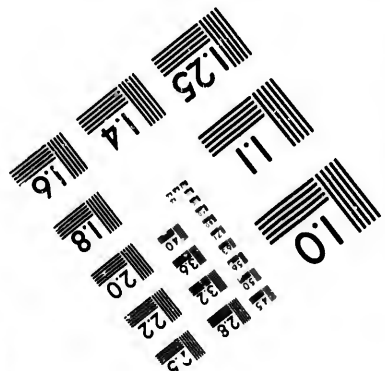
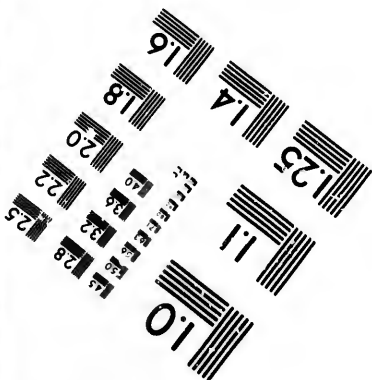
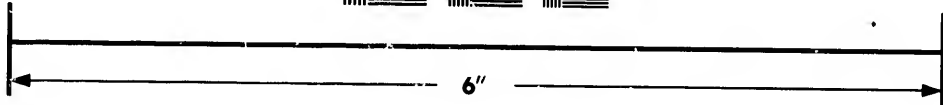
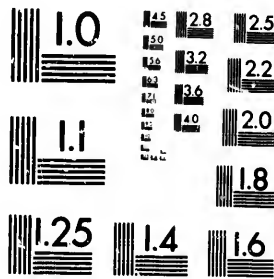


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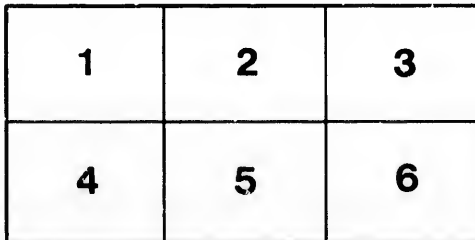
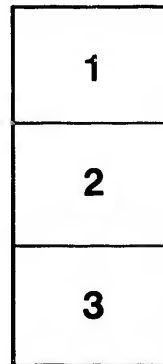
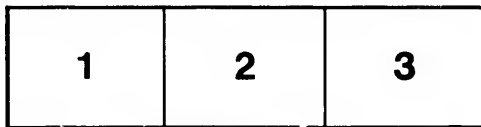
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ON

METHODIST CHURCH POLITY,

BY REV. THOMAS WEBSTER.

