

# THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE. . . . . Eph. 2 c. 20 v.

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AN EPITOME OF THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH—continued.

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PART II.—History of the Church from the Revolution to the year 1800.

On the 25th of September, 1785, the first General Convention was held in the city of Philadelphia. Seven States were represented, viz:—New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. The Church had been thrown entirely on its own resources, like an infant deprived of the sympathy and guidance of a careful parent. It might therefore be expected that many crude opinions would exhibit themselves in this assembly, and that little unanimity would prevail in regard to the course necessary to be taken in future. The former was actually realized; the latter was providentially averted. In the North, the ideas of Churchmen on the subject of Episcopacy, were generally correct and well defined. This may be ascribed to their frequent collisions with the dominant body of congregational dissenters. In the South, where Church government has not been so much a subject of controversy, many singular views existed. In Maryland, for instance, and elsewhere, the doctrine was held, that a Presbyter possesses all the powers of a Bishop, excepting those of Confirmation and Ordination. Again, it was a common opinion in the middle States, that the laity ought to be allowed to sit in Convention with the clergy. This was defended as a natural consequence of the principle of following the Church of England; and it was pleaded that in no other way could a substitute be provided for the parliamentary sanction to legislative acts of power. On the other hand, it was maintained that the admission of the laity to an ecclesiastical synod was incongruous with every idea of Episcopal government. This latter sentiment was held by Bishop Seabury and his clergy, in common with the Episcopal Church of Scotland. Some again were anxious to defer all measures towards the organization of the Church, until a regular Episcopate had been obtained; while others were ready to establish an ecclesiastical system under the control of Presbyters alone, until Bishops could be procured. The moderate conciliatory measures of Dr. White, the Cramer of the American Church, then President of the Convention and now in his 89th year, the presiding Bishop, contributed much towards the settlement of difficulties, and the first Convention was concluded with a degree of harmony greater than, under existing circumstances, could have been anticipated. During this Convention, the articles of union were ratified which had been proposed in the informal meeting at New-York. An ecclesiastical constitution was likewise framed, which provided for a Convention of the Church in each State, and also for a triennial General Convention consisting of a clerical and lay deputation from the several States. Considerable alterations in the Prayer-book were also proposed, of which some were in accommodation to the new government of the country; others were perhaps expedient as improvements, and a few not only unnecessary, but improper. Finally, a document was drawn up by unanimous consent, addressed to the English Archbishops and Bishops, acknowledging the past favours received from them through the Propagation Society; declaring the desire of the Convention to perpetuate in America the principles of the Church of England; and requesting the prelates to consecrate to the Episcopacy those persons who should be sent with that view from the United States.

This address was forwarded to the Archbishop of Canterbury through the American minister John Adams; afterwards the distinguished President. Early in 1786, an answer was received, signed by the two Archbishops, and eighteen of the twenty-four bishops of England, in which they declared their wish to comply with the request, but stated that they must delay

measures to that effect until they should have become fully acquainted with the alterations proposed by the Convention. A letter soon afterwards arrived from the two archbishops expressing their disapproval of several alterations, but stating that they expected to obtain an act of Parliament, under which, if satisfaction should be given, they would feel at liberty to consecrate for America.

In consequence of the receipt of these communications, two special General Conventions were held in 1786, in the course of which, the constitution framed in the preceding year was adopted with some amendments; a second address was directed to the English prelates, and several objectionable alterations in the Prayer-book were removed. It also appeared that Dr. Provoost had been duly elected to the Episcopate for New-York, Dr. White for Pennsylvania, and Dr. Griffith for Virginia. The two former embarked for England in November in the same year, and on the 4th of February, 1787, were consecrated according to an act of Parliament, by Dr. Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury, and soon afterwards returned to America. Dr. Griffith was prevented by domestic circumstances from prosecuting his intended voyage, and tendered his resignation to the Convention by which he had been elected.

The triennial Convention assembled again in 1789, and was followed by a special Convention in the same year. During these sessions the constitution framed in 1786 was reviewed and re-modelled. The principal feature now given to it was a distribution into two houses, one consisting of the bishops, and the other of the clerical and lay deputies. Bishop Seabury and the northern clergy attended on this occasion and a permanent union of the Church was happily consummated. The Prayer-book was arranged as it now stands with the exception of a few minor alterations, and the addition of some occasional services. The canons were also established in a form which still continues substantially the same; and the year 1789 must ever be considered an important era in the history of the Church.

