CHURCH GOVERNMENT:
A WORK FOR THE TIMES,
BY REV. O. SCOTT.
CONTAINING ALSO
A DECLARATION OF RIGHTS,
BY REV. H. B. BASCOM, D. D.
ALSO,
THE METHODIST E. CHURCH AND
PRIMITIVE CHURCH COMPARED:
BY REV. C. PRINDE.
WITH AN
ACCOUNT OF SOME "STRANGE THINGS,"
BY REV. J. D. BRIDGE.

Wesleyan Church
ARCHIVES

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DECLARATION OF RIGHTS.

BY REV. H. B. BASCOM.

ARTICLE I.

GOD, as the common FATHER of mankind, has created all men free and equal, and the proper equality and social freedom of the great brotherhood of the human race, in view of the gifts and grants of the CREATOR, are to be inferred from all his dispensations to men. Every man, by the charter of his creation, is the equal of his contemporaries,—the essential rights of every generation are the same. Man as the child of God's creation, continues man immutably under all circumstances; and the right of ancestry are those of posterity. Man has claims, which it becomes his duty to assert, such as the indefeasible right of thinking and acting for himself, when thought and action do not infringe the rights of another, as they never will, when truth and justice are made the basis of human intercourse. These rights, common to the great family of man, cannot be abolished by concession, statute,
precedent, or positive institution;—and when wrested or withheld from the multitude of mankind, by their rulers, may be reclaimed by the people, whenever they see proper to do it.

Article II.

Man was created for society; his natural rights are adapted to the social state, and under every form of society, constitute properly, the foundation of his civil rights. When man becomes a member of civil society, he submits to a modification of some of his natural rights, but he never does, he never can, relinquish them. He concedes the exercise of those rights, for his own and the general good, but he does not, cannot, cast them off. His rights receive a new direction, but do not terminate; and that government which deprives man of rights, justly claimed in virtue of his creation, and interwoven with the constitution of his nature, and the interests of society, denies to him the gifts of his Creator, and must be unjust. GOD can be the author of no government, contravening the wisdom of his arrangements, in the creation of man.

Article III.

In every community there is a power, which receives the denomination of sover-
eignty, a power not subject to control, and that controls all subordinate powers in the government. Now whether this power be in the hands of the many, or the few, it is indubitably certain, that those members only of the community are free, in whom the sovereign power resides. The power of a community is essential to its freedom, and if this power be confined to a few, freedom is necessarily confined to the same number. All just government must be founded upon the nature of man, and should consult alike the natural rights, civil wants, and moral interests of his being. All rightful authority is founded in power and law; all just power is founded in right, and as one man’s natural right to the character of lawgiver, is to all intents as good as another’s, it follows, that all legitimate law must have its origin in the expressed will of the many.

ARTICLE IV.

As all men are essentially equal, in their rights, wants, and interests, it follows from these, that representative government is the only legitimate human rule, to which any people can submit. It is the only kind of government that can possibly reconcile, in any consistent way, the claims of authority, with the advantages of liberty. A prescriptive legislative body...
making laws without the knowledge or consent of the people to be governed by them, is a DESPOTISM. Legislators, without constituents, and peers and fellows, deputing them, as their representatives and actors—thus constituting themselves a legislature beyond the control of the people, is an exhibition of TYRANNY in one of its most dangerous forms. In the momentous affairs of government, nothing should be made the exclusive property of a few, which by right belongs to all, and may safely and advantageously be used by the rightful proprietors. The justice of every government depends essentially upon the original consent of the people:—this privilege belongs to every community, in right of the law of nature; and no man, or multitude of men, can alter, limit, or diminish it. Constitutional law is an expression of the will of the people, and their concurrence in its formation, either personally, or by representation, is essential to its legitimate authority.

ARTICLE V.

No community can be said, without mockery, to have a constitution, where there is a consolidation of the different powers of government in the hands of the same men, and the remaining portion are left of course, WITHOUT ANY SECU-
RITY FOR THEIR RIGHTS. Such a case presents an absolute government; a government of men, not principles. A constitution is not the creature of government; the nature of things renders it impossible that it should be an act of government. In strict propriety, it exists anterior to government;—government is based upon, proceeds from, and is the creature of the constitution. A constitution contains the elements and principles of government, and fixes the nature and limits of its form and operation; but is an instrument distinct from government, and by which government is controlled. It is a preliminary act of the people, in the creation of government. It sustains to government the same relation that laws do to the judiciary; the latter is not the source of law, cannot make laws, or annul them, but is subject to and governed by law. A constitution recognizes the rights of the people, and provides for their assertion and maintenance. It settles the principles and maxims of government. It fixes the LANDMARKS OF LEGISLATION.—It fixes the sovereign power of the people, giving law and justice to themselves and their representatives.

ARTICLE VI.
A government uniting the legislative, judicial and executive powers in the hands
of the same men, is an absurdity in theory, and in practice tyranny. The executive power, in every government, should be subordinate to the legislative, and the judicial independent of both. Wherever, therefore, it happens, that these three departments of government are in the hands of the same body of men, and these men are not the representatives of the people, first making the laws, then executing them, and finally the sole judges of their own acts, there is no liberty, the people are virtually enslaved, and liable to be ruined at any time. In a government, civil or ecclesiastical, where the same men are legislators, administrators, and judges, in relation to all the laws, and every possible application of them, the people, whether well or ill-treated, are in fact slaves; for the only remedy against such a despotism, is revolt. No constitution can be presumed a good one, embodying the principles of correct government, which does not sufficiently guard against the chances and possibility of mal-administration. All absolute governments owe their character to the manner in which they are administered; whereas, in a representative government, with proper checks and balances, it is the interest, even of the vicious, to promote the general welfare, by conforming to
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The greater the equality, established among men by governments, the more virtue and happiness will prevail; for where the voluntary consent of the governed is the basis of government, interest and duty combine to promote the COMMON WEAL.