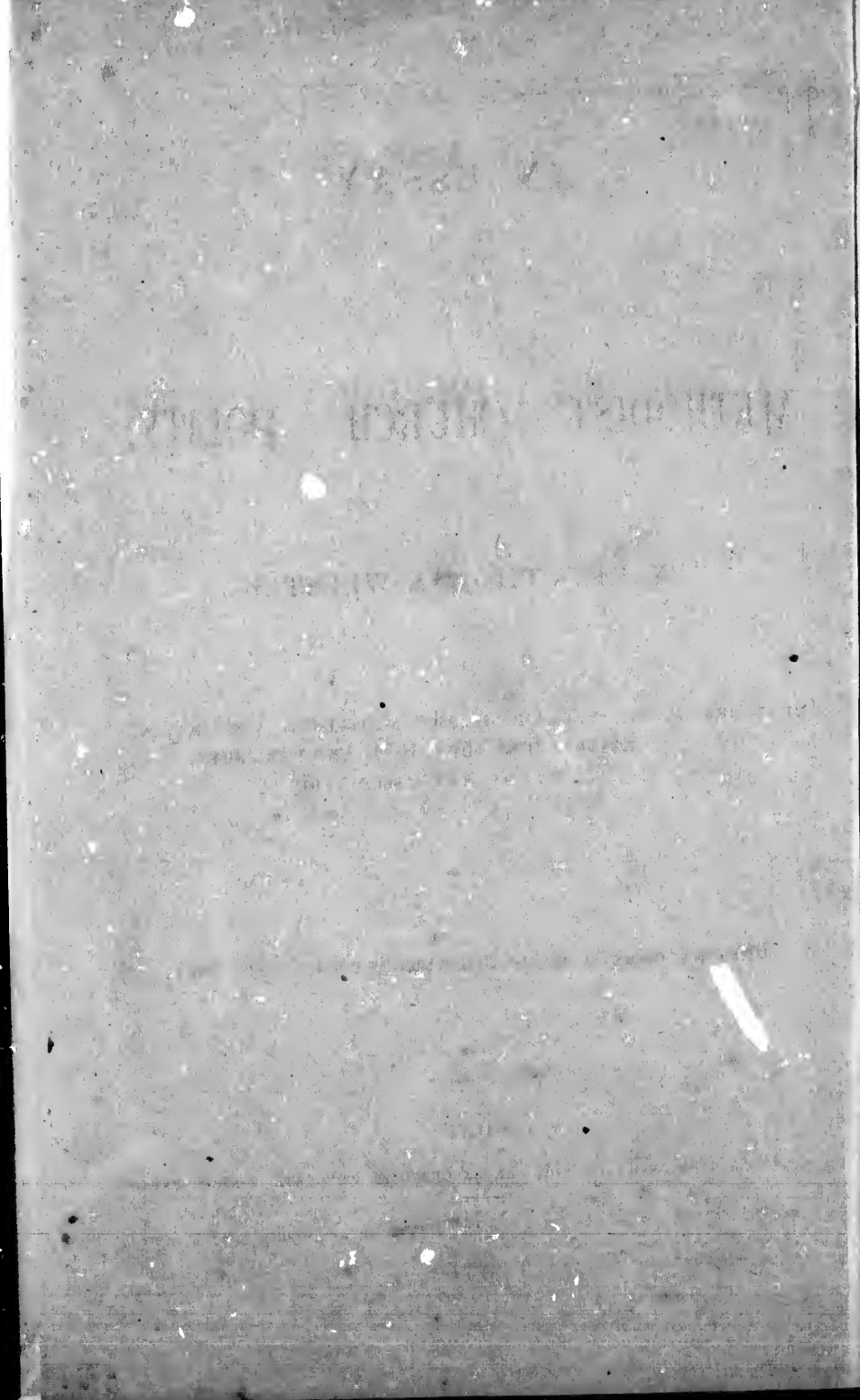
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HELD AT DRESDEN, JUNE 15TH, 1871, AND PUBLISHED
BY REQUEST OF THE ASSOCIATION.

“ Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.”—ST. PAUL.

HAMILTON :

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE CANADA CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, JOHN STREET.

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INTRODUCTION.

AT several different times the writer of the following short treatise has been requested by members of our Conference to prepare an essay on the subject of Methodist Church Polity; but in consequence of ill health and pressing engagements, the matter has been deferred, hoping for a "more convenient season." But some of the events of the present year have thrust the subject upon his attention, and made obvious the inexpediency of longer delaying to comply with the wishes of his brethren. He therefore prepared a brief essay on the question of Methodist Church Government for the June meeting of the Ministerial Association of the St. Clair District.

On receiving the essay the Association unanimously requested its publication. Had circumstances permitted, the writer would have been pleased to have gone more thoroughly into the subject; but this not being the case, in deference to the judgment of his brethren, he presents it to the public as it is, believing that it will be found in accordance with the New Testament Scriptures and the practice of the Apostolic and Primitive Church.

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METHODIST CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

METHODIST EPISCOPACY—DOES IT COMPORT WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, AND THE PRACTICE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH ?

No question in regard to Methodism at the present moment deserves a more careful consideration than the subject of church government, and especially so as there have been, and still are, Methodists both in Europe and America, who profess great respect for the opinions of Mr. Wesley, and at the same time treat with cold indifference, if not with supreme contempt, his mature and deliberate preference for episcopacy. He originated and fully prepared the American Methodist system, and clearly indicated the same form of church government for his societies in England, to take effect after his death. This fact I shall point out hereafter. One might reasonably expect, therefore, that no real Wesleyan would object to the modified and well arranged system of episcopacy so carefully prepared by the founder of Methodism for his societies, and so wonderfully successful where established.

