, By the delegates of the several Annual Conferences, in General Conference assembled, that the Bishops be, and they hereby are, requested to return to Bishop Hamline his parchment,

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1852, vol. iii, pp. 41, 42.

accompanied by a communication informing him that this General Conference declines accepting his resignation as a Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and grants him unrestricted permission, and advises him to adopt and pursue such a course for the restoration of his health as his judgment may dictate.[1]

This resolution, after the yeas and nays had been called, and ordered, by a vote of 161 yeas to 10 nays, was laid on the table.

In the debate on the third resolution important speeches were made by men of greatest ability and experience.

Nathan Bangs said that no man had a higher respect for Bishop Hamline and the episcopal office than he, but he had other reasons than those assigned by the chairman of the Committee for approving the report. He thought that the present was a fair opportunity to set a precedent; and that he did "not consider the doctrine once a Bishop, always a Bishop *our* doctrine."

Durbin finished his remarks thus: "Bishop Hamline is competent to resign, and the Conference is competent to accept his resignation."

After the third resolution was adopted, the report was amended by appending the following resolution, submitted by J. A. Collins, and adopted by the Conference:

Resolved, By the delegates of the several Annual Conferences, in General Conference assembled, that the Bishops be, and hereby are, respectfully requested to convey to Bishop Hamline the acceptance of his resignation as a Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by the General Conference, accompanied with a communication expressing the profound regard of this body, that the condition of his health, has, in his judgment rendered it proper for him to relinquish his official position; and assure him also of our continued confidence and affection, and that our fervent prayers will be offered to the throne of grace that his health may be restored and his life prolonged to the Church.[2]

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1852, vol. iii, p. 42.
[2]Ibid., vol. iii, p. 43.

Bishops Waugh, Morris, and Janes closed the letter which they sent, together with a certified extract from the *Journal* of the General Conference, setting forth the acceptance of the resignation from his episcopal office, in these words: "Be assured, Rev. and dear Brother, that in retiring from the episcopacy, you bear with you our high esteem, our warm fraternal affections, and our best wishes for your future welfare."

His resignation divested Leonidas Lent Hamline of the title and authority of General Superintendent, and as he had lost his membership in the Ohio Conference when he was ordained Bishop, he now became simply a local preacher, and so described himself, a short time after his resignation, in a letter to a friend, which was made public. At his own request, and without formality, he was readmitted in 1852 to the Ohio Conference, and his name was placed in the answer to the question: "Who are the superannuated or worn-out preachers?"

THE LIFE TENURE OF BISHOPS

When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized Wesley's imperial power was transformed into influence; his will was no longer regarded as the edict of a sovereign but as the advice of a venerated father. Thereafter, absolute power inhering in the Conferences which met annually, they could at any time have suspended, deposed, or removed either Coke or Asbury. But in the absence of any such action it was assumed that the General Superintendents, or Bishops, would continue to hold office; and there were no annual reëlections of Bishops and no propositions for such. This being the common understanding, no distinct reference was made to the subject in the *Discipline.* But at the request of the General Conference of 1796 Bishops Coke and Asbury appended Explanatory Notes to the *Discipline* of that year. These

also had the sanction of the General Conference of 1800. They say that "The Bishops are obliged to travel till the General Conference pronounces them worn out or superannuated," and add:

> If an episcopacy has neither the dignity which arises from these worldly trappings [referring to those who "endeavor to preserve their dignity by large salaries, splendid dresses, and other appendages of pomp and splendor"], nor that infinitely superior dignity which is the attendant of labor, of suffering, and *enduring hardship for the cause of Christ, and of a venerable old age, the concluding scene of a life devoted to the service of God,* it instantly becomes the disgrace of a Church and the just ridicule of the world.

Those who established the Methodist Protestant Church recognized that this was the claim of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A large part of their contention was that they were opposed to the life tenure and to the theory of the episcopacy which the Church imbedded in the Constitution.

Nicholas Snethen, one of the most capable men of universal Methodism, in speaking of Asbury, says: "Whenever he was accused of partiality his standing reply was, 'I am set for the defense of the gospel,' meaning the traveling plan; but it so happened that this defense was identical with the defense *of the unlimited power which he held for life.*"

A passage from the speech of Leonidas L. Hamline, in the General Conference of 1844, as to the relation of the episcopacy to the powers of the General Conference will not bear close inspection. His words are:

> Our Church Constitution recognizes the episcopacy as an abstraction, and leaves this body to work it into a concrete form in any hundred or more ways we may be able to invent. We may make one, five, or twenty Bishops; and, if we please one for each Conference. We may refuse to elect another until all die or resign; and then, to maintain the episcopacy, which we are

bound to do, we must elect one at least. *As to his term, we may limit it at pleasure, or leave it undetermined.* But in this case is it undeterminable? Certainly not. The power which elected may then displace. In all civil constitutions, as far as I know, not to fix an officer's term is to suspend it on the will of the appointing power. Cabinet ministers and secretaries are examples. No officer, as such, can claim incumbency for life, unless such a term be authoritatively and expressly fixed upon.[1]

This was plausible, and being delivered with the oratorical power of a Webster, produced a great effect; but on testing it by the whole of the Third Restrictive Rule, it will appear that the assertions greatly exaggerate the powers of the General Conference. Hamline rested upon only one branch of the Rule. The General Conference "shall not change nor alter any part of our government so as to do away episcopacy."

The Methodist Episcopacy is *not* an "abstraction" but concrete and well defined. It can, indeed, be constitutionally "worked out" in any one of a possible hundred ways; but *only if they be such as not to "do away episcopacy."*

The second part of the rule confirms and elaborates the first. By it the word "episcopacy" is made equivalent to "General Superintendency," and to protect this from any vandal hand, the restriction adds *"or the plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency."*

To limit a Bishop to "each Conference" would destroy the existing "plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency."

To refuse to elect a Bishop "till all have resigned or died," and then to "elect but one" would surely defeat the operation of the *Itinerant General* Superintendency of the Church.

The analogy drawn between the method of determining the duration of the term of office in civil constitutions

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, pp. 129, 130.

and that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, is fatally defective. For, from the time the episcopal office was instituted, the life tenure was assumed, and there was no more need to specify it in the Restrictive Rule than for specifying the separate parts of the plan. It is taken for granted, although not definitely stated in any law of the Church, that a "traveling" preacher retains his membership in the Annual Conference until death, or until he withdraws, locates, or is located, deposed, or expelled. An attempt to exclude him, without trial or an opportunity to defend himself, would be contrary to law and equity.

To establish beyond reasonable doubt that the life tenure of Bishops was definitely understood and acknowledged by the General Conference of 1808, which at the very time was engaged in forming the Constitution, the copy of the certificate of ordination of William McKendree to the office of Bishop is here given:

Know all men by these presents, that I, Francis Asbury [Here follows an account of his own ordination by Dr. Coke and three elders.]

And now be it known to all whom it may concern, that William McKendree was ordained Deacon in the year 1790, and I did set him apart to the office of an Elder by my hands, in December of the year 1791. I have, this eighteenth day of May, one thousand eight hundred and eight, set apart William McKendree, by the laying on of hands and prayer, assisted by Freeborn Garrettson, Philip Bruce, Jesse Lee, and Thomas Ware, all of them Elders in the Church; to the office and work of a Superintendent or Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church (after he had been elected by a majority—i. e., 95 out of 128 members of General Conference) as a man whom we judge well qualified for the office of a Superintendent, and one of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and fit to preside over and feed the flock of Christ, *so long as his spirit, practice, and doctrine is such as becometh the Gospel of Christ*, and *he shall submit to the Discipline and Order of the said Methodist Episcopal Church in America.*

And I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this eighteenth of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eight.

FRANCIS ASBURY,
JESSE LEE,
FREEBORN GARRETTSON,
THOMAS WARE,
PHILIP BRUCE.

From the election of Francis Asbury to the office of Bishop until the present time the Church has proceeded upon the assumption that a Bishop—unless he should of his own motion resign—is elected for life, or good behavior, "although if he be enfeebled in body or mind, he may be superannuated, but still bears the title of his office, and is supported by the funds from which the support of the effective Bishops is drawn."

Superannuation does not come within the Third Restrictive Rule. It is determined by the General Conference as is superannuation of members of the Annual Conference. A Bishop may ask to be superannuated, as did Stephen M. Merrill, or the General Conference may relieve from work such Bishops as, in its judgment, come rightly under the provision for the same. In either case they may have such functions and honors as are set forth under the title, "Superannuated Bishops," in *Discipline* of 1908.

The utility of this plan is confirmed by its working, especially when compared with the growth of denominations which are without it, or do not possess in a large degree its equivalent. The detailed history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and other Methodist bodies, whose episcopacy has a life tenure, confirms its inestimable value.

Were Bishops chosen for a limited term, the number of elections would be greatly increased, reëlections would be thought necessary to a vindication, and scheming combinations be held constantly in view. Bishops would

find it impossible to keep out of controversies, which would materially weaken their influence, and, being unable to visit within a limited period the entire connection, they would rarely lose their original sectional sympathy. Some, if not all, Bishops, knowing that every disappointed minister or Church would have the power to combine with others against their reëlection, would be made timid in their work.

As ministers elected to the episcopacy are of mature years, and there is no office so high or permanent to tempt ambition, the life tenure guarantees a larger average of impartiality, in dealing with pastors and Churches, than could reasonably be expected under an episcopacy subject to a time limit.

The General Superintendency, *with the life tenure,* is the only connectional position of permanence in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and is therefore its most revered office. It maintains the stability of the denomination and its uniformity in operation.

Successive General Conferences do not consist of the same members, although a minority, by the favor and will of their constituents, may be members of several. Each Conference is created, performs its work, and dies; but the General Superintendency survives the birth, tenure, and dissolution of General Conferences, and is preëminently qualified to preserve and transmit the traditions of the Church throughout the generations.

The reverence with which the life tenure invests the Bishop is invaluable in a country such as the United States, and especially in a Church which puts forth no prelatical claims.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Third Restrictive Rule (*Continued*)

MISSIONARY BISHOPS

For many years much difficulty was encountered in conducting the Mission in Africa—the first foreign Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The distance was great, the climate dangerous, and the expense, necessary for a Bishop to visit the field, onerous. A resolution to enlarge the Third Restrictive Rule so as to authorize the ordination of a Missionary Bishop was made in the General Conference of 1852, but was lost by 73 to 87. The subject, on motion of Durbin, corresponding secretary of Missions, was indefinitely postponed. In 1853 Bishop Levi Scott visited Africa, and after making a thorough inspection, returned with a firm conviction that the Mission could not prosper except under local episcopal superintendence.

The other Bishops, agreeing with their colleague's views, devoted a part of their Episcopal Address in 1856 to the subject. In due time the Committee on Missions introduced the subject in the concrete as follows:

> *Resolved*, That we recommend the appointment of a Missionary Bishop who shall reside in Liberia, on the western coast of Africa, or in its vicinity, having episcopal jurisdiction in Africa only.[1]

On this resolution a debate followed, incisive, comprehensive, and worthy of the issue. Quigley inquired if the resolution would not conflict with that part of the Third Restrictive Rule which provides for the perpetuity of a *General Superintendency.* He set forth that they only wished to make a temporary arrangement which

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1856, vol. iii, p. 56.

would look forward to the establishment of an independent Church in Africa. The redoubtable Collins opposed the resolution, declaring it would "establish a diocesan episcopacy and destroy the Itinerant General Superintendency," and denied that the jurisdiction of the Methodist Episcopal Church was confined to the United States. He exclaimed: "Is Africa in the United States? Was Canada in the United States when it was in connection with us? Was Texas in the United States when it existed as the Lone Star Republic? The Methodist Episcopal Church can extend its ecclesiastical jurisdiction anywhere throughout the globe." He averred that he had no objection to electing a Bishop to go to Africa, but never would he give his vote for the election of a man whose jurisdiction was to be limited to Africa. He moved to strike out the part which limited the jurisdiction of the Bishop to Africa alone.

Durbin said the Constitution was to be interpreted partly by the history and the circumstances of the times, and we must interpret an article under the rule of necessity. "In the providence of God the time may come when we shall need a Missionary Conference in India, China, and other places, and our Bishops would not visit these places."[1] He then read the following from the Bishops' Address:

> Two points are clear to us: first, that episcopal authority on the spot is very desirable for the interest of the Mission in Liberia; secondly, that it cannot be regularly furnished from this country without embarrassing our home work. How it may best be supplied is for you to determine. Three modes have been suggested: first, for the General Conference to appoint a Bishop, and send him to organize them as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Africa; second, to let them organize themselves, elect their Bishop, and send him to us for ordination; third, to appoint a Missionary Bishop to take charge of that work, we retaining

[1]The great man's prophetic instinct failed him here.

jurisdiction over it. As this subject has received much attention from you heretofore, we shall not dwell upon it; but we trust you will be able to make such provision as will secure the best interests of all concerned. But whatever disposition may be made of the case, we hope the brethren of Liberia will never cease to receive our Christian sympathy, and that the missionary dividend will be continued to them as long as they need and properly use it.[1]

Durbin continued: "The Bishops do not suggest which of these modes is the best, but they would not have proposed them if they had supposed either of them would be an infraction of the Constitution." He closed his speech by saying that he had no doubt whatever in regard to the authority. Hosmer "undertook to answer the constitutional argument of Collins." Slicer made a vigorous attack upon the proposition, stating that there had already been *three* attempts in as many Conferences to carry this measure and he was astonished that it was brought up again.

Hiram Mattison tried to show, as Durbin had done, that it could be done without changing the Constitution. Osbon said "it was not a constitutional question at all." George R. Crooks said the Restrictive Rule should be construed strictly, fairly, with reference to the intentions of its framers, and they *certainly only had this continent in their minds.*

Cartwright declared that the "episcopate is an office and not an order, and an office that can be executed everywhere." He held that "the doctrine that the General Conference can elect a Bishop for a particular locality is the legitimate offspring of Congregationalism and diocesan episcopacy." He said that he would favor voting for a man for Africa, but not while the Church *there* was an integral part of the Church *here.*

F. G. Hibbard said if the case was of so much impor-

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1856, vol. iii, p. 198.

tance as to make necessary a change in the Constitution, there was plenty of time for deciding. He referred to the *Discipline* and proposed to take the incipient steps by a two-thirds vote in favor of amending the Third Restrictive Rule.

J. S. Porter moved that "the brethren in Africa elect their Bishop to be independent of our jurisdiction," and that "the Missionary Society should be at liberty to make appropriations to Liberia as heretofore."

Collins withdrew his amendment; and the whole subject was referred back to the committee. The next day the committee reported a recommendation to the several Annual Conferences to alter the paragraph by adding, "after the word 'superintendency,' in the fourth line, 'but may appoint a Missionary Bishop or Superintendent for any of our foreign missions, limiting his episcopal jurisdiction to the same respectively.'" This went over until the next day. When the debate was reopened, Heman Bangs argued for an independent Church in Africa. "It had long been nursed; and if a mother nursed and lead her child too long, he will not be able to stand and walk alone." He moved as a substitute "that our members in Africa be authorized to form an independent Church, and that should they do so and elect an elder to the Superintendency, our Bishops might ordain him."

Durbin emphasized the difficulty of this, and showed that the proposed form provided for cases which may arise hereafter, so that, should missions in China, India, or Germany be organized into separate Conferences, they may have the benefit of it.

Bishop Levi Scott announced as his deliberate judgment, that in the present state of affairs in Africa, they should have a white Superintendent. James Floy opposed the report, and "objected to a white Bishop. Colored men must do the work in Africa that is done at all."

Norval Wilson thought it premature and ridiculous, to elect a Bishop for twenty elders and twelve hundred members.

When the vote was taken by yeas and nays, the report was found to be adopted by 159 to 27; and by vote the Bishops were requested to present the resolution to the several Annual Conferences for their concurrence. Also the Conference resolved that, should the Bishops ascertain that the Annual Conferences had passed the measure by the requisite majority, "then they [the Bishops] are hereby authorized to act under its authority if necessary."

To complete the action, the General Conference passed this statesmanlike resolution:

Resolved, That the following principles shall regulate the administration in relation to Missionary Bishops during the coming four years, namely:

1. A Missionary Bishop shall reside (with his family, if he have one) in the particular mission field assigned him, and he shall perform all the duties of a Bishop in said district, to which his jurisdiction shall be exclusively limited.

2. Should he cease to reside in said mission field, he shall exercise no episcopal powers, and shall become a member of the Annual Conference from which he was elected.

3. His amenability shall be as in the case of other Bishops, except that the testimony taken before the Investigating Committee shall be in writing, and upon this testimony, and upon such further testimony as may be taken prior to the session of the General Conference, on proper notification of the parties, shall the case be determined by the General Conference.

4. The support of a Missionary Bishop while in his work, or in case of failure of health, and the provision for his family in case of death, shall be furnished in the same manner as in the case of other missionaries.[1]

The requisite number of the Annual Conferences having concurred with the General Conference, the Bishops reported to the General Conference of 1860 that "the Liberia Mission Annual Conference having elected the

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1856, vol. iii, p. 177.

Rev. Francis Burns, an elder in good standing in said Conference, to the office of Bishop, and our Board being satisfied of these facts, Bishops Janes and Baker [the concurrence of their colleagues having been previously given] assisted by several elders, did ordain Francis Burns." Bishop Burns wrought wondrously, but his health failed four years after his ordination. He hurried away to this country, but died soon after his arrival.

The General Conference of 1864 authorized the election and ordination of a successor, and the Liberia Conference chose the Rev. John Wright Roberts. He was ordained in New York on June 20, 1866, and became an acknowledged leader in the Mission and in important civil affairs in Liberia, but died in January, 1875, with the "entire Conference at his side."

No successor was ordained until the General Conference of 1884, when William Taylor was elected, he being at that time a lay delegate from India. But as he had long been a traveling preacher in orders, the Conference considered him eligible. The General Conference of 1888 elected James M. Thoburn Missionary Bishop for India.

That body enacted rules and stated various principles governing Missionary Bishops and their relations to the General Superintendents. Subsequently several Missionary Bishops have been elected. Such regulations are not constitutional but legislative, and as they were made by the General Conference, so they may be changed.

The general rights of the Missionary Bishops are covered by the addition to the Third Restrictive Rule, which became operative after the action of the General Conference of 1856, and the concurrence of the Annual Conferences, and which was first introduced into the *Discipline* of 1860.

CHAPTER XXIX

Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Restrictive Rules, and the Proviso for Change of Restrictive Rules

FOURTH RESTRICTIVE RULE

"The General Conference shall not revoke nor change the General Rules of the United Societies."

These rules were published by John Wesley, and signed by John and Charles Wesley under date of May 1, 1743, and were adopted without alteration by the first Methodist societies in America. They were first published in the *Discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1789; and by that time, certain minor changes had been made, and Wesley's historical introduction omitted. It is not necessary to discuss these, except where they relate to fundamental principles.

As the rules came from the hands of the Wesleys, the command on "Drinking" reads thus: "Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, except in cases of extreme necessity." As it appears in 1789 the phrase, "unless in cases of extreme necessity" is omitted; but in the *Discipline* of 1790 it was in substance replaced, as follows: "Drunkenness, or drinking spirituous liquors, unless cases of necessity." The next year saw the introduction of the preposition "in" between "unless" and "cases." In 1848 Wesley's rule was restored exactly as it was one hundred and five years before.

In Wesley's original Rules, slavery was not mentioned; but in the *Discipline* of 1789 the following was inserted: "Buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them." In 1792 "souls of" was omitted, and in 1808 it was changed to the

"buying and selling of men, women, and children with an intention to enslave them."

In 1864, and the Annual Conferences supervening, the paragraph on slavery in the General Rules was changed to "Slaveholding, buying or selling slaves."[1]

Wesley's historical introduction was reinserted in 1792, simply substituting the third person for the first and inserting Wesley's name.

FIFTH RESTRICTIVE RULE

They shall not do away the privilege of our ministers or preachers of trial by a committee and of an appeal; neither shall they do away the privileges of our members of trial before the society or by a committee of the people.

This rule was subjected to only one alteration until 1884, when the phrase "The General Conference" was substituted for the word "They"; and since the revision of the Constitution as a whole, it reads:

The General Conference shall not deprive our ministers of the right of trial by the Annual Conference, or by a select number thereof, nor of an appeal; nor shall it deprive our members of the right of trial by a committee of members of our Church, nor of an appeal.

The General Conference, however, has the right to modify methods of procedure according to its wisdom and will, provided these essentials are undisturbed or are changed in a constitutional way.

SIXTH RESTRICTIVE RULE

This restriction, when first adopted was:

They shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern, nor of the Chartered Fund, to any purpose other than for the benefit of the traveling, supernumerary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and children.

[1]This subject is further treated.

With the exception of changing "They" to "The General Conference," and "or" to "nor," this restriction remained as it was originally formed until the revision of the Constitution, by which it was made to read:

> The General Conference shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern, nor of the Chartered Fund, to any purpose other than for the benefit of the traveling, supernumerary, and superannuated preachers, their wives, widows, and children.

For many years the Bishops and needy traveling preachers were supported from the produce of the Book Concern; and this money was also appropriated to paying the expenses of the General Conference. But after much discussion, the Bishops are now supported by a special fund, raised for the purpose; and the expenses of the General Conference are provided for in a similar manner. It is recognized without dissent that the traveling preachers, and the supernumerary and superannuated preachers, their wives, widows, and children have a claim upon the produce of the Book Concern. Certain legislation, however, which is recognized as within the authority of the General Conference, prevents the misapplication of the funds.

The Chartered Fund, at its birth, was expected to become of great value; but its name was against it. Enthusiasm was not maintained, and only for a short time did it receive funds.[1]

THE PROVISO

The method provided by the Constitution for repealing, altering, or adding to the Restrictive Rules was originally:

> *Provided*, nevertheless, that upon the joint recommendation of all the Annual Conferences, then a majority of two thirds of the General Conference succeeding shall suffice to alter any of the above restrictions.

[1] At present it disburses to each Conference $30 annually.

There were serious difficulties in such a plan. Under that Rule, it was possible for *one* Conference—and that the smallest—to countervail the will of the whole Church and prevent all change. Further, as the proposition to change the Constitution must be first voted upon in the Annual Conferences, however great an emergency might arise, it could not, in some cases, be met for four years, unless a special General Conference were called.

An illustration of the first difficulty mentioned, is given by Bangs, who says:

> A recommendation had been sent the rounds of the Annual Conferences requesting them to empower the General Conference of 1828 to diminish the number of delegates. This recommendation passed all the Annual Conferences except the Philadelphia; and as it required *all* the Conferences to concur before the alteration could be made by the General Conference, the measure was defeated by the nonconcurrence of this single Annual Conference. It was thus that we all began to feel the pressure of the yoke which had been imposed upon us by the General Conference of 1808, by which we were compelled to submit to the burden until permitted to relieve ourselves by the concurrence of *all* the Conferences in the Union. This unwise provision put it completely in the power of a very small minority to rule the whole body on any question arising out of the Restrictive Rules. From such a grievous yoke, "which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear," the General Conference of 1828 made an effort to break loose.[1]

Wilbur Fisk proposed a measure of relief, which, as adopted by the General Conference, was as follows:

> *Resolved*, That this General Conference respectfully *suggest* to the several Annual Conferences the propriety of recommending to the next General Conference so to alter and amend the Rules of our *Discipline*, by which the General Conference is restricted in its powers to make rules and regulations for the Church, commonly called the Restrictive Rules, as to make the proviso at the close of the said Restrictive Rules, No. 6, read thus:
>
> "*Provided*, nevertheless, that upon the concurrent recommen-

[1] *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. iv, p. 103.

dation of three fourths of all the members of the several Annual Conferences who shall be present and vote on such recommendation, then a majority of two thirds of the General Conference succeeding shall suffice to alter any of such regulations excepting the first Article.

"And, also, whenever such alteration or alterations shall have first been recommended by two thirds of the General Conference, so soon as three fourths of the members of the Annual Conferences shall have concurred, as aforesaid, with such recommendation, such alteration or alterations shall take effect."[1]

In the General Conference of 1832 the Committee on Itinerancy reported the result of its submission to the several Annual Conferences, stating, that the "resolutions have passed all the Annual Conferences in full and due form, with the exception of the Illinois, where we find some want in the formality, not sufficient, however, in the judgment of your committee, to alter or set aside the principle."[2]

The subject was postponed and was taken up for final discussion and vote on the 10th of May, when the report of the Committee on Itinerancy was again read, and also the following communication in writing from the delegates of the Illinois Conference:

We, the delegates from the Illinois Annual Conference, do hereby certify that we do all cordially concur in the above assurance.[3]

The General Conference evidently considered this sufficient, for the resolution concerning the change in the Proviso was unanimously adopted, and though the proceedings were not quite regular, there is no record of any objection to it at that time or since.[4]

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1828, vol. i, pp. 353, 354.

[2]Ibid., *Journal*, 1832, vol. i, pp. 377, 378.

[3]Ibid., *Journal*, 1832, vol. i, p. 383.

[4]In order to learn just what the informality in the action of the Illinois Conference was, the Rev. Christian Galeener, secretary of that Conference, at the request of Dr. Neely, carefully examined the *Journal*, but could find no mention of the subject, and so wrote him, January 9, 1891.

At the same time that the alteration in the Proviso for changing the method of altering any of the restrictions was effected, an addition, equivalent to another Restrictive Rule, was made. There were inserted into the Proviso, the words "Excepting the first Article." This is a limit upon the Proviso, which would appear to prevent, by any means whatever, any change in our Articles of Religion and the establishing of any Standards or rules of doctrine "contrary to our present existing Standards." But this is not the case.

Before this alteration was made the Annual Conferences and the next succeeding General Conference could destroy, modify, or enlarge *every one* of the Restrictive Rules. The fact that it was Constitutional to insert, in the Proviso for amendment, the words "excepting the first Article" demonstrates that, had they been placed there at the first, it would have been constitutional to remove them. Therefore, by the General Conference and the constitutional votes of the members of the Annual Conferences, and, at the present time, the votes of the Lay Electoral Conferences, the words could be removed, and that having been done, the First Restrictive Rule could then be altered by the same method as any of the others.

Some who feared that, under this Rule, our Standards of doctrine could be easily mutilated, have tried to prove that the First Restrictive Rule could be changed *only* under the old law; that is, if *all* the Annual Conferences by a majority vote should agree to change the said Rule, and the ensuing General Conference should ratify the same by a vote of two thirds. That method was annihilated and another put in its place, and the idea that it could be called from its grave in which it had lain for half a century is without support.

The Rule as it was enacted in 1808 bore the same rela-

tion to the Proviso for changing the Restrictive Rules as did the Rule protecting the episcopacy or any other Restrictive Rule. Now, the Articles of Religion and "our present existing and established Standards" are more safely protected than any other part of the Constitution.

CANADIAN METHODISM'S SEPARATION FROM THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE UNITED STATES

CHAPTER XXX

Separation of Canadian Methodism from the Methodist Episcopal Church

The divers and diverse relations of early Canadian Methodism to the Methodist Episcopal Church became intricate to such a degree as to involve constitutional questions of vital interest and great difficulty. A broad sketch is needed to render clear the issues and explain the final action taken.

In the province of Canada a few local preachers represented Methodism before 1789. William Losee appears in the Minutes of that year, stationed, under Freeborn Garrettson, presiding elder, with David Kendall on the Lake Champlain Circuit. Losee had kindred in Upper Canada, and went among them preaching the gospel. Stevens says the tradition is that Losee received permission from Garrettson in the winter of 1789-90 to "range at large," seeking a more eligible field. This is highly probable, as the circuit named "Lake Champlain" had not been successful, and in 1790 was abandoned. It is certain that Losee formed classes, and returned to the Conference with petitions for his reappointment, and the next year was regularly stationed in Canada. He is recognized in the Minutes of 1790 as remaining "on trial," but there is no station in connection with his name in the Minutes of that year. In 1791 he was admitted into full connection and appointed to Kingston, Canada.

STEADY PROGRESS

The spirit of Methodism and its preachers was responded to by many; and by 1799 there was, in Canada,

a presiding elder's district with four preachers. Between that period and 1810 the preachers designated for Canada were frequently transferred from one Annual Conference to another. Those in Lower Canada were always related to a different Conference from those in Upper Canada; but all Methodists were always connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church until 1812, when war broke out between the United States and England.

Two years before that event the Genesee Annual Conference had been organized, and the preachers in Canada were chiefly comprehended within its boundaries; and by the opening of the Conference year 1812-13, all except those on the border circuits were connected with that Conference. Early in the war all the preachers for *Lower* Canada except two, being American citizens, returned to the United States. Thomas Burch, a British-born subject, took the place of Nathan Bangs in Montreal. The presiding elder of the *Upper* Canada District at that time had charge of seven circuits and twelve preachers. Several of these were American citizens, but only one went back to the United States on account of the war.