ARTICLE VII.

Every community should be the ASSERTER and GUARDIAN of its own rights. No government can be administered to the advantage of the governed, for any considerable length of time, unless the people retain sufficient power in their own hands to COMPEL their rulers to act correctly. When a government is so constructed, that its acts are final, and preclude remedy by appeal to the people, its principles are unjust, and its administration cannot fail to be injurious;—a virtuous administration can never change, or redeem the vicious principles of a government. And whenever the subjects of a government, whose legislative, executive, and judicial functions, pertain to a few, independent of the choice of the people, find themselves aggrieved and oppressed by the conduct of their rulers, without any constitutional remedy for the redress of existing evils, it then becomes the duty, and is the IMPRESCRIPTABLE RIGHT of that people to CON-
TROL their rulers, by extra-judicial measures.

ARTICLE VIII.
When all the power and forms of government are held and managed by a few, who act without delegated right by consent of the people, the authority of the rulers is absolute, and the people are disfranchised of all right, in the various relations existing between them, as subjects, and those who hold the reins of government. Such a government must always lead to mental debility, will depress the moral vigor of a people, and necessarily abridge the liberty of reasoning and investigation. In all governments of this kind, right is the creature of fortune, and the slave of caprice. Those who live under a government which denies to the people the right of representation, blindly engage to submit to the will of others, right or wrong, and must continue to do so, or else deprive themselves of all the advantages of the community in which they live, in order to get rid of its evils.---The enactment of all laws and rules, therefore, should be with and by the consent of the people, and their execution strictly under their control.

ARTICLE IX.
The right to be represented, where law is made to govern, is not only essential to
civil freedom, but is equally the basis of religious liberty. Civil and religious liberty are intimately connected; they usually live and die together, and he who is the friend of the one, cannot consistently be the enemy of the other. If liberty, as is admitted on all hands, is the perfection of civil society, by what right can religious society become despoiled of this CROWNING EXCELLENCE of the social state? The New Testament furnishes the principles, but not the forms of church government; and in the adaptation of forms to these principles, Christian bodies should be governed mainly by the few facts and precedents furnished in the Apostolic writings. The will and mind of the GREAT HEAD OF THE CHURCH, on this subject, so far as clearly revealed, whether by express statute, or fair implication, cannot be contravened without impiety; but in relation to a variety of topics, connected with the internal police and external relation to the church, on which the scriptures are silent, it is left to every Christian community to adopt its own regulations, and the same is true of nations. Ministers and private Christians, according to the New Testament, are entitled to equality of rights and privileges—an identity of interests implies an equality of rights. A monopoly of power, therefore, by the minis-
try, is a usurpation of the rights of the people. No power on the part of the ministry can deprive the people legitimately of their elective and representative rights; as the ministry cannot think and act for the people, in matters of principle and conviction, so neither can they legislate for them, except as their authorized representatives.

ARTICLE X.

The government of every Christian church should be strictly a government of principle, in relation to the governed; and every private Christian is as deeply and reasonably interested as the ministry.—Dominion over conscience, is the most absurd of human pretensions.—The assumption, that absolute power in the affairs of church government, is a sacred deposit in the hands of the ministry, libels the genius and charities of the New Testament. Whenever a Christian places himself under a ministry who claims the right of thinking and deciding for them, in matters of faith and morality, they are guilty of impiety, however unintentional, to the great head of the church, inasmuch as it is required of every Christian to reflect and determine for himself, in all such cases, and the duty cannot be performed by
another. And those ministers who aim at
principality of this kind, in the personal
concerns of faith and practice, are
plainly guilty of usurped dominion over
the rights and consciences of the PEOPLE.

ARTICLE XI.

EXPEDIENCY and RIGHT are differ-
ent things. Nothing is expedient that is
unjust. Necessity and convenience may
render a form of government useful and
effective for a time, which afterwards, un-
der a change of circumstances, and an ac-
cumulation of responsibility, may become
oppressive and intolerable. That system
of things, which cannot be justified by the
word of GOD, and the common sense of
mankind, can never be expedient. Sub-
mmission to power, gradually and insidious-
ly usurped, should seldom or never be re-
ceived as proof of the legitimate consent of
the people to the peculiar form of govern-
ment by which they are oppressed; as
such submission may be the result of prin-
ciples, attachments and energies, which
owe their existence to causes foreign from
the government, which is supposed to pro-
duce them. Peaceable submission by the
people, to a system of government, can
never be construed into a proper approval
of it, as one of their own choice; for, as
men by birth and education, may become
the subjects of a form of civil government they do not approve, so thousands may be born into the KINGDOM OF GOD, and nurtured in his family, under forms of ecclesiastical policy, materially inconsistent with the lights and notices of revelation on this subject. The continued sufferance and submission of the people, so far from proving the divine right of those who govern, does not even furnish proof of any right at all, except the claim which arises from mere FORBEARANCE.

ARTICLE XII.