But notwithstanding the spiritual influence and marvelous prosperity which have attended the Methodist Episcopal Church, objections have been raised to some of the features of her church polity at different periods since her organization. Her history in this respect is no exception to that of other religious organizations. Objectors were not lacking in the Patriarchal, Mosaic or Apostolic days, nor are they a race likely to die out while human minds are diversified and human judgments are imperfect. Let us not, therefore, allow ourselves to be disturbed "as though some strange thing had happened unto us," because of the desire of a few of our brethren in the United States to change old established usages, and limit the term of the bishop's service. Whether this recent agitation against the present period of episcopal service in the neighboring nation, and against Methodist Episcopacy in Canada, is any more reasonable, consistent, and charitable than the excitement created in 1793 against Methodist bishops and Methodist Episcopacy by Rev. James O'Kelly and his followers, or the agitation of more recent date, so ably dealt with by the lamented Bishop Emory in his "Defence of our Fathers," time and the good sense of prudent men must determine. Methodist Episcopacy has lived through all these and other contests,

and has come out from them un mutilated in all her fair proportions, and their most important result has been the more conspicuous exhibition of her scriptural efficiency. Whatever project is successful in belittling episcopacy in one country, affects the same form of church government in all lands, because the system is precisely the same. We may therefore very appropriately enquire, on general grounds, Is Methodist Episcopacy scriptural, and compatible with the practice of the primitive Church? And if so, why should the plan be "modified"—as it is called—a word which, as at present used in this connection, means the destruction of a system modelled by the mature and deliberate judgment of Mr. Wesley after the Scriptures and the practices of the Apostolic Church. And for what? In order to gratify a *whim*, or obviate an imaginary tendency to prelacy, by creating some sort of a presidency, based on some political model, or a rotatory episcopacy, subject to the excitement and other disadvantages of constant elections.

In considering the question before us, the first thing to be examined is the orders of the Christian ministry, as presented to us in the New Testament, and accepted and practiced by the Methodist Episcopal Church.

We learn that Deacons were chosen by the Church, and ordained by the Apostles to the sacred office. See the 6th chapter of the Acts. They distributed alms to the poor widows, but they also baptised and preached the Gospel to the people. Their office in relation to the Church is, therefore, clearly defined in the Acts and several of the Epistles. See Acts vi., 5 to 8, also the 8th chapter and 5th verse. Dr. Bangs, referring to 1 Timothy, iii. 8 to 13, and similar texts, observes in regard to the position of Deacons, "This proves that they were not of the same order with Elders, but were inferior to them"—simply in orders. They, however, went everywhere among the dispersed, publishing the glad tidings of salvation. "Allowing the soundness of this conclusion," adds the same writer, that is, that the Deacons were ministers, "It will follow that those churches which admit of no distinction in ministerial order, but reduce all to a level, have *departed* from the apostolic mode. In their intemperate zeal against episcopacy, which broke out with such violence among the Independents of England, in the days of the Stuarts, they seem to have run into the opposite extreme, by introducing a perfect parity of ministerial orders, as well as of jurisdiction, and thus have impaired that beautiful symmetry which we behold in the orders, of powers, and harmonious subordination of the several grades of officers in the primitive Church."

It must be admitted that Deacons, as well as Elders or Presbyters, were ordained to the sacred office by prayer and the imposition of hands in the Apostolic, as well as in the Methodist Episcopal Church; and there is abundant evidence of the importance which

Mr. Wesley and the fathers in America attached to it, as witness their firm refusal to countenance the proceedings of certain zealous preachers who took upon themselves to administer the ordinances without having been set apart to the sacred office. It appears unnecessary to multiply facts upon this subject, as the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles, the history of the primitive Church, and the action of Mr. Wesley, all unite to justify us in regard to the order of Deacons as acknowledged by our body. Why then shou'd any of our people be ashamed of our practice, or be driven from a scrip'ral position by the sneers or ridicule of those who, while professing to be Wesleyans, are adverse to the episcopal system of church polity as existing in the Methodist Episcopal Church by Mr. Wesley's own recommendation.