ENTANGLEMENTS ARISE

Quebec Methodists, having been destitute of the ordinances, applied to the chairman of the Nova Scotia District, which was not ecclesiastically connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church, for a supply, and, through his representations, a minister was sent from the British Conference, who arrived in 1814. The larger part of the society in Montreal expressed a similar wish, which was responded to; but the minority, desiring a preacher from the United States, received one, and for some time worshiped in a public hall.

On one plea or another, British Wesleyan preachers had established themselves in other parts of Lower Canada,

and as far west in Upper Canada as Niagara and Saint Catherines, and various important stations between.

Under these circumstances the British Conference sent to the General Conference of 1816 a letter to the effect that the Methodist Episcopal Church should vacate divers stations and surrender them to the British missionaries.

The reasons for this proposition were: the relative situation of the inhabitants of Montreal and Canada to England, the fact that there was a misunderstanding between British missionaries and the American presiding elder for Lower Canada, and because a considerable part of the money for erecting the chapel and house in Montreal had been raised in England. The General Conference, however, declared that it "appears, from written and verbal communications, that it is the desire of the great majority of the people in Upper and Lower Canada to be supplied, as heretofore, with preachers from the United States." And "these things being duly considered, together with the contiguity of those provinces to the western and northern parts of the United States," the following resolutions were submitted:

Resolved, 1. That we cannot, consistently with our duty to the societies of our charge in the Canadas, give up any part of them, or any of our chapels in those provinces, to the superintendence of the British connection.

Resolved, 2. That a respectful letter be addressed to the London Methodist Missionary Society, explaining the reasons for the above resolution.[1]

This letter requested "that the preachers of each connection might be permitted to .occupy in peace their respective fields of labor."

DIFFICULTIES GROW MORE PERSISTENT

Grave difficulties then arose between the Wesleyan Church of England and the Methodist Episcopal Church

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 151, 152.

of the United States—difficulties which were not settled to any degree until the General Conference of 1820, and then only apparently. At this General Conference numerous memorials and petitions from the several circuits in Upper Canada were presented. They protested against the interference of the British missionaries, and prayed that " they might still be supplied with the ministry and ordinances of religion by the American Conference."

After an unusually careful consideration of the subject, several resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, By the delegates of the Annual Conferences in General Conference assembled, 1. That it is the duty of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church to continue their episcopal charge over our societies in the Canadas, except Quebec.

Resolved, etc., 2. That the following address be sent to brethren in Canada:

"DEAR BRETHREN: We sincerely deprecate those evils of which you complain, and which have grown out of the conduct of the missionaries sent by the British Conference to labor in Canada. Confiding, however, in the integrity of that Conference, and believing they have been misled by partial and erroneous statements sent out by interested persons in Canada, we still hope that the existing embarrassment will be removed, and that an amicable adjustment of this unhappy affair may be brought about. "

The fourth resolution was:

That this Conference address the British Conference on the subject of a mutual exchange of delegates, as representatives of the one Conference to the other.

The sixth resolution provided:

That the episcopacy, by and with the advice and consent of the General Conference, if they judge it expedient prior to the sitting of the next General Conference, shall have authority to establish an Annual Conference in Canada.[1]

Later the first resolution was amended by adding:

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 213-215.

Provided, nevertheless, that the episcopacy shall have authority to negotiate with the British Conference respecting Lower Canada in the way and manner they shall see fit.[1]

Affairs in Canada, in 1824, were not drifting nor being brought to any conclusion satisfactory to the Canadian brethren; and the Methodists in Upper Canada were desirous of having an *independent* Church reorganization in that province. The result of the different deliberations upon this subject was contained in the resolutions:

That there shall be a Canada Conference under our superintendence, bounded by the boundary lines of Upper Canada.

And

That a respectful representation be made to the British Conference of those points in the late agreement between the two connections which have not, on the part of their missionaries, been fulfilled.[2]

In the Conference of 1828 a petition from the Canadian Annual Conference was presented by William Ryerson, "praying that it may be separated from the jurisdiction of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States." Upon this Bangs observes:

This desire, however, did not arise out of any dissatisfaction with the conduct of the brethren in the United States toward them, but chiefly from the opposition evinced by statesmen in Upper Canada to their being subject to the control of a foreign ecclesiastical head, over which the civil authorities of Canada could exercise no jurisdiction; and as most of the preachers in Canada were formerly from the United States, and all of them subject to an ecclesiastical jurisdiction in another nation, it was contended by the Canadian authorities that they had no sufficient guarantee for their allegiance to the crown of Great Britain, and to the civil regulations of Canada; and hence the Methodist ministers in Canada had suffered civil disabilities, and had not been allowed to celebrate the rites of matrimony, not even for their own members.[3]

[1] General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, p. 237.
[2] Ibid., vol. i, p. 302.
[3] *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. iii, p. 388.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

The controlling resolution passed by the Conference of 1828 was:

If the Annual Conference in Upper Canada at its ensuing session, or any succeeding session previously to the next General Conference, shall definitely determine on this course, and elect a General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church in that province, this General Conference do hereby authorize any one or more of the General Superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, with the assistance of any two or more elders, to ordain such General Superintendent for the said Church in Upper Canada, provided always, that nothing herein contained be contrary to or inconsistent with the laws existing in the said province; and provided that no such General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Upper Canada, or any of his successors in office, shall at any time exercise any ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatever in any part of the United States, or of the territories thereof; and provided also, that this article shall be expressly ratified and agreed to by the said Canada Annual Conference, before any such ordination shall take place.[1]

Bangs enters into an argument to prove that this resolution was *constitutional.* He acknowledges that when the subject first came up for consideration, and the report was approved by the vote of the General Conference, it had

no constitutional right to set off the brethren in Upper Canada as an independent body, because the terms of the compact by which we existed as a General Conference made it obligatory on us, *as a delegated body, to preserve the union entire*, and not *to break up the Church into separate fragments.* Hence to grant the prayer of the memorialists, by a solemn act of legislation, would be giving sanction to a principle, and setting a precedent for future General Conferences, of a dangerous character—of such a character as might tend ultimately to the dissolution of the ecclesiastical body, which would be, in fact and form, contravening the very object for which we were constituted a delegated Conference, this object being the *preservation*, and not a

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, p. 406.

destruction or *dissolution* of the *union*. These arguments appeared so forcible to the first committee, and to the Conference, that the idea of granting them a separate organization on the principle of abstract and independent legislation was abandoned as altogether indefensible, being contrary to the constitutional compact.[1]

Bangs also conceded that since the "Canadian brethren so earnestly requested," and pleaded "with so much zeal, and even with most pathètic appeals to our sympathies" for some method of granting their wish, the Conference "looked about for a way to satisfy them."

Emory suggested that, as the preachers who went to Canada in the first instance as *missionaries*, and afterward, when additional help was needed,

> Bishop Asbury and his successors asked for *volunteers*, not claiming the *right* to send them, in the same authoritative manner in which they were sent to the different parts of the United States and Territories, they had a perfect right to request us to withdraw our services, and we the same right to withhold them.

The Conference then concluded, that

> it seemed perfectly compatible with *our* powers as a delegated Conference and *their* privileges as a part of the same body, thus connected by a *voluntary* and *conditional* compact, either expressed or implied, to dissolve the connection subsisting between us, without any dereliction of duty or forfeiture of privilege on either part. *It was on this principle alone that the above agreement was based.*[2]

A FINAL AND SATISFACTORY ADJUSTMENT

In the General Conference of 1828 the Canadian Methodists made a claim on a portion of the Book Concern. The members of the Conference, with few exceptions, agreed that the claim was just. But the prevailing opinion was that there were constitutional difficulties in the way; and the matter was postponed to the General

[1] *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. iii, p. 390.
[2] Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. iii, p. 391.

Conference of 1832. That body, after much, and peculiarly able, discussion, resolved that "an apportionment of the property of the Concern ought to be made to them. But as constitutional difficulties are believed to be in the way of such appropriation by this Conference, because they have not been instructed on the subject by their constituents, according to the Proviso at the end of the restrictive regulations," they therefore passed a resolution by which "if three fourths of all the members of the several Annual Conferences, who shall be present and vote shall concur," the apportionment might be made. The proposal sent down to be voted upon was:

1. The dividend shall be made according to the proportion that the number of traveling preachers in the Canada Conference bears to the number of traveling preachers in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, including in both estimates the superannuated preachers and those on trial.

2. The amount of property to be divided shall be reckoned according to the first and largest estimate of stock in the late exhibit of the Book Agents, namely, $448,745.70½, deducting therefrom debts due from the Concern, annuities, etc., and leaving an amount to be divided of about $413,566.93½.

3. That the Canada Conference shall receive a full proportion of the unsalable and salable stock, and of the bad as well as good debts, considering the stock and debts in Canada that belong to the Book Concern as so much of the dividend already paid, but to be estimated as forming a part of the General Book Concern, according to the manner of estimating the whole amount.[1]

The Annual Conferences debated this plan, for and against, with great zeal; and in the General Conference of 1836 the Committee on Canada Affairs reported on the submission as follows:

In favor of concurring with the General Conference of 1832, *five hundred and ninety-nine; against* concurring, *seven hundred and fifty-eight.* Whole number of votes taken, one thousand three hundred and fifty-seven. This statement shows that in-

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 404, 405.

stead of three fourths of the votes being in favor of obviating the constitutional restriction, as the *Discipline* in such cases requires, a large majority have decided against it. And this your committee regard as final and conclusive *against* these claims.[1]

In the meantime the Canada Conference had appointed its president, the Rev. William Lord, and the Rev. William Case to negotiate its claims in the Book Concern, giving them "full powers to bring an amicable termination." Therefore the General Conference instructed the Book Agents to sell the Catalogue books to the Canadian Conference at forty per cent discount from the retail price, Sunday school publications at eighteen per cent, and that these and some other subordinate privileges should continue until 1852.

Bangs, the veteran missionary to Canada, had the exquisite pleasure of writing in his *History:*

Thus was this long-pending question brought to an amicable termination on such terms as to preserve and perpetuate the harmony and brotherly affection heretofore subsisting between the connections.[2]

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, p. 461.

[2]*History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. iv, p. 239.

BISECTION OF THE CHURCH IN 1844–45

CHAPTER XXXI

The Bisection of the Church

Slavery from the very first was a troublesome and embroiling element in Methodism. It appears in the Rules and Regulations of 1780, in a sharp "disapprobation" of all who keep slaves; in 1783, in a threat to suspend local preachers who do so. In 1784 it was decreed, that all, who having been warned and yet "buy slaves to keep as slaves," shall be expelled, and that traveling preachers "who now have slaves and will not free them if the law allows, shall be no more employed." Later in 1784, there was added to the "Rules of our society" a complicated scheme of emancipation. Recognizing that "these rules form a new term of communion, anyone who will not obey them may peaceably withdraw; but he shall never partake of the Supper of the Lord with the Methodists," till he complies with the rule. Those who "buy or sell slaves, or give them away" are immediately to be expelled; "unless they buy them on purpose to free them."

But in 1785 the Annual Conferences found these last Rules would do harm, and they were suspended. This notice had the effect of an absolute repeal, and in the second edition of the *Discipline,* published in London in 1786, they entirely disappeared.

FIRST GENERAL RULE AGAINST SLAVERY

The *Discipline* of 1789 contains for the first time a "general rule" forbidding "The buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women, or children with an intention to enslave them."

The General Rules as framed by Wesley contained

nothing whatever with regard to slavery, and no evidence exists that the above "General Rule" was authorized by the Annual Conferences.

The General Conference of 1796 declared that it was "more than ever convinced of the great evil of the African slavery which exists in these United States"; it commanded the yearly Conferences, Quarterly Conferences, and also presiding elders and pastors, "to be exceedingly cautious what persons they admit to official stations in our Church; . and to require security of those who hold slaves for the emancipation of them." And also: "Every member of the society who sold a slave should, after full proof, be excluded the society."

Paragraphs were inserted in 1800 to the effect that if any of the traveling preachers "becomes an owner of a slave or slaves by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in the Church, unless he execute, if it be practicable, a legal emancipation of the said slaves." The Annual Conferences were directed to draw up addresses for the gradual emancipation of the slaves in those States in which no general laws had been passed for that purpose.

EXTRAORDINARY CHANGES

But as before, these stern decrees reacted, and in 1804 astonishing modifications were made. It was provided that the members of the societies in the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee should "be exempted from the operation of the above rules."

In 1808 the General Conference elided all of the section on slavery except the first two paragraphs, and passed a resolution authorizing "each Annual Conference to form their own regulations relative to buying and selling of slaves." There appears to have been no debate on the subject and by this legislation everything relating to

slaveholding among private members was stricken out. Bishop Asbury moved the extraordinary resolution "that there be one thousand forms of *Discipline* prepared for the use of the South Carolina Conference in which the *section and rule on slavery be left out.*" This motion apparently prevailed unanimously. A change was made in 1812 so that the paragraph should read:

Whereas, the laws of some of the States do not admit of emancipating of slaves, without a special act of the Legislature, the General Conference authorizes each Annual Conference to *form their own regulations* relative to buying and selling slaves.

In 1816, the following was enacted:

No slaveholder shall be eligible to any official station in our Church hereafter, where the laws of the State in which he lives will admit of emancipation, and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom.

In 1820 the provision that "Annual Conferences can form their own regulations about buying slaves" was stricken out.

ORGANIZED OPPOSITION TO SLAVERY

In the General Conferences of 1828 and 1832 there was no slavery legislation. But various ominous events had been occurring.

The New England Antislavery Society was organized in 1832, the first Methodist Abolition Society in 1833, and the American Antislavery Society the same year. At a convention in Philadelphia sixty-three abolitionists, representing eleven of the States, were present; among them William Lloyd Garrison and John G. Whittier. They lectured and distributed pamphlets, tracts, and leaflets, and by 1835 they had collected $35,000 to expend for issuing a million publications of various sorts, for the employment of fourteen lecturers, and for organizing five hundred auxiliary societies. The Ohio Annual Con-

ference in 1835 passed a resolution against abolition and antislavery societies. The Baltimore Conference in the next year declared itself convinced of the great evil of slavery, but was equally *opposed "in every part and particular to the proceedings of the abolitionists."*

The New England and New Hampshire Conferences organized societies in 1835 for the promotion of the *immediate* and *unconditional* abolition of slavery. Zion's Herald was opened to articles in favor of abolition, and published an appeal to the members of the New England and New Hampshire Conferences signed by Leroy Sunderland and several other ministers. This was answered in the same paper by a counter appeal written by D. D. Whedon, signed by Wilbur Fisk, Abel Stevens, Bishop Hedding, "Father" Taylor, and five others.

HEATED ACTION IN GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1836

Of the sixteen delegates elected by the New England and New Hampshire Conferences to the General Conference of 1836, fourteen were pronounced abolitionists. A memorial was presented, signed by two hundred ministers, asking for the restoration of the original rule on slavery. Another was signed by 2,284 lay members. There were many other petitions, all of which were referred to a committee.

The Conference sat in Cincinnati, and during its progress an abolition meeting was held in the city, which was attended by George Storrs and Samuel Norris, delegates from New Hampshire to the General Conference.

On May 11, Roszel, of the Baltimore Conference, moved that the committee appointed to draft a pastoral letter to the Church be instructed to take notice of the subject of abolition "that has so seriously agitated the different parts of our country, and that they let our preachers, members, and friends know that the General Conference

is opposed to the agitation of that subject, and will use all prudent means to put it down."[1] The next day, Roszel moved a preamble and resolutions censuring two members who were lecturing on the subject of abolition in Cincinnati. The debate following created much excitement, and when the voting took place the resolution of censure was adopted by 122 for and 11 against, and the resolution condemning "modern abolition" was adopted by a similar vote, as was the whole report. These are the resolutions:

Resolved, by the delegates of the Annual Conferences in General Conference assembled, 1. That they disapprove in the most unqualified sense the conduct of two members of the General Conference, who are reported to have lectured in this city recently upon and in favor of modern abolitionism.

Resolved, 2. That they are decidedly opposed to modern abolitionism, and wholly disclaim any right, wish, or intention to interfere in the civil and political relation between master and slave as it exists in the slave-holding States of this Union.

Resolved, 3. That the foregoing preamble and resolutions be published in our periodicals.[2]

After the General Conference of 1836 the Methodist abolitionists, being greatly wrought up by the censure of the two members and by the resolutions passed by the body, increased their activity. Those in the New England Conference in 1837, anticipating that the Bishop would refuse to put any motion involving slavery and abolition, determined to block all business and adjourn from time to time, and notified the Bishop of their purpose. As a peace measure he offered to allow them to adopt a respectful petition to the next General Conference. The Bishops presiding in other Annual Conferences refused in several instances to put motions relating to the subject; and the Bishop in the New Hampshire Conference

[1]General Conference *Journal*, vol. i, p. 443.
[2]Ibid., vol. i, p. 447.

stipulated six conditions before allowing the appointment of a committee on slavery, and these the Conference refused to accept.

THE APPEAL OF SILAS COMFORT

To the General Conference of 1840 Silas Comfort, a member of the Missouri Conference, appealed from a decision which had adjudged him guilty of maladministration in a trial for admitting the testimony of a colored member against a white one. When his case was taken up Bishop Roberts decided that the appeal ought not to be entertained by the General Conference. As it was the right of the Conference to determine such questions, a motion to entertain it was made, and prevailed. After a long debate, the Conference rejected the resolution before it, which affirmed the decision of the Missouri Conference. This was equal to reversing the Missouri decision. But the next day, by a vote of 74 to 46, the Conference

> *Resolved*, That it is inexpedient and unjustifiable for any preacher among us to permit colored persons to give testimony against white persons, in any State where they are denied that privilege in trials at law.[1]

Attempts were made to reconsider this resolution, and a compromise was finally effected in a series of resolutions. The first was that the Conference did not intend "to express or imply that the testimony of colored persons against white persons in Church trials, is either expedient or justifiable in any of the slaveholding States or Territories where the civil laws prohibit such testimony in trials at law," and also that "it is not the intention of the Conference to prohibit such testimony in Church trials in any of the States or Territories where it is the established usage of the Church to admit, and where, in the judgment of constitutional adjudicatories

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1840, vol. ii, p. 60.

of the Church, such testimony may be admitted with safety to the peace of society, and the best interests of all concerned." And the last resolution was, "That it is not the intention of this Conference, in either of the above cases, or in any action had by this body, to express or imply any distrust or want of confidence in the Christian piety or integrity of the numerous bodies of colored members under our pastoral care."[1]

Later in the year several distinguished ministers in the North were tried and censured by the Conference for promoting abolition.

While these proceedings were taking place in the North, conventions, equally excited and determined, were being held, and resolutions, fully as uncompromising, were being passed in the South, both in Church and State.

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1840, vol. ii, p. 109.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Bisection of the Church *(Continued)*

Very soon after the adjourning of the General Conference of 1840 secessions from the Church began in the North, which in the end resulted in the establishment of the Wesleyan Connection of America.

Extraordinary discussions now filled the press of the Church. To prevent the members from seceding, and to promote the cause of abolition, which they had espoused, the Methodists in various parts held numerous conventions. At one in Boston, January 18, 1843, it was resolved, that

> slaveholding is sin; that every slaveholder is a sinner, and ought not to be admitted to the pulpit or the communion; that the Methodist Episcopal Church is responsible for slavery within its pale.
>
> *Resolved*, That the only way to prevent entire dissolution among us as a Church is an entire separation from the South.

It was under such circumstances that the General Conference of 1844 convened in the city of New York, Bishops Soule, Hedding, Andrew, Waugh, and Morris being present.

Prior to the assembling of this Conference the Annual Conferences were asked to pass judgment on the proposition of the New England Conference to modify the general rule on slavery, so that it should read: "the buying or selling or holding men, women, or children as slaves except on purpose to free them." The votes in favor were very far from sufficient. Many memorials of traveling preachers and private members were sent to the General Conference, but only one in seven of the twenty-eight Annual Conferences asked for antislavery action.

Early in the session a Committee on Slavery, consisting of one member from each Annual Conference, was ordered.

THE APPEAL OF HARDING

The first great issue was the appeal of F. A. Harding, of the Baltimore Conference. Slaves had come into his possession by marriage, and he had been suspended from his ministerial standing for refusing to manumit them. The appeal was admitted, and William A. Smith, one of the ablest of the Southern debaters, represented the appellant. Collins, of Baltimore, supported the action of that Conference. Early, of Virginia, moved that the decision be reversed. Fifty-six voted in favor, but 117 against. "The president announced that this vote affirmed the decision of the Baltimore Conference." Capers appealed, but the chair was sustained by a vote of 111 to 53. New York, New England, Providence, Maine, New Hampshire, Troy, Black River, Oneida, Genesee, Erie, Pittsburgh, Ohio, North Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Baltimore Conferences voted unanimously to sustain the action of the Baltimore Conference. All of the Rock River but one voted to sustain; all of Illinois but three; all of the New Jersey but two, and all of the Philadelphia save three.

The Kentucky, Holston, Tennessee, Memphis, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, voted *unanimously* to reverse. Three of the four from Missouri did the same, and also one of the two from Texas; the other was a Northerner who had been a missionary in Texas and who returned at once to the North. This was a prophetic division: indicating cleavage on many issues.

THE SITUATION OF BISHOP ANDREW

A few days afterward Collins presented the following resolution:

Whereas, It is currently reported, and generally understood

that one of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church has become connected with slavery; and,

Whereas, It is due to this General Conference to have a proper understanding of the matter; therefore,

Resolved, That the Committee on the Episcopacy be instructed to ascertain the facts in the case, and report the results of their investigation to this body to-morrow morning.[1]

The Committee on the Episcopacy reported "that Bishop Andrew is connected with slavery," and presented a letter from the Bishop on the subject. In that he detailed that a lady had bequeathed to him a mulatto girl in trust that he should take care of her until she should be nineteen years of age, and then, with her consent, she was to be sent to Liberia; and that in case of her refusal he should keep her and make her as free as the laws of the State of Georgia permitted. She refused to go; and the laws of that State would not permit her emancipation; and she would not consent to leave the State. In that case he was a slaveholder legally, *but not of his own consent.*

He explained that five years ago the mother of his former wife had left to her daughter, *but not to him*, a Negro boy, and as his wife died without a will, the boy became his property. "Emancipation is impracticable in the State," but he said that "the boy shall be at liberty to leave the State whenever I [Bishop Andrew] shall be satisfied that he is prepared to provide for himself, or I can have sufficient security that he will be protected and provided for in the place to which he may go."

Also he informed the committee that he was married to his present wife in the preceding January, "she being at the time possessed of slaves, inherited from her former husband's estate, and belonging to *her*." Shortly after the marriage, *"being unwilling to become their owner, regarding them as strictly hers,* and *the law not permit-*

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, p. 58.

ting their emancipation," he secured them to her by a deed of trust. He said further, that these statements proved that he had neither *"bought* nor *sold* a slave," and that in the only two instances in which he was a legal slaveholder, "emancipation is impracticable"; and as to the slaves owned by his wife he had no legal responsibility in the premises, nor *could his wife emancipate them if she desired to do so.*[1]

GRIFFITH'S RESOLUTION REQUESTING BISHOP ANDREW TO RESIGN

Griffith, seconded by Davis, both of Baltimore, moved "that the *Rev. James O. Andrew be, and he is hereby affectionately requested to resign his office as one of the Bishops* of the Methodist Episcopal Church."[2] Griffith said that Bishop Andrew had by a voluntary choice placed himself in a position to embarrass himself by circumstances that rendered it impracticable to discharge the duties assigned to him; and that this was a *disqualification* and sufficient ground to ask him to resign.

Sandford, of New York, agreed with Griffith. Winans, of Mississippi, was not "prepared to deny" that the Conference had an abstract right, "with or without cause, to *request* any member of that body to retire from the episcopacy," or that any member had the right to argue in favor of the propriety of such a request. He added:

> If you pass this action in the mildest form in which you can approach the Bishop, you will throw every minister in the South *hors de combat.* You will cut us off from all connection with masters and servants, and will leave us no option but to be disconnected with your body.

Lovick Pierce indorsed this speech; Berryman, of Missouri, opposed the resolution as having "no sanction in the *Rules of Discipline."* Coleman, of Troy, characterized

[1]General Conference *Journal,* 1844, vol. ii, pp. 63, 64.
[2]Ibid., vol. ii, p. 64.

the step taken by Bishop Andrew in marrying a woman holding slaves as *"wonderfully unfortunate."* Stringfield, of Holston, opposed the resolution on the ground of indirection and inexpediency. He said: "If the Bishop be shuffled out of office, some one must be elected to fill his place; and such a one whoever he may be, will meet with as little favor in the South, as Andrew would, with all his disabilities, in the North." Crowder, of Virginia, essayed to show that no good result could follow from the resignation, and predicted a *division* of the Church, a *division of the United States*, and finally *"civil war* and far-reaching desolation will result from the course proposed."

Spencer, of Pittsburgh, replying to the inquiry, "What specific rule has he [Andrew] violated?" said, "The mere silence of the *Discipline* in regard to a particular case is no evidence that action in that case would be contrary to our rules."

THE SUBSTITUTE OF FINLEY AND TRIMBLE

A substitute for the resolution was moved by Finley and Trimble, of Ohio:

Whereas, The *Discipline* of our Church forbids the doing anything calculated to destroy our Itinerant General Superintendency; and,

Whereas, Bishop Andrew has become connected with slavery by marriage and otherwise, and this act having drawn after it circumstances which in the estimation of the General Conference will greatly embarrass the exercise of his office as an Itinerant General Superintendent, if not in some places entirely prevent it; therefore,

Resolved, That it is the sense of this General Conference that he desist from the exercise of this office so long as this impediment remains.[1]

Stephen Olin, after eulogizing Bishop Andrew, discussed the whole subject, and supported the substitute

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, pp. 65, 66.

as a *constitutional* measure, dishonorable to no one, unjust to no one, and expressed the hope that it would be sent forth with the solemn declaration of the Conference that it was not designed as a punishment or a censure, but merely as a prudential and expedient measure, calculated to avert great evils.

Drake, of Mississippi, maintained that in no vital principle did the substitute differ from the original resolution, though in the preamble he thought it preferable. He then suggested this resolution:

Whereas, There have been found difficulties of a serious nature in the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church exercising a General Superintendency; therefore,

Resolved, That the General Conference recommend to the episcopacy to assign to each Superintendent his sphere of labor for the next four years.

Slicer, of Baltimore, supported the Finley and Trimble substitute, thinking it milder than the other. George F. Pierce, of Georgia, delivered a powerful speech charging the other side with "practicing legerdemain." "They state abstract propositions of right, which no man will pretend to deny, and then deduce elaborate argumentations, and make them to bear on conclusions with which these conclusions have no more to do than the law of the tides has with the polar star." He denied that the argument of expediency had one half the force assigned to it. He predicted that in ten years or less, if the division should come, which he believed would come, "there will not be one shred of the distinctive peculiarities of Methodism left within the Conferences that depart from us. Episcopacy will be given up, presiding eldership will be given up, the itinerancy come to an end, and Congregationalism will be the order of the day."

Longstreet followed, and demonstrated that the proposed action would necessarily result in the separation

of the North and South. J. T. Peck antagonized G. F. Pierce point by point. Green, of Tennessee, spoke long and powerfully against these resolutions.

Hamline began his speech by proposing two questions: "Has the General Conference constitutional authority to pass these resolutions? and Is it proper or fitting that we should do it?" He argued that the Conference has the right under the Constitution first "from the genius of our polity in points which the most nearly resemble this," and "from the relations of the General Conference to the Church and to the episcopacy." "The General Conference is the fountain of all official executive authority." It was a wonderful address, perhaps in rhetoric and facility of speech; but he went beyond the principles. Had there been only the discussion of the powers of the episcopacy and the General Conference, if the Conference had not been under a burning heat—the majority the heat of abhorrence of slavery, and the minority the heat against what they considered an outrage upon their constituents, their States and homes, and upon their beloved Bishop Andrew—the majority of all the members would have considered the speech of Hamline as an exaggeration of the powers of the General Conference. As it was, his overdoing caused his opponents to exaggerate the powers of the episcopacy. The Northern members were determined to shake off the odium, incurred at home, of a Bishop personally connected with slaveholding, and the Southern members felt, that, under the circumstances, the Bishop was right, that the fiery abolition spirit and speeches were an attack upon them, and that the resolutions against the Bishop were contrary to the Constitution.

William A. Smith attacked Hamline with great force and pertinency, yet increasing the heat of his opponents.