In the year 1799, the Rev. Dr. Madison of Virginia, was consecrated bishop of that diocese, by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The canonical number of bishops necessary for transmitting the English succession was now complete, and accordingly, Dr. Claggett was consecrated in New-York as Bishop of Maryland; in Philadelphia Dr. Smith, of South Carolina, and Dr. Bass of Massachusetts; and in New-Haven, Dr. Jarvis of Connecticut after the decease of Dr. Seabury in 1796. In the mean time a circumstance occurred which is worthy of notice. In 1791, Bishop White received a letter from Dr. Coke, a superintendent of the Methodist connexion in America, proposing a union between that Society and the Church. Dr. Coke stated his motive in this proposal to be an apprehension that he had gone farther in the separation than Mr. Wesley had designed. Mr. Wesley himself, he was sure, went farther than he would have gone, if he had foreseen some events which followed. Dr. Coke's plan, however, was impracticable; and although a prudent answer was returned by Bishop White, the negotiation was soon broken off.

At the termination of the 18th century, the Church was completely organized, and was gradually recovering itself from the tremendous shock sustained during the revolution. Its members had learned in some measure to rely on their own resources, and its ministers were supported in some instances comfortably by the voluntary contributions of their flocks. Yet the number of clergy little exceeded 200; and these were widely scattered through the country bordering on the Atlantic. No great enterprises were undertaken, because a hard struggle was necessary to maintain the ground already occupied. It was reserved for another century to witness the rapid development of the energies of the Church, and the consequent increase of its numbers, its piety, and its zeal.

EXTRACTS.

*From 'Memoranda respecting King's College.'*  
Continued.

A new Copy of Statutes was prepared, in pursuance of the Patron's suggestions, and duly ratified—but unfortunately this was a single Manuscript Copy. The printed copies remained unaltered, and as no new addition was printed, these were still given to those who required them. And here a curious fact may be mentioned:—one of these was the only copy (it is believed) the Earl of Dalhousie had seen, when he laid the foundation of Dalhousie College. Unaware of the alterations made by the Patron, he then supposed, and publicly stated, that no Students could be admitted to King's College, without subscription to the 39 Articles, a restriction which the Patron had wisely abolished, with other objectionable provisions, many years before that time.

As in the earliest years of the King's College, the intention of connecting it with the Church, and the fact of that connection, were so evident, as to be incontrovertible, so it must be equally unquestionable, that such connection was always intended to be continued, and was actually continued up to the period of the granting of the Charter, and of the full operation of the Statutes, as amended by the Patron. Of the subsequent connection with the Church, to the present day, little need to be said. The Charter and the Statutes have proclaimed and enforced it, and not one who has any acquaintance with the College, is so ignorant as to be uninfomed of it.

A few facts, and only a few, may be brought forward, to show that the late measures of those most deeply interested in the Institution, have been pursued in the same spirit, and upon the same principles, which marked the earlier efforts on its behalf.

The College, although it had been very useful, and had afforded a valuable education to many persons, had not attained the eminence that was desired; for it had not received the full assistance which had been expected and was required. The building was in a state of decay, and there were no funds for its repair. The number of Professorships and Scholarships was deficient. The Governors, therefore, thought it incumbent upon them, to make some vigorous effort to obtain means for its improvement and enlargement. Accordingly, in the year 1821, a very earnest appeal was made to the Government, by a memorial addressed to Earl Bathurst, and signed by every member of the Board. That memorial recited the History of the Institution from its origin,—clearly stated the connection of that origin with the establishment of an Episcopal See in Nova Scotia, and contained the following passage:—"That by the Statutes" [the corrected Statutes] "of King's College, which were framed after its Charter was obtained, and closely copied from those of the University of Oxford, as well as by the Charter itself, and by the original design of its first promoters, it is inseparably connected with the Established Religion of the United Kingdom, and for the perpetual security of this important distinction, every new Statute that is proposed, and every alteration of an old Statute, are subject to the revision and rejection of his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is appointed by the Charter, the Patron of the Institution. The Seminary, therefore, is made the nursing mother of sound religious principles and unaffected piety, no less than of useful learning, loyalty, and good morals."

The sums required were so large, and the want of them so pressing, that as the memorialists stated to Earl Bathurst, "further silence would be an abandonment of the important trust that has been confided to them. For the moment has now come, when all the benefits of the Institution, must be materially abridged, and the risk of their entire loss must be incurred, if a most earnest appeal is not made at