

the existing system of Methodist episcopacy and Annual Conference independence and jurisdiction; and the South, of falling under the influence of a political and worldly power.

Up to the session of 1844, the evident predominant doctrine and practice of the Methodist Episcopal church went to consider the General Conference as possessing two functions only, namely, the legislative and judicial. This is seen in its Discipline, its constitution, its relations to the Annual Conferences, its distribution of administrative power amongst the bishops, presiding elders, elders, and Quarterly-Meeting Conferences; and, in fine, by its entire action. We cannot but look upon this as a very wise and judicious arrangement; as embodying the only true principle of liberty, and as securing the equable administration of discipline and order.

Did not the proceedings of 1844 trench on these constitutional, these fundamental principles? Doctrines were broached regarding the power of the General Conference which, in effect, and if acted upon, would raise it above law; put it in a position beyond the pale of the constitution; give it the power of parliamentary omnipotence; and place the destinies of all imaginable interests within its grasp. The best analogy which I can think of, is the claim of "parliamentary privilege" in this country; that monstrous usurpation of power, by which one of the Houses of Parliament claims for itself the right, on the ground of its privileges, of setting aside the other branch of the legislature, the courts of law, the law itself, and, by its own majority, to deal summarily with any of Her Majesty's subjects offending against this power. Something like this was certainly claimed for the Conference at the above period. Such power can neither be possessed nor exercised safely. It must degenerate into a despotism. No human virtue can prevent this. And of all the despotisms in the universe, the undivided, unchecked power of one chamber, one aggregate body, is the most certain, the most fearful, the most crushing. The Annual Conferences, and the other divisions of the church into separate administrative bodies, held this power in check, in the General Conference, up to the time in question. The sooner the North returns to the old soundings of the church the better. A *unit* is a fearful power; bad enough in one tyrant, but when existing in a conclave, a council, a Conference, it is next to infi-

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