Hamline having declined to interrupt Smith while on

the floor, now asked and obtained leave to explain. In doing this he made a declaration apparently unknown to many writers. It is this:

I never said, as Brother Smith affirms, that the administrative powers of this Conference are "absolute." I said they were "*supreme.*" "Absolute" means "*not bound.*" This Conference is bound in all its powers, whether legislative, judicial, or executive, by constitutional restrictions. "Supreme" means that while acting within its constitutional limits, its decisions are final and all-controlling.[1]

Collins submitted a compromise resolution, which, after a preamble, expressed the regret of the General Conference that Bishop Andrew had become connected with slavery; and in view of the fact that while thus circumstanced he could not perform the duties of his office acceptably to a large portion of the ministers and members of the Church, he was affectionately and earnestly requested to take the necessary measures to free himself from connection with slavery at the earliest period practicable within the ensuing four years.

BISHOP ANDREW DEFENDS HIMSELF

After this Bishop Andrew delivered an equally pertinent and pathetic address. He declared himself to be a slaveholder for conscience' sake; he believed the providence of God had thrown these creatures into his hands and held him responsible for their proper treatment. He said: "What can I do? I have no confession to make; I intend to make none. I stand upon the broad ground of the *Discipline* on which I took office." He terminated with these words:

The Conference can take its course; but I protest against the proposed action as a violation of the laws of the *Discipline*, and an invasion of the rights secured to me by that book. Yet let

[1]Debates in the General Conference of 1844, General Conference *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 145.

the Conference take the steps they contemplate; I enter no plea for mercy; I make no appeal for sympathy; indeed, I love those who sympathize with me, but I do not want it now. I wish you to act coolly and deliberately, and in the fear of God; but I would rather that the Conference would change the issue, and make the resolution to depose the Bishop, and take the question at once, for I am tired of it. The country is becoming agitated upon the subject, and I hope the Conference will act forthwith upon the resolution.[1]

[1]Debates in the General Conference of 1844, General Conference *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 150.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Bisection of the Church *(Continued)*

The address of Bishop Andrew affected his friends in the South sympathetically, as was natural, also not a few from other parts of the country; but the closing words seemed to many a note of defiance.

Finley defended his substitute. Winans rose to set forth the doctrine that the General Conference, if it took any action, was constitutionally confined to expulsion. He would not concede that it had power "to suspend, depose, or reprove a Bishop *without trial.*"

Peter Cartwright delivered a striking speech, in which he said it would be "a deplorable fix" if we had no power to touch a Bishop if he becomes unacceptable and unprofitable. Dunwody, of South Carolina, opposed the resolution on the ground of unscripturalness, unconstitutionality, and mischievousness.

Bishop Soule said that, in his deliberate opinion, the resolution "deposes Bishop Andrew without form or trial," and intimated that it would absolutely divide the Church, and that he knew that what he said might seal his (Soule's) fate.

Durbin spoke at much length, in which he referred to the deep feelings in his breast caused by the remarks of Bishop Soule, but said that "strong as were and are those feelings, they cannot stifle my conscience or darken my understanding." Capers took issue with Durbin in all his positions.

A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOPS

The next morning Bishop Waugh read to the Conference a communication from the Bishops proposing to defer action on the case of Bishop Andrew until the next

General Conference. Bishops Soule, Hedding, Waugh, and Morris stated their belief that "such a division of the work of the General Superintendency might be made, without any infraction of a constitutional principle, as would fully employ Bishop Andrew in those sections of the Church in which his presence and services would be welcome and cordial."[1]

Winans said that the Southern delegates were of one mind to entertain the proposition of the Superintendents. The communication was referred to a committee. The next morning before it reported Bishop Waugh said he desired his name to remain as he had signed it in the hope that it would "promote the future peace of the Church." Bishop Morris wished his name to stand "as a testimony that he had done what he could to preserve the unity and peace of the Church." Bishop Soule said that "he had not changed his views or convictions in any way. He wished his signature to *stand* on that document, which had now gone forth to the American people through a thousand mediums."[2]

But Bishop Hedding said that "he wished to withdraw his name from the Address of the Bishops, presented yesterday. He had not been argued or persuaded into signing it, but had attached his name of his own free will and accord, because he thought it would be a peace measure; but facts had come to his knowledge since which led him to believe that such would not be the case. Again: he thought it would be adopted without debate, but he was convinced now that it would give rise to much discussion, and therefore he wished to withdraw his name from the paper on the table."

The facts which caused Bishop Hedding to make so sudden a change, were not generally made known until

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, p. 76.

[2]Ibid., vol. ii, p. 81.

many years later, when James Porter, a delegate from the New England Conference to the General Conference of 1844, and who had been very active on the abolition side, in an article in the Methodist Quarterly Review of April, 1871, gave this account of the affair:

Abolitionists regarded this as a most alarming measure. Accordingly, the delegates of the New England Conferences were immediately called together, and after due deliberation unanimously adopted a paper, declaring in substance that it was their solemn conviction that if Bishop Andrew should be left by the Conference in the exercise of episcopal functions it would break up the most of our Churches in New England; and that the only way they could be holden together would be to secede in a body, and invite Bishop Hedding to preside over them. The proposition was also concurred in by some of our most distinguished laymen who were present, and a committee of two was appointed to communicate this action to Bishop Hedding before he should meet with his colleagues. But so much time was consumed by the meeting, and in copying the document, that we were too late, and did not see him, deeming it dangerous to our interests to call him out, believing it would be construed and used in a way to defeat our object. The next morning the Bishops (Soule, Hedding, Waugh, and Morris) reported unanimously, "recommending the postponement of further action in the case of Bishop Andrew until the ensuing General Conference" (*Journal*, p. 75). Their report was laid over one day. On the morning of June 1 Bishop Hedding invited one of that committee to the vestry of the church, where he was fully informed of the aforesaid action. He thought our fears well founded, and deeply regretted that he had not known our action before he signed that report, and said he would go right into the Conference and withdraw his name. He did so, stating that he had signed the document presented yesterday as a peace measure, but that facts had come to his knowledge since which led him to believe that it would not make peace, and that it might be productive of a lengthened debate, and instead of removing would only increase the difficulty (*Journal*, p. 81). This so impaired the influence of the Bishops' recommendation that the Conference laid it on the table by a vote of 95 to 84, showing very clearly that it would have carried had not Bishop Hedding withdrawn his name.

Bangs moved that the communication lie on the table. Early, of Virginia, called for the ayes and noes; and, on taking the vote, there were 95 yeas and 84 nays.[1]

Bangs said that "he had used every effort in his power to have this matter brought to a compromise, and had indulged a hope that this would be the result," but "from what had been told him by members of the North and South not a vestige of hope remained," and he therefore would "urge immediate action on the substitute if it was before the house." He explained that "he did not mean to say that the South objected to the proposal of the Bishops, but that the Conference could not come to any general compromise on the subject."

Collins opposed the motion for taking up the Order of the Day; "he had *not yet given up all hopes of peace*"; be believed "that if the body would listen to a proposition from Dr. Durbin a compromise might yet be effected."

Paine said he was a man of peace. He considered the substitute to be mandatory, and it placed the South in an awkward position. "He hoped that some ground would be proposed by the North that both could occupy. But if there was no such common ground, the South was prepared for the result."

James Porter deduced from the discussion of the last fortnight evidence of the peace-loving character of the Northern members: "they wanted to be one body," *but they could not "live as one body with anything less than the substitute."*

Mitchell, of Rock River, proposed an amendment to the effect that Bishop Andrew should resign until a majority of the Annual Conferences desired him to resume his office.

At this point Bishop Soule said that "he had good reason to believe that brethren had entertained erroneous

[1]Further Debate and Vote on Finley's substitute.

views with respect to the position he occupied at the time he addressed the Conference on this subject; and he now wished to correct those views, that there might be a proper understanding in the matter before they had action on the substitute. It must have occurred to the brethren that his remarks at that time were entirely irrelevant, except on the understanding that the resolution was mandatory. He looked upon it as suspending Bishop Andrew. There was a great difference between suspension and advice. If this action was not intended to be judicial, he should withdraw many of his remarks. If it was a mandatory act, it was judicial. One brother had said that if the resolution passed, Bishop Andrew was still a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. If this was the case, his remarks, he must repeat, were irrelevant. He considered the proceeding as a judicial one, suspending Brother Andrew from his duties as a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church."[1]

The substitute of Finley was then put to a "yea and nay vote," with the result that 110 voted in the affirmative, and 68 in the negative. Two days later the votes of two members, absent when the vote was taken, were added, making the total 111 to 69, the entire Conference voting. All the votes in the affirmative were from the Northern, Western, and Eastern Conferences, except one, J. Clark,[2] of Texas.

Of the 69 votes in the negative, 18 were from the Northern and Western, the other 51 were all from Southern Conferences.

CAPERS PROPOSES TWO GENERAL CONFERENCES

On June 3, Capers introduced resolutions the substance of which, with much of the phraseology, are here given:

[1]Debates in the General Conference of 1844, General Conference *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 190.

[2]A Northern minister temporarily in the South.

They proposed that the General Conference recommend to the Annual Conferences to suspend the constitutional restrictions which limit the powers of the General Conference so far, and so far only, as to allow that the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States and Territories, and the Republic of Texas, shall constitute two General Conferences to meet quadrennially, the one at some point South, and the other North.

That each shall have full powers, under the limitations and restrictions which are now of force and binding on the General Conference, to make rules and regulations for the Church, within their territorial limits, respectively, and to elect Bishops for the same. The third resolution designated the territory to be superintended by each respectively. The fourth provided that as soon as three fourths of all the members of all the Annual Conferences shall have voted and approved the same, the Southern and Northern General Conferences shall be deemed as having been constituted by such approval; and that it shall be competent for the Southern Annual Conferences to elect delegates to meet in the city of Nashville, Tennessee, May 1, 1848, or sooner, if a majority of two thirds of the members of the Annual Conferences composing that General Conference shall desire the same. The fifth stipulated that the Book Concerns at New York and Cincinnati should be held and conducted as the property and for the benefit of all the Annual Conferences as heretofore; editors and Agents to be elected once in four years at the time of the session of the Northern General Conference, and the votes of the Southern General Conference to be cast by delegates of that Conference attending the Northern for that purpose. The sixth was that the Church organization for foreign missions should be maintained and conducted jointly between the two General Conferences as one Church in such manner as should be agreed upon from time to time between the two branches of the Church.[1]

These resolutions were referred to a committee of nine, who were instructed to report on them as soon as possible.

DECLARATION AND PROTEST FROM SOUTHERN DELEGATES

Longstreet presented a declaration from the Southern and Southwestern delegates, which was referred to another committee of nine, as follows:

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, pp. 86, 87.

The delegates of the Conferences in the slaveholding States take leave to *declare* to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church that the continued agitation on the subject of slavery and abolition in a portion of the Church; the frequent action on that subject in the General Conference; and especially the extra-judicial proceedings against Bishop Andrew, which resulted, on Saturday last, in the virtual suspension of him from his office as Superintendent, must produce a state of things in the South which renders a continuance of the jurisdiction of this General Conference over these Conferences inconsistent with the success of the ministry in the slaveholding States.[1]

Concerning this, J. B. McFerrin offered this resolution:

That the committee appointed to take into consideration the communication of the delegates from the Southern Conferences be instructed, provided they cannot in their judgment devise a plan for an amicable adjustment of the difficulties now existing in the Church on the subject of slavery, to devise, if possible, a *constitutional* plan for a mutual and friendly division of the Church.[2]

The next day a Protest, written by Henry B. Bascom and signed by sixty members, against the resolution concerning Bishop Andrew, was presented to the Conference. The chair decided that this be entered upon the *Journal;* and Matthew Simpson offered a resolution,

that the Conference appoint Brothers Olin, Durbin, and Hamline a committee to prepare a statement of the facts connected with the proceedings in the case of Bishop Andrew; and that they have liberty to examine the Protest just presented by the Southern brethren.[3]

STATUS OF BISHOP ANDREW

The Bishops addressed a letter to the General Conference requesting official instruction in answer to the following questions:

1. Shall Bishop Andrew's name remain as it now stands in the Minutes, Hymn Book, and *Discipline*, or shall it be struck off of these official records?

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, p. 109.
[2]Ibid., vol. ii, p. 111.
[3]Ibid., vol. ii, p. 113.

2. How shall the Bishop obtain his support? As provided for in the *Form of Discipline*, or in some other way?

3. What work, if any, may the Bishop perform; and how shall he be appointed to the work.[1]

To answer these questions three resolutions were adopted, the first by a vote of 155 to 17; the second, 152 to 14; and the third 103 to 67. They were:

1. *Resolved*, As the sense of this Conference, that Bishop Andrew's name stand in the Minutes, Hymn Book, and *Discipline*, as formerly.

2. *Resolved*, That the rule in relation to the support of a Bishop, and his family, applies to Bishop Andrew.

3. *Resolved*, That whether in any, and if any, in what work, Bishop Andrew be employed, is to be determined by his own decision and action, in relation to the previous action of this Conference on his case.[2]

The last of these evoked a remarkable speech from Winans, who said that he

should go against the resolution. The *Discipline* of the Church knew no discretion in an officer of recognized standing to withdraw himself from the duties of his office. By the two votes just passed, it was clear and unequivocal that Bishop Andrew had an unquestioned standing as a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by a vote of a large majority of that Church, and the provision of the *Discipline;* and he congratulated the South on the fact, that they had now a recognized slaveholding Bishop, whose name appeared on all their records after being known as a slaveholder. And that Bishop had no right to elect as to whether he would serve, or in what way he would serve.[3]

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF NINE

The committee of nine, on the declaration of the members from the slaveholding States, submitted this report:

Whereas, A declaration has been presented to this General Conference, with the signatures of fifty-one delegates of the body, from thirteen Annual Conferences in the slaveholding States,

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1844, vol. ii, pp. 117, 118.

[2]Ibid., vol. ii, p. 118.

[3]Debates in the General Conference of 1844, *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 216.

representing that, for various reasons enumerated, the objects and purposes of the Christian ministry and Church organization cannot be successfully accomplished by them under the jurisdiction of this General Conference as now constituted.

Resolved, That, should the delegates from the Conferences in the slaveholding States find it necessary to unite in a distinct ecclesiastical connection, the following rule shall be observed with regard to the Northern boundary of such connection: All the societies, stations, and Conferences adhering to the Church in the South, by a vote of a majority of the members of said societies, stations, and Conferences, shall remain under the unmolested pastoral care of the Southern Church; and the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church shall in no wise attempt to organize Churches or societies within the limits of the Church South, etc.

It was understood that the same rule should be operative in the South; but there was a provision that "this rule shall apply only to societies, stations, and Conferences bordering on the line of division, and not to interior charges, which shall in all cases be left to the care of that Church within whose territory they are situated." "That ministers, local and traveling, of every grade and office, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, may, as they prefer, remain in that Church, or, without blame, attach themselves to the Church South."

Another vital proposition of the report was that the General Conference "recommend to all the Annual Conferences at their first approaching sessions, to authorize a change of the Sixth Restrictive Article, so that the first clause shall read thus:

"They shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern, nor of the Chartered Fund, to any purpose other than for the benefit of the traveling, supernumerary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and children, and to such other purposes as may be determined upon by the votes of two thirds of the members of the General Conference."

The object of the change in the Restrictive Rule was to make legal the paying over to the Church South their

proportionate part of the property and proceeds of the Book Concern; and this was provided for in the remaining resolutions of the report.[1]

Elliott argued extensively in favor of the resolutions. Griffith, of Baltimore, "denied that anyone had the right to divide the Methodist Episcopal Church." He said that "the report went to disfranchise many members of their common right to choose where they will belong."

Cartwright criticized the speech of Elliott, agreeing with Griffith. Paine declared that the measure was a peace measure designed to produce and maintain "the fraternal and loving spirit." Luckey thought the resolution "provisionary," "settling nothing at present, but providing in an amicable and proper way for such action as it might hereafter be necessary to take."

Bangs proposed that matters should be adjusted in such relations as exist between the Irish and English Methodist Church, as arranged by Wesley. Finley "could see in the report no proposition to divide the Church," nor did he see anything unconstitutional.

Bond besought the body to adhere to the Conference lines as they now stood, and there would be peace. In any other case "a most disastrous state of things will exist in every territory where slaveholding and non-slaveholding Conferences are contiguous to each other."

Collins and James Porter supported the report as the best proposition under the circumstances.

After a motion to reconsider in order to introduce an amendment by striking out "delegates" and inserting "Conferences," Sanford "opposed the report and the resolutions." *He believed this measure to be practically "opening the door and inviting the brethren to separate."*

Winans gave the history of the matter in committee,

[1]Debates in the General Conference of 1844, General Conference *Journal*, vol. ii, pp. 217, 218.

and said, "the only proposition was that they might have liberty, if necessary, to organize a separate Conference."

Hamline declared that the committee "had carefully avoided presenting any resolution which would embrace the idea of a separation or division." The Article which was referred to the Annual Conferences for division of the proceeds of the Book Concern "had not *necessarily* any connection with division." After discussing the subject for two days, and adopting the several resolutions singly, the report as a whole was adopted.

THE "REPLY TO THE PROTEST"

The report of the committee appointed to prepare a statement of facts in relation to the action of the Conference in Bishop Andrew's case to serve the purpose of a reply to the protest presented by the Southern brethren, was read to the Conference by Durbin. It contains a condensed history of the episcopacy relative to slavery, but is not specially important until it reaches the status of Bishop Andrew, when it quotes the adopted resolution "That it is the sense of this General Conference that he desist from the exercise of this office so long as this impediment remains," upon which it says:

> The action of the General Conference was neither judicial nor punitive. It neither achieves nor intends a deposition, nor so much as a legal suspension. Bishop Andrew is still a Bishop; and should he, against the expressed sense of the General Conference, proceed in the discharge of his functions, *his official acts would be valid.*

On this proposition the Reply to the Protest bases the constitutionality of the action, and thus the right of the General Conference to express itself, in the language of the resolution.

Crowder declared the report to be "an insult to the whole South," and Early confirmed his view.

Objection was made to entering of the "Reply to the Protest" on the *Journal.* It was affirmed that the Conference had "violated right by appointing a committee to reply to the Protest."

When the motion to spread the report on the *Journal* and to print it was put, it was carried by a vote of 116 in the affirmative, and 26 in the negative. Only 19 of the Southern delegates present voted against it: 20 voted for it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Bisection of the Church *(Continued)*

In August of the same year Bishop Andrew issued an address to the public justifying his course and that of the Southern delegates.

The Bishops prepared two plans of episcopal distribution. In the one published they gave Andrew no work, and Soule protested against it. Bishop Morris, in a private letter to Bishop Andrew, said that the published plan was upon the assumption he would decide not to act, and the reserve plan was in anticipation of his possible decision to take work. Bishop Soule invited Bishop Andrew to join him at Frankfort, the seat of the Kentucky Conference, and, having no separate duty asigned him, he assisted Soule in his district.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH, ESTABLISHED

The Southern Conferences arranged for a convention in Louisville, Kentucky, May 1, 1845, and invited the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church to attend. After discussion the Conferences proceeded to establish the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the following words:

> We, the delegates of said Annual Conferences, acting under the provisional Plan of Separation adopted by the General Conference of 1844, do solemnly declare the jurisdiction hitherto exercised over said Annual Conferences by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church entirely dissolved; and that said Annual Conferences shall be and they hereby are constituted a separate ecclesiastical connection under the provisional Plan of Separation aforesaid, and based upon the *Discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church, comprehending the doctrines and entire moral, ecclesiastical, and economical rules and regu-

lations of said *Discipline*, except, only, in so far as verbal alterations may be necessary to a distinct organization, and to be known by the style and title of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

They invited Soule and Andrew to become Bishops of the new Church and Andrew accepted. Soule sent a communication stating that he must act as Bishop among the Northern Conferences until he had completed the plan of visitation formed by the Bishops in New York.

In July, 1845, Bishops Hedding, Waugh, Morris, Janes, and Hamline published to the Church:

That the Plan reported by the select committee of nine at the last General Conference, and adopted by that body in regard to a distinct ecclesiastical connection, is regarded by us as of binding obligation in the premises so far as our administration is concerned.

At first both divisions seemed to be disposed to keep peace along the border. The South had made no change in the rule regarding slavery, in part for the sake of peace and to avoid the charge of being a proslavery Church, and doubtless in part to be acceptable to such border Churches and ministers as because of contiguity or social considerations might naturally wish to affiliate with them.

THE ACTS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1848

In consequence of the foregoing events, the General Conference of 1848, which sat at Pittsburgh, represented 780 traveling preachers and 532,290 members less than the Methodist Episcopal Church had numbered four years before.

Bishop Soule addressed a letter to the Conference, declaring that though he had adhered to the Church, South, he held himself amenable to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church for his acts until May 1, 1846. He appealed to the Conference to investi-

gate his character and conduct, on which the Conference resolved that

> It is the sense of this General Conference, that they have no jurisdiction over the Rev. Bishop Soule, and can exercise no ecclesiastical authority over him.[1]

During the interval intense oposition had developed to the action of the General Conference of 1844 with respect to the Plan and the proposition to change the Restrictive Rule relative to the Book Concern; and the Annual Conferences had refused to concur with this part of the plan; the vote being, for concurrence in the staying Conferences, 1,164, in the departing, 971; total, 2,135; for nonconcurrence, 1,070; but at that time three fourths of all voting was necessary to change the Restrictive Rules.

Bishop McTyeire, writing of this, says: "It cannot be allowed for a moment that these 1,070 were actuated by motives of dishonesty." He analyzes the elements thus: That some repented of their coöperation in adopting the Plan of Separation; certain editors "wrought confusion"; "the political elements were intensified daily in their opposition to a peaceable adjustment"; and "the severity with which some of the Southern assemblies reviewed the bearings and doings of Northern Methodism when declaring in favor of the convention at Louisville was very irritating."[2] Some believed that perhaps by defeating the proposed constitutional change providing for dividing the Church property the Plan itself would be defeated, and the Church thus kept from being divided.

The Conference of 1848 received a communication from the Board of Commissioners appointed by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to adjust the property question, stating that they had informed the Commissioners appointed by the Methodist Episcopal Church of their

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1848, vol. iii, p. 47.
[2]*History of Methodism*, p. 646.

readiness to proceed, and had been by them referred to that General Conference, and that they were then present in Pittsburgh ready to negotiate. The Conference, on various assigned grounds, declared that "in view of these facts, as well as for the principles contained in the preceding declarations, there exists no obligation on the part of this Conference to observe the provisions of said Plan. And *it is hereby declared null and void.*"[1]

However, it was resolved to submit the disputed property claims to the decision of disinterested arbiters, unless the Book Agents, on the advice of eminent legal counsel, "shall be satisfied that when clothed with all the authority which the General Conference can confer, their corporate powers will not warrant them to submit said claims to arbitration, then this resolution should not be binding upon them."[2]

It was also enacted that if they had not the power to submit the case to voluntary arbitration, and they should be sued by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Book Agents were authorized to tender "an adjustment of their preferred claims by a legal arbitration," and if they were not authorized to do this, *and no suit should be commenced by the commissioners from the South,* then the General Conference, "being exceedingly desirous of effecting an amicable settlement of said claim," recommended to the Annual Conferences to suspend the Sixth Restrictive Rule so far as "to authorize the Book Agents to submit said claim to arbitration."

Although these resolutions were adopted, there was in each instance a heavy vote against them.

THE BEGINNING OF LITIGATION

The Commissioners of the Church South gave notice August 20, 1849, that they had entered, in the United

[1] General Conference *Journal*, 1848, vol. iii, pp. 84, 85.
[2] *Journal*, 1848, p. 94.

States Circuit Courts of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, suits for the division of the property of the Book Concern. The suit in Ohio had been filed on the 12th of the preceding month, but it was not argued until June 4, 1852. The decision of Judge Leavitt in that case was adverse to the Church South, and was founded upon these propositions:

1. The General Conference is a delegated body with limited powers, and has no authority, directly or indirectly, to divide the Church.

2. That in the Plan of Separation there is no claim to the exercise of such power.

3. That the Conference is prohibited from using the produce of the Book Concern, except for a particular purpose and in a particular way, and the Annual Conferences had refused to remove the prohibition.

4. That it is a charity to be used only for the benefit of those who remain in the Methodist Episcopal Church; that any of its members may withdraw, but in doing so take with them no rights of property.

5. That the withdrawal of the Southern Conferences was voluntary and not induced by positive necessity.

6. That the defendants are required by law to comply with the rules and regulations of the General Conference, and therefore had been guilty of no breach of trust.

7. And that this is not a case for a court of equity to construct a new scheme.

Another suit had been brought in New York by H. B. Bascom and others. This was tried in May, 1851, in the United States Circuit Court for the southern district of New York. The counsel for the Church South were Daniel Lord, Reverdy Johnson, and Reverdy Johnson, Jr. The counsel for the Book Agents, who were made defendants in the suit, were Rufus Choate, George Wood, and Enoch L. Fancher. The presiding judge, Nelson, decided for the Methodist Episcopal Church, *South,* declaring that the General Conference of 1844 proceeded upon the

assumption of unquestioned power to erect the Church into two separate ecclesiastical establishments. From that proposition he deduced the conclusion that as the separation had taken place by the action of the founders of the fund, it could not be maintained that the Conferences which fell into the new organization had forfeited the character which entitled them to its enjoyment.

THE CASE GOES TO THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Meanwhile the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States against the decision of Judge Leavitt in the suit brought in Ohio. The case was heard in Washington in April, 1854. Judge Nelson was chosen to write the decision, which was in substance the same as that which he delivered in the New York case, the judgment of the Ohio Circuit Court being unanimously reversed, and the Plan of Separation enforced in all of its provisions and particulars.

In this crucial test the counsel on each side were prompted by distinguished Methodists: William A. Smith, of Virginia, and A. L. P Green, of Tennessee, on the Southern side; and Nathan Bangs and George Peck, on the Northern.

At that time one of the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States was John McLean, a man equally distinguished for legal lore, acumen, and probity. As he was a Methodist and had expressed an opinion, he took no part in the case.

THE SALIENT POINTS IN THE DECISION OF THE FEDERAL SUPREME COURT

The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States contains the following paragraph:

The Powers of the General Conference Before it Became a Delegated Body

It cannot, therefore, be denied—indeed, it has scarcely been denied—that this body, while composed of all the traveling preachers, possessed the power to divide it, and authorize the organization and establishment of the two separate independent Churches. The power must necessarily be regarded as inherent in the General Conference. As they might have constructed two ecclesiastical organizations over the territory of the United States originally, if deemed expedient, in the place of one, so they might, at any subsequent period, the power remaining unchanged.

The Court then entered into an argument as to the power remaining in the body, and discussed at length the contrary argument based upon the Six Restrictive Rules.

The Present Powers of the Conference

Subject to these restrictions, the delegated Conference possessed the same powers as when composed of the entire body of preachers. And it will be seen that these relate only to the doctrine of the Church, its representation in the General Conference, the episcopacy, discipline of its preachers and members, the Book Concern, and Charter Fund. In all other respects, and in everything else that concerns the welfare of the Church, the General Conference represents the sovereign power the same as before. This is the view taken by the General Conference itself, as exemplified by the usage and practice of that body. In 1820 they set off to the British Conference of Wesleyan Methodists the several circuits and societies in Lower Canada. And in 1828 they separated the Annual Conferences of Upper Canada from their jurisdiction, and erected the same into a distinct and independent Church. These instances, together with the present division, in 1844, furnish evidence of the opinions of the eminent and experienced men of this Church in these several Conferences, of the power claimed, which, if the question was otherwise doubtful, should be regarded as decisive in favor of it. We will add that all the Northern Bishops, five in number, in council in July, 1845, acting under the Plan of Separation, regarded it as of binding obligation, and conformed their action accordingly.

The Court went so far as to declare that "if the beneficiaries connected with the South had forfeited the right

to the fund, the North was in the same condition; that its General Conference is not the General Conference of the old Church, nor does it represent the interest or possess territorially the authority of the same; nor are they the body under whose care this fund was placed by its founders." After discussing this at some length the Court said:

> But we do not agree that this division was made without the proper authority. On the contrary, we entertain no doubt but that the General Conference of 1844 was competent to make it; and that each division of the Church under the separate organization is just as legitimate and can claim as high a sanction, ecclesiastical and temporal, as the Methodist Episcopal Church first founded in the United States.

As respects the relation of changing the Sixth Restrictive Article, the decision said the plan of separation "admits the right of the Church South to its share of the common property, in case of a separation, and provides for a partition of it among the two divisions, upon just and equitable principles; but regarding the *Sixth Restrictive Article* as a limitation upon the power of the General Conference, as it respected a division of the property in the Book Concern, provision is made to obtain a removal of it. The removal of this limitation is not a condition to the right of the Church South to its share of the property, but is a step taken in order to enable the General Conference to complete the partition of the property."