Without insisting upon those portions of the New Testament, which go directly against the rights of the ministry to exclusive rule, the well known indefiniteness of its language on the subject of church government, should admonish the claimants of such power, that their pretensions cannot be sustained. Nevertheless, in all ages since the Apostolic, and in all parts of the world, with but few exceptions, a large majority of those calling themselves Christian ministers, have shown a disposition both in ecclesiastical and civil affairs, to maintain an influence in matters of government, independent of the people, and to suppress the right of inquiry, and freedom of discussion. And this is readily accounted for by adverting to the fact,
that the liberty of thinking and acting, and especially the free expressions of opinion, have always lessened the influence of ministerial pretensions, and abridged the claims of an aspiring ministry to irresponsible domination. It is lamentably true that in a thousand instances, in the various divisions of Papal and Protestant Christendom, oppression has been exercised under pretence of duty, and professed veneration for the dead; and their doing, and an earnest contention for pre-existing customs had been urged, as sufficient reasons for withholding the rights of the people, and lording it over God's heritage.

**Article XIII.**

It is true, to a great extent, that throughout all divisions of the Christian world, intellect has taken but comparatively little hold of the subject of religion, and still less of the subject of church government, and this affords the ministry an opportunity of misleading the people on the subject of their rights, and in but too many instances, they resign themselves the passive subjects of their religious teachers, without once inquiring, whether, in doing so, they do not dishonor the Great Head of the Church, in his members. Christian ministers are men of like
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In passions with other men, they are equally liable to err, and become depraved; they should not be watched with an eye of malignant jealousy, but their errors, oppressions and usurpations should be met and resisted by the people, with confidence and firmness. The people should teach their rulers, that they will find them alike free from the spirit of faction, and the insincerity of servility. They should let them know, that with every disposition to render proper obedience, they are determined not to be OPPRESSED.

ARTICLE XIV.
Whenever the members of a church resign the right of suffrage, and of discussing freely and fearlessly the conduct of their rulers, whether it be done by direct concession, or indirectly by attaching themselves to, and continuing within the pale of a church, where such a system of polity obtains, they renounce to a fearful extent one of the first principles of the PROTESTANT RELIGION, and bring dishonor upon its name. Whenever spiritual rulers attempt to check a perfectly free communication of thoughts and feelings among the people,—when the lips and the pens of the laity are interdicted, without their oversight and license,—when they attempt to repress honest convictions and
free inquiry;—when their disapprobation is shown to all who do not support them, and their displeasure incurred by the diffusion of intelligence among the people, not calculated to increase their power and reputation,—then it becomes the duty of the people to decline their oversight, as men unworthy to rule the Church of God. The rock on which the church has split for ages, is that the sovereign power to regulate all ecclesiastical matters, (not decided by the Scriptures, and which of right belongs to a Christian community as such,) has, by a most mischievous and unnatural policy, named expediency, been transferred to the hands of a few Ministers, who have been in part, the patricians of the ministry, and the ARISTOCRACY of the church.

ARTICLE XV.

Government as a fixed and stable cause in the progress of human affairs, is finally productive of a large amount of good or evil; it is strictly in its operation, a moral cause, in the formation of character; for it necessarily presents circumstances and considerations, in the light of reasons and motives which lead to results in the formation of character, that become habitual and permanent. The good of all concerned, therefore, should be the object proposed in
the adoption of any form of government; and when a system of government is adopted, which calls off the attention of the governed, from the general welfare, by depriving them of all control in the enactment of the laws, the natural and unavoidable tendency, of a government of this description, is vicious and demoralizing: and such, are the character and influence of all non-elective governments. The members of a community, who place themselves under the exclusive control of a few irresponsible persons, as their sole masters, in matters of government, thus tamely deprive themselves of the right of representation, and even of existence, except by EXPATRIATION, betray a criminal negligence of their best interests, and great inattention to the general welfare; and all governments recognizing such a distinction, contravene necessarily the influence of enlightened conviction and independent inquiry.

ARTICLE XVI.

Any government that does not allow the people to meet, deliberate, and decide upon matters that concern themselves, is evidently oppressive. For those who are not the representatives of the people to make laws for them, and then deny them the freedom of candid inquiry and honest an-
The maxim which assumes that the ministry has a right to rule and dictate exclusively, in the great concerns of religion, is the fruitful source of implicit faith, which, tamely and without inquiry, receives instruction at the hands of men, as authoritative and final—impiously receiving for doctrines the commandments of men, and perverting the ORACLES OF GOD. When the ministry judge and determine for the people, without their legitimate concurrence, as matter of right, conformity becomes a question of policy, instead of resulting from conscience and principle. A government which denies to the governed the right to inquire, remonstrate, and demand withheld justice, which, from its structure and operation, is calculated to darken the understanding and mislead the judgment—and thus compel obedience to its measures, in the great interests of right and wrong, must be essentially unjust, and ought not to be submitted to.

ARTICLE XVII.