So far as it regards the order of Elders or Presbyters, in the Apostolic or modern churches, there appears to be but little difference of opinion, and therefore it is not necessary to prove a generally admitted fact; and there is as strong testimony in the New Testament and the usages of the early Church for the order of preaching Deacons as for the order of preaching Elders. Then as to the two orders of Deacons and Elders, the Methodist Episcopal Church has strong scriptural grounds, as well as historical usages, to justify her practice. History, Scripture, and Methodist usage all unite to establish the validity of our Methodist polity.

The next point that demands special attention is the office of Bishop or General Superintendent.

The questions raised by objectors are, 1st. Do the New Testament Scriptures and the usages of the Apostolic Church bear out the Methodist Episcopal Church in the practice of setting apart by prayer and imposition of hands an Elder or Presbyter as General Superintendent, to take the oversight of the Connexion? 2nd. Had Mr. Wesley a scriptural warrant for the step he took in the ordination of Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, as Deacons and Elders, and of ordaining Dr. Coke a General Superintendent, in order to make provision for the organization of the societies in America into a regular church? And was the ordination of Mr. Asbury, first Deacon, secondly Elder, and thirdly General Superintendent, by Dr. Coke and his two Elders, justified on a legitimate Christian basis?

I think the following facts will answer these questions in the affirmative, and will fully vindicate Mr. Wesley's conduct in his ordination of Dr. Coke and *Mr. Mather*, as General Superintendents for America and England. And if Mr. Wesley's action was right in the provision he made for the organization of the American Church, then it follows that the Methodist Episcopal Church is the *true* Wesleyan body, representing the only system of church polity existing among Methodists, in any portion of the world, which had been matured and authorized by Mr. Wesley.

We find by a reference to the 13th chapter of the Acts, that Paul and Barnabas, after they had "fulfilled their ministry at Jerusalem," returned to Antioch, where the brethren were collected together to hold a conference or Christian council. Here, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, the Church selected Paul and Barnabas, and they were ordained by prayer and imposition of hands, and again sent away upon a more general visitation, having been set apart to that special work, and "they took with them" John Mark, as "their minister" or assistant.

Dr. Clarke is of the opinion that Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen were the disciples who laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas at the time of this special ordination service, when these two ministers of Jesus Christ were sent out as General Superintendents of the great work now committed to their trust.

It is not at all likely that this was the first ordination of either Barnabas or Paul, because they had been preachers for years prior to this event. It will be remembered that Barnabas was an old disciple, and that he introduced Paul to the brethren at Jerusalem about three years after his conversion.

By consulting 1 Timothy ii. 7, we are informed by Paul himself, that he had been ordained a *preacher, and an Apostle*, and yet he was ordained to a special work at Antioch. And we learn further that not only was it the business of Paul and Barnabas to preach, raise up and confirm the churches, but to ordain Elders in every church. Acts xiv. 23. And such is the office work of our Bishops. They are appointed to travel through the work as extensively as possible, preach the word, preside at the Conferences, or councils of the Church, and ordain the brethren that the Church may recommend as suitable persons to minister to the people.

Paul, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, clearly conveys the idea of distinction between the position of Deacons and that of Elders, although both had a right to preach and baptize. Yet Elders were evidently considered superior in point of order to Deacons, while Bishops and Elders were clearly the same in ministerial order, and at the same time some of the Elders or Presbyters had a more general oversight of the work than others, as in the case of Paul himself, for he had "the care of all the churches." He was in fact a General Superintendent in the Methodist acceptance of that term. He was the same in order with his brethren the Apostles, but superior to some of them in office or jurisdiction. And this is all that has ever been claimed for our Bishops; nor is there anything assuming in the title of Bishop more than in that of Elder. He is simply an overseer—an equal in orders, but a superior in office, by the suffrage or consent of his brethren. And surely there can be nothing arrogant in the acceptance of such a position at the choice of the General Conference or council of the Church. To

speak, then, of prelacy in connection with Methodist Episcopacy conveys an idea of power over God's heritage which has no existence in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Anything like prelacy, as that term is generally understood, has never been claimed for our Bishops in any portion of the world, by any part of the church, nor has it been sought for by any of those who have ever been appointed to the episcopal office. Thus far in the United States and Canada the Bishops have been a devoted and most laborious class of men. They have not, as a body of ministers, been surpassed as earnest workers by any similar number of church officers on this continent. Why, then, should we be fearful where no danger exists?