The Court then said that "nothing short of an agreement or stipulation of the Church South to give up their share of it could preclude the assertion of their right; and it is quite clear no such agreement or stipulation is found in the Plan of Separation."

The conclusion of the decision is:

> Without pursuing the case any farther, our conclusion is *that the complainants and those they represent are entitled to their*

share of the property in this Book Concern; and the proper decree will be entered to carry this decision into effect.

This decree being final the Court ordered a *pro rata* division.

In accordance with this decree, the Agents at New York and Cincinnati paid the representatives of the Church South $270,000 in cash, and transferred to that Church presses and papers belonging to the Church in the South, and all debts due within the bounds of the Southern Conferences.

CHAPTER XXXV

Final Change in the Discipline in Regard to Slavery

Under all these circumstances extreme bitterness was developed on both sides.

If the fierceness of the controversy could be said to have subsided for a time, it was only by comparison, for many Methodists in Delaware and Maryland and some in Virginia along the border, adhered to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and they were largely in the Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Ohio Conferences. It had been recognized that non-slaveholding was not a term of membership, but those members who had slaves did not expect to be disturbed so long as they governed their slaves in a spirit of Christian humanity. A large party, however, would not consent to what they considered "temporizing."

Bond, editor of the Christian Advocate; Elliott, editor of the Western Christian Advocate, and Clark, editor of the Ladies' Repository, *maintained the technical right of slaveholders to a place in the Church;* but Zion's Herald (Daniel Wise, editor) the Northern Christian Advocate, edited by William Hosmer, and James V Watson, editor of the Northwestern, condemned *all* slaveholding.

During the period between 1852 and 1856 various resolutions asking a change in the general rule of slavery were laid before all the Annual Conferences for their concurrence, but none of them received the constitutional majority.

The Bishops, referring to this fact, observed in their Address to General Conference of 1856:

> We are aware that it is difficult to separate the consideration of the desirableness of any measure from its constitutionality,

and especially so where deep feeling on the subject may exist. Yet we think it to be our duty to express our strong doubts whether, in view of the restricted powers of a delegated General Conference, any measure equivalent to a change in the General Rules can be constitutionally adopted without the concurrence of the Annual Conferences.[1]

This was signed by Bishops Waugh, Morris, Janes, Scott, Simpson, Baker, and Ames. The action of that Conference proposed no change in the Constitution, nor any mandatory rule.

For a long time the issue turned on whether it would be within the prerogative of the General Conference to pass a simple rule of discipline by which all slaveholders would be liable to expulsion; and the number of those who held that view increased rapidly. Harris, in his series of articles which finally constituted a small work entitled *Powers of the General Conference,* concludes that the General Conference had power to refuse to tolerate slavery any longer. Stevens disputed this proposition, and was replied to by D. D. Whedon; but while the latter held that the constitutionality of such a statute might be maintained, he preferred the slow but sure constitutional process.

A Ministers' and Laymen's Union was established at the session of the New York Conference in 1859, to protest against the proposed change in relation to slavery. The New York East Conference—which, besides its territory in New York, includes the larger part of Connecticut—formed an Anti-Slavery Society, which controverted vigorously the views and intents of the Ministers' Union.

Various forms for changing the General Rule on slavery were submitted to the Annual Conferences. The measure proposed by the Cincinnati Conference was to insert in the General Rules the prohibition of "the buying or sell-

[1]General Conference *Journal,* 1856, p. 199.

ing of men, women, or children, or holding them with the intention of using them as slaves." The Providence proposed "slaveholding, or buying or selling men, women, or children with the intention to enslave them." The Erie desired to change the rule so as to read "the buying, selling, holding, or transferring of any human being to be used in slavery." These all failed to secure the constitutional "three fourths of all voting."

At the General Conference of 1860 many memorials were presented asking that "no change be made in the *Discipline* on the subject of slavery": but six times as many, signed by more than ten times as many individuals, asked that "slavery might be extirpated from the Church." The result was that the General Conference substituted in place of the chapter on slavery which had come down from 1780 the following:

> We believe that the buying, selling, or holding of human beings, to be used as chattels, is contrary to the laws of God and nature, and inconsistent with the Golden Rule, and with the Rule in our *Discipline* which requires all who desire to continue among us to "do no harm" and to "avoid evil of every kind." We, therefore, affectionately admonish all our preachers and people to keep themselves pure from this great evil, and to seek its extirpation by all lawful and Christian means.

This created intense excitement among several Conferences; practical rebellion in some, and in others threats of dissolving the bonds of fellowship with the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the Baltimore Conference Bishop Levi Scott, presiding, refused to entertain motions relating to a division of the Church, but subsequently allowed the secretary to put the question on the adoption of a similar series of propositions. After he resumed the chair he ordered a paper to be spread on the *Journal* declaring the action null and void regarded as Conference action. One hundred and thirty-two of the one hundred and seventy-one members of the Conference were present,

and eighty-three voted for immediate separation. Sixty-six ministers of the Baltimore Conference withdrew; and in 1863 the record of this Conference showed a decrease of 21,065 members.

The General Conference of 1864 adopted the following resolutions, by a vote of 207 to 9:

> That we recommend the amendment of the general rule on slavery so that it shall read, "Slaveholding, buying, or selling slaves."
>
> That we recommend the suspension of the Fourth Restrictive Rule for the purpose set forth in the foregoing resolution.

The Bishops were instructed to submit these resolutions to the Annual Conferences, and to insert the new rule in subsequent editions of the *Discipline* if the requisite number of votes were obtained.

From 1808 the General Rule had been, "The buying and selling of men, women, or children with an intention to enslave them." The change made by the General Conference of 1864, and the subsequent action of the Annual Conferences reduced the rule in such a way as to make if for the first time absolutely prohibitive of slavery.

But as slavery had been abolished throughout the land by the Civil War, there has never been in this country an opportunity to apply the rule, but in the world-wide missionary operations of the Church it is quite within the bounds of possibility that it may at some period come into use.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Lay Delegation

The admission of laymen as delegates to the General Conference was one of the principal demands of those Methodists who were expelled, or withdrew, from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1821 and the years immediately succeeding. In 1830 they established the Methodist Protestant Church.

Petitions and memorials for lay representation were sent to the General Conference of 1840, which referred them to a committee in connection with two other subjects, "A Moderate Episcopacy" and "Election of Presiding Elders in the Annual Conferences."

The Sentiment in 1840

The report of this committee disposed of all very curtly. It charged that the petitions and memorials had "been obtained by a *concerted* operation, under the direction of some *single* intellect"; that they were "the result of *agitation* and not of *original* dissatisfaction on the part of most of the persons signing these petitions and memorials." It said, further, that "memorials and petitions, regarding not *individual grievances*, but *general interests,* are entitled to no other consideration than that to which they are entitled as mere arguments in favor of the courses indicated," and continued: "The committee refer to the proceedings of the General Conference of 1828, for the light in which the election of presiding elders by the Annual Conferences, and a lay delegation in the General Conference, was then viewed, and the decision which was made by the Church on these subjects." The com-

mittee therefore declared that it could "do no other than submit the following resolution, viz.":

> That it is not expedient to change the form of our Church government in any of the matters suggested in the petitions and memorials which have been under the consideration of the committee.[1]

In 1844 and 1848 there were more intricate problems to solve, and the subject of lay delegation was not introduced.

THE ATTITUDE IN 1852-56

A convention *in favor* of lay representation was held in Philadelphia in March, 1852; and in May a conference of laymen also met in that city *in opposition* to the movement. Addresses from these contradicting bodies were sent to the General Conference of 1852, as were both memorials and petitions from various parts of the Church. The latter were referred to a special committee. Its report stated that "while we highly appreciate the spirit which characterizes the movements of those brethren who advocate a change, and while we most ardently desire the full and cordial coöperation of the laity and ministry in all our enterprises, still we are fully convinced that the proposed change would not be advantageous to the interests of the Church." The report concluded: "Your committee have also ascertained that there is a strong opposition in the great mass of membership to the proposed change. They therefore present the following resolution:

> "That it is inexpedient so to alter the economy of the Church as to introduce lay delegation into the General and Annual Conferences."[2]

This committee consisted of a large number of very able men, among them Osmon C. Baker, Edward R. Ames,

[1] General Conference *Journal*, 1840, vol. ii, pp. 74, 75.
[2] Ibid., 1852, p. 148.

Edward Thomson, and Abel Stevens. After the debate the ayes and nays were called, with the result of 171 for and 3 against the report. Matthew Simpson was chairman of the committee; he, as well as Baker and Ames, had already been elected to the episcopacy, but had not been ordained. They voted in favor of the report, as did John McClintock and Edward Thomson.

After having been much discussed during the quadrennium, the subject appeared again in the Conference of 1856 and was referred to the Committee on Itineracy, which placed it in the hands of a special committee of five. The latter reported that they had received many petitions and memorials for and against, and added:

> Though some wise and good men desire the proposed change, the great body of the Church do not desire it. The subject has been discussed repeatedly in different periods of our history; it was largely discussed four years since [1852], and the attention of our entire membership was called to the subject by circulars, newspaper discussions, and resolutions passed by conventions. Since then the matter has died away. For these reasons we are brought to the conclusion that the change is demanded neither by the exigencies of the case nor by the voice of the Church; and therefore we recommend the passage of the following resolution:
>
> "*Resolved*, That any change in our economy relating to the Constitution of our General and Annual Conferences is inexpedient at the present time."[1]

The addition of the words "present time" inspired hope in the hearts of the optimists.

FIRST "STANDING COMMITTEE" ON LAY REPRESENTATION

The year 1860: in this Conference for the first time a "Standing Committee" on Lay Delegation was established. During the previous four years the East Genesee and Oregon Conferences had sent a resolution to the other

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1856, pp. 290, 291.

Annual Conferences for their votes. The committee presented both a majority and minority report. The former records that "some of the Annual Conferences took no action upon either the East Genesee or Oregon resolutions upon this subject; but so far as we have been able to get at the facts in the case, it appears that a large majority voted against these rules." Also that one hundred and thirty-seven Quarterly Conferences voted, but "according to the best judgment of the committee," the number of votes for and against lay delegation, was "about equal." They noted that "no distinct *plan* for lay delegation has been before the Church, and that "the great body of our people have not spoken on this subject." However, they observed, that while it was necessary in the early days of the Church that the government thereof should fall upon the ministry, since that period it had greatly increased in members, wealth, and intelligence; they therefore submitted a plan for lay delegation which included the proposition that the number of lay and clerical delegates should be equal, but that the laity should not be allowed to sit on the trial of a Bishop or on the appeal of ministers. Ten members were to have the power to order a separation of the lay and clerical delegates in voting, but in the case of the election of General Conference officers the vote should be by joint ballot.[1]

The minority reported to the effect that the introduction of lay delegation "is an organic change of great magnitude, which has hitherto been considered by the best minds of the Church, in the laity and the ministry, as of doubtful and dangerous expediency." Therefore they offered the resolution that "the change should not be attempted, if *at all,* without great caution and mature consideration, and then only after a clear and full expres-

[1]General Conference *Journal,* 1860, pp. 446, 447.

sion of the laity and the constitutional concurrence of the ministry," and a second resolution which deemed it "inexpedient to inaugurate any plan at present that would change the constitution of either the General or Annual Conferences."[1]

Many amendments and substitutes were proposed but were set aside, until Davis W Clark, afterward Bishop, moved a substitute for all that was before the body. After debating for some time, the Conference passed a motion "That the Conference now proceed to vote on the subject of lay delegation without further debate, *provided* this resolution shall not prevent the offering of amendments and substitutes or the making of legitimate motions; but if any such be offered or made, they shall be voted on without debate."[2]

THE COMMITTEE OF THREE

After several other motions, and the withdrawal of some, another resolution was adopted, that "the Chair appoint three members, to whom the whole subject shall be recommitted, to adjust this matter and report at three o'clock." Davis W Clark presented the report of the committee of three and Morris D'C. Crawford moved that it be adopted. It was as follows:

Resolved, 1. That we, the delegates of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in General Conference assembled, hereby approve of the introduction of lay representation into this body when it shall be ascertained that the Church desires it.

Resolved, 2. That all our preachers in charge, stationed within the United States and Territories, be and they are hereby required to lay the subject of lay representation in the General Conference before the male members over twenty-one years of age, and in full connection in their several charges, at a meeting duly notified on two successive Sabbaths, said meetings to

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1860, p. 447.
[2]Ibid., 1860, p. 280.

be held at some convenient period between the sessions of the respective Annual Conferences in 1861 and 1862, and the results to be certified to the Annual Conference next succeeding the taking of the vote by the preacher in charge, specifying the number voting for and the number voting against lay representation, and be entered upon the *Journals;* and that each Annual Conference shall, through its secretary, furnish to the presiding Bishop a certified copy of the result. The form and manner of presenting the vote to the male members of the Church shall be by ballot, and as follows: "For Lay Representation," or "Against Lay Representation."

Resolved, 3. That the Bishops be and are hereby instructed to lay the same question and in the same form before the Annual Conferences at their sessions in 1862; and that each Annual Conference, through its secretary, shall furnish the presiding Bishop with a certified copy of the result.

Resolved, 4. That the Bishops be requested to report the results of these several votes to the General Conference at its next session.[1]

CONVENTION OF LAYMEN PRESENT AN ADDRESS

The General Conference of 1864 sat in Philadelphia. On May 19 the order of business was suspended to receive a deputation from a convention of laymen of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which had just been held in the city, and Bishop Baker, who was presiding, introduced the following gentlemen to the Conference: ex-Governor Joseph A. Wright, of Indiana; Governor Cannon, of Delaware; Professor James Strong; Charles C. North and John Elliott, of New York; Cornelius Walsh, of New Jersey; Thomas Kneil, of Massachusetts; George C. Cooke, of Illinois; and Oliver Hoyt, of Connecticut.

Professor Strong read an address, which pointed out imperfections and irregularities in presenting the subject to the people. He maintained that "the preachers should have been required to notify the people by reading the resolutions of the General Conference, and the pas-

[1]General Conference *Journal* 1860, p. 290.

sage of the pastoral address which touches upon lay delegations, from their pulpits, and not by verbal statement; and the General Conference papers should have been directed to publish the same resolutions conspicuously a certain number of times during the period appointed for the taking of the vote."

The address charged that many preachers "neglected or wholly refused to present the subject to their congregations"; in other cases "the people were requested to give their judgment upon the admission of laymen to the Annual Conferences as well as the General Conference"; that circuits, by the ruling of a presiding elder, in various places were compelled to vote at one time and place.

The Professor showed that the breaking out of the war, then raging, had "withdrawn the attention of members from the subject." Further, that in the Conferences east of the Allegheny Mountains, embracing the New England States, Central States, and Eastern border, there had been cast a majority of over one thousand for lay delegation. The address met the argument of some, by prophesying that the laity will be found to be "more prone to resist than to encourage innovation," and that they will "consent with reluctance to the removal of old landmarks."

THE POPULAR WILL DIVIDED

The report of the Committee on Lay Delegation states that the Conference had received sundry petitions, some in favor of lay delegation; others against it; a third class asking that the subject be submitted again to popular vote, and a fourth protesting against resubmitting the question. The committee said: "We have also been favored with the views and arguments of the committee of the Lay Convention, which, we are happy to say, were

uttered in the most kindly and loyal spirit." The following preamble and resolutions were then submitted:

Whereas, The General Conference, at its last session declared its approval of the introduction of lay delegation into this body when it shall be ascertained that the Church desires it; provided for submitting the question to the male members over twenty-one years of age, in full connection, in all our charges; instructed the Bishops to lay the question before the Annual Conferences at their session in the year 1862, and requested them to report to this body the results of these several votes; and,

Whereas, The Bishops reported the vote as follows. namely, Of the ministers there were 1,338 votes for, and 3,069 against; of the male members, 28,884 for, and 47,855 against; showing a majority against lay representation in the General Conference of 1,731 ministers and 18,971 male members; therefore,

Resolved, 1. That, while we reaffirm our approval of lay representation in the General Conference *whenever it shall be ascertained that the Church desires it*, we see no such declaration of the popular will as to justify us in taking advanced action in relation to it.

Resolved, 2. That we are at all times ready to receive petitions and memorials from our people on this subject, and to consider them most respectfully.

(Signed) EDWARD THOMSON, *Chairman*,
EDWARD G. ANDREWS, *Secretary*.

Philadelphia, May 23, 1864.[1]

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1864, pp. 412, 413.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Lay Delegation *(Continued)*

The General Conference of 1868 began its work on May 1, in Chicago. Several serious and unusual problems were before it, but none so momentous as lay representation. The numbers of petitions and memorials had greatly increased. Many influential members who had not been interested in the question became aroused to the fact that "no other great ecclesiastical body of the New World, except the Romanists, had retained thus far an exclusively clerical system of government. Our legislative power, at least, was entirely clerical, and our executive power was substantially so."[1]

DEPUTATIONS FOR AND AGAINST PRESENTED

On May 18, a delegation of eminent laymen was introduced to the Conference by the president, after which they read their address, which was ordered to be printed. Among them were General Clinton B. Fisk, the president of the convention sending the deputation; Isaac Rich, principal founder of Boston University; Governor William Claflin, of Massachusetts; Oliver Hoyt; Amos Shinkle, of Covington, Kentucky; John Owen, of Detroit; F. H. Root, of Buffalo; John Evans, of Colorado; and Andrew V Stout, of New York.

Later a deputation of laymen representing a convention of members of the Methodist Episcopal Church at that time in Chicago, was received and submitted an address protesting against the introducing of lay delegation and assuring them that it *doubted the constitutional*

[1]Abel Stevens, *Supplementary History of American Methodism*, p. 56.

right of the body to make the proposed change without previously altering the Restrictive Rule. Among these were George J. Hamilton, a prominent layman of New York city; Samuel Preston, of Vermont; and William H. Whitehead, of Chicago.

FOR LAY DELEGATION

The laymen's address in favor of representation is a remarkable production. The substance of it covers in some degree every affirmative element. The petitioners to the body in number were ten for representation to one against. But five Conferences adopted adverse resolutions. Opportunity had been afforded by the free circulation in the form of petitions against lay delegation "for a full expression of whatever opposition there may be to it in the Church." During the previous four years the Methodist press, with perhaps a single exception, had cordially supported the claims of the laity to a representation. The address continues:

> You have recently extended the duration of the pastoral term; you have acquired the assent of the Annual Conferences to the sale of Church property, and you have inserted among the conditions of reception into full membership a pledge to "support the gospel and the various benevolent enterprises of the Church," all without first ascertaining the wishes of the laity upon any one of these important modifications of our *Discipline.* Would it not be better, fathers and brethren, that you and we should sit and deliberate upon these connectional interests of Methodism together?

Many points of equal pertinency were presented in the very essence of simplicity:

> Our fathers, when, forty years ago, they declined to admit lay delegates to the General Conference, at the same time disclaimed for the Conference the possession of any legislative power whatever. Since then the General Conference has been compelled from the necessities of its position, to exercise all the

legislative authority known to any ecclesiastical assembly. Fathers and brethren, receive us. You and we are both required to make the complete Church. Together we form one living body in Christ, our Head; we cannot, we must not, be dissevered from each other.

The names signed to that address contained statesmen and philanthropists, and, what is better, all known to be devoted to the Methodist Episcopal Church.

AGAINST

The laymen's address against representation was equally candid:

We entirely disagree with these, our brethren, in their construction of the action of the several Annual Conferences respecting lay delegation. We have, indeed, observed a great unanimity in the action of those bodies respecting the proposition to modify our Church polity as to admit laymen to seats in the Conferences; but in all cases we have understood such approval to have been qualified—which is done explicitly in most cases—and in several instances an unqualified disapproval has been expressed. Satisfied with the form of Church government transmitted to us by our fathers, we have avoided all partisan agitation of the subject. The laity of our Church have been accustomed to confide in the ministry, and to feel that in its godly conservatism there is safety against all dangers from needless innovations. As our Church is now governed there is a most happy separation of the spiritual and secular offices of the body. the laity are called upon to trust the ministry in the administration of spiritual offices, so the ministry is compelled to trust the laity in secular and pecuniary offices. We are satisfied that you have not the constitutional right to make the proposed change without going through the constitutional process of changing the Second Restrictive Rule, and we should look upon the attempt to do so with alarm.

The men that signed that address, though most of them not as well known as the others, were stanch and true.

On May 22, the majority and minority reports were presented. The majority, in substance, held that the

Conference had the power, and should then and there exercise it, to enact a statute providing for the admission of laymen. The minority held that the Second Restrictive Rule must be changed before such a statute could be constitutionally enacted.

On Wednesday, May 27, E. O. Haven, chairman of the Committee on Lay Representation, delivered an address, in which he explained the report and described the route by which it had been reached. Immediately afterward S. M. Merrill, chairman of the minority of the Committee on Lay Representation, made an address which elicited profound attention. His fundamental principles were that:

"The change proposed cannot be made without a change of the Restrictive Rule," and "That the change of the Restrictive Rule, according to the provision of the Constitution, will not meet the end proposed by the report of the majority." He declared that the doctrine of the report of the majority is that every portion of the Constitution of the Church is liable to be changed, and may be changed, by a mere majority vote, except the Restrictive Rules. He argued that the General Conference was "a mere delegated body and had no being only during its session, and as soon as this body shall adjourn *sine die* there will be no General Conference." He asserted also that the Annual Conferences have "a continuous existence, but the General Conference has not." After speaking at great length, he was permitted to resume in the afternoon session. Finally he said that he claimed to be "a better friend to the laity than any man whose opinions are fully developed in that majority report," and explained that he had "no war to make upon lay representation *per se.*"

Peter Cartwright declared that he was opposed to any change in this matter in any shape, form, or manner, and

closed his speech by these words: "These eccentric gentlemen, if they want lay delegation, I would advise them to resuscitate the Methodist Protestant Church, for they have got it already; but let your own mother alone. Do not stab her to the vitals."

Gilbert Haven said that "we are told that no power exists to introduce lay representation"; "That there is no reason for the demand"; "That it is already introduced"; "That its introduction will dispossess the ministry of their prerogatives and bring dishonor and disaster upon the Church." He controverted those propositions.

C. Munger, of Maine, delivered an able argument against lay representation, and was followed by John McClintock. He argued against the position of Merrill, supporting himself by passages from L. L. Hamline and William L. Harris.

At last Merrill said that he would go as far as to say that "when the laity desire it, and it shall be fully constitutional, I am willing for my part to sacrifice somewhat of my position, and a great deal of it."

Bishop Ames presented a paper which was not accepted.

Bishop Clark said "it might appear to some from the way in which the paper comes before the Conference that it came from the Board of Bishops." But he personally did not accept it.

Bishop Ames said it was "very far from his intention in presenting this paper to compromise Bishop Clark or any of his colleagues in any way."

Daniel Curry said, "I am ready for one to do this—to waive everything but the constitutional question."

THE "COMMITTEE OF CONFERENCE"

Lay representation was discussed during the greater part of May 27 and 28; and, there being a great disso-

nance of thinking and speaking, a "Committee of Conference" was appointed. This consisted of E. O. Haven, D. Curry, J. B. Dobbins, R. S. Foster, E. S. Fuller, J. T. Peck, J. McClintock, S. M. Merrill, W H. Hunter, and C. Munger.

This committee reported on the morning of the 29th; thirty-three motions, some strictly parliamentary and others additions and excisions, were voted upon before the report was adopted. The first resolution declares:

Whereas, The General Conference of 1860 expressed its willingness to admit lay delegates to the General Conference whenever the people should desire it; and,

Whereas, The General Conference of 1864 concurred in that action; therefore,

Resolved, That we also concur in the same and recommend the following plan to the godly consideration of our ministers and people.

The second resolution provided for a "general election," "at which all members in full connection, and not less than twenty-one years of age, shall be invited to vote by ballot for lay delegation or against." The details of the management of the election were also given.

The third and last resolution was:

That should a majority of votes cast by the people be in favor of lay delegation, and should three fourths of all the members of the Annual Conference present and voting thereon vote in favor of the above proposed change in the Constitution of the Church, then the General Conference meeting in 1872, by the requisite two-thirds vote, can complete the change, and lay delegates previously elected may then be admitted.[1]

Marvelous was the unanimity with which this report was carried. There were only three nays.

VIEWS OF FOUR EMINENT METHODISTS

During the next quadrennium the subject was much

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1868, pp. 275-277.

discussed. After the vote was taken by the laity, Daniel Curry, editor of The Christian Advocate, who had voted with the majority on the final action in the General Conference in 1868, opposed ministerial confirmation on the ground that not a sufficient number of the laity had voted for the change. He buttressed his argument by affirming that all who did not vote were to be regarded as against the change. Bishop Simpson subsequent to his election to the episcopacy had advocated at all times the introduction of lay delegation; and Bishops Ames and Janes, toward the close of the ministerial voting, becoming convinced that the enterprises of the Methodist Episcopal Church were so large, and the possibilities of irritation, animosity, and division connected with them so apparent, that the business sense and experience of laymen, which for some years had been desirable had now become indispensable, threw their influence in favor of the change of the Constitution. One of the strongest reasons which led these influential Bishops to this conclusion was the Book Concern controversy, in which they had sat as cojudges in the trial of the junior Agent for various parts of his action in endeavoring to reform the management of the Book Concern.

THE DECISIVE VOTES

The vote in the Annual Conferences was as follows: for the proposed change, 4,915; against, 1,597; blank, 4; total, 6,516. As three fourths of all the votes cast were required to alter the Rule, a change of thirty-three votes would have defeated the project.

This vote related entirely to the change of the Second Restrictive Rule which fixed the constituent members of the General Conference; but as the General Conference of 1868 had conditioned its action upon the demonstration of the desire of the people, in order to admit the

laymen provisionally elected it was necessary for the Conference of 1872 to concur, which it did by adopting by a vote of 283 in favor and 6 against, the following resolution:

Resolved, That this General Conference does hereby concur with the Annual Conferences in changing the Second Restrictive Rule, so as to read as follows:

"They shall not allow of more than one ministerial representative for every fourteen members of an Annual Conference, nor allow of less than one for every forty-five, nor more than two lay delegates for any Annual Conference."[1]

THE PLAN

This effected only the change in the conditions of membership. It was therefore necessary to adopt the plan, which had been definitely recommended by the General Conference of 1868 to the "godly consideration of our ministers and people." The record in the *Journal* is:

The first item of the resolution [offered by J. T. Peck, W. L. Harris, R. S. Foster, G. Haven, and T. M. Eddy] was therefore adopted by a vote of 252 to 36, in words following, viz.: "*Resolved*, That said plan is hereby ratified and adopted."

By this, Part II, Chapter I, Section 1 of the *Discipline* was altered so as to read:

Answer, 1. The General Conference shall be composed of ministerial and lay delegates. The ministerial delegates shall consist of one member for every thirty members of each Annual Conference, to be appointed by seniority or choice, at the discretion of such Annual Conference, yet so that such representatives shall have traveled at least four full calendar years from the time that they were received on trial by an Annual Conference, and are in full connection at the time of holding the Conference.

The lay delegates shall consist of two laymen for each Annual Conference, except such Conferences as have but one ministerial delegate, which Conferences shall be entitled to one lay delegate each.

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1872, p. 41.

The lay delegates shall be chosen by an Electoral Conference of laymen, which shall assemble for the purpose on the third day of the session of the Annual Conference, at the place of its meeting, at its session immediately preceding the General Conference.

The Electoral Conference shall be composed of one layman from each circuit or station within the bounds of the Annual Conference, and, on assembling, the Electoral Conference shall organize by electing a chairman and secretary of their own number; such layman to be chosen by the last Quarterly Conference preceding the time of its assembling: *Provided*, that no layman shall be chosen a delegate either to the Electoral Conference or to the General Conference who shall be under twenty-five years of age, or who shall not have been a member of the Church in full connection for the five consecutive years preceding the elections.

Answer, 3. At all times when the General Conference is met it shall take two thirds of the whole number of ministerial and lay delegates to form a quorum for the transaction of business.

The ministerial and lay delegates shall sit and deliberate together as one body, but they shall vote separately whenever such separate vote shall be demanded by one third of either order, and in such cases the concurrent vote of both orders shall be necessary to complete an action.[1]

The placing of the plan in the chapter on the General Conference was not constitutional, as it had not been voted upon by the Annual Conferences.[2] But the error was rectified when the Constitution was revised in 1900-04.

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1872, p. 46.

[2]Neely discusses this at length in *The Governing Conference in Methodism.*

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Lay Delegation *(Continued)*

Under the rules, given in the preceding chapter, the General Conferences of 1872, 1876, 1880, and 1884 were constituted.

