

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—HAB. ii. 1.

Rev. A. H. BURWELL, Editor.]

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(FROM THE EPISCOPAL WATCHMAN.)

METHODIST EPISCOPACY.

Why is the Methodist Church in this country styled the Methodist Episcopal Church? Is it pretended that their Bishops, as they style them, have ever had Episcopal consecration? Are they willing to have the authority of their ministers tested by the sound, primitive views of Episcopacy? If not, are they prepared to say that any number of presbyters may assemble and consecrate a bishop, and that the acts of a bishop so constituted shall be valid? In short, do they, or do they not, maintain the necessity of an apostolic succession; and if they do, will any well-informed Methodist claim that they have it in their Church?

I have been led into these reflections by looking into the origin of their Episcopacy, of which the following is a brief history.

"At the conference held in Leeds 1784, Mr. John Wesley declared his intention of sending Dr. Coke, and some other preachers to America. Mr. Richard Whatcoat and Mr. Thomas Vasey offered themselves as missionaries for that purpose and were accepted. Before they sailed, Mr. Wesley abridged the Common Prayer Book, and wrote to Dr. Coke, then in London, to meet him in Bristol to receive fuller powers; and to bring the Rev. Mr. Creighton with him. The Dr. and Mr. Creighton accordingly met him in Bristol, when with their assistance he ordained Mr. Richard Whatcoat and Mr. Thomas Vasey, presbyters for America, and did afterwards ordain Dr. Coke a superintendent, giving him letters of ordination under his hand and seal, and at the same time a letter to be printed and circulated in America."

As this is Dr. Coke's own account of the origin of Methodist Episcopacy, there seems to be no reason for doubting it. It is proper to remark, however, that while Mr. Wesley gave to Dr. Coke only the title of superintendent, the Dr. thought proper to assume that of Bishop on his arrival in this country, and was so received by the society.

Here then we find Mr. Wesley, only a presbyter of the Church of England, taking upon himself to ordain Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey presbyters for America; and Dr. Coke, who was also a presbyter of equal standing in the Church with himself, a superintendent: and this same Dr. Coke assuming the title of Bishop on his arrival in America. Are the Methodists in this country aware that this is the rock out of which their Episcopacy was hewn?

The following letter from the Rev. Charles Wesley to the Rev. Dr. Chandler, just before the Dr. embarked for America, will show what were his sentiments in relation to his brother's proceedings.

London, April 28th, 1786.

Rev. and dear Sir,

As you are setting out for America, and I for a more distant country, I think it needful to leave with you some account of myself, and my companions through life. At eight years old, in 1715, I was sent by my father, rector of Epworth, to Westminster school, and placed under the care of my elder brother Samuel, a strict Churchman, who brought me up in his own principles. In 1727, I was elected student of Christ Church. My brother John was then fellow of Lincoln.

The first year at college I lost in diversions. The next I betook myself to study. Diligence led me into serious thinking. I went to the weekly sacrament, and persuaded two or three young scholars to accompany me: and likewise to observe the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the University. This gained me the harmless nickname of *Methodist*. In half a year my brother left

his curacy of Upworth, and came to our assistance. We then proceeded regularly in our studies, and in doing what good we could to the bodies and souls of men.

I took my degrees, and only thought of spending all my days at Oxford; but my brother, who always had the ascendant over me, persuaded me to accompany him and Mr. Oglethorpe to Georgia. I dreaded exceedingly entering into holy orders; but he over-ruled me here also; and I was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Oxford, on Sunday, and the next, priest by the Bishop of London.

Our only design was to do all the good we could, as ministers of the Church of England, to which we were firmly attached both by education and principle. My brother still acknowledged her the best national Church in the world.

In 1730, we arrived as Missionaries in Georgia. My brother took charge of Savannah, and I of Frederica; waiting for an opportunity of preaching to the Indians. I was, in the mean time, secretary to Mr. Oglethorpe, and also secretary of Indian affairs.

The hardships of lying upon the ground, &c. soon threw me into a fever and dysentery, which forced me, in half a year to return to England. My brother returned the next year. Still we had no plan but to serve God and the Church of England. The lost sheep of this fold were our principal care: not excluding any Christians of whatever denomination, who were willing to add the power of godliness to their own particular form.

Our elder brother, Samuel, was alarmed at our going on, and strongly expressed his fears of its ending in a separation from the Church. All our enemies prophesied the same. This confirmed us the more in our resolution to continue in our calling: which we constantly avowed both in public and private, by word and preaching, and writing; exhorting all our hearers to follow our example.

My brother drew up rules for our society, one of which was constantly to attend the Church prayers and sacrament. When we were no longer permitted to preach in the Churches, we preached (but never in Church hours) in houses, or fields, and sent from thence, or rather carried, multitudes to Church, who had never been there before. Our Society, in most places, made the bulk of the congregation both at prayers and sacrament.

I never lost my dread of a separation, or ceased to guard our society against it. I frequently told them, "I am your servant as long as you remain members of the Church of England, but no longer. Should you ever forsake her you renounce me." Some of our lay preachers very early discovered an inclination to separate, which induced my brother to publish *reasons against a separation*. As often as it appeared, we beat down the schismatical spirit. If any one did leave the Church, at the same time he left our Society. For fifty years we kept the sheep in the fold, and having fulfilled the number of our days, only waited to depart in peace.

After our having continued friends for above seventy years, and fellow-labourers for above fifty, can any thing but death part us? I can scarcely yet believe, 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 the 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 practices of his whole life; that he has