We can see no valid or scriptural reason, therefore, why we may not follow the example set us at Antioch, and ordain one or more of our Elders to take the general superintendency of the Church.

Titus had the general charge in Crete, and was authorized to "ordain Elders in every city." He, therefore, made provision for the proper administration of the ordinances, and the congregations were thus supplied with pastors who might in all things be able to attend to the spiritual wants of the people, according to the direction of the Apostles.

In due time Paul and Barnabas, after having made an extensive tour among the Gentiles, as well as among some of the churches already established, returned to Antioch, and reported to the Church the success of their Gospel labors. But a difficulty having arisen in consequence of some who came down from Jerusalem, who insisted on circumcision in addition to faith as a condition of salvation, Paul, Barnabas, and certain others of the brethren were requested to go up to Jerusalem to confer with "the Apostles and Elders and brethren" in regard to this matter.

The Apostles and Elders alone, it would appear, met in council, or as we would call it, a Conference, the Church having a right to be present. James, who, it is admitted by both Catholics and Protestants, was Bishop of Jerusalem, evidently presided at this general Christian Council. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas were the chief speakers in opposition to those Pharisees, who, having united with the Christians, were the advocates of circumcision. And, after the debate was ended, James, as presiding officer or Bishop, gave his decision. See the 15th chapter of the Acts, and Dr. Clarke's note on the 13th verse.

We have, then, this fact, that James not only decided in accordance with the views of Paul and Barnabas, but advised a pastoral letter to be sent to the churches, giving them proper instructions in the things of God. And Paul took Silas as his travelling companion and went in one direction to visit the churches, and Barnabas took John Mark with him as his assistant, and went in another direction to visit the churches. Paul had, it is true, lost confidence in Mark,

because he had at one time left the work, and therefore he preferred Silas. But Barnabas thought that Mark should have another trial. And although Paul and Barnabas differed as to the propriety of taking Mark out again, yet they were evidently both intent on accomplishing the same great purpose, namely, the "confirming the churches" in the faith of the Gospel, and turning the heathen "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

We learn the following facts from the word of Divine revelation: 1st. That Deacons were "ordained" to their office by prayer and imposition of hands, and that they were authorized to preach and baptise. 2nd. Paul assures us that he was "ordained a preacher and an Apostle," and he was also with Barnabas at Antioch ordained by prayer and imposition of hands, in order to enter on a more general and specific work of preaching and ordaining pastors for the newly established churches.

Let us now take a glance at church history, and learn what Dr. Stillingfleet has to say on this question. He says,

"In the first primitive church the Presbyters all acted in common for the welfare of the Church, and either did or might ordain others to the same authority with themselves, because the intrinsical power of order is equally in them, and in those who were after appointed governors over presbyteries. And the collation of orders doth come from the power of order, and not merely from the power of jurisdiction. It being likewise fully acknowledged by the schoolmen that Bishops are not superior above Presbyters, as to the power of order." *Irenicum*, page 273; Young's Methodism, page 297.