A NEW PROBLEM

But the Conference of 1888 was confronted by a delicate problem. Five women had been elected lay delegates by as many Electoral Conferences—Frances E. Willard from the Rock River, Angie F Newman from the Nebraska, Mary C. Nind from the Minnesota, Amanda C. Rippey from the Kansas, and Lizzie D. Van Kirk from the Pittsburgh. With the exception of the last, each claimed a seat.

A protest, signed by ministers and laymen, against the seating of women, had been sent to the Bishops prior to the convening of the Conference. The senior Bishop, Bowman, presented a communication from the Bishops proposing, in view of this, that the Conference be organized with those who were unquestionably duly qualified to sit as members of the body. "And it will then be competent for the Conference to act upon the cases in question in such way as its sense of justice and right shall dictate as lawful and expedient." In pursuance of this opinion, the chair directed the secretary of the last Conference to call the roll. The Conference, being organized, referred the question of eligibility to a special committee. The action on the report of the committee declared women ineligible under the Constitution, and that their seats were vacant, and instructed the secretary to notify the first reserves.

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST ELIGIBILITY OF WOMEN

A summary of the arguments on both sides includes the following: *Against* the admission of women it was argued, that when lay delegates were admitted, women had not been legally eligible to hold any office in the government of the Church; that, while the *laity* comprehended the whole body of the Church as distinguished from the *clergy*, without regard to sex or age, the word "laymen," with respect to seats in the legislative body of the Church, had never included women. Furthermore, in no debate, prior to the vote to change the Constitution so as to admit lay delegates, did anyone intimate that women would be eligible. On the other hand, both parties appealed to women for their influence, since they would not be eligible in any case, and urged them to vote as disinterested arbiters on the question of lay representation.

Those in favor of their admission maintained that they are certainly members of the Church, and belong to the *laity;* that the General Conference of 1872 declared that in all matters pertaining to lay delegation the word "laymen" included all *members of the Church that are not members of Annual Conferences;* that from the beginning some women had sat in the Electoral Conferences; that it made no difference whether women were contemplated or not when the Rule was passed; that they were regularly elected; to refuse them seats would be to disfranchise the constituency that sent them; and that when the law is doubtful, and a question of right is involved, *the law should be construed broadly in favor of the rights claimed.*

Those who upheld the unconstitutionality of the claim replied to these points that women are *not* laymen in the sense of the Restrictive Rule; that the vote declaring who are laymen, related wholly to the eligibility of

local preachers; that the fact that women had sat in Lay Electoral Conferences, and been elected reserve delegates, settled nothing, as the reserve had no standing unless the principal defaulted, therefore the question had not been raised in the General Conference; that that body could not destroy the Constitution by an interpretation; and that the terms of the law *are not doubtful, taken in connection with the existing custom* from the foundation of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

To this it was replied that the presumption is that the General Conference meant exactly what it said: and that if it is unconstitutional for a woman to be elected, it is unconstitutional for her to sit in Lay Electoral Conferences; and therefore, that those Conferences which admitted her were illegal. To this was answered that, unless they were there in sufficient numbers to make the result of actions turn upon their votes, it merely bore the same relation to legality that it would if laymen under twenty-five years of age were present.

During the debate the report was amended by a proposition to submit to the Church the question of a change in the Restrictive Rule by the introduction of the words, *"and the said delegates may be men or women."*

On the final vote the orders divided, and the report as amended was adopted by a concurrence of both orders: 159 ministers voted for the report, and 122 against; 78 laymen for, and 76 against. Subsequent to this action the first reserves arrived and took the seats thus declared vacant.

NEW EFFORTS TO OPEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL DOOR

The most exciting question of the next quadrennium was the proposition to change the Constitution so as to make women eligible to seats in the General Conference.

The laity were asked to express their wishes in the

matter, with the result that 235,668 voted that women should be made eligible as lay delegates in the Electoral and General Conferences, and 163,843 voted against it. This vote had no *legal* force, and its moral significance was challenged on the ground that the whole number voting was less than one sixth of the membership. The challenge was met by the statement that it was a large vote when compared with other votes of the laity.

The legal vote of the ministry to change the Restrictive Rule stood, 5,634 for and 4,717 against. The Constitution requiring a vote of three fourths to make such an alteration, the measure failed for the want of more than two thousand votes.

In the Conference of 1892, held in Omaha, no woman claimed a seat, although some had been elected reserve delegates. The advocates of admission moved a reference of the subject to the Judiciary Committee with instructions to report upon the eligibility of women. It unanimously reported, one member declining to vote, that, under the situation as it then was, women were ineligible. When this report was presented it was moved to reverse the statement.

A STRANGE PROPOSITION AND ITS RESULT

Pending the discussion of the substitute, an amendment was offered that the question be submitted again to the laity for an expression of opinion, and to the ministry for a change in the Restrictive Rule. The conditions of the proposition were unusual. Members of the Annual Conferences were requested to vote upon the question of amending the Restrictive Rule by adding the words, "*and said delegates must be male members.*" (It was assumed that if the amendment so submitted did not receive the necessary votes of the Annual Conferences and of the succeeding General Conference, the Rule

should be so construed that the words "lay delegates" might include both men and women.) The vote on that stood: for the adoption, 241; against, 160. This, being less than two thirds, was not a constitutional vote.

Various Annual Conferences refused to vote on it at all, and the entire vote was only 4,122: in favor of the amendment, 474; against, 3,648; while, by the same Conferences voting to amend the Second Restrictive Rule (by adding the words "and said delegates may be men or women" after the words "two lay delegates for an Annual Conference") 9,962 votes were cast. As only 2,608 of these were against the amendment, it is obvious that more than one half of those in favor of the admission of women constitutionally refused to vote. The reason for this was that as the General Conference of 1888 had decided that, under the Constitution, women were not eligible to seats in the General Conference, and the Judiciary Committee of the Conference of 1892 had unanimously decided that they were ineligible, and as a resolution declaring them eligible had been laid on the table, it was regarded as improper to reverse the proposition to be sent down to the Church. But the argument that influenced the Church as a whole to repudiate the proposition was that the General Conference of 1892 had not reversed the action of 1888, and that if such a method were accounted constitutionally moral, it would be easy to overthrow any existing Rule by first denying its interpretation and then submitting a proposition to reverse the preceding custom and interpretation and also the declaration of the preceding General Conference.

The reaction caused the Colorado and Baltimore Conferences respectively to submit a direct proposition to insert into the Restrictive Rule, "Said delegates may be men and women." Requiring three fourths of all the votes, it failed by a small margin.

CHAPER XXXIX

Lay Delegation (*Concluded*)

The Conference of 1896 included among the lay delegates Jane F. Bashford, of the Ohio Conference; Ada C. Butcher and Lois S. Parker, of the North India; Lydia A. Trimble, of the Foo Chow Conference. The General Conference of 1888 having enacted that the certificates of election of persons elected to the General Conference be transmitted to the secretary of the preceding General Conference, and be *prima facie* evidence of their right to membership, the first three took their seats.

ELIGIBILITY CHALLENGED

A paper challenging their right was presented to the Conference, and referred to a "Committee on Eligibility," consisting of one minister and one layman from each General Conference district, and three at large.

On the third day the three women who were present presented a communication stating, that though they believed themselves legally entitled to seats, they would withdraw, not desiring to be the center of controversy.

A. J. Kynett, chairman of the Committee on Eligibility, then reported:

> Your committee, to whom was referred the challenge of the eligibility of women in the General Conference, of Lydia A. Trimble, delegate-elect from the Foochow Electoral Conference, Lois S. Parker and Ada C. Butcher, delegate-elect from the North India Electoral Conference; and Jane Field Bashford, delegate-elect from the Ohio Electoral Conference, having carefully considered the same, report that the challenge is not sustained, and that the aforesaid lady delegates-elect, are not ineligible to this body.[1]

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1896, p. 92.

T. B. Neely presented a minority report, which related the action of previous General Conferences, and thus closed:

> We find, therefore, that the challenge of the eligibility of the women whose names have appeared on the roll of this General Conference is sustained, that the elections of women by Lay Electoral Conferences are illegal acts, and that to seat the claimants would tend to destroy all respect for the Constitution of the Church, and for the decisions and interpretations of the General Conference.[1]

A long discussion ensued.

On May 7 the Committee on Eligibility made another report, which, as finally passed, contained a resolution to submit to the Church a new proposition to change the Restrictive Rule so as to admit of the election of women, the gist of which change was the substituting of "person" for the word "layman," and the report concluded:

> The challenge not having been judicially passed upon, those occupying the seats in question do so under a title in dispute, yet without prejudice to the rights of either challengers or challenged, and without establishing a precedent.[2]

Divers members of the committee, though having agreed with the report for the disposal of the case in that Conference, being opposed on various grounds to the admission of women, voted in the negative. The affirmative vote was 425, the negative, 98.

Lydia A. Trimble, who had arrived during the discussion and taken her seat, declining to sit "under a title in dispute," withdrew.

In the Annual Conferences the vote was: in favor of the amendment, 7,455; against, 3,636. This was not sufficient, if the succeeding General Conference had furnished the necessary two thirds. But the General Conference

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1896, pp. 93, 94.
[2]Ibid., 1896, p. 418.

of 1900 did not put this proposition to vote. A broader measure took its place.

EQUAL REPRESENTATION DEMANDED

From the year 1872, when laymen were admitted, there had been much dissatisfaction with the small proportion accorded them. An appeal was made to the General Conference of 1880 for a modification of the law, so as to authorize equal representation in the General Conference.

In 1884 there were many memorials and much discussion, and a commission to be appointed by the Bishops consisting of one from every General Conference district, and one at large, was ordered to take into consideration the whole subject of representation, ministerial and lay, and report the result of their deliberations to the next General Conference.

This commission recommended to the General Conference of 1888 "to take the necessary action to hand down to the Annual Conferences during the year 1890" a proposition to change the Constitution on this subject, so that it should read: "Nor allow of a greater number of lay delegates than there may be ministerial delegates." The resolution on this subject was voted on by orders, and therefore by ayes and noes. In its favor there were 157 ministerial votes; against, 114. Of the laymen 121 voted in the affirmative, and 24 in the negative. This sent the report down to the Annual Conferences, but *not with the constitutional number.*

The resolution was defeated in the Annual Conferences, the vote being 5,501 against and 2,926 for.

Another proposition was submitted at the request of the Philadelphia Conference, which provided that the ministerial and lay delegates should deliberate and vote as one body and *never as separate orders,* and that "there shall be as many lay delegates for an Annual Conference

as there are ministerial." This motion was also lost, there being a vote of 2,310 for and 4,849 against.

A long list of memorials relating to the subject was presented to the General Conference in 1892. That Conference sent down to the Annual Conferences a proposition to change the *Discipline* so that there should be an equal number of lay and ministerial delegates, "who shall deliberate and vote with the ministers as one body." One hundred and forty-three laymen voted in the affirmative, and 10 in the negative; of the ministers, 197 voted in the affirmative, and 108 in the negative.

The chair announced that the report was adopted by the concurrent vote of the two orders; but a point of law was raised that two thirds of the ministerial order had not voted to adopt the report. Whereupon this question was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, which reported as follows:

> The vote upon the adoption of the report having been taken by orders, and the two orders having concurred by a majority vote of each order in the affirmative, it appearing that two thirds of the General Conference had voted in favor of the adoption of the report, it is the opinion of the committee that the report was duly adopted, and the recommendation has been legally and constitutionally made.[1]

The Annual Conferences refused to coalesce, there being in favor of the amendment 2,894, and against it 6,138. The smallness of the vote in favor was largely caused by the provision that the lay delegates should deliberate and vote with the ministers as one body, it being believed that in the absence of two houses, the power to divide and vote on critical questions was essential to the eliciting of the feeling and judgment of each order.

APPROACHING THE GOAL

Many memorials were sent to the Conference of 1896.

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1892, p. 492.

The report of the Committee on Lay Representation left out the statement that they should "sit, deliberate, and vote as one body," and simply proposed that there should be from each Annual Conference lay delegates equal in number to the ministerial delegates. In the report the General Conference was said to *recommend* the proposition; but the word "recommend" was stricken out and the word "submit" inserted. The report, as thus amended, was adopted by a vote of 289 ayes to 47 noes. This change made it impossible to effect the result without the aid of the next General Conference.

During the ensuing quadrennium the Church was much agitated. The proposition was defeated in the Annual Conferences. In favor of the amendment there were 4,362 votes, and against 6,364.

The mere fact of the defeat of this proposition had no bearing upon the right of other Annual Conferences to propose and send round other, or similar, resolutions. The Rock River Conference requested the Bishops to submit to the several Annual Conferences, at the first regular session of each Conference held after January 1, 1898, changes, by striking out and inserting, which would result in the following form for Paragraph 60: "The lay delegates shall consist of one layman for each Annual Conference, except such Conferences as have more than one ministerial delegate, which Conferences shall be entitled to as many lay delegates as ministerial delegates"; and it provided also for the verbal changes necessary in all parts of the *Discipline* to agree therewith.

A marvelous reversal of the last vote was the result. In favor of the amendment 9,258 ministers recorded themselves, and against 1,524.

A strong desire and determination arose that there should be provisional delegates ready to enter the Conference of 1900 similar to those who were admitted in the

General Conference of 1872. This spirit found expression in the action of the Baltimore Conference, which requested the Bishops to submit to the Annual Conferences in 1899 and 1900 the following proposition to amend the *Discipline:*

That, if three fourths of the members of the Annual Conferences present and voting during 1899 and 1900 shall approve of this amendment, and it shall also receive the concurrence of two thirds of the General Conference of 1900, and the Electoral Conferences of 1899 and 1900 shall have selected provisional representatives, having the qualifications and selected in the manner now determining the election of lay delegates, so that the whole number of lay delegates and provisional representatives selected for any Conference shall equal the number of ministerial delegates for said Conference, the General Conference of 1900 may provide for their admission as lay delegates.[1]

In favor of the resolution there were 2,738 votes, against, 591.

EQUAL REPRESENTATION FINALLY SECURED

Immediately after the opening of the General Conference of 1900 three resolutions, signed by six ministers and four laymen—all members of the Conference—were presented. The first was:

Whereas, The Rock River Annual Conference, at its fifty-eighth annual session, held in Chicago, Illinois, beginning October 6, 1897, requested the Bishops to submit to the several Annual Conferences at the first regular session of each Conference held after January 1, 1898, the following proposition: "To amend Section 2 of Paragraph 67 of the *Book of Discipline* by striking out the words 'nor of more than two lay delegates for an Annual Conference,' and inserting the words 'nor of more lay delegates from an Annual Conference than there are ministerial delegates from such Annual Conference,' so that the section as amended, shall read: 'Section 2. The General Conference shall not allow of more than one ministerial representative for every

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1900, p. 377.

fourteen members of an Annual Conference; nor of a less number than one for every forty-five, nor of more lay delegates from an Annual Conference than there are ministerial delegates from such Annual Conference; *provided*, nevertheless, that when there shall be in any Annual Conference a fraction of two thirds the number which shall be fixed for the ratio of representation, such Annual Conference shall be entitled to an additional delegate for such fraction; and *provided*, also, that no Conference shall be denied the privilege of one ministerial and of one lay delegate' "; and,

Whereas, The Bishops submitted to the several Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the first regular session of each Conference, held after January 1, 1898, the above proposition to amend the Second Restrictive Rule, which proposition was voted upon by the said Annual Conferences, and was concurred in by three fourths of all the members of the said Annual Conferences who were present and voted on the said recommendation; therefore, be it

Resolved, By the twenty-third delegated General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, held in the city of Chicago, in the State of Illinois, beginning May 2, 1900, that we hereby concur in the proposed change of the Second Restrictive Rule, and it is hereby so amended as to read:

"¶ 67, § 2. The General Conference shall not allow of more than one ministerial representative for every fourteen members of an Annual Conference, nor of a less number than one for every forty-five, nor of more lay delegates from an Annual Conference than there are ministerial delegates from such Annual Conference; *provided*, nevertheless, that when there shall be any Annual Conference a fraction of two thirds the number which shall be fixed by the ratio of representation, such Annual Conference shall be entitled to an additional delegate for such fraction; and *provided*, also, that no Conference shall be denied the privilege of one ministerial and of one lay delegate."[1]

The vote on this was taken by ayes and noes, with the result that 509 votes were in favor and none against, 55 being absent or not voting. Bishop Merrill then announced "that the constitutional change had been effected by the concurrence of this General Conference."

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1900, p. 102.

The second resolution did not deal with the Constitution, but merely altered the *Discipline* in other paragraphs, so that they would harmonize with the change in the Restrictive Rule, just consummated. It required only a majority to pass it, and was unanimously adopted.

The third resolution was:

Whereas, The Rock River Annual Conference, at its session in Chicago, Illinois, beginning October 6, 1897, requested the Bishops to submit to the several Annual Conferences at the first regular session of each Conference held after January 1, 1898, a proposition to amend the Second Restrictive Rule of the *Book of Discipline* so as to provide for equal ministerial and lay representation in the General Conference; and,

Whereas, This proposition has been duly approved by three fourths of the members of the several Annual Conferences present and voting, and by two thirds of the members of this twenty-third delegated General Conference; and,

Whereas, The Lay Electoral Conferences have selected provisional delegates sufficient in number to complete the quota to which such Annual Conferences are now entitled; therefore,

Resolved, That the secretary of the General Conference is hereby instructed to call the roll of provisional delegates selected by the several Lay Electoral Conferences entitled to additional lay delegates, and that such provisional delegates be admitted as members of this General Conference; *provided*, that if objection to the admission of any provisional delegate or delegates be made by six members of the Conference, then the case of such delegate or delegates shall be deferred until all to whom no objection is made have been duly admitted; after which the deferred cases, if any, may be called and decided on their merits.[1]

It was unanimously adopted.

These necessary proceedings being ended, the provisional delegates, no longer provisional but actual, took their seats.

During the proceedings D. H. Moore, under a question of privilege, presented a letter from Mrs. Mattie Yates McMahon, one of the eight women elected as provisional

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1900, p. 106.

delegates. The part relating to the immediate conditions is in these paragraphs:

To the members of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, Illinois:

Greeting: In presenting to you my greetings, I desire to say that I have not swerved one iota from the views I have always held in regard to the rights of women to a seat in your honorable body.

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Therefore, waiving none of the principles involved in the eligibility of women, yet, for the sake of removing every possible hindrance to the immediate seating of these provisional candidates, so far as that hindrance may be occasioned by the question of admission, I shall not present my credentials for admission to this Conference. When elected a provisional delegate by my own Lay Conference a responsibility came with it that could not be lightly treated. That responsibility is now transferred to you.

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Very respectfully yours,
(Mrs.) Mattie Yates McMahon.[1]

This sacrifice is worthy of permanent recollection.

From that time the number of lay and clerical delegates has been equal. However, the undisputed foundation for the eligibility of women as delegates to the General Conference was not finally laid until the completion of the revision of the Constitution.

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1900, p. 107.

CHAPTER XL

The Revision of the Constitution

In 1888 the General Conference appointed a Constitutional Commission of nine members, who recommended "the appointment of a Commission of seven ministers and seven laymen, one from each General Conference district, and three of the General Superintendents, who may prepare paragraphs to take the place of Paragraphs 63 and 64, inclusive, in the present edition of the *Discipline,* said paragraphs to define and determine the Constitution of the General Conference, to state of whom it shall be composed and by what method it shall be organized; to declare what shall be the powers thereof and in what manner they shall be exercised, and to provide the process by which the Constitution or any part thereof shall be amended, and report to the General Conference of 1892." They said that they "are convinced that the organic law of the Church, and especially the Constitution of the General Conference, need to be accurately defined and determined; that the method to be pursued in the organization of the General Conference should be precisely and explicitly stated; that the relations of lay to ministerial representations should be more satisfactorily adjusted."[1]

The report was presented on the third day of the Conference of 1892, and was read, as was also a minority report. On May 10 the consideration of the report was begun. Bishop Merrill, one of the Commission, was invited to give such explanations of the history and meaning of any part of the Constitution during the debate as he might consider fit.

[1]General Conference *Journal,* 1888, p. 468.

Speedily a substitute to the report was presented, which was lost. The next day the discussion was resumed and amendments moved, and finally a substitute for the report as it stood.

On the twelfth day there were many speakers, and the Conference became confused. A motion was made that the whole matter be indefinitely postponed, with instructions to have the report published in the papers of the Church and *presented to the next General Conference.* After considerable discussion the substitute was accepted by a vote of 233 to 190, and finally was adopted.

Great pains had been taken by the Commission, and the report contained some valuable improvements, but certain phases of it did not carry conviction to the majority of the Conference.

Early in the session of 1896 a Committee on Constitution was appointed. Many changes and amendments were proposed. There were a majority and a minority report, and on May 27 William F. Warren moved the following, which prevailed:

> That the General Conference requests the Bishops to appoint a committee to consist of six laymen, six ministers, and three General Superintendents, whose duty it shall be to review the work of the Constitutional Commission of 1888, the recommendations of the Committee on Constitution appointed by the General Conference of 1896, and the recommendations of all General Conference Committees on Lay Representation, .; and that it shall present its report to the Church papers for publication as early as January, 1899, and after revising it between January 1 and May 1, 1900, in the light of all discussions and amendments then available, present it in its final form to the General Conference of 1900.

Never was more pains taken to perfect the Constitution of any ecclesiastical constituency.

AN EPITOME OF THE WORK DONE

The organic law was divided as follows: I. Articles of

Religion; II. The General Rules; III. Articles of Organization and Government. The first and second of these divisions were not affected by the revision. Part of Division III consists of pastoral charges, Quarterly and Annual Conferences. This dignifies and protects those important elements of the Church. Part second deals with The General Conference. Article I, "How Composed?"

From the section, "Of the Election of Ministerial Delegates," the phrase *"by seniority"* was removed as of no use, for since 1808 no one has been made a delegate by that method.

The Annual Conference is empowered to elect reserve delegates, a practice which grew up with the Constitution, but was not recognized by words in the Constitution.

The Article on Lay Delegation is much changed. For the first time it is said *"Each Lay Electoral Conference* shall be entitled to *elect as many* delegates to the General Conference as there are ministerial delegates from the Annual Conference."

As respects Presiding Officers, in the revised Constitution it is provided that "The General Superintendents shall preside in the General Conference *in such order as they may determine."*

This is an important change; the custom had been that the senior Bishop should preside on the first day, the others succeeding in their order of election. By the present method the Bishops respectively may be suited to each situation, appointing the best parliamentarian on a day most liable to have excited debates or intricate problems.

There is a distinct Article on *Organization* and another on *Voting:*

In all cases of separate voting it shall require the concur-

rence of the two orders to adopt the proposed measure; except that for changes of the Constitution a vote of two thirds of the General Conference shall be sufficient, as provided in Article XI.

Article X consists of Powers and Restrictions. This covers what are called "The Restrictive Rules."

The General Conference shall have full power to make rules and regulations for the Church under the following limitations and restrictions, viz.:

Article I. The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, nor change our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new Standards or Rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established Standards of doctrine.

The Second Restrictive Rule, until this change, was:

The General Conference shall not allow of more than one ministerial representative for every fourteen members of an Annual Conference; nor of a less number than one for every forty-five; nor of more than two lay delegates for an Annual Conference; *provided*, nevertheless, that when there shall be in any Annual Conference a fraction of two thirds the number which shall be fixed for the ratio of representation, such Annual Conference shall be entitled to an additional delegate for such fraction; and *provided*, also, that no Conference shall be denied the privilege of one ministerial and of one lay delegate.

But the Second Restrictive Rule now is:

The General Conference shall not organize nor authorize the organization of an Annual Conference with less than twenty-five members.

The previous "Second Restrictive Rule" was transferred to Article II, in Part Second, under the title *"Ministerial Delegates."*

The Third Rule is as before; also the Fourth. The Fifth is somewhat altered. It is as follows:

The General Conference shall not deprive our ministers of the right of trial by the Annual Conference; nor shall it deprive our members of the right of trial by a committee of members of our Church, nor of an appeal.

Originally it was:

The General Conference shall not do away the privileges of our ministers or preachers of trial by a committee and of an appeal; neither shall they do away the privileges of our members of trial before the society, or by a committee, and of an appeal.

LESS DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN

Article XI deals with the altering of the Restrictive Rules. It is now:

The concurrent recommendation of *two thirds* of all the members of the several Annual Conferences present and voting, and of *two thirds* of all the members of the Lay Electoral Conferences present and voting, shall suffice to authorize the next ensuing General Conference by a two-thirds vote to alter or amend any of the provisions of this Constitution, *excepting Article X*, § 1; and also, whenever such alteration or amendment shall have been first recommended by a General Conference by a two-thirds vote, then so soon as two thirds of all the members of the several Annual Conferences present and voting, and two thirds of all the members of the Lay Electoral Conferences present and voting, shall have concurred therein, such alteration or amendment shall take effect; and the result of the vote shall be announced by the General Superintendents.

The substitution of *"two thirds"* instead of "three fourths" of all the members of the several Annual Conferences makes a change somewhat easier to accomplish.

In the discussion concerning that proposition, those who wished to *retain the "three fourths"* did so because they desired that "the Constitution should not be trifled with." The other part argued for *"two thirds"* because two thirds of the laity was sufficient; and that each order should have the same voting control.

Some ministers were willing to give up their numerical superiority because they had more confidence in the caution of the laity than in the ministry. As a whole, the three great changes are the results of the various modi-

fications: The Quarterly Conference must be organized in each pastoral charge; and the official board cannot supersede it. Traveling preachers are specifically required to attend the sessions of the Annual Conference to which they belong. And for the first time the clergy and laity are equally represented in the Constitution and women universally recognized as eligible to election to the General Conference.

The Church at large accepted the revision by the joint action of the Annual Conferences and the Lay Electoral Conferences, with unusual jubilation.

PRINCIPAL UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION

CHAPTER XLI

The Presiding Eldership

This arm of the episcopacy has been a heated center of contention, not only during the one hundred years of the existence of the Church under the Constitution, but almost from its origin.

It was one of the reasons of the establishment of the Methodist Protestant Church, and came near causing a large secession, if not the forming of still another denomination.

For a long time it was supposed that prior to 1792 all elders were *presiding* elders, whereas only those whom Bishops assigned to districts were presiding elders. In 1876, Arthur Edwards, editor of the Northwestern Christian Advocate, published the following illuminating list:

YEAR	TOTAL ELDERS	ELDERS ON DISTRICTS
1785	20	12
1786	28	22
1787	25	22
1788	22	13
1789	30	18
1790	67	20
1791	62	18
1792	78	18

Lee, in his comments on 1785, says:

The form of the Minutes of Conference was changed this year, and all the *elders*, who were directed to take oversight of several circuits, were set to the right hand of a bracket, which inclosed all the circuits and preachers of which he was to take charge. This may be considered as the beginning of the presiding elder's office; although it was not known by that name at that time; yet in the absence of a *Superintendent*, this *elder* had the direct-

ing of all the preachers that were inclosed in the bracket against which his name was set.[1]

In 1792 he says:

The 5th Section had respect to the presiding elders. Such an order of elders had never been regularly established before. They had been appointed by the Bishop for several years; but it was a doubt in the minds of the preachers whether such power belonged to him. The General Conference now determined that there should be presiding elders; and that they should be chosen, stationed, and changed by the Bishop. The presiding elder was to be supported by the surplus money in each circuit; but if there was no surplus, then he was to share in proportion with the preachers of the circuit.[2]

The question in its simplest form is this: Is it the prerogative of the Bishops solely, under constitutional protection, "to appoint presiding elders"; to "fix the number of the districts," and to "determine their boundaries"; or is it within the power of the General Conference to authorize the Annual Conferences respectively to do any, or all, of these things?

No one denies that ever since presiding elders have existed, the Bishops alone have had this power, and have used it in every instance. No presiding elder has ever been elected or appointed by an Annual or General Conference since the Constitution was formed. No Conference has ever fixed the number or bounds of its districts.

But these facts have not been sufficient to prevent, in several General Conferences, the most vigorously defended claims for the right of Annual Conferences to elect presiding elders themselves, or conjointly with the Bishop. The issue, therefore, turns on the history of the office and its relation to the constitutional plan of Itinerant General Superintendency.

[1] *History of the Methodists*, pp. 119, 120.
[2] Ibid., p. 183.

1808

In the *Discipline* of 1808, which contained every part of the "plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency," Section 5 is:

Of the Presiding Elders and of Their Duty

Quest. 1. By whom are the presiding elders to be chosen?

Ans. By the Bishops.

Quest. 2. What are the duties of a presiding elder?

Ans. 1. To travel through his appointed district.

2. In the absence of the Bishop, to take charge of all the elders and deacons, traveling and local preachers, and exhorters in his district.