No power possesses so fatal a principle of increase and accumulation in itself, as ecclesiastical power. Its faculties for reproduction and multiplication are many and fearful, and should be vigilantly guarded against by all, who consider the
IMAGE OF GOD is closely connected with the RIGHTS OF MAN. And whenever the growth and manifestation of this power, in any of its innumerable forms and modes of operation, shall clearly amount to an invasion of Christian rights, the injured and oppressed should resist the encroachment with manly decision and unyielding remonstrance. In every church, where the principle of representation is excluded, in the affairs of its government, the right of private judgment becomes a nullity, and faith and practice are necessarily, to a great extent, the offspring of prescription. The right of deciding what are the will and mind of GOD, in matters of faith and discipline, by prescriptive interpretation, is conceded in the scriptures to no man, or body of men exclusively: of course, the right of judgment belongs to all, equally and indisputably, and when the ministry avail themselves of the indifference, inattention, or ignorance of the people, brought under their charge from time to time, to constitute themselves their LEGISLATIVE MASTERS and EXECUTIVE GUARDIANS, they usurp the dominion of conscience, and although never complained of, are de facto religious TYRANTS, because they assume and exercise rights, that do not, and cannot, in the nature of things, belong to them. It should not be
overlooked, moreover, that when the ministry are considered by the laity, as the sole judges and depositories of faith and discipline, the people lose the only powerful motive, the only direct incentive, they can possibly have, to inquire and decide for themselves, in the infinitely momentous concerns of truth and duty. Such a monopoly of power by the ministry, tends directly to mental debasement, consequently decision of character, insincerity and misguided zeal.

**Article XVIII.**

That form of ecclesiastical policy, under which the revenues of the church proceed from the people, when they have no participation in the enactment of its laws, furnishes no proper constitutional balance of power; for the legislative council of the church, consisting of the ministry alone, have it in their power, at any time to render the contributions of the people to an amount sufficient for their competent supply and even affluence, not a voluntary service, but a condition of membership; when such government ceases to be free, and necessarily becomes tyrannical. Any government which places the public property of the governed in the hands of its rulers, so that it must proceed from their gift exclusively, without any
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constitutional negative in its appropriation on the part of the people, is unjust and vicious in its nature. Property is dominion held in right of power; and if in the hands of a few, the balance of government is destroyed, by enabling them to control the destiny of the whole. As it is the duty of every community, to support those who are only called to the administration of its affairs, so it is plainly a matter of right, that the will of the people should determine the necessary amount of supplies, and the mode of their assessment and collection.

ARTICLE XIX.

Punishments should never be inflicted in any community, except when strictly necessary, and plainly called for by the PUBLIC GOOD; and in all cases the infliction should be according to law. All punishments, proceeding from the regular administration of constitutional law, should be submitted to without resistance.

ARTICLE XX.

The subjects of all governments have a right to know the official acts and doings of their agents and officers, and to demand their publication accordingly.

ARTICLE XXI.

The vindication of an injured people, in
a contention for their rights, is furnished by the shameful denial of their existence.

Article XXII.
Any movement by the oppressed, to recover their rights, will be resisted by those who have oppressed them; but suffering and persecution, in a cause which the love of God and man requires, should be fearlessly met and resolutely borne.

Church Government.

Chapter I.
General Principles of Government.

Question—Has not the Methodist Episcopal Church, for some years, been greatly agitated by a controversy on the subject of church government?

Answer—Yes.

Q. Have any doctrines, or any other principles than those of government been involved in this controversy?

A. Yes; slavery.
Q. Has not this controversy resulted in a considerable secession from the M. E. Church?
A. Yes.
Q. Well, was the difference of sufficient magnitude to justify a secession from the church?
A. Yes; it was unanswerable.
Q. Well, what is the nature of the government of the M. E. Church; that is to say, is it republican or anti-republican?
A. Anti-republican.
Q. What are we to understand by a republican government?
A. It is a government where the sovereign power is in the hands of the people, or where all parts of the governed are fairly represented in the legislature.
Q. What are we to understand by an aristocracy?
A. It is a government where the power is in the hands of a few, and those not the representatives of the people nor amenable to them for their official acts.
Q. What is a monarchy?
A. It is a government where all the power is in the hands of one person.
Q. Are republican principles right or wrong—are they in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ, or opposed to it?
A. They are in accordance with the gospel, and consequently right.
Q. And will it not follow, that if republican principles are in accordance with the gospel, and right, anti-republican principles are opposed to the gospel, and consequently wrong?
A. Yes.

Q. Can republican principles be right in one situation, and wrong in another? that is to say, can they be right in the state and wrong in the church?
A. No; for that would be to say, that while the state frames her government in accordance with the gospel, the church ought to frame hers in opposition to the gospel, which would be absurd, as the Rev. H. B. Bascom has justly said. (See Declaration of Rights, art. 9.)

Q. Is it not, therefore, evident, that in proportion as monarchy or aristocracy prevails in the church, in the same proportion will the securities of civil liberty be weakened or destroyed?
A. Yes; it would be a contradiction, to say that a man was a republican in civil, and an aristocrat in ecclesiastical government.

Q. But is it not contended that the government of the M. E. Church is republican, because persons authorized to preach, must first be recommended by the people; and does this not constitute them their representatives?
A. Some do so contend, but others (yea and ministers of high standing) publicly thank God that their government is not republican, and proclaim in their sermons, that no church can have a republican government, without dethroning Jesus Christ.

Q. But does not the circumstance of their being so recommended by the people at first, constitute the government republican?

A. No: for though, this be the case, the people never thought in that act, of constituting them law-makers, but only recommended them as suitable persons to preach. That this is the fact is evident: First, because a majority so recommended and licensed, never become travelling preachers, without which they can have no voice in the government, and of course cannot be the representatives of the people: Second, many of those who become travelling preachers, never go to General Conference, and consequently cannot represent any one there: Third, if some few do, after many years, become members of the General Conference, they may have changed their views very much since they were recommended to preach, and of course, could not suitably represent the views and wishes of the people now: Fourth, however corrupt they may have become since that time in their principles,
and oppressive in their measures, the people have no authority to remove them from office and elect others in their places; so, you see, this is a curious kind of republicanism; and this fine superstructure, which has been so much harped upon among the ignorant and uninformed, tumbles to the ground, for want of a foundation to support it.