And again, pages 281-2, the same author observes,—“When the Apostles were taken out of the way who kept the main power in their own hands, of ruling their several presbyteries, or delegated some to do it, * * * the wiser and graver sort considered the abuse following the promiscuous use of this power of ordination, and, withal, having in their minds the excellent frame of government of the Church under the Apostles and their deputies, and for preventing of future schisms and divisions among themselves, they unanimously agreed to choose one out of their number who was best qualified for the management of so great a trust, and to devolve the exercise of the power of ordination and jurisdiction to him; yet so as that he act nothing of importance without the consent and concurrence of the Presbyters, who were still to be as the common council to the Bishops. This I take to be the true and just account of the origin of episcopacy in the primitive Church, according to Jerome; which model of government, thus contrived and framed, sets forth a most lively character of that great wisdom and moderation which then ruled the heads and hearts of the primitive Christians, and which, when men have studied and searched all other ways, * * * will be found the most agreeable to the primitive

form, both as asserting the due interest of the presbyteries, and allowing the due honor of episcopacy, and by the great harmony of both, carrying on the affairs of the Church with the greatest unity, concord and peace. Which form of government I cannot see how any possible reason can be produced, by either party, why they may not with cheerfulness embrace it."

If we, then, take Dr. Stillingfleet's version, and that of Lord King, referred to by Mr. Wesley, as a correct statement of the views and usages of the primitive Church, and look at the apostolic action, we can see at once that the Methodist Episcopal Church is, in its government, the same with the Christian Church in the first ages.

Aside from any pretence to inspiration in a scriptural sense, Mr. Wesley endeavored to model his Methodist church polity as nearly like the Apostolic Church as possible, and it would be hard to show that he did not succeed in exactly accomplishing his plan so far at least as American Methodism is concerned.

It will be discovered by a reference to our Discipline that the Methodist Episcopal Church recommends suitable persons for the ministry, and that our Conferences—like the first presbyteries—act as Councils to our Bishops, who are the same in order as the Elders, but the Bishops are, by common consent, the chief among their brethren in office, having been elected to the power of jurisdiction by the Elders, in order to take the general oversight of the work, to preside at the Conferences, and to ordain those to the ministry who have been recommended by the constituted authority of the Connexion; and to preach upon every available occasion. A Bishop's appointment in the Methodist Church is no sinecure. The Bishop's authority is a delegated power, conferred upon him by the Elders, under certain constitutional rules, and consequently, he is in the hands of his brethren composing the General Conference, to direct and control according to the well defined laws of the denomination. The actual power of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada is in the General and Quarterly Meeting Conferences; and in the United States the power is in the Annual and the General Conferences, now composed of ministers and laymen. The Bishops are simply the executive officers of the Church, made such by their peers, for prudential reasons—exercising the delegated power conferred upon them by the Elders. But "if, by death, expulsion, or otherwise, there is no Bishop remaining in the Church, the General Conferences," in both countries, have ample authority to elect a successor or successors for the episcopal office, "and any three or more Elders appointed for that purpose by the General Conference, may ordain the brother or brethren, so elected, to the episcopal office." The Bishops are, in the strictest sense of the word, the servants of the Church. They are as fully controlled by church law as any private

member of the body, both as it regards their moral and religious character, and they are held amenable to the General Conference for their ministerial conduct and all official actions.

It is hard to conceive how denominational checks can be more strongly applied than they are in the case of our Bishops. To "modify" Methodist Episcopacy, as some desire, would be to *maim* it. Mr. Wesley has given us a "modified episcopacy" in the proper sense of the term, agreeing with the New Testament Scriptures and the usages of the primitive Church.

The next point to be considered is, Did Mr. Wesley design the episcopal form of church government for the Methodists of British America and Europe as well as for those of republican America?

I need not do more in this place than refer to the fact that Mr. Wesley, assisted by Elders, ordained Dr. Coke, who already had been ordained a Deacon and a Presbyter in the Church of England, to the office of General Superintendent, and that he also ordained Messrs Whatecoat and Vasey Deacons and Elders, and sent them to America with the Doctor, in order to organize the societies into a regular church. These facts are admitted on all sides.

But it is contended by those opposed to Methodist Episcopacy that Mr. Wesley planned the episcopal form of church polity for the Methodists of the United States *only*, because the revolutionary war had separated the old American colonies from Great Britain, and therefore it was on political grounds alone that the episcopal form of church government was prepared for the Methodists of the new republic, and consequently that Methodist Episcopacy is not suited to any portion of British America. This is an incorrect representation of Mr. Wesley's great design. He evidently intended the episcopal form of church government for *all* America. It was because the Church of England was no longer the established church of the United States that he had no further scruples with regard to the ordination of preachers for America, and not because the United States was no longer a dependency of England. His words are, "By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of *North America* are totally disjoined from the British Empire and erected into independent states. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the State Assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice, and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

"Lord King's account of the primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the same orders, 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 travelling 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.