3. To change, receive, and suspend preachers in his district during the intervals of the Conferences, and in the absence of a Bishop, as the *Discipline* directs.

4.

5. To be present, as far as practicable, at all the quarterly meetings; and to call together at each quarterly meeting, a quarterly meeting Conference, consisting of all the traveling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders of the circuit, and none else, to hear complaints, and to receive and try appeals.

6. To oversee the spiritual and temporal business of the societies in his district.

7. To take care that every part of our *Discipline* be enforced —in his district.

8. To attend the Bishops when present in his district; and to give them, when absent, all necessary information, by letter, of the state of his district.

Quest. 3. By whom are the presiding elders to be stationed and changed?

Ans. By the Bishops.

When the Conference of 1808 was debating the report of the Committee on "Regulating and Perpetuating General Conferences," Ezekiel Cooper, some time after his motion for seven Bishops, there being seven Conferences, was lost, moved "to postpone the present question to

make room for the consideration of a new resolution as preparatory to the minds of the brethren to determine on the present subject." This being granted, Cooper moved:

> That in the fifth section of the *Discipline*, after the question, "By whom shall the presiding elders be chosen?" the answer shall be:
>
> "*Ans.* Each Annual Conference respectively, without debate, shall annually choose, by ballot, its own presiding elders."[1]

This proposal was debated in the afternoon until adjournment, and privately discussed in the evening. The next morning Soule moved to take the vote "on the motion of electing presiding elders without further debate." This was lost, but after several hours of debate, it was at last successfully moved to proceed to the vote, which, on motion, was by ballot, and stood: for the election of presiding elders 52; against, 73.

1812

In the General Conference of 1812 these questions again appeared in a motion made by Clark, of the New York Conference, for the election of presiding elders by the Annual Conferences. Snethen moved the following amendment:

> *Provided* always, that the Bishops shall have the power to nominate them, and if the first nomination is not ratified by a majority of the Annual Conferences, the Bishop shall proceed to nominate until a choice is made; and in all cases, each nomination shall be determined separately by ballot without debate.[2]

Douglass moved that the subject be laid on the table until "we request our Superintendents to explain their opinion respecting it." This was lost, 41 for, and 42 against. Douglass then moved that the Conference go into a Com-

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1808, vol. i, p. 83.
[2]Ibid., 1808, vol. i, p. 114.

mittee of the Whole. This motion he withdrew. Snethen's amendment was then voted upon, with 39 for, and 43 against. In the afternoon the original motion was put to vote, with the result of 42 for placing the power of selecting presiding elders in the hands of the Annual Conference, and 45 against it.

1816

In the Conference of 1816, Merwin, of the New York Conference, moved an amendment to the rule in the *Discipline* respecting presiding elders:

Question 1. How shall the presiding elders be chosen and appointed?

Answer. At an early period in each Annual Conference the Bishop shall nominate a person for each district that is to be supplied, and the Conference shall, without debate, proceed in the choice, the person nominated being absent; and if the person nominated be not chosen according to nomination, the Bishop shall nominate two others, one of whom it shall be the duty of Conference to choose.

Question 2. By whom shall the preachers be appointed to their stations?

Answer. By the Bishop, with the advice and counsel of the presiding elders.[1]

The resolution was taken up the next day, whereupon Roszel, of Baltimore, moved "from certain delicacies connected with the motion, that the Conference resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole." Carried. Bishop McKendree retired after calling Garrettson to the chair.

After considering the subject several days, the Conference again went into a Committee of the Whole, and Bangs moved this amendment:

Question. How are the presiding elders chosen and appointed?

Answer. The Bishop, at an early period of the Annual Conference, shall nominate an elder for each district, and the Conference shall, without debate, either confirm or reject such

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1816, vol. i, p. 135.

nomination. If the person or persons so nominated be not elected by the Conference, the Bishop shall nominate two others for each of the vacant districts, one of whom shall be chosen. And the presiding elder so elected and appointed shall remain in office four years, unless dismissed by the mutual consent of the Bishop and Conference, or elected to some other office by the General Conference. But no presiding elder shall be removed from office during the term of four years without his consent, unless the reasons for such removal be stated to him in presence of the Conference, which shall decide, without debate, on his case.[1]

After many hours in committee, the vote was taken on the motion of Merwin: 42 for, and 60 against.

A few days later the first part of the main question was taken up by the Conference, and the proposition was lost, 38 in favor, and 63 against; the second part was also lost. Eleven days afterward Merwin moved that the following resolution be adopted:

Resolved, By the delegates of the several Annual Conferences in General Conference assembled, that the motion relative to the election and appointment of presiding elders is not contrary to the Constitution of our Church.[2]

But this was lost. Thus ended the struggle in the General Conference of 1816.

1820

In the Conference of 1820 the presiding-elder question reappeared wearing an ominous aspect. During two days the strongest men in the Conference participated in prolonged debate; and Cooper and Emory submitted a resolution, which was:

That the Bishop, or the president of each Annual Conference, shall ascertain the number of presiding elders wanted, and shall nominate three times the number, out of which nomination the

[1] General Conference *Journal*, 1816, vol. i, p. 140.
[2] Ibid., 1816, vol. i, p. 164.

Conference shall, without debate, elect by ballot the presiding elders.[1]

When the subject was next under consideration the following resolution was submitted by Bangs and Capers —two of the most influential men in the Conference—the first in favor of the new method, the second against it:

That three of the members who desire an election of the presiding elders, and an equal number of those who are opposed to any change of our present plan, be appointed a committee to confer with the Bishops and the Bishop-elect upon that subject, and that they report to us whether any, and if any, what, alteration might be made to conciliate the wishes of the brethren upon this subject, and that they report to-morrow.[2]

On the afternoon of May 23 the committee reported as follows:

The committee appointed to confer with the Bishops on a plan to conciliate the wishes of the brethren on the subject of choosing presiding elders, recommend to the Conference the adoption of the following resolutions, to be inserted in their proper place in our *Discipline:*

"*Resolved,* 1. That whenever, in any Annual Conference, there shall be a vacancy or vacancies in the office of presiding elder, in consequence of his period of service of four years having expired, or the Bishop wishing to remove any presiding elder, or by death, resignation, or otherwise, the Bishop or president of the Conference, having ascertained the number wanted from any of these causes, shall nominate three times the number, out of which the Conference shall elect by ballot, without debate, the number wanted; *provided,* when there is more than one wanted not more than three at a time shall be nominated, nor more than one at a time elected; *provided,* also, that in case of any vacancy or vacancies in the office of presiding elder in the interval of any Annual Conference, the Bishop shall have authority to fill the said vacancy or vacancies until the ensuing Annual Conference.

"*Resolved,* 2. That the presiding elders be, and hereby

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[1]General Conference *Journal,* 1820, vol. i, p. 213.

[2]Ibid., 1820, vol. i, p. 218.

are, made the advisory counsel of the Bishop or president of the Conference in stationing the preachers."

(Signed) EZEKIEL COOPER,
STEPHEN G. ROSZEL,
N. BANGS,
J. WELLS,
J. EMORY,
WILLIAM CAPERS.[1]

The first resolution was put to vote and carried, 61 to 25, and afterward the whole report was passed. It was then ordered that the resolutions be recommitted to the committee to be incorporated in the Section of the *Discipline* relating to presiding elders.

Six days before this the General Conference had decided to elect but one General Superintendent, and Joshua Soule had been elected. This made him eligible for ordination, which by the laws of the Church is essential to the making of a Bishop. Soon after the passing of the resolution legalizing the election of presiding elders, Soule notified the Conference, that he did not consider himself bound by that law, and the following resolution was submitted:

Whereas, Brother Joshua Soule, Bishop-elect, has signified in his letter to the episcopacy, which letter was read in open Conference, that if he be ordained Bishop he will not hold himself bound to be governed by a certain resolution of this General Conference relative to the nomination and election of presiding elders; therefore,

Resolved, That the Bishops be earnestly requested by this Conference to defer or postpone the ordination of the said Joshua Soule until he gives satisfactory explanations to this Conference.[2]

The vote on this was taken by ballot, and stood 43 to 43. A second vote produced the same result. The presiding Bishop, Roberts, refused to give the casting vote,

[1] General Conference *Journal*, 1820, vol. i, p. 221.
[2] Ibid., 1820, vol. i, p. 230.

declaring the motion lost for lack of a majority. Soule presented a paper containing his resignation of the office of Bishop, and in the afternoon he asked for a prompt decision, upon which the Conference by vote declined, stating that it would not express its decision before the next morning. Finally, Soule again stated his purpose to resign, and his resignation was accepted.

Near the close of the Conference a motion was adopted, after much debate:

> That the rule passed at this Conference respecting the nomination and election of presiding elders be suspended until the next General Conference, and that the Superintendents be, and they are hereby directed, to act under the old rule respecting the appointment of presiding elders.[1]

1824

The subject again came up in 1824, when David Young offered the following resolution:

> *Whereas*, A majority of the Annual Conferences have judged the resolutions making presiding elders elective, and which were passed and then suspended at the last General Conference, unconstitutional; therefore,
>
> *Resolved*, That the said resolutions are not of authority, and shall not be carried into effect.[2]

It was sustained by a vote of 63 in favor and 61 against.

A day or two afterward the Conference proceeded to the election of two General Superintendents. One hundred and twenty-eight votes were cast, of which Joshua Soule received 64; William Beauchamp, 62; Elijah Hedding, 61; John Emory, 59. It is noteworthy that Soule had only one more vote for the episcopacy than the number of votes sustaining the foregoing resolution, and that Hedding, who was a thorough believer in the constitutionality of electing presiding elders by the Annual

[1] General Conference *Journal*, 1820, vol. i, p. 235.
[2] Ibid., 1824, vol. i, p. 278.

Conference, had exactly the same number of votes as had been cast *against* this declaration of unconstitutionality. On the second vote Soule had one more than he had on the first ballot, and Hedding three more. Soule on this occasion was declared elected, and was duly ordained. It was finally moved:

That it is the sense of this General Conference that the suspended resolutions, making the presiding elder elective are considered as unfinished business, and are neither to be inserted in the revised form of the *Discipline* nor to be carried into operation before the next General Conference.[1]

1828

The General Conference of 1828 took the following action on the same:

Resolved, That the resolutions commonly called the suspended resolutions, rendering the presiding elders elective ., and which were referred to this Conference by the last General Conference as unfinished business, and reported to us at this Conference, be, and the same are, hereby rescinded and made void.[2]

This was carried—by what majority is not recorded.

Later another resolution was offered:

That the first question and answer in Section five of our *Form of Discipline*, relating to the appointment and duties of presiding elders, be altered so as to read as follows:

"*Question.* How shall the presiding elders be chosen and stationed?

"*Answer.* Each Annual Conference shall elect its own presiding elders for its respective districts, and the presiding elders when so chosen shall be an efficient council to assist the Bishops in the appointments of the preachers to their several circuits and stations."

This was at once laid on the table.

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1824, vol. i, p. 297.

[2]Ibid., 1828, vol. i, p. 232.

CHAPTER XLII

The Presiding Eldership *(Continued)*

To the reader thus far nothing on this subject has been revealed that would imply a mental or moral earthquake, but such was the case. No convulsion in the Church, except that which split the denomination in 1844, has been as great as this. The evidence of this proposition is here to be adduced.

On May 27, 1820, a protest was sent to the Bishops against entering into another election to the episcopacy. This was signed by thirty members. Paine had the original paper, when he was writing his *Life and Times of Bishop McKendree.* It was in the handwriting of Nathan Bangs, with signatures of many prominent members of the New York, New England, Genesee, and Philadelphia Conferences attached. The reasons which they assigned for nonelection were the

agitations created by the recent election and resignation, and the excitement growing out of the suspension of the presiding elder resolutions, producing such a state of feeling as precluded the deliberation necessary to such an act. They suggest that "it would be placing any man in a very hazardous situation to put him, at this time, into the episcopal chair." They also complain of the majority for the manner in which they secured the suspension of the presiding elder resolutions "on yesterday, by obtaining the signatures of the said majority." Paine apparently condenses the rest of the protests and proceeds, that now they are so leagued together that they can and will carry any measure they choose, however obnoxious to the feelings and views of the minority. They therefore say [Paine quotes from the protest]: "*We most earnestly wish the present session to come to a close.*" The fact is, the *majority would have voted for no one except Joshua Soule,* and *as that, under the existing circumstances,*

would have been afflicting to him, and perhaps add to the unpleasant agitation of the Conference, there was a general inclination to put off the election, if it could be done without too serious detriment to the work. When, therefore, the two effective Superintendents [George and Roberts] came forward and proposed to undertake the task for the succeeding four years, with only such assistance as the senior Bishop might be able to give them, the proposition was gladly concurred in.[1]

COOPER'S ACCOUNT AND ESTIMATE

Ezekiel Cooper says, concerning the result of the Compromise resolutions:

The above resolutions each of the committee pledged himself to support as the act and deed of them all jointly; and this was agreeably to the earnest request of Bishop George, who was present when the report was agreed upon and signed. The report was opposed by a few; but the resolutions, as reported, were adopted by a majority of 61 to 25 votes—considerably more than two thirds. It was now apparent that more love, unity, and brotherly kindness prevailed than at any other period during the sitting of the Conference.

But, unfortunately, this pleasing state of things continued only a few days, when the senior Superintendent, Bishop McKendree, came into Conference—which he seldom attended on account of indisposition—and, with an apparent distress and painful displeasure in his appearance and in his speech, addressed the Conference in a melancholy and alarming introduction by observing that he was the bearer of bad or sad tidings, and had a disagreeable communication to make. After a number of preliminary observations verbally made, tending to excite surprise and alarm, as though some awful intelligence was about to be divulged, and which made some of the preachers, in emphatic whispers, ask each other, with much pathos and apparent solicitude, "What is the matter? What is it? What does he allude to?" he presented a paper addressed to the episcopacy, from J. Soule, Bishop-elect, which was read in open Conference, signifying in plain terms, that if he were consecrated and set apart to the office of Superintendent or Bishop in the Church, he would not hold himself bound to be governed by the decision

[1] Paine's *Life and Times of Bishop McKendree*, vol. i, p. 437.

and resolution of the General Conference relative to the nomination and election of presiding elders, and substantially protested against the resolution and rule passed by the Conference, as in his opinion, unconstitutional, and that he could not, in conscience, execute or comply with it.

This produced a great sensation, much excitement, and surprise. The paper containing the protest, being addressed to the episcopacy, though read to the Conference, was not suffered to remain in possession of the Conference, but was withdrawn by the senior Bishop, who subjoined a number of remarks of his own in support of the doctrine advanced by the Bishop-elect, intimating, in plain terms, that he knew of no tribunal to test and determine the constitutionality of the proceedings of the General Conference, excepting the episcopacy, and recommended the repeal or suspension of the rule for the election of presiding elders at least for four years, declaring it, in his opinion, unconstitutional, and not obligatory on the Bishops to enforce or submit to it. This, in the estimation of many, was a high and unjustifiable ground for a Bishop and Bishop-elect to take. But, even if the doctrine were correct, two out of three of the episcopacy had admitted the act to be a constitutional one, and, therefore, settled.

The Bishop-elect declared he had no explanations to give, but had said what he meant, and meant what he said, and renewed his declaration, which went, as was conceived, to put the General Conference and their resolutions at defiance, if they did not comport with his opinion and constructions of the constitutionality of what was done. Immediately a motion was made by John Collins to reconsider the resolutions of the Conference on the election of presiding elders, with the avowed intention to reverse or suspend what had been done; upon which a disagreeable debate ensued, in the course of which a number of inflammatory observations were made, which were considered unkind, ungenerous, and illiberal. After a warm, confused debate, which produced great excitement, tending to sow the seeds of discord and to impair and destroy the peace and union of the brethren, the question for reconsideration was taken by ballot, and lost.

The Bishop-elect and some others, as coadjutors to the senior Bishop, in their great efforts to maintain an undue episcopal power, appeared to have exerted all their ingenuity and influence in and out of the Conference; and it appeared they had

gained over at least twenty members who had voted for the election of presiding elders on the compromise agreed upon.

Under these circumstances two protests had been prepared and signed; the one, against the alarming doctrine set up in support of the episcopal power—that the Bishops had authority to overthrow and put at defiance the decisions of a General Conference, under a pretense of unconstitutionality which they assumed the right of determining; the other, against the consecration of the Bishop-elect, provided he persisted in maintaining a doctrine so repugnant to the prerogatives, rights, and privileges of the Conferences.[1]

In this paper which was "designed originally to be issued from the press, but withheld, probably to avoid an increase of the excitement which prevailed throughout the Church after the adjournment of the General Conference," and which was printed about sixty years later in *Light on Early Methodism*, Cooper closes:

Therefore, in the fear of God, we do most seriously, sincerely, and conscientiously protest against the arbitrary proceedings of those forty-five members as unjust, ungenerous, and unscriptural, and as not being obligatory or binding upon us or the Annual Conferences, or any other free and independent men. And we do also most solemnly protest against the high-toned doctrine set up and advanced: that the episcopacy are to judge of the constitutionality of the proceedings of a General Conference; and that their judgment or opinion is to overthrow, make void, suspend, and put at defiance the decisions and proceedings of a General Conference. And we do further most solemnly protest against the precedent or example of delegates of the Annual Conferences, in General Conference assembled, passively surrendering their own judgments, and implicitly yielding themselves to be controlled, governed, and directed into this or that particular course or measure by the mere dictate or mandate of a Bishop or Bishops, as though such Bishop or Bishops were infallible, or as if such delegates had not sagacity, liberty, or independence sufficient to judge for themselves. And we do furthermore protest, in the most solemn and decided terms, against the servile surrender of our rights, liberties, and

[1] *Light on Early Methodism*, pp. 301–304.

privileges to any ecclesiastical domination whatever; but that, on the contrary, it is our duty to God, to our brethren, to the Church of Christ, and to ourselves, by all lawful and righteous means, to maintain our rights, liberties, and privileges, civil and religious, as citizens and Christians, in *peace, union, and brotherly-kindness, if we possibly can*, but otherwise if we must. And if necessity be forced upon us, "To your tents, O Israel!"[1]

This is almost, if not quite, equal to the Declaration of Independence.

The instability of temper that accompanied all these debates requires the assumption of a deep undertow which carried the minds of men hither and thither. The influence of the senior Bishop (McKendree) was great. Entering the episcopacy with modesty, if not with diffidence, he gradually approximated to the regime of Asbury. By this time there was added to his temperament the irritation of a complication of chronic diseases, brought on by his exhausting labors for God and the Church, and accentuated by rapidly approaching old age.

Right or wrong as to the issue involved, it is clear that Bishop McKendree fell into a perilous error in declaring that if the General Conference passed the resolution, he would declare himself under no obligation to enforce it or to enjoin it on others to do so. Had he been in the vigor of his life and had uttered such a menace, he might have raised a rebellion which would have ended in his expulsion or a great secession from the denomination.

Had he appealed to the body to postpone the consideration of the matter, or if he had asked permission, as Asbury did on certain important occasions, to give to the General Conference his opinions, surely the larger part of his opponents would have consented. As it was, abundant evidence exists that the denomination was in peril of division.

Bishop McKendree sent an epistolary address to all

[1] *Light on Early Methodism*, pp. 307, 308.

the Annual Conferences. This was fully within his rights. In that, he said that "the change under consideration *would completely destroy the plan of our General Superintendency*"; but he expressed himself willing, *if the Conferences were to vote for it,* to be satisfied, and therefore he would "advise them to adopt such measure as in their judgment they deemed most prudent by which to accomplish the adoption of the change proposed in the resolutions and conformable to the provision in the sixth Article of the Constitution"—not that he believed the change would be an improvement of our system of government, or that it would fully meet the expectations of its advocates, but as "an accommodating measure in regard to the utility of which men equally good and wise in some degree may differ in opinion."

No one familiar with the career of William McKendree—his self-denial, his constant labor, his devotion to Methodism—can imagine that his motives were tainted with a desire for personal ascendency. But he had reason to think and feel that, in the providence of God, he was the defender of Methodism and the protector of the Constitution of which he was one of the authors. He was ill; he realized that his working days were over, and wished to feel and know before he died that his view was entrenched, and that his successors in the episcopacy should have the power to call a halt when they thought they saw danger ahead. But he who essays to give impartial history must weigh words, actions, events, methods, and times.

In this matter Soule acted well within his bounds. He was elected before the Conference had decided to take from the episcopacy the power of choosing and appointing presiding elders, and give it to the Annual Conferences; and he frankly informed the General Conference, that, if ordained, he could not conscientiously submit

to that change or enforce it. Also he tendered his resignation, a sacrifice seldom paralleled.

BANGS'S SUMMARY OF THE DEBATE

Bangs says of some of the speeches:

Perhaps a greater amount of talent was never brought to bear on any question ever brought before the General Conference than was elicited from both sides of the house in the discussion of this resolution. Some of the speeches were deep, pungent, and highly argumentative, the speakers throwing their whole souls into the subject, and winding themselves up to the highest pitch of impassioned eloquence, often concluding with a tremendous appeal to the understandings and consciences of their antagonists, both sides invoking the future prosperity of the Church as an auxiliary to their arguments.[1]

Bangs also says:

Those in favor of the change alleged that it is more in conformity to the genius of the American people to have a voice in the election of those who are to rule over them, and therefore the preachers ought to have a choice in the selection of the presiding elders. So long [he continues] as they were appointed by the Bishop it necessarily augmented the power of the episcopacy. Hence the preacher, let him be oppressed ever so much in his appointment, has no medium of redress within his reach, as his case is represented to the appointing power through an ecclesiastical officer over whom he has no control, and who is completely in the Bishop's confidence and at his disposal. These things, it was contended, were incompatible with the natural and civil rights of freedom. It was pleaded that, however wise and good the Bishop might be, it was impossible for him to have that knowledge of the local state of the people and peculiar circumstances of the preachers, and hence he assumed a responsibility for which he could not rationally account.

And then to give one man the complete control over five hundred others, many of whom may be equal to him in age and experience, and perhaps also in wisdom, learning, and goodness was an anomaly in legislation and an absurdity in practice.

That, however safely this prerogative might be exercised by

[1] *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. ii, p. 334.

Bishop Asbury, especially in the infancy of the Church, it had now become impossible. for a Bishop to exercise such a tremendous power intelligibly and safely to all concerned. The example of our British brethren was cited, who had given the power of stationing preachers to a committee, and then they were allowed to appeal to the Conference.

To overcome these arguments those who upheld the presiding eldership contended after this manner:

The Church of Christ was founded, in some respects, upon very different principles from those on which civil governments rested, and, therefore, though analogous in some particulars, yet in others the contrast was so obvious as to neutralize all analogical arguments. That though the people elected their legislators, President, and governors, yet most of the executive officers were appointed by the President.

It was admitted that they strengthened the hands of the episcopacy, yet being appointed by him saved the Church from an evil more to be dreaded than mere episcopal power, and that was an electioneering spirit, which must keep the Conference in perpetual agitations. Hence, though a preacher might, either from inadvertence or design, be injured in his appointment, yet to make the presiding elder dependent on the choice of an Annual Conference might make him fear to do his duty, in respect to enforcing discipline, and in exacting vigilance from those under him in the discharge of duty.

As to natural and civil rights, it was retorted, that though a Methodist preacher retains them as a citizen, yet the moment he entered the itinerancy, he becomes subject to ecclesiastical restraints which, though not incompatible with his rights as a freeman, were, nevertheless, essential to the preservation and efficient operation of the itinerancy.[1]

1876

This vexed question came up for determination in the General Conference of 1876, by a report from the Committee on Itinerancy, M. D'C. Crawford, chairman. There was also a report of the minority, of which William Rice was chairman.

[1]Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. ii, pp. 338-340.

The minority report set forth that to elect presiding elders would not be unconstitutional, and that it would be a benefit to the Church. This report was lost, 195 to 123.

The majority report maintained the proposition that it would be unconstitutional for the General Conference to take from the Bishops the power of appointing presiding elders, and determining their number, and the number of the districts; and that if it were not so, the change would "tend to destroy the plan."

George G. Reynolds offered as a substitute for a part of this report a proposal to make a constitutional test, and if the Restrictive Rule were altered so as to allow the Annual Conferences to determine the number of districts, he proposed a working plan. This motion was finally adopted, 144 to 111. And the item (as amended by the substitute of Reynolds by 186 yeas to 67 nays), and the report as a whole, was adopted.

Thus ended the last considerable attempt to remove from the episcopacy the power and responsibility of appointing presiding elders.

CHAPTER XLIII

Proposed Veto Power for Bishops

An effort was made, after the agitation concerning the episcopacy in the General Conference of 1820, to give power to the Superintendent or Superintendents to examine any resolution or motion for altering any part of the Constitution, and if they, or a majority of them, should judge it unconstitutional, to return it with their objections.

This was introduced on May 27, when Stephen G. Roszel and J. B. Finley presented, for consideration and action, the following resolution on the veto power of the Bishops:

Whereas, A difference has arisen in the General Conference about the constitutionality of a certain resolution passed concerning the appointment of presiding elders; and,

Whereas, There does not appear to be any proper tribunal to judge of and determine such a question; and,

Whereas, It appears important to us that some course should be taken to determine this business; therefore,

Resolved, That we will advise, and hereby do advise the several Annual Conferences to pass such resolutions as will enable the next General Conference so to alter the Constitution that whenever a resolution or motion which goes to alter any part of our *Discipline* is passed by the General Conference it shall be examined by the Superintendent or Superintendents; and if they, or a majority of them, shall judge it unconstitutional, they shall, within three days after its passage, return it to the Conference with their objections to it in writing. And whenever a resolution is so returned the Conference shall reconsider it; and if it pass by a majority of two thirds, it shall be constitutional and pass into a law, notwithstanding the objections of the Superintendents; and if it be not returned within three days,

it shall be considered as not objected to and become a law. Carried.[1]

The preamble assumes that "there does not appear to be any proper tribunal to judge of and determine such a question." That assumption includes the episcopacy as not being a "proper tribunal," and, further, that the Annual Conferences do not constitute one. And it assumes also that the General Conference is not a "proper tribunal." The first and second assumptions are correct; but, right or wrong, wise or unwise, the General Conference was and is the only body to judge authoritatively constitutional questions, all powers having been given to it which are not by Restrictive Rules taken from it. The proposed resolution would empower the Bishops, and not only so, but compel them "to examine every resolution or motion which goes to alter any part of our *Discipline.*"

As this proposition was brought forward on the last day of the Conference; was a subject of immense importance; and many of the strongest men, both in intellect and oratorical skill of presentation, were opposed to it, it is not wonderful that it did not succeed. The Journal simply records that "The previous question was called for, and the resolution was lost." This record of ancient times—among many other important debates on vital questions—is far too small.

As the General Conference was nearly equally divided on the presiding-elder question, and this proposal was a fruit of that contention, it is certain that the Annual Conferences which favored the election of presiding elders would vote against the veto power to the Bishops, or ignore the subject entirely.

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[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1820, vol. i, p. 238.
[2]*A Constitutional History of American Methodism*, Revised Edition, p. 354.

A SECOND ATTEMPT

There is no reference to the measure of 1820 in the *Journal* of 1824; but in that Conference, on May 18, notice was given that the following resolution would be offered:

Resolved, By the delegates of the Annual Conferences in General Conference assembled, that it be and is hereby recommended to the several Annual Conferences to adopt the following article as a provision to be annexed to the sixth Article of the "limitations and restrictions" adopted by the General Conference in 1808, viz.:

"*Provided* also, that whenever the delegated General Conference shall pass any rule or rules which, in the judgment of the Bishops, or a majority of them, are contrary to or an infringement upon the above 'limitations and restrictions,' or any one of them, such rule or rules being returned to the Conference within three days after their passage, together with the objections of the Bishops to them, in writing, the Conference shall reconsider such rule or rules, and if, upon reconsideration, they shall pass by a majority of two thirds of the members present, they shall be considered as rules, and go into immediate effect; but in case a less majority shall differ from the opinion of the Bishops, and they continue to sustain their objections, the rule or rules objected to shall be laid before the Annual Conferences, in which case the decision of a majority of all the members of the Annual Conference present when the vote shall be taken shall be final. In taking the vote in all such cases in the Annual Conferences the secretaries shall give a certificate of the number of votes, both in the affirmative and negative, and such certificates shall be forwarded to the editor and general book steward, who, with one or more of the Bishops, who may be present, shall be a committee to canvass the votes and certify the result."[1]

This was signed by Lovick Pierce and William Winans.

On May 21 the resolution was taken up. Ostrander moved that it be "laid on the table," on which motion the Conference divided, and 61 appeared in favor of laying the resolution on the table and 65 against it.

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1824, vol. i, p. 267.

The following amendment was then offered by James Smith and N. Bangs: "*Provided* also, that in all the above votings both in the Annual Conferences and in the General Conference, the vote shall be taken by ballot," and it was admitted.