Q. Then will it not follow, that if in the act of recommending them to preach, the people intended also to make them representatives in the General Conference, or law-making department of the church, they have been greatly disappointed; for travelling preachers have prevented a large majority of the representatives of the people from going to the General Conference, though they were elected for that purpose, according to this argument. Would this be allowed in the civil department?

A. We think the conclusion legitimate, if the premises be admitted.

Q. But did not the people, at the organization of the church, consent to this kind of government by conventional enactment; and if so, is it not founded in the will of the people, and consequently republican?

A. No; the people were never consulted at the organization of the M. E. Church, they had no representative present, but a few ministers, of themselves, in the city of
Baltimore, in 1784, framed the government without the concurrence or consent of the people, and have held with tenacious grasp ever since, all legislative, judicial, and executive prerogatives.

By virtue of this usurped authority, this body has imposed upon the Church *articles of faith*, without either their advice or concurrence, and thus has interfered with the free exercise of conscience and the right of private judgment, on the part of the laity, and in respect to matters with which their personal salvation is inseparably identified. What more has the Roman Catholic Church itself done than this, in controlling the faith of its members?

Q. But did they not virtually embrace and approve of this kind of government, in the act of joining the church, and in this act concede to the preachers the right to make and execute all the laws, and will not this make it republican?

A. No; not one in a hundred, if one in a thousand, thought anything about the principles of government when uniting with the church, but were influenced in this act by entirely different considerations.

Q. But do they not approve of this kind of government by continuing in the church; and is not this equivalent to a vote of approval, and of course republican?
A. No; a large majority in the church do not understand the principles of their own government, nor the government of reformers, or of the difference between them; and among those who are acquainted with them, perhaps there is a majority in favor of reform.

Q. If this be the fact, why then do they continue in the church?

A. They may probably be influenced to this course from a number of considerations, foreign to the government; such as their attachment to favorite ministers; an unwillingness to interrupt old associations and attachments. Some may be influenced by the argument taken from numbers and popularity; others may think they can succeed better in their temporal avocations, and that it will best subserve their secular interests, to belong to so large a community; others, again, do not like to leave the meeting-houses which their money has built; and not among the least, is a fear that the new church will not succeed—which fear ought now to be abandoned.

Q. It would appear, then, that if the preachers favorable to reform would come out and join the reformers, a large proportion of the members would go with them; or if a majority of the people would come out, the preachers would follow—and so they are waiting one for the other?
A. No doubt it is even so.

Q. But is there not a majority of the members in the M. E. Church in favor of this kind of government; and is not the peaceable submission of it an evidence of that fact; and if so, is it not founded in the will of the people, and republican?

A. This is very doubtful and uncertain, as it has never been tested; neither are the preachers willing to submit it to the voice of the members in a fair election, but have told them plainly that they have no right to a voice in such matters. (See the report of the General Conference in 1828.) Mr. Bascom has discussed this question with considerable ability! (See Declaration, art. 11.)

Q. Why then does the M. E. Church support anti-republican principles, if they are opposed to the gospel?

A. I do not know; but "I wot that they do it ignorantly."

Q. Is the government of the M. E. Church a monarchy or aristocracy?

A. It is a mixture of both; for though the government is in the hands of the travelling preachers, [this is aristocratic] they are dependent on the Bishops at their head, [this is monarchical.]

Q. What is the nature of the government of the Wesleyan Connection?

A. Republican or representative, as we shall see hereafter.
CHAPTER II.

METHODIST EPISCOPACY.

Q. By whom was Methodist Episcopacy established?
A. By Dr. Coke and Francis Asbury.

Q. But do not the ministers of the M. E. Church attribute their Episcopacy to John Wesley?
A. They do; but there is no sufficient evidence of this fact.

Q. But did not Mr. Wesley consecrate Dr. Coke a Bishop?
A. We have no proof that he ever made such an attempt—and had he done so, he could not have succeeded; for he never was a Bishop himself. He could not therefore confer powers he did not possess.

Q. But was not Mr. Wesley the superintendent of all the Methodists?
A. Yes; and he could and did appoint Dr. Coke and Francis Asbury joint superintendents of the Methodist societies in North America.

Q. But does not the word superintendent signify the same thing as Bishop?
A. Not always—not generally. There are many superintendents who are not Bishops—though all bishops are superintendents.
Q. I am aware of this; but did not Mr. Wesley set apart Dr. Coke by the imposition of hands?

A. Yes; but this ceremony, though it generally accompanies ordination, does not prove anything in itself. It was a ceremony which, in the days of the apostles, accompanied appointments to office, where no ministerial function was either conferred or recognized. It was also a common ceremony which accompanied the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Again, Mr. Wesley, as the father and founder of the Methodist societies, often exercised the right of sending his preachers to particular fields of labor, and in doing so, he frequently laid his hands upon them in token of his blessing; and this practice he professed to have derived from Acts xxxiii. 3. In one of his letters he thus speaks,—“Paul and Barnabas were separated for the work to which they were called. This was not ordaining them—it was only inducting them to the province for which our Lord had appointed them.”

Q. Have you seen Dr. Coke's commission, or in other words, the letter of appointment, which he received from Mr. Wesley?

A. Yes; it is now lying before me.

Q. Well, do you gather from that letter the fact that Mr. Wesley constituted him a Bishop?
A. I do not. Mr. Wesley puts himself and Dr. Coke on a level, as it regards grades in the ministry. He applies the term presbyter to both. Mr. Wesley, as the father of the whole Methodist family, simply "appointed," "set apart," Dr. Coke to "superintend" and "preside over" a portion of his great family. This is all that can fairly be gathered from the commission of Dr. Coke.

Q. Did not Mr. Wesley give, (in this letter of appointment) as one reason for the step he then took, that the Methodists in North America desired "to continue under his care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England"?

A. He certainly did.

Q. Can we suppose then that he would violate his solemn ordination vows, by ordaining a Bishop, while he was only a presbyter, and also that he would trample on the discipline of the church to which the "people still wished to adhere," by thrusting upon the societies a Bishop of his own creating, contrary to the discipline of said church?

A. Such a position is too monstrous to be believed.

Q. But did not Mr. Wesley intend that Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury should ordain other presbyters?
A. Undoubtedly he did. The necessities of the case he supposed would justify, in America, this departure from English usage; but he could plead no such necessity for making a Bishop—believing as he did, "that Bishops and presbyters were of the same order and had the same right to ordain." He did not confer upon Dr. Coke any additional ordination power, but merely set him apart to superintend the flock of Christ.

Q. Did Mr. Wesley anticipate that Coke and Asbury would assume and exercise the office of Bishops, and organize a separate and distinct Methodist Episcopal Church?

A. It is very evident he did not.

Q. Is there any evidence of this?

A. Yes; he expected both preachers and people would continue under his care, and "still adhere to the discipline" of the established church.

Q. Is there any other proof?

A. Yes; when Mr. Wesley found that his superintendents had taken the name of Bishops, he wrote to Asbury a letter, of which the following is an extract. "How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a 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 con-
sent, call me a Bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this. John Wesley."—(Moore's Life of Wesley, vol. 2, p. 285.)

Q. But is it not possible that it was the name only to which Mr. Wesley objected?

A. Mr. W. was not a stickler for names. And besides, as the name was scriptural, he certainly could not object, as a churchman, to their being called by a name which exactly designated their office. It is ridiculous to suppose that after he had made them Bishops, he so pointedly condemned them for taking the name! Such a supposition is contrary to Mr. Wesley's whole character.

Q. Is there any other evidence that Dr. Coke never considered himself a Bishop in the Episcopal sense?

A. Yes. Dr. Coke appears never to have been satisfied with his Episcopal authority; though he says, in his letter to Bishop White, that "Mr. Wesley did invest him, as far as he had a right to do, with Episcopal authority."

Dr. Coke wrote a letter to Bishop White, dated Richmond, April 24, 1791, nearly seven years after Mr. Wesley had made him a Bishop, making a formal proposition for a union of the Methodists in America with the Protestant Episcopal Church! He wrote to Bishop Seabury, of Connecti-
In the former of these letters he expressed the opinion that he "went farther in the separation" of the Methodists from the Established Church than Mr. Wesley intended—that Mr. Wesley "did not intend an entire separation"—that Mr. Wesley himself "went farther than he would have done, if he had foreseen some events which followed!"—and that he is now sorry for the separation. How much does this look like constituting Dr. Coke a Bishop to form a separate Methodist Episcopal Church? These "certain events which followed," were, doubtless, the assumption of the name and office of Bishops, on the part of Coke and Asbury, and their consequent proceedings! In this letter, Dr. Coke styles himself a "Presbyter of the Church of England," and states that about 130 preachers had been ordained, and that "the generality, and perhaps none of them would refuse to submit to a re-ordination." So much for the satisfaction of the preachers at that early day with ordination from Mr. Wesley's Bishops! In his letter to Bishop Seabury, which Dr. Coke read to Bishop White, he suggested that in case of a re-union, "there would be use in consecrating Mr. Asbury to the Episcopacy—and that although there would not be the same
reasons in his, (Dr. Coke's case,) because he was a resident of England; yet as he should probably, while he lived, occasionally visit America, it would not be fit, considering he was Mr. Asbury's senior, that he should appear in lower character than this gentleman." Hence it seems that Mr. Wesley's Bishops were only Presbyters after all—and that to be true Episcopal Bishops they needed, in the opinion of Dr. Coke, a new consecration.

As lately as 1813, Dr. Coke applied to Wm. Wilberforce and several other distinguished gentlemen in England, for an appointment to the Episcopacy of India, and promising, if he could obtain that appointment, he would return to the bosom of the church, and do all in his power to promote her interest. It is as clear as the sun, that Dr. Coke never considered himself properly a Bishop, though this appears to have been the height of his ambition. "If the less can bless the greater;" if presbyters can make Bishops, then is Methodist Episcopacy something to stand upon, though it owes its existence more to these self-styled Bishops, Coke and Asbury, than to John Wesley.

Q. Will you give us the substance of what Mr. Wesley says respecting sending laborers to America?

A. Yes. Page 314, vol. vii. of his works,
Mr. Wesley thus states the whole case. "Hence those who had been members of the church, had none either to administer the Lord's Supper, or to baptize their children." Judging this to be a case of real necessity, I took a step which, for peace and quietness, I had refrained from taking for many years; I exercised that power which, I am fully persuaded, the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls has given me. I appointed three of our laborers to go and help them, by not only preaching the word of God, but likewise, by administering the Lord's Supper, and baptizing their children, throughout that vast tract of land—a thousand miles long, and some hundreds broad." The same facts are referred to as the cause of Mr. Wesley's action in this case, in his Life by Coke and Moore. They there state "that Mr. Asbury informed Mr. Wesley of the extreme uneasiness of the people's minds for want of the sacraments; that thousands of their children were unbaptized, and that the members of the society in general, had not taken the Lord's Supper for years!" Again, in his own circular upon this subject, Mr. Wesley says, "For some hundreds of miles together, there is none either to baptize or administer the sacraments; hence, therefore, my scriptures are at an end, as I violate no order and invade no man's right.
by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest." This then was his object, and he incidentally cites the practice of the Alexandrian Church, as sustaining him in the ordination he performed. Such a reference, however, would not have been relevant, had he ordained a Bishop, as the Bishops of that church were elected by the whole church previously to being ordained by the elders. Can any one believe that, at that time, Mr. Wesley intended to assert and defend his right to originate an Episcopacy? Is there another place in his voluminous works, where such a right is even adverted to? We believe there is not one. It is evident that the sublime conception of Methodist Episcopacy had not then entered his mind: when it was forced upon him, we know how he expressed himself with regard to it.

Q. Is not the case of Scotland similar to that of America?
A. I think so.

Q. Will you give us the substance of what Mr. Wesley says respecting "setting apart" preachers for Scotland?
A. Yes; the societies in Scotland were without any to administer the sacraments, and many members had been lost in consequence. Hence he says in his Journal, "Aug. 1, 1785. Having, with a few selected friends, weighed the matter thor-
oughly, I yielded to their judgment, and set apart three of our well-tried preachers to minister in Scotland." Again, in his works, page 314, vol. vii. he says, "After Dr. (not Bishop) Coke's return from America, many of our friends begged I would consider the case of Scotland." Then, after mentioning the evil arising from the want of ordained ministers there, he adds, "To prevent this, I at length consented to take the same step with regard to Scotland, as I had done with regard to America!" The three preachers referred to, were undoubtedly intended to superintend the societies in Scotland, which were, shortly after this, divided into three circuits. So far was Mr. Wesley from originating any Episcopal establishment "to supersede the Protestant Episcopal Church," that, in the same document, he (Mr. W.) says, "Whatever then is done, either in America or Scotland, is no separation from the Church of England. I have no thought of this!" Let these facts be considered well.

Q. The "same step" with regard to Scotland as America. Did Mr. Wesley ever ordain any Bishops for Scotland?
A. I have never heard that he did.

Q. If he took the same steps with regard to Scotland as America, and ordained no Bishops for the former place, is it not very
strange that the ministers of the M. E. Church should persist in asserting that Mr. Wesley is the author of *Methodist Episcopacy*?

A. It certainly is; and it cannot be accounted for only on the ground of ignorance, prejudice or dishonesty!

Q. How long was it after Messrs. Coke and Asbury were appointed superintendents before they took the name of Bishops?

A. It appears from "Lee's History of Methodism," that when the society was first organized under Messrs. Coke and Asbury, these gentlemen were not known as Bishops. The title was not assumed until about three years after the organization, and then without the knowledge or consent of the conference. We know, too, that many of the preachers were opposed to the change; and that after considerable debate a vote was passed, *not approving of the act, but according to the request of the superintendents, upon Mr. Asbury's explanation of the term, to allow it to remain." Mr. Wesley's letter to Asbury appears to have been despatched immediately after this, namely, in 1788. So that he lost no time in endeavoring to correct the evil.

Q. Was Dr. Coke ever received in England as a Bishop?

A. No; about five months after Mr.
Wesley's death, the Conference assembled. This was in 1791. Dr. Coke, who had been seven years a Bishop, was present. But he did not preside as Bishop, nor yet as superintendent. He did not preside at all. William Thompson was chosen President, and Dr. Coke Secretary. The next year, Alexander Mather was chosen President, and Dr. Coke Secretary. And the three following Conferences, Dr. Coke acted not as Bishop, not as President, but as Secretary.

Q. In what light did the Wesleyan preachers view Dr. Coke's "consecration"?

A. Some supposed Mr. Wesley had attempted to make a Bishop, among whom was C. Wesley; others considered it a kind of Presbyterian ordination. They were all thunderstruck! The thing was done in a private chamber! C. Wesley was in the same town at the time, but knew nothing of the business till all was over. One of the preachers, when he heard of the transaction, said, "It is a new mode of ordination, to be sure, on the Presbyterian plan." Another said, "It is neither Episcopal nor Presbyterian, but a mere hodge-podge of inconsistency." [Not far from the truth.]

Q. How many orders in the ministry does the M. E. Church hold to?
A. Two theoretically; three practically, Methodist Bishops are inducted to the Episcopacy by a triple ordination. The forms for the ordination of a Bishop are more pompous than those of an elder.

Q. Then is not the pretense that all this parade is only to ordain to an office, (not an order,) a miserable shift to avoid an obvious difficulty?

A. It is so received by all reflecting, unprejudiced minds. To admit that a Bishop is superior in order, would be to admit that John Wesley made a greater man than himself,—or that Coke created himself a Bishop, and then created the triple crown for Asbury. To deny that a Bishop is superior in any sense to a presbyter, would be to lower down the Episcopal standard,—hence this dodging and trimming between office and order. It is a mere play upon words—a distinction without a difference.

Q. As a presiding elder is next in office to a Bishop, and superior in many respects to other elders, why not ordain him?

A. Echo answers, why?

Q. Do you think the Episcopal Methodists would ever have had any doubts about a third order, had their Episcopacy come from a regular Bishop of the established church?

A. I do not.
Q. Then is it the peculiar character of their Episcopacy, that leads them to make this distinction without a difference, is it not?
A. Most evidently it is. In the language of an English Wesleyan preacher, "it is a kind of hodge-podge of inconsistency."

Q. Are not the usages of the established church more consistent with her doctrine of a third order, than are those of the M. E. Church with her doctrine of but two orders?
A. Without doubt.
If the bishopric is only an office in the church, it is about the seventh, in the room of the third. 1. Class-leader. 2. Exhorter. 3. Local preacher. 4. Junior preacher. 5. Preacher in charge. 6. Presiding elder. 7. Bishop! But the bishopric is the only office that happens to be ordained. Such an ordination to office merely, is supremely ridiculous!

CHAPTER III.
GENERAL AND ANNUAL CONFERENCES, COMPOSITION, POWERS, &c.

Q. By whom are the laws made, for the government of the M. E. Church?
A. By the General Conference.
Q. Of whom is the General Conference composed?
A. Of travelling preachers. The travelling clergy, by their delegates in General Conference, control the entire church both in respect to its “faith and practice,” and hereby destroy the very foundations of all religious liberty, and provide a basis for rearing up an absolute despotism.

Q. By whom are the members of the General Conference appointed?
A. By the Annual Conferences.

Q. Of whom are the Annual Conferences composed?
A. Exclusively of travelling preachers.

Q. Can no one be elected a member of the General Conference but a travelling preacher?
A. None.

Q. Can no one vote for members of the General Conference but a travelling preacher?
A. None.

Q. May it not then be emphatically called a government of travelling preachers?
A. Yes.

Q. Upon whom are the laws of the General Conference binding?
A. Upon the travelling and local ministers, and membership.
Q. Have the local ministers and members any representatives in the law-making department?
A. No; it is denied that they have any right, either natural or acquired, to representation. (See the report of the General Conference of 1826.)

Q. How did the travelling preachers get the power to legislate for the local preachers and members, without their consent?
A. They assumed it.

Q. Ought the members quietly to yield this right, secured to them by the God of nature and grace, and submit to be governed by this assumed authority; or how can they be justified in this act?

Q. We think Dr. Bascom has placed this subject in a clear point of view. (See Declaration, art. 14.)

It is upon such principles and with such powers, that the legislative department of the M. E. Church is constituted; principles and powers at utter variance with human rights and the heaven-sanctioned equality of the Christian brotherhood. Look at it, reader, and say if you know of a parallel, either civil or religious, except among the absolute despots of the Old World?

Q. By what argument do the travelling preachers attempt to support the assumption of power?
A. By their call to the ministry, or because they are "divinely instituted." (See report of the General Conference of 1828.)

Q. And do they not acknowledge that the local preachers are also called of God, or "divinely instituted"?
A. Yes; and many of them have been itinerants.

Q. Do they then believe that when a preacher ceases to travel he loses his divine right, and has no longer authority to expound "gospel doctrines, ordinances, and moral discipline"?
A. They do not in so many words say this, but it is evidently implied in their report.

Q. If they do not believe this, why do they deny the local preachers a voice in the government, when they are entitled to it upon the same principles that they themselves claim it?
A. I will leave this difficulty to be explained by themselves.

Q. Well, will not the call to the ministry, or the divine right, be as good an argument in favor of local preachers making laws to govern the travelling preachers without their consent, as it is in favor of travelling preachers making laws, &c. for them?
A. Yes; it holds equally good, whether.
CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

they claim this by nature, by becoming Christians, Methodists or ministers.

Q. Have the local ministers and members any negative on the laws, which are to affect their property, persons, and reputation?
A. No; to object to, or reason against them, is called sowing dissension and inveighing against discipline.

Q. What is the penalty annexed to this alleged crime of sowing dissension and inveighing against discipline?
A. Expulsion from the church.

Q. Cannot persons be expelled by this rule of discipline from the M. E. Church, without being charged with a breach of the laws of Jesus Christ?
A. Yes; the preacher can exclude them for a breach of the rules of the discipline, and not for immoral conduct.

Q. Is it not contended by many that they have a sufficient check upon their rulers, by withholding their pecuniary contributions, and consequently, the support of the ministry?
A. Many use this argument, and think it unanswerable.

Q. Is it not a good argument?
A. No; 1st. Because it could never be effected; for though some might withhold their support, others would not, and in such case, the deficiency could be supplied
from the immense book and chartered fund, which is entirely under the control of the ministers. 2d. Because it is made the duty of the members of the church, both by gospel and the discipline, to support those who minister to them in holy things. But upon this plan of correcting the evils of the government, this obligation is violated. 3d. This plan of withholding support, as the only check upon oppressive rulers, if carried out, would greatly retard the spread of the gospel, as it would not only stop the operations of government, but the preaching of the gospel also. 4th. It would be the very essence of rebellion; and it must be a bad government indeed, which has no other remedy for existing evils but rebellion. "Shall we