"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 are none either to baptize or 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.

"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 baptising and administering the Lord's Supper."

It is evident from these statements of Mr. Wesley to the American brethren that he had no special reference to a political policy, but his action in relation to the ordination of Dr. Coke and others for the Church in America was based on the consideration that no national church had then an existence in America, and hence he invaded no ecclesiastical right in the provision made for his American societies. In making this provision for his American societies he had no regard to national boundaries. This is further demonstrated from the fact that he requested the ordination of Mr. Freeborn Garrettson as General Superintendent, in order that he might be sent in that relation to the *British possessions*. On this subject Dr. Stevens gives us the following historical facts :

"Freeborn Garrettson was ordained at the Conference of 1784, and appointed to Nova Scotia. His labors in that province were extraordinary in their extent and success, but they will come under our notice hereafter. In April, 1787, he returned to the United States, by way of Boston, where he preached in private houses, not being admitted to its pulpits. At Providence and Newport he addressed large assemblies. Arriving in New York, he hastened to the Conference at Baltimore. Wesley had been so impressed by his success in Nova Scotia that he sent a request to the Conference for his ordination as Superintendent, or Bishop, for the British dominions in America—a vast diocese, comprising not only the north-eastern provinces and the Canadas, but also the West India Islands. Dr. Coke, writes Garrettson, '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 among those whom I was requested to serve, I would return to the next Conference and receive ordination for the office of Superintendent. His reply was, "I am perfectly satisfied," and he gave me a commendatory letter to the brethren in the West Indies, etc. I had intended, as soon as Conference rose, to pursue my voyage to the West India Islands, to visit Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and in the Spring to return. 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.' Wesley was deeply grieved by this disappointment. The biographer of Garretts on ascribes it to the unwillingness of the American preachers to have him so entirely separated from them." Stevens' M. E. Church, vol. 2, pages 324, 325.

To attribute a political design to Mr. Wesley in his American scheme is not only incorrect in every respect, but is an act of great injustice to a most devoted servant of Christ. He had declared that the "world was his parish," and like his adorable Master, he was anxious that the Gospel might extend to the ends of the earth. He realized that although Christ's kingdom is *in* the world, that "it is not *of* the world," and that the minister of Christ has a God-appointed right to go into *all* the "world and preach the Gospel to every creature," without reference to national or political lines.

The practice of forming churches according to political boundaries is a merely secular arrangement, and seems to have originated with "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin." When the ten tribes had revolted from Rehoboam, Jeroboam, fearing if the people went up to worship with their brethren in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, as they were commanded, that their hearts would be drawn away from him and turned again to the princes of the house of David, set up his golden calves at Bethel and at Dan. Thus under the guise of regard for the convenience of the people, saying to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem," &c.; but in reality moved by political motives, he established a national church. Similar fears to those of Jeroboam seem ever since to have haunted church and state politicians, and have too often led to not very dissimilar results. To arrange a Christian Church on any political basis, or by national divisions, or to model its government according to any political system is contrary to the well known plans of Mr. Wesley, and at variance with the usages of the Apostles and the command of Christ. To talk, therefore, of one system of church polity for England, another for the United States, and a third for Canada, simply because they have separate civil governments, is a whim of interested politicians, which I have no hesitation in saying is

antiochrian, and therefore God-dishonoring. If such a system had been best for the Church, the Master, or his disciples, would have had one form for the Jews, a second for the Romans, and a third for the Greeks. The great commission is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," and Mr. Wesley felt that the ministers of Jesus had a scriptural license to go into any nation under heaven and proclaim salvation to the inhabitants, to raise up churches, and to continue to feed the flock of Christ, over which the "Holy Ghost had made them overseers."