In the afternoon, however, it was moved by Cooper and seconded by Bangs, "to dispense with the usual method of taking the vote and to take it on this question by ballot." The only explanation of this, as those against the amendment frankly stated, was to prevent the concentrated eyes of the Bishops upon the individual voters, who derived their appointments from the Bishops. This vote was lost, and when the question was taken on the resolution, it was sustained, 64 voting in the affirmative and 58 in the negative. It is noticeable that the measure was carried by a vote much less than two thirds; a change of four votes would have negatived it.

Bishop Paine, in *The Life and Times of Bishop McKendree,* says:

> To me, the youngest member of the body, it was an imposing spectacle. Bishop McKendree observed the action of the body with great solicitude. On Friday, May 20, came up the "constitutional" test, it all involving constitutional questions only. The Bishops, anticipating some action of the kind, had agreed to unite, and, if desired, present to the Conference the following amendment to the sixth Article of the "Limitations and Restrictions" adopted by the General Conference in 1808.

This document was signed: "We recommend the adoption of the above resolution. W McKendree, Enoch George, R. R. Roberts, Thomas L. Douglass, William Capers."[1]

Paine further says:

> Whether the subject was brought into the Conference by the presentation of this document or by another series of resolutions,

[1]Vol. ii, pp. 32, 35, 37.

the writer cannot say; but the discussion of the subject was upon substantially a similar, if not an identical, presentation of the question.

Tigert says:

> The names of Douglass and Capers were doubtless added to *anticipate the objection that the Bishops had no constitutional right* to introduce measures into the General Conference, but it was found inexpedient or unnecessary to attach the signatures of the Bishops to the measure as presented to the Conference; and Pierce and Winans, for some reason now undiscoverable, were selected to introduce it instead of Douglass and Capers.[1]

It will be observed that the second attempt to transform the Bishops into a supreme court was more strenuous than the first. That simply calls a halt for three days, during which, or at the end, the Bishops present their objections in writing to the Conference, which shall reconsider it. If it be not returned within three days, it shall be considered as not objected to and become a law; but if they do object to it, and if the Conference by a majority of two thirds shall pass it, it will be constitutional. But the *second,* upon the reconsideration, if passed by a majority of two thirds of the members present, they will be "considered as rules, and go into immediate effect; but in case a less majority shall differ from the opinion of the Bishops and they continue to sustain their objections, the rule or rules shall be laid before the Annual Conferences in which case the decision of a majority of all the members of the Annual Conference present when the vote shall be taken shall be final."

The Methodist Episcopal Church from 1812 has survived and flourished without any method of deciding constitutional questions otherwise than by the judgment of the General Conference.

Where there has been a difference of opinion on a large

[1] *A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism*, Revised Edition, p. 357.

scale, great conservatism has been observed, as shown in the prolonged contests concerning the establishment of a missionary episcopacy, lay delegation, and the admission of women to the General Conference. Should any General Conference trample upon the Constitution or be generally supposed to have done so, those who believe it so, have the right and the facilities in an emergency to elect another General Conference of a different turn of mind.

The difficulties of 1844 with respect to person, office, custom, spirit, and location were unparalleled, and can never be reproduced.

CHAPTER XLIV

"Bishops for Races and Languages"

The General Conference of 1904 received from its Committee on the Episcopacy a report as follows:

Concerning memorials from the Tennessee, East Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Texas, and Lexington Conferences requesting the General Conference to provide for the election of Bishops of African descent who shall be assigned to the presidency of Conferences consisting wholly or chiefly of ministers of African descent, we respectfully report that:

In the present state of our fundamental law a constitutional objection is raised to the granting of the request of said memorialists; but there having been referred to this committee by the General Conference a memorial from the Rock River Conference to change the fundamental law so as to make possible the realization of the desire of the memorialists and to accomplish other important objects; therefore,

Resolved, 1. That this General Conference propose the following amendment to the Constitution: To strike out from of the *Discipline* of 1900 after the disjunctive "but" and insert the words, "may elect a Bishop or Bishops for work among particular races and languages, or for any of our foreign missions, limiting their episcopal jurisdiction to the same respectively," so that the whole paragraph shall read:

"The General Conference shall not change nor alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away episcopacy, nor destroy the plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency; but may elect a Bishop or Bishops for work among particular races and languages, or for any of our foreign missions, limiting their episcopal jurisdiction to the same respectively."[1]

After extended discussion, the proposed amendment to the Constitution was submitted to the General Conference in order to ascertain whether the legal consti-

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1904, pp. 428, 429.

tutional vote of two thirds of the members present and voting would be given for the change, and it was enthusiastically adopted by a vote of 517 yeas to 27 nays.

From this practical unanimity there was a strong reaction. The European Conferences thought that any arrangement for episcopal superintendency other than the General Superintendency would create dissension, lower the standing of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and increase the distaste of the nations for what the enemies of our missions in those ancient countries declared "unwonted" and "unwanted." Others thought that the missionary episcopacy now existing would soon be discontinued, and arrangements to cover that work would include the situation which the pending proposition was expected to cover. Still others were of opinion that there was at the present time no constitutional difficulty in electing General Superintendents qualified to take care of the vast number of other than English-speaking peoples on this continent; and if they should be assigned to one or two Conferences other than those speaking foreign languages in this country, that would meet the need.

Before the introduction of the resolution it was supposed, on good authority, that the great majority of the brethren of African descent would count it a genuine blessing. These, with various disagreements here and there, produced a compound of indifference and opposition, the effects of which are seen in the following statement of the votes of the Conferences, clerical and lay:

AGGREGATE VOTE[1]

PROPOSITION I.—Bishops with Limited Episcopal Jurisdiction (Adopted by the General Conference of 1904. See *Journal*, page 410.)

To amend the Restrictive Rule, *Discipline* of 1904, ¶ 46, § 3, so that it shall read:

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1908, p. 1125.

"The General Conference shall not change nor alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away episcopacy, nor destroy the plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency; but may elect a Bishop or Bishops for work among particular races and languages, or for any of our foreign missions, limiting their episcopal jurisdiction to the same respectively."

	Annual Conferences		Lay Electoral Conferences	
Total Vote	12,973		7,853	
Ayes necessary to adopt (two thirds)	8,049		5,236	
	Ayes	Noes	Ayes	Noes
Votes cast	3,110	7,863	1,994	5,859

Proposition lost.

PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY

CHAPTER XLV

Beginnings of Organization

Assemblies may be roughly classified into crowds, audiences, and deliberative bodies. Crowds may degenerate into riots; audiences into knots of conversers, and deliberative assemblies into a scramble for the floor. Parliaments and congresses are sometimes transformed into mobs. From the earliest epochs of civilization it has been found necessary to have certain rules, and, where there are only the germs of government, restrictions are placed on individual members in the general interest of the whole body. The "powwow" of the Indian and the parliaments of enlightened nations have regular codes. England, France, Germany, and the United States have long been building up and perfecting these codes, until they have almost a system of laws, and the legislator who does not understand them is at great disadvantage.

The Christian communions are governed in their deliberations by a system of rules which may be described as being in substantial unity, but with circumstantial variety, according to the ruling officers. Abundant experience has shown that appeals to generosity, respect for order, or the interests involved in the action of the body, are not sufficient to maintain order even in religious assemblies. Nor can mere conventional rules conserve the rights of all and make possible the transaction of business.

As parliaments are notoriously tumultuous in times of stress or political antipathies, they need stringent laws; and being the most important assemblies, in public opinion, such rules—religious, scientific, financial, profes-

sional—are known as "parliamentary law" in distinction from ecclesiastical, civil, military, and international law.

The first Conferences, as to organization and business, were practically conversations. "It was a religious society and not a Church, and any member of any Church who would conform to the rules and meet in a class had liberty to continue in his own Church." The preacher alone, with the General Assistant's indorsement, made the rules. They recognized that fact, and the first Conference was introduced to the public as follows: "Minutes of some conversations between the preachers in connection with the Rev. Mr. John Wesley."

1792

In the first regular General Conference, that of 1792, the first thing to be done was to form rules or regulations for conducting its business. A committee was chosen, consisting of the oldest preachers and some that were younger in the work. Lee says:

> The committee was afterward increased, by adding more preachers to it, but, after all, it was found to be of no real use; for if a few of the committee were opposed to anything that was adopted by a majority of their brethren, when the business was brought before the whole of the Conference those that were dissatisfied before would take an active part in the debates, and all the arguments that had been brought forward in the committee would be taken up again, which did not answer the end intended. It had been thought that a committee would arrange matters so as to expedite the business; but after trying it, we found it had a contrary effect. The committee was then given up, and any preacher was at liberty to bring forward any motion; and the Conference proceeded to establish or reject it according to the above regulations.[1]

One of the rules for the regulation of the Conference was this:

> It shall take two thirds of all the members of the Conference

[1] *History of the Methodists*, p. 178.

to make a new rule and abolish an old one; but a majority may alter or amend any rule.

Another was:

Each person, if he choose, shall have opportunity to speak three times on each motion.

In the O'Kelly case, under that rule, "by dividing the question, and then coming back to where we were at first, we were kept on the subject called 'The Appeal' for two or three days."

1800

The first regularly constructed Code appears in the *Journal* of the General Conference of 1800.

Any person speaking shall not be interrupted, except by the presidents, when they judge that he deviates too much from the point; nevertheless, an appeal may be made to the Conference by any two members from the presidents; but neither the Conference nor the presidents shall speak to the point, but simply take the vote. No person shall have liberty to appeal above a quarter of an hour at a time, except with the permission of the Conference; but still the Conference shall grant or prohibit without debate. If any person thinks himself misrepresented by a speaker, he shall have a right to explain, in as few words as possible after the speaker has done. No person shall speak oftener than three times on any question.

The sittings of Conference shall be from nine to twelve in the morning, and from three to six in the afternoon. No question shall be proposed on a different subject from that under debate, until the question debated be decided or postponed. A secretary shall be chosen by the Conference, who shall keep a regular journal of all the proceedings of the Conference; which journal shall be signed by the presidents, and countersigned by the secretary at the close of the Conference. No motion shall be put, except by the presidents, unless it be first delivered at the table in writing, after being read by the mover and seconded. No old rule shall be abolished except by a majority of two thirds. No member of the Conference shall leave the city of Baltimore until the Conference adjourn, without first obtaining leave of absence. No member shall leave the room to go into

the city without leave. The Bishops are requested to arrange, and, from time to time, to lay before the Conference such business as they may judge expedient; provided the above regulation does not affect the ninth rule. Any member shall have leave to copy, at pleasure, any motion laid upon the table.[1]

Ezekiel Cooper moved:

That the election of a Bishop shall be by ballot written and put into the box or drawer: the highest upon the list shall be elected, provided there be a majority of all the votes of the Conference for him. But in case there be not a majority of all the votes of the Conference for anyone, then the Conference shall vote again, and choose by ballot from the four highest upon the list. If no one then have a majority of the whole Conference, they shall vote for the three highest of the four; and if neither of the three have a majority of the whole, the Conference shall vote for the two highest of the three.[2]

This was accepted.

The first vote for the election of a Bishop in 1800 was a tie.

1804

In 1804 the following rule was added to those of 1800:

No spectators shall be admitted but members of the society, and such as have introduction by, or a ticket from, a member of Conference.

Questions of eligibility were discussed, and five preachers were disallowed membership.

General Superintendent Coke, filled with English ideas and customs, moved:

That no regulation or law should finally pass the Conference until it had been read *at three distinct sittings*, and has received the *approbation of the Conference each time.*

The motion was lost by a majority of 9, there being 47 ayes and 56 nays. Nothing daunted, he moved:

That no regulation or law shall finally pass this Conference until it has been read at three distinct sittings.

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1800, vol. i, pp. 31, 32.
[2]Ibid., 1800, vol. i, p. 35.

This was also lost.

Another motion was:

That the rule which provides that no law be abolished but by a vote of two thirds of the Conference, be reconsidered.

This was done, but the motion, that it be rescinded, was lost by a majority of one. Jesse Lee moved that no names of members be used in debate, which did not prevail. Another moved that "every motion lie on the table one sitting before debate," but this was also lost.

On the third day it was moved that "no person be admitted as a spectator during the sitting of the General Conference." This was passed, but in the same session another motion prevailed that "all the official members of our Church should be admitted as spectators."

In 1804 a second tie appeared. It was on the question whether there should be an ordination of local elders, and the votes were 44 to 44. Coke did not give the casting vote, but moved that it "lie over, as unfinished business, till the next General Conference."

CHAPTER XLVI

Progressive Enlargement

During the Conference of 1808 several additions were made to the small list of rules under which it began proceedings.

Immediately after the secretary and assistant secretary were elected "the judgment of the Conference was called for respecting the membership." It was voted that "no preacher has a right to a seat in this Conference who has not traveled, under the direction of the yearly Conference, four full years."

1812

In 1812 there was a situation to be met with respect to reserve delegates, this being the first time they had appeared. Three extra members had been elected by the New England Conference, and "after some conversation," quaintly worded, a motion was made: "Are our brethren from the New England Conference entitled to their seats in this Conference?" On taking a vote, it was found that 56 were in the affirmative and 22 against. Therefore the reserves took seats in the place of those who had failed to appear.

A suggestive rule was passed in this General Conference. It was that "a secretary be appointed *who is not a member of this Conference.*"

A committee of seven of the most influential members were selected, one from each Conference, to form rules "for the regulation of this Conference." These were Ezekiel Cooper, N. Snethen, Philip Bruce, George Pickering, Freeborn Garrettson, Lewis Myers, L. Blackman, and William B. Lacy.

Under the discussion of the "rules and orders for governing the Conference" this important question was decided: "Shall the Conference have power to resolve itself into a committee 'of the whole'?" This was carried by a large majority.

Lee moved that "no old rule shall be abolished without a majority of two thirds," but the motion was lost. He also moved that "the traveling preachers, who are in full connection, have liberty to sit in this house as listeners during Conference." This passed by a large majority, and these were allotted seats in the gallery, but were "subject to the orders of Conference."

Immediately after this a motion to allow traveling preachers *not* in full connection to be admitted as spectators was lost by a large majority, as was also a motion that the local preachers be admitted.

Bishop McKendree's address was referred to a Committee of the Whole.

When the report of the Committee of the Whole relating to the episcopacy was called up, it was referred to a committee of eight. It was then moved that this committee be appointed by the Conference; which proceeded to elect *by ballot* the Committee on Episcopacy.

The rules of the last General Conference were read one by one, and passed with such amendments as the Conference judged expedient. A futile attempt was made to strike out the 34th Article, which concerned the Committee of the Whole. Some quaint phrases were used; for example, S. G. Roszel moved to "concur in the gross."

The General Conference closed in a peculiar manner:

J. Early called up his motion, to make the following addition to the fourteenth section, 23d page of our *Discipline:* "If a member of our Church be convicted of giving treats at elections directly or indirectly, he shall first be reproved by the senior minister or preacher of his circuit; and if afterward he persists

in such pernicious practices, he shall be expelled from the Church."

Moved and carried to adjourn until May 1, 1816, to meet in the city of Baltimore.

After it was moved and carried, this motion was called, reconsidered, and lost; but some counted and said there was not a quorum present.

Then followed the signatures of Francis Asbury and William McKendree. And below them is this: "I *consider the reconsideration of Early's motion unofficial.* William McKendree."

In 1816 it was moved:

That the rules of the last General Conference be read one by one and passed, with such amendments as the Conference shall judge expedient. Carried.

In this Conference the motion to reconsider was used frequently, and the call for the "previous question" was conspicuous.

On May 24, 1820, on a motion to reconsider, there was a tie of 43 ayes to 43 nays. A second vote was taken with the same result, Bishop Roberts refusing to give the casting vote; and he pronounced it "not carried, inasmuch as there was not a majority."

By 1820 the rules had reached the number of forty, but they were not incorporated in the minutes.

The catalogue of rules in the *Journal* of the General Conference of 1828 was the product of a committee, and contains several of the best in use at the present time.

Passing over the years between 1828 and 1864, we find the parliamentary rules reduced to twenty, but they combine several cognate rules in one.

The Rules of Order of the General Conference of 1908 are elaborate, and the number of separate paragraphs is fifty. This is not a waste of space, since the General Conference consists in considerable part of foreigners,

whose native tongue is not English, and many of the members have not had experience in public bodies, and others, who are expert parliamentarians in Legislatures and town meetings, are not acquainted with the congeries of rules which have been accumulating for more than one hundred years.

For a long time it was very difficult to prevent the introduction of subjects foreign to the situation and purpose of the Conference. It only required one man to move and another man to second to precipitate a debate which might consume time and irritate the greater part of the members. A number of years ago a member introduced the subject of capital punishment and used fifteen minutes on the subject, at a point when time was precious. And many years before that a member took the floor, *before the rules had been adopted for that Conference.* He claimed that he had a right to speak at any length, and did speak more than an hour and a half. He was sincere, able, and learned, and would have been interesting in a high degree, if the audience had assembled to listen to a lecture. The presiding Bishop was compelled to suppress him without a special rule to authorize it, by assuming that the entire body desired him to cease.

A very important addition has been introduced. The third rule under the "Order of Business" is "the calling of the roll of Conferences in alphabetical order for the presentation of appeals, resolutions, and miscellaneous business for immediate consideration." And the following has been added to it:

The person introducing a proposition under the call may speak to it if it be seconded; after which a motion to refer, if made, shall be entertained and be decided without debate. But immediately after the motion or resolution has been presented, and before the person who introduces the proposition has

spoken, the question of consideration may be raised by a member, saying: "Mr. President, on that I raise the question of consideration." The question of consideration shall then be put without debate, and if there is a two-thirds vote against consideration, the proposition shall not be entertained.

To the 22d Rule an additon has been made:

Reconsideration. When any motion or resolution shall have been acted upon by the Conference, it shall be in order for any member who voted with the prevailing side to move a reconsideration; *but a motion to reconsider a nondebatable motion shall be decided without debate.*

The latter part of the rule was introduced a number of years ago because one of the ablest parliamentarians in the episcopacy decided in favor of a speaker who discussed a motion in a critical debate, and when a member rose to a point of order declared that there was no rule against it.

Under the caption of "Voting" there is a law or rule now existing, which is very necessary but is by no means as old as the Constitution of the General Conference:

Every member who is within the bar at the time a question is put shall vote unless the Conference for special reasons excuses him.

If such member were to refuse to vote, the General Conference has power to expel him.

The contrast between this list of rules and the few that our fathers employed is suggestive and inspiring. A similar process has taken place in the parliamentary rules of the State Legislatures and federal Congress.

CHAPTER XLVII

Some Decisions by the Bishops

I

In the General Conference of 1816 Bishop McKendree introduced a foreign element. A motion was made that "the fortieth Article, relative to the previous question, be expunged entire from the rules of the Conference." Bangs called for the previous question, and this singular decision was given by Bishop McKendree: "The president was of opinion that it was not in order, *on prudential grounds,* to put the previous question on a motion which goes to consider the propriety of the previous question itself."

II

In the General Conference of 1840 a tie appeared on a motion to lay a substitute on the table. The vote stood 62 to 62, and the presiding Bishop, Andrew, voted in the affirmative.

III

In the General Conference of 1840 the report of the Committee on the Episcopacy with respect to increasing the number of Superintendents was taken up.

The second resolution was read, the pending motion being to amend by striking out "2" and inserting "1"; a division of the motion was called for, so as to take the question on striking out first. The Conference resolved to take the question without further debate, and the main question being about to be taken, the call for division was renewed.

Winans moved to postpone the motion for a division.

The point of order was raised in respect to the propriety of such a motion after the main question had been ordered, and the Chair (Bishop Hedding) decided it to be in order to move the postponement of the motion to divide.

Bangs took an appeal, the question being, "Shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the Conference?" It was decided in the negative.

The president having decided that the main question had respect to the pending amendment only, Bangs again took an appeal from the decision and it was determined in the negative.

It was moved to adopt the whole report as amended. While this was pending a motion was made to amend the report by inserting a resolution in favor of the election and ordination of one Bishop. The president decided it to be in order, "because it was a point the Conference had not acted on when it was determined not to elect two Bishops." From this decision Bangs took an appeal; and again the decision of the Chair was negatived.

IV

In 1840 a vote was taken which stood 69 to 69. Bishop Hedding was in the chair, and was called upon to give the casting vote. He declined, "not that he was unwilling to give his opinion in the case pending, but because he did not think he had a constitutional right to do so." For this opinion he gave the following reasons:

> In the original General Conference the Bishops not only had a right to give the casting vote, but to speak and vote on all subjects if they chose to do so. They had the right, because all traveling preachers who had been in the connection four years had it, and they had the right as traveling preachers; but when the delegated General Conference was constituted that right was taken away—probably not by design, but inadvertently. Under

the arrangement for a delegated General Conference the *Discipline* has always said, in substance, the General Conference shall be composed of delegates from the Annual Conferences. The Bishops, not being delegates from any Annual Conference, have no right to vote, and, consequently, no right to give a casting vote. The *Discipline* provides that they shall preside in the General Conference, but it does not provide that they shall vote. The speaker of the House of Representatives in Congress can give the casting vote, because he forms a part of the body, and is elected and sent there as others are.

The president of the Senate of the United States has a right to give the casting vote because, though not an elected member, the Constitution gives him that right. If our Constitution had given the Bishops a right to vote, I should now be willing to give the casting vote, but as it does not, I must decline.

The biographer of Bishop Hedding, Davis W Clark, says that the latter "knew that this had been done in several instances when there was a tie in the General Conference." This is an error; only four ties had occurred in the history of the General Conference. These have been mentioned elsewhere; in three of them there was no casting vote, and the only one ever cast was on May 19, 1840, nine days before Bishop Hedding declined to give it.

From that time, in the Methodist Episcopal Church or the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, no Bishop has given a casting vote.

Rarely is an appeal taken from the decision of a Bishop when presiding in the General Conference, and still more rarely does the Conference sustain the appeal. The reason for this is compound. Many are not versed in parliamentary proceedings; all revere the General Superintendents; and usually they are right in their decisions in the Conference. While there are different degrees of gifts and knowledge for this work among the Bishops, there are several who are past masters in the art: and they can guide and steady the timid or perplexed.

The late Bishop Fowler, most capable and usually correct in his conclusions, made a decision which led the late Bishop Merrill to approach him from the rear of the platform, and at the same time a question came from the floor, "Is the President sure that his decision is correct?" Instantly he responded: "The Chair is not sure at all. He has received light from behind."

VII

One important question arose in the General Conference of 1880. The preceding Conference had ordered a Committee on "Revising of the Ecclesiastical Code," consisting of nine—three Bishops, three ministers, and three laymen. The Bishops were Harris, Merrill, and Andrews. Bishop Harris was elected chairman. He promptly declined on the ground that a Bishop, not being a member of the General Conference, could not enter the discussions on the floor, and especially, take the advantage, given to the chairman of a committee, of making the last speech. The other Bishops agreed with him, and one of the three ministers was elected. In the General Conference of 1884, Bishop Wiley was on a committee, and a question arose as to the right of Bishop Wiley, chairman of the committee, to close the debate. Bishop Hurst decided that he had the right. Thereupon an appeal was taken from the decision of the Chair, "upon the ground that these rules were made for the government of the members of the General Conference, and that Bishop Wiley, not being a member of the General Conference, had not the right, under parliamentary rules made solely for the government of members of the body, to close a debate." The appeal was sustained by a large majority.

Later as a matter of privilege, Bishop Hurst stated

again the ground of his decision with additions, as follows:

> The Committee on Coöperation in Church Work is a creature of the General Conference. This body appointed a member from each General Conference district, and directed that the Board of Bishops should designate one of their number besides, who proved to be Bishop Wiley. All these together should constitute the committee. It would seem that Bishop Wiley is as much a member of the committee as any other man on it, because he was designated by order of the General Conference. If he were not, it would be clear that the conclusions which the committee reached, and this report, would be of no legal force. To this opinion I must still adhere.[1]

Later the appellant moved that Bishop Wiley be permitted to give an explanation of an item in dispute.

It was the judgment of those who sustained the appeal, that, had the decision been sustained, and the assumption it contained become settled, a majority could have placed a Bishop at the head of every committee with power to utter the last speech in the debate.

[1]General Conference *Journal*, 1884, p. 263.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Rational Rules and their Rational Use

Of all the concise statements of the value of parliamentary rules none are clearer than these two.

Jefferson, who wrote the first important work in America on parliamentary law, quotes from Mr. Onslow, who was counted "the ablest among the speakers of the House of Commons," as frequently saying that "it was a maxim he had often heard when he was a young man, from old and experienced members, that nothing tended more to throw power into the hands of administration, and those who acted with the majority of the House of Commons, than a neglect of, or departure from, the rules of proceeding; that these forms, as instituted by our ancestors, operated as a check, and control, on the actions of the majority, and that they were, in many instances, a shelter and protection to the minority, against the attempts of power."

Jefferson quotes another authority: "It is much more material that there should be a rule to go by than what that rule is; that there may be a uniformity of proceeding in business, not subject to the caprice of the speaker, or capriciousness of the members. *It is very material that order, decency, and regularity be preserved in a dignified public body.*"

STRICT ATTENDANCE

Every member of a General Conference should attend to the business from the beginning to the end of the sessions, tiresome though it may be. No one can foretell

what may spring up. "The regular order of business, after the reading of the *Journal* and action thereon, is the calling of the roll of Conferences in alphabetical order for the presentation of *appeals,* resolutions, and miscellaneous business for *immediate consideration.*"

There are one hundred and thirty-five Annual Conferences, and this order of business is frequently continued each morning for ten or more working days.

A solemn responsibility is placed upon every delegate by his constituents, and is accepted by him. Decisions are settled by majorities, and frequently by a majority of one; or are lost for the lack of two more votes. Every member also should understand what is going on. Not unfrequently a resolution is put upon its passage and declared lost or carried, and when the president announces the result, then, or later, dissatisfaction arises, and not a few members declare that they did not hear what was going on, or that they were absent.

It is the duty of every member to vote. Under no circumstances should he fail to do so, unless he cannot choose between the positive and negative of the resolution. Every member can, if he will, comprehend the proposition presented—if not through the public speeches, by conversation with some one near him who understands the situation. A large number of propositions belong to the class that have to be published in the Daily Advocate before being acted upon in the Conference. These should be studied, so that whatever the confusion may be, the meaning of the resolution can be kept before the mind.

If not already done, often it would be wise to postpone and print in the Daily Advocate.

Besides the regular methods of the Conferences there are two other possible forms of action; and these differ in moral quality.

THE "TRICK"

In every legislative body there is room for tricks, which, if not counter-worked, may bring about great disaster. Such are common in Legislatures, in the House of Representatives; sometimes in Senates, and most frequently in boards of aldermen in cities under the domination of corrupt officials, or the power of a conscienceless political party leader; under such circumstances money and promises of place play a great part. The "trick," however, sometimes appears in the assemblies and conferences of great literary, scientific, artistic, benevolent, and religious societies and in denominational General Assemblies and Conferences.

The word "trick" is used in the sense of a device for getting an advantage; a petty artifice; a contrivance, which, if exposed beforehand, would be condemned by all who did not benefit by it. For example: very frequently the Conference assembles slowly in the morning. Some members are quartered at great distances from the place of meeting, and think that if they reach their seats at the close of the reading of the minutes they will be in time for business: also it requires several minutes after recess to resume business. Sometimes those who are anxious to get some report or resolution carried, take advantage of this ordinary situation to gather together all their forces, making a compact not to have any discussion, and thus, in a few minutes, get their motion through, having a majority (perhaps the only way they could have procured it). Such tactics may justly be called a trick. It is a secret device for getting an advantage, not by positive, but by what may be called negative, deception.

The producing of a majority by the manner described, is not so deceitful as it is when the leaders detail some of their friends to engage the opponents of the measure

in conversation at their hotels so that they shall be absent until after the transaction is safely completed. In a Christian assembly everything should be open and fair. If defeated by the tricks of the unconscientious, the only resource is to secure a reconsideration.

STRATEGY

The other method is by *strategy.* Parliamentary law is complex. Each rule has a definite meaning and a definite purpose, and he who understands it and is capable of using it can be in a degree a "master of assemblies"; and there should be scores of masters in a large assembly such as the General Conference, men who can pilot a resolution safely into the harbor through waves of emotion or fogs of confused ideas.

Strategy in war is the science of projecting and directing important military movements or operations, and the skillful management of large bodies of men: and the first derived definition from it is the display or exercise of skill and forethought in carrying out one's plans.

In a parliament the exercise of such strategy is open. The motion is made; the body understands its meaning and measures its scope. The strategist may or may not declare what his next move will be, but all the weapons that he can possibly employ lie open to every eye. All the rules are comprehended in a few fundamental principles: to push business along; to hold it back when necessary; to get it out of the way; to prevent confusion; to modify by dividing or diminishing or enlarging; to dismiss the assembly. Keeping these elements in view a modicum of common sense will prevent error.

The man who uses honorable strategy weighs the result of every motion before he makes it. He perceives the temper of the assembly. If he believes the motion before the house worthy of being debated, but to be in some

respects defective, he may make a motion to amend; but if there be made an amendment to that amendment, and he has reason to think that the second amendment is of such a nature that the original motion was better without any amendment, and, for reasons, believes that the body will be deceived by the second amendment, and is somewhat tired of the whole debate, he may move to lay all that is before the house on the table. His knowledge of the situation and of the temperament of the body enables him to do this; whereas, if he had done it before, it would not have been laid upon the table and the majority of the house would have been antagonistic to anything that he might do. This is strategy, but it is not trickery, for it is as open as the day.

In the long roll of parliamentary assemblies presiding officers have sometimes been found to be parties to an underhand scheme of action.

When only one member addresses the Chair, if he be in order, the president *must* recognize him. But if there be two, he has the necessary right to recognize one, and if a larger number, to select one from it. But he has no right to make promises to men to give them the floor, as against a man holding a view obnoxious to him, if the said man addressed the Chair before any other.

In a protracted debate, should a large number rise in unison, the president can choose; he can, if he will descend to it, choose each one from the side *of the question that pleases him.* In the history of large assemblies in the course of years such things have been done. A president of a noble mind would alternate, first recognizing a representative of the affirmative, and next, one of the negative. This is the case usually in the General Conference. The highest type of man would select the best on each side, and not (as has been the case in some bodies) out of the motley crowd that address the speaker,

select the best upon the side that he favors, and the weakest of those on the other side.

In the contrast it is a pleasing and uplifting spectacle to know the sentiments of a presiding officer and to discover him to be as impartial as a finite being could be in selecting from the number desiring the floor.

CHAPTER XLIX

"Without Debate"

The abhorrence of debate at particular times and for particular purposes is illustrated by certain extracts from the *Journals* of the General Conferences.

I

General Conference *Journal,* 1832, May 28:

Monday Afternoon

Conference met according to adjournment, Bishop Soule in the chair.

The Journal of the forenoon was read and approved.

The president presented the following written address:

The Bishops being desirous of understanding with clearness and certainty the resolution passed by the General Conference at its present session in relation to the episcopal visitations of the Annual Conferences, in the course of the ensuing four years, beg the favor of a vote of the Conference, *without debate,* in answer to the following questions, viz.:

Was it the intention of the General Conference, by the resolution above alluded to, simply to relieve the Bishops from the influence of the resolution passed at *the last General Conference on the same subject,* and to leave them now at liberty on their joint and several responsibility to make such arrangements among themselves for the entire administration, and for the visitation of the Annual Conferences as they shall judge most conducive to the general good; and without designing to give any direction or advice whether it be or be not expedient for each of the Bishops, in the course of the four years, to visit each of the Annual Conferences, should they themselves find it convenient and practicable, and judge it for the general good so to do?

The Conference voted an answer to the above in the affirmative.

II

The extracts here presented should be closely read to understand the foregoing.

Copied from the General Conference *Journal* of 1824: May 25, recorded May 28:

Resolved, &c., 4. That it is highly expedient for the General Superintendents, at every session of the General Conference, and as far as to them may appear practicable, in the intervals of the sessions, annually, to meet in council to form their plan of traveling through their charge, whether in a circuit after each other or by *dividing the connection into several episcopal departments*, with *one* Bishop or more in *each* department, as to them may appear proper and most conducive to the general good, and the better to enable them fully to perform the great work of their administration in the General Superintendency, and to exchange and unite their views upon all affairs connected with the general interests of the Church.

The above resolution was carried, and was not reconsidered.

III

General Conference *Journal*, 1828, May 22:

Report of the Committee on the Episcopacy

The Committee on the Episcopacy begs leave to report:

1. Your committee, after a particular and minute examination respecting the labors and administration of our government by the episcopacy, finds nothing to condemn but much to applaud. Their labors during the last four years have been arduous, and their attention to duty such as meets the decided approbation of your committee.

2. In any arrangement that the Bishops may think proper to make for their own convenience in the general oversight of the work, we would recommend that each of our Bishops should, if practicable, *be known in each of the Annual Conferences* once in *four years;* and that none of our preachers should be kept too long in city stations.

This also was carried and not reconsidered.

IV

General Conference *Journal,* 1832, May 23:

8. Considering the great extent of the work throughout this vast continent, committed to the oversight of the episcopacy, the committee deems it inexpedient to require each of our Bishops to travel throughout the whole of their extensive charges during the recess of the General Conference, and therefore recommends to the episcopacy to make such an apportionment of the work among themselves as shall best suit, in their judgment, most effectually to promote the general good.

The journey through the three extracts, from 1824 to 1832, carefully examining the route, will show why the General Superintendents authorized Bishop Soule to ask that the Conference interpret the last of the three actions, without debate. Also the answer desired was furnished.

Whether the General Conferences were wrong or right in their desires is not in question here. Those Bishops were godly men, and the Church justly honors their memory. The issue is whether a momentous question should be determined *without debate*—not by a parliamentary rule made by the house, but by a pressure laid in the form of a request upon the whole Conference. Under the circumstances anyone who had begun to address the Chair would have offended the majority of his brethren and also the episcopacy.

NECESSITY AND SUPREME VALUE OF DEBATE

There are those who would have all business done by committees or commissions, and are impatient if anyone rises to propound a question to the chairman, and particularly so if the question goes to the center of the subject and awakes in the whole assembly a spirit of inquiry. But those who dislike such a question are often much

more disturbed when a powerful speaker, who has studied the subject, attacks the foundations of the report.

John Wesley, even in the early days of his conversational Conferences, at which the majority of the preachers were far below the *master* in education and experience, was never guilty of this. He heard them for hours and days, and, though he retained and exercised the power of final decision, learned much from the "Conversations," and modified his views whenever he received from others a valuable suggestion.

It is not in the nature of human beings possessing great power and having no adequate restriction, to be impartial, just, and tender. Even in the absence of any conscious ambition to rule for rule's sake, the habit would grow strong in proportion to the absence of obstruction or the fear of discomfort.

Free debate is the salvation of a free people, in Church or in state.

The practice of debate quickens the mind, teaches how to marshal arguments, requires much general or particular preparation: for "he that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him." Debate promotes fluency of utterance and increases the susceptibility of being aroused mentally and physically at the same moment.

That which represses debate on important subjects furnishes armor and builds fortresses for tyrants.

HELPS TO EFFECTIVE DEBATE

No one should enter into a debate before he has made a thorough examination of the whole subject; otherwise his understanding will be clouded, and he will not know after he has finished what he himself believes.

Either in debating or in listening to debates it is unwise to form immovable opinions of the general sub-

ject as the debate progresses. Generally men are identified with one side or the other, and he who has examined the whole subject before unalterably fixing his own judgment is able to weigh the arguments brought forth by others. A debater in a Christian assembly—or, indeed, anywhere—should cultivate self-possession. Neither embarrassment nor anger should be allowed for an instant; no personal allusions, such as charging opponents with sophistry, hypocrisy, or stupidity, no stinging witticisms; everything should be done in good humor. That man is mentally blind and deaf and lame who does not know that men may believe opinions directly opposed to his, yet be as wise and honest as himself.

In an assembly invested with important responsibilities no one should speak for speaking's sake, or to be seen; but if any member think that he has something valuable to say, he should utter it. Should another have brought it forward, and some one has assailed it but does not convince a listener familiar with the issue, he should rise and defend it. Where the limit of the speaker's time is but ten minutes, ten pertinent sentences stated clearly may be better than ten times ten. If one is, like Elihu, compelled to speak, full of matter, bursting with sound words, he should view intently the speaker on the floor and discern by his inflection and accent when he is about to cease. Let him not allow a fraction of a second to pass after the speaker has finished before Elihu's voice is heard, and at the same instant let it be perceived that he is on his feet.

STANDING COMMITTEES A HELP TO DEBATE

The standing committees, as well as the special committees, are governed by the same rules of order which are in practice in the General Conference, so far as they apply to them. It is impossible, for various causes, for

every member of a General Conference of more than eight hundred delegates to speak in that body, and it is much easier to secure the floor in a committee than in the house. So far as possible one who has anything to say that has not been said by others effectively should deliver his sentiments in the committee. Frequently there is a unity of agreement on important questions; but on important questions in which there is a division of the sentiment there should be a majority and a minority report. He who is able or learns to speak "in order" in a committee of more than one hundred need not be afraid to address the larger body. Until about forty years ago in the General Conference, the allotted time for speakers was fifteen minutes, but it was customary to lengthen the time of luminous debaters indefinitely. The regular time has been reduced to ten minutes, with but few instances of suspending the rule; therefore the work of the committees should be thorough, and the chairman, who has the last speech, should say much in little; and those who speak in the General Conference should cultivate that method.

NECESSARY BUT DANGEROUS RULES

The motion to *lay on the table* is nondebatable. The person moving it cannot, if he would, explain why he moves it, nor has anyone the right to ask why he wishes to do it, nor can the president utter a word except to put the motion. It requires only a majority of one.

The previous question also admits of no debate, but it does not take the subject out of the touch of the assembly. The reason for it cannot be explained at the time, and the main question must be put.

It is not quite so dangerous as the question to lay on the table. If sustained by a vote of two thirds, it brings forward the main question. Under it, it is in order under our rules to move to refer or to recommit, on either of

which the vote shall be taken without debate. It will allow a division or to lay on the table *after* the previous question has been ordered. It shall not, however, be in order to move the previous question or to move to lay on the table at the close of a speech in which the pending question has been discussed. The dangerous possibility is in the fact that chairmen of committees, and members *wishing to bring forward other business* in which *they* are interested, are frequently ready and hasty to move to lay on the table or to call the previous question for the purpose of getting the subject out of the way, so that the business which the mover and his friends wish to bring forward can be considered. If the first is more important than the second, it may be injurious, and it is often thoughtlessly done.

The period near the permanent close of a General Conference is a dangerous time.

A member should take as much interest in things not affecting the community or region whence he comes as he does in those of his home country. Relaxed attention is noted frequently in Legislatures and Congresses; men ascertain at what time that which they stand for particularly will be brought forward, and the rest of the time they absent themselves or are listless. The delegate to the General Conference who only pays attention to the things that he thought of before he came will go away without knowing much more than he did when he arrived. The unification in spirit of the Methodist Episcopal Church is to be brought about and maintained only by the fact that the knowledge of one is the knowledge of all, and those who attend with the intention of learning what they can of universal Methodism and the new methods which promise well, will carry away much which will be valuable wherever they go.

CHAPTER L

An Unparalleled Free School of Parliamentary Law

Our system of government under the Constitution would naturally develop great parliamentarians. A few salient points of character or achievement relating to those who have presided in the General and Annual Conferences will serve to show that this is not an unsupported estimate.

One hundred and sixty-three Annual Conferences, including Mission Conferences not represented in the General Conference, meet four times each during the interim of the General Conferences. One hundred and twenty-five are in the United States, and the rest are scattered throughout the world. The same General Superintendents who preside in the General Conferences, preside over the Annual Conferences.

In them the General Superintendents have much more control than they have in the General Conferences. They decide questions of law and their decisions must prevail for the session. There is, however, the right of an appeal to the next General Conference.

The Bishops can adjourn the Conference after it has been in session one week, and they can compel the Conference to sit longer than a week if the Disciplinary requirements are not yet met. Thus in four years more than five hundred Conferences are held in at least four hundred towns or cities, all presided over by expert parliamentarians.

Besides these there are several Missionary Bishops, who—limited to certain foreign missions and the countries wherein the missions are—preside over the Confer-

ences in those countries. And once in every quadrennium every Mission over which a Missionary Bishop has charge is administered jointly by a General Superintendent and the Missionary Bishop.

A PROCESSION OF GREAT PRESIDING OFFICERS

Thomas Coke was impulsive, not suited to presiding in the United States, especially at the time in which he was in this country.

Francis Asbury had little use for a code of laws. He did not resemble a president or a moderator; rather a loving but stern father. He lived only eight years after the establishment of the Constitution, and during the greater part of that period he was very ill. A thorough study of his temperament would not allow dissent from the view here taken.

William McKendree was a competent parliamentarian, but was conscious of power and sometimes did not show the softness of spirit which would disguise the strong grasp upon the wills of those whom he superintended. Both Asbury and McKendree were lovable men, and the latter had what might be called a "business head." If it is permissible to say that Peter was more impulsive, more liable to speak sharply, and rush hastily into a difficulty, than others of the apostles, or to mark the distinction between John and Paul without reflecting upon their characters and religious standing, it is allowable to believe to-day neither Asbury nor McKendree would be able by the same methods and spirit, to control the Church which they erected. In fact, they lived at a period between the undeveloped Church and one thoroughly settled.

Richard Whatcoat—so kind, so amiable, so sincere and so grave—was accepted as a president, and venerated.

Robert R. Roberts was a man with a strong but not

rapidly moving mind, and a large and sympathetic heart. Possessed of tact and executive ability, he presided with mildness, propriety, and dignity. He was calm, prompt, and impartial, but thoroughly decided and firm. In every respect, mentally and morally, he was fit to be one of a number of Bishops, cotemporaneously performing the duties of the itinerant General Superintendency.

Enoch George had no taste for systems of rules. His soul was filled with religious fervor. He was always in haste to dispatch business. Except in faith, hope, and love, which both experienced, there was little similarity between George and McKendree.

A MASTERFUL RULER APPEARS AMONG THE BISHOPS

Not until Joshua Soule arrived was there a parliamentarian of the highest type. His majesty, manner, and strength overcame common minds and interested the more able. His resoluteness, attention to business, and knowledge of the meaning of every rule made him capable of commanding an audience to work his will. Where he presided lawyers and judges would visit the Conference to observe his management. Some of them smiled but not with the smile of scorn, for they perceived that he had a grasp of his subject—a grasp upon the rules and a grasp upon the Conference.[1]

Elijah Hedding was an all-round presiding officer, dignified, benign, firm when resisted, and in personal religion simple as a child. He gave every function of his position its true place, drew good men to him, without severity reproved the frivolous among young ministers and cheered the aged.

John Emory was eminently qualified for presiding. He had risen to a successful practice of the law when

[1] Joshua Soule and James O. Andrew spent their later years as Bishops in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

he began to devote his life to the service of the Church. "After his election to the episcopacy he was appointed to preside at the closing session of the same General Conference. He promptly repressed the confusion which arose, as it always does at such times, securing the methodical and satisfactory transaction of the business remaining to be adjusted." He died before he could disclose all his strength.

James O. Andrew represented his section at its best. He was loved, and his manner, skill, and devotion to his duty and respect for his office endeared him to his contemporaries in the episcopacy, the ministry, and the laity.

Beverly Waugh blended good sense and self-possession in a manner which added greatly to assist his presidency. During the antislavery conflict he was designated to preside over the New England Conference, and was asked if he would allow memorials to be presented on the subject of slavery. He asked time for consideration, and had an interview first with the older and more conservative preachers, and, secondly, in an epistolary way, with those who wished to introduce the memorials. He concluded to rule the motion out of order, and after giving his reasons, said: "And now, brethren and fellow laborers, allow me most affectionately to address you for a moment. I repeat that I very much regret the necessity which has urged me to this decision; but I beg you to believe that in the best light which I have been able to obtain it becomes my imperious duty to take this ground. Let this not produce any unpleasant personal feeling toward each other. I need not say that I believe you are most conscientious, and, of course, you will adopt the motion. Let us be lovers one of another while we prosecute our calling in the work."

Before the close of the session, on motion of two leading Abolitionist brethren, he was thanked for his digni-

fied, able, impartial presidency and invited to visit them whenever it might be practicable.

Thomas A. Morris was not a failure as a General Superintendent. The common people met, heard, and obeyed gladly. He had some of the elements which gave Benjamin Franklin his popularity. Many are the incidents repeated by the very aged, of his crisp sentences and his paternal aspect as he uttered them. His judgment also was sound; he was adapted to his time, and lived to a great age.

Of Leonidas L. Hamline, Thomas M. Eddy, who knew him, wrote that "his rulings on points of order were ready, and rarely controverted; without parliamentary *finesse* he had thoroughly mastered parliamentary detail. His decisions on law points were clear. His judicial training had strengthened his natural legal turn of mind." As he was ill during the years of his episcopacy, he fell into various eccentricities, yet when able to preside he performed his work perfectly so far as his deciding parliamentary questions was concerned. As an orator, few equaled him.

Edmund S. Janes was one of the master presidents. In his twentieth year he began the study of law and was admitted to the bar. In the first four years of his ministry he exhibited business qualities of a high order and spirit and a singular clearness of statement which made intricate financial questions intelligible. This led to his being appointed agent for Dickinson College, and the same qualities which secured this appointment caused his selection as financial secretary of the American Bible Society. This position he filled till his election, in 1844, to the office of Bishop. His power of attention was extraordinary. He had a strong will and was of great readiness in speech. He had a high estimate of his powers, responsibilities, and the prerogatives of his office.

No labyrinth of debate was too intricate for him to unravel.

Levi Scott was a godly man, an unaffected friend, and a business parliamentarian; he could have presided in any Legislature with efficiency.

Matthew Simpson was a president rarely, if ever, disturbed or entangled. His Celtic ancestry, however, caused him to thrust back vehemently any imputation upon his fairness. One of the best of men, distinguished and courteous, was interested in the composition of a committee. The Bishop appointed its members, and the gentleman referred to, intimated that the committee had been "packed." Instantly Bishop Simpson, with flushed face and intensity of voice, demanded that those words be recanted. As the speaker had not for an instant thought that Bishop Simpson would pack a committee in the ordinary way, but had used that expression to show that one side of the case had a large proportion of the committee, he easily satisfied the Bishop's feelings. Bishop Simpson disproved the saying that a great orator is never a good presiding officer.

Osmon C. Baker was a noteworthy officer when all was peaceful, and, as his gentle spirit spread throughout the Conferences, peace generally prevailed. His balanced judgment, his delicacy and refinement, made him a superior president and cabinet officer. L. D. Barrows, himself a master of parliamentary law, and an author upon the subject, declared that none were his superiors in parliamentary usage.

Edward R. Ames had a powerful personality. His biographer declares that he had the governmental faculty in excess. He also was truly a master of assemblies. Though he sometimes showed an austere countenance and indulged a stinging wit, and, as the consequence, was

occasionally spoken of as having the spirit of a despot, beneath all these symptoms there was a heart; and when he had overdone the pressure upon a Conference he would sometimes make an apology that went to the hearts of all the assembly. A modest, but very intelligent minister, who rarely took part in Conference discussions, presented a motion relating to a method of procedure. Bishop Ames peremptorily said: "The Conference ought not have its time wasted. That is not necessary. It ought to be done in such a way." The Conference was amazed and indignant that such a man should receive so curt an answer. But, probably for the first time in his life he rose to a height which caused all sense of diffidence to disappear. With decision he said, "I did not make the motion to elicit the opinion of the Chair, but to ascertain the mind of the Conference." Instantly Bishop Ames said, "You are right, brother; I will put the motion at once."

Davis W. Clark rose not from extreme poverty but from a home which required him to make his own way in the world. He was self-made in the best sense, and discerning his intellectual needs, he turned to the seminary and the college. By genuine work he excelled in the various spheres of minister, principal, and editor. After having been elected it was soon evident that he would not err in deciding points of order or allow disorder. For some years he was a neighbor of Bishop Hedding, and from him received much information otherwise unattainable. He seemed also to have been imbued with the spirit of that godly man. Sent forth as Bishop during the Civil War, he exhibited great skill in readjusting disturbed Conferences and founding others.

Edward Thomson, classic in tastes, gentle without losing strength, loved by students, a writer of fame, without special powers of control in the General Con-

ference or the Annual Conference, won reverence and elevated in thought and feeling all who heard his strong, spiritual, and poetical sermons and addresses to the young ministers.

Calvin Kingsley had peculiarities which gave him a distinct personality, but were of great advantage to him both as an educator and as General Superintendent. He had remarkable powers of debate. Far from the country of his birth, he died on a missionary tour. Travelers in Syria visit his grave at Beirut, and will prolong his memory for centuries.

William L. Harris had no superior in knowledge of parliamentary law. Having been secretary of the General Conference for several terms before he was elected to the episcopacy, he had every opportunity to perfect himself in the functions of a moderator of a great assembly; and wherever he went it was evident that he was a man for any emergency.

Randolph S. Foster was a man apart. Great thoughts and great words occupied his mind, his tongue, and his hands. His presence commanded order. Where another would have been troubled by confusion which he could not compose, Bishop Foster's look would calm the storm. Only when he became irritated and attempted to rebuke the causes of it did he lose command.

Isaac W Wiley was cultured, fit for any place calling for clear thinking and forceful speaking. Some thought him cold, but it was only on the surface. His friends compared his style with that of Addison. From chronic illness he suffered much and died in China, where in his earlier years he had been a medical missionary. His manner and knowledge of parliamentary rules enabled him to excel in preserving order and system.

Stephen M. Merrill was qualified by nature to investigate causes, measures, and weigh propositions, so that

when he grew to manhood he readily took to reading and mastering historical works. The same qualities and tendencies aided him in the study of systematic theology. He made a specialty of parliamentary law and became the mentor of several of his colleagues. Unique in the episcopacy, he wielded much influence.

Edward G. Andrews was thoroughly educated, an alumnus of Wesleyan University, and afterward principal of a preparatory school, which under his control exerted marked influence in western New York. At the time of his election he was, and had been for some years, in churches capable of reacting for good upon their pastor. Almost as soon as he was ordained he began anew to study the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and in less than four years he had no superior in influence in the episcopacy. For thirty-two years he filled the position with constant success, and after he ceased to visit the Conferences he was a counselor to many, a forceful writer, and a much-sought preacher, attending all the meetings of the Boards, of which he was a member.

Gilbert Haven was evidently a genius, with a mind quick as lightning to see, and a tongue to speak the thought. To attempt to describe him as a president is to attempt the impossible. It was supposed by some that his becoming a General Superintendent might introduce elements of unrest or conflict, but, without losing his characteristics, he became a suggestor of good projects and an industrious performer of his routine duty.

Jesse T. Peck on occasions rose to the highest conception of the presiding officer. Ordinarily he indulged his remarkable facility of speech to an excess. He was sixty-one years of age when he was elected Bishop, and was already showing signs of lessening vigor; but with much industry he discharged his official obligations. Frequently he delivered addresses and sermons with such

eloquence that the assembly forgot his feebleness. In the Ecumenical Conference held in London in 1881, two years before his death, he received deservedly high honor for the manner in which he presided.

Cyrus D. Foss was a careful, consistent, and commanding presiding officer. At no time did he lower the standard of the best of his predecessors. His thorough education, his many years in Brooklyn and the city of New York, and his presidency of Wesleyan University for several years, were preparing him for this position which touches every constituent of Christianity.

John F Hurst, when his mind was intent upon the situation, was equal to the normal conditions and to most of the emergencies of the General Conference and the Annual Conferences. In the latter he was sometimes abstracted when routine business was slowly moving on, especially after he assumed the presidency of the American University and was flooded with letters. His wide knowledge, his residence in Germany in the Martin Mission Institute for several years, and his presidency of Drew Theological Seminary all combined to make him a useful member of the Board of Bishops.

Erastus O. Haven lived but a few months after his election. He was in his sixtieth year when he entered the Board, but his adaptive power was great and he could not, when well, fail or become entangled in the work assigned him. He began his episcopal career with the greatest zeal and wherever he went he was welcomed. The editorship of Zion's Herald for several years, the presidency of the University of Michigan and of the Northwestern University, also the office of chancellor of Syracuse University, besides being eight years secretary of the Board of Education, qualified him to understand the needs of every part of the United States.

William X. Ninde, much of a dreamer in the best sense,

often abstractedly thinking in the midst of confusion, and not notable for self-manifestation, was expected by some to become embarrassed in ruling an immense assembly; but from the first he was perfect in the presidency; this was the result of close study of parliamentary law after his election to the episcopacy. He was elected because of his cultivation, courtesy, and spotless piety. After he began to travel throughout the United States in the discharge of his duty, preaching to great concourses, and called upon to speak in every form of meeting, he became a powerful orator; perfect in his former method, he became so in his latter.

Willard F. Mallalieu, as his French origin might suggest, was subject to an accession of emotional warmth, usually of a spiritual nature, but sometimes of criticism or condemnation. There were various classes whose views and works were not in harmony with his sentiments and principles. He was firm in many opinions and devoted to evangelism. To his friends he was most agreeable, and when he became aware of having wounded the feelings of others he was effusive in making peace. As a president he was generally liked, and reached the hearts of many. Parliamentary practice was not one of his chief studies, but his common sense and experience guided him through thickets of motions.

Charles H. Fowler possessed a variety of gifts and was always accorded attention when presiding. His native wit, unusual quickness in forming a judgment; resolution, and power of condensing his opinions into Anglo-Saxon words made him all sufficient. If a suggestion were made that his decision was incorrect, or might be so, he listened with interest, and, if convinced, acquiesced; but if the criticism proved to be wrong, the interrupter was liable to receive a good-humored rebuff.

James N. FitzGerald, a lawyer before he entered the

ministry, was of the type who give extraordinary attention to the letter of the rule, and careless debaters and motion-makers were in danger when he presided. His mind was also clear upon all subjects with which he dealt. While presiding he was closely attentive to business and in his manner would have graced any judge's bench. When in good health he left nothing undone that could be reasonably expected from him.

Isaac W Joyce was a preacher and an evangelist by temperament and practice. He was elected because his constituents believed that such a man was needed at that time in the episcopacy. Those who did not know him accepted the testimony of those who knew him well. He proved their prognostication true, and more. As a presiding officer he was of average capability among his colleagues, and left a savor of the spirit of Christian work behind him when he departed. There was one peculiarity in his preaching: when in the mood, and all things were favorable, he became capable of preaching to the Annual Conference with extraordinary effect. He believed that God inspired him, and under such circumstances all fear, anxiety, or loss of words disappeared.

John P. Newman. This noted orator had but a few years to display his competency in the episcopacy. He was known throughout the country. His chaplaincy in the Senate of the United States, his many years of ministry in Washington, his tour around the world under an important commission from the President, his remarkable report on his return, which disappointed those critics who declared that he would not bring home anything of worth from afar, caused many to flock to hear him when preaching at the Conferences and presiding in deliberations and also in the few General Conferences occurring before his death. He had had little executive experience, and in view of the fact that the oratorical tem-

perament and action had controlled him all his life, it was a wonder to many that he performed the duties of the episcopacy as well as he did.

Daniel A. Goodsell gave great promise of success from the first. His form was imposing, his voice musical, and his mental faculties and acquirements were adequate to any task. Nor was this anticipation a dream. From 1888 to 1909 he filled the position of General Superintendent, and discharged its responsibilities in some respects in an unusual manner, and all of them without failure. As preacher, writer, occasional speaker, careful in forming judgments and wary in publishing them, he justified the eulogy given to him of being "every inch a Bishop."

Charles C. McCabe resembled none of his predecessors or successors in the episcopacy. Endowed with a voice clear and sweet, filled with sympathy and love, impulsive as a child, and sometimes as penetrating and wise as Abraham Lincoln, he so disliked rules that, while he remembered everything else, he frequently forgot them. He cannot be delineated or paralleled. He was loved by ministers and laymen and the Annual Conferences often begged with unusual warmth that he might be sent to them again. He succeeded in part because there was none like him; he promoted happiness and good cheer everywhere and did great good in his day and generation.

Henry Spellmeyer was well educated. All his public career was in the pastorate. He was so admired and loved that he was frequently recalled to his charges, all of which were within a small area. After being appointed to important positions he was elected largely for his ability shown in the conduct of an important denominational responsibility while yet a pastor. He proved a precise and concise Bishop. He never forgot; he never lost his self-control, and everywhere honored the Church

of Christ, and in particular that part of it known as the Methodist Episcopal Church.

These are they with whom the Church intrusted its deepest, broadest, and most grave responsibility, and who have died in its service.

IT IS NOT IN MORTAL MAN TO BE PERFECT, AS WAS THE MASTER AND LORD. BUT THESE FAITHFULLY LABORED IN HIS VINEYARD, AND IT BROUGHT FORTH FRUIT UNTO ETERNAL LIFE.

FROM THEIR LABORS THEY REST; AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF THEM IS A PERPETUAL BLESSING TO THE CHURCH.

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NOTE.—The foregoing catalogue includes but a minority of the volumes consulted in the preparation of this work.

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