The establishing of missions in foreign lands is according to correct Gospel principle, and an old Christian practice. But to cut off mission fields, dismember the Church, and parcel out the membership according to national boundaries, or hand the flocks over to other pastors, is the reverse, though it may be a stroke of worldly wisdom. Such an arrangement has no warrant in the New Testament, nor is it sanctioned by the acts of the Apostles. A scheme of this nature is adverse to Christian liberty, and to individual religious rights. Mr. Wesley had no political designs in view in providing for his societies. He evidently intended that Methodism should be one the world over, both as it regards church polity and doctrines. To establish this point I present the following facts:

After establishing the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, if not before that period, Mr. Wesley saw that after his death the societies in England would sooner or later take some decided step by which the Methodist preachers would be able to administer the sacraments to their people. In order to provide for the approaching event, he ordained (in 1789) Mr. Alexander Mather a General Superintendent, and Messrs. Rankin and Moore, Elders, as he had previously (in 1784) ordained Dr. Coke a General Superintendent, and Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey, Elders. We have also seen that he deputed Dr. Coke to request Mr. Freeborn Garretson to allow himself to be ordained by Dr. Coke to the office of General Superintendent for the British American possessions. Thus it is evident that Mr. Wesley designed that Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury should take the oversight of the work in the United States, Mr. Mather in Europe, and Mr. Garretson in the British American possessions. The three dioceses or episcopal districts were extensive, but the object contemplated by Mr. Wesley could be reached by the four men whom he designed as General Superintendents. Nothing can be more apparent, therefore, than that Mr. Wesley intended that all the Methodists in the world should ultimately be under the episcopal form of church government.

Speaking of the sacramental controversy in the English Conference, after Mr. Wesley's death, Dr. Stevens says,—“When the agitation was raging and extending, the Conference of 1792 met in London, on the 31st of July. The venerable Alexander Mather, who had

preached thirty-five years, and whom Mr. Wesley had ordained as Superintendent, or Bishop, was elected President." Stevens' History of Methodism, vol. 3, pages 40, 51, 52.

"The controversy respecting the administering of the sacraments was continued with as much acrimony after this session of the English Conference as before it, and in the latter part of 1793 Mr. Pawson, who was then the President, expressed himself respecting the condition of the Connexion as follows:

"At present we really have no government. It will by no means answer our ends to dispute one with another as to which is the most scriptural form of church government. We should consider our present circumstances, and endeavor to agree upon some method by which our people may have the ordinances of God, and at the same time be preserved from divisions." Again, adverting to Mr. Wesley's action, Mr. Pawson continues:—"He foresaw that the Methodists would, after his death, soon become a distinct people; he was deeply prejudiced against a presbyterian, and was as much in favor of an episcopal form of government; in order, therefore, to preserve all that was valuable in the Church of England among the Methodists he ordained Mr. Mather and Dr. Coke, Bishops. These he undoubtedly designed should ordain others. * * * I sincerely wish that Dr. Coke and Mr. Mather may be allowed to be what they are, Bishops." Such is the testimony of one of the Presidents of the English Conference. Dr. Dixon, another English preacher, remarks:—"The constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church is only a development of Wesley's opinion of church polity; and it may be added, that an imitation of that great transaction in this country would be perfectly justifiable on the ground assumed by Wesley himself, and held sacred by his followers. If we mistake not, it is to the American Methodist Episcopal Church that we are to look for the *real* mind and sentiments of this great man."

The student of Methodist history will admit the truths herein stated.

Why then should we be required to abolish Methodist Episcopacy in order to effect a unification of the several Methodist bodies in this country? Or why should a Methodist union be demanded only according to national lines? To yield to such a supercilious demand would be an act unworthy the sons of noble Christian sires. If a Methodist union is desirable, let us rally under the broad banner of the Gospel, taking the New Testament, the primitive Church, and Mr. Wesley's views as a basis on which to unite. But let it never be once said of us as a Christian community that Methodism shall, with our consent, be restricted by national or political boundaries, or modelled after the pattern of any civil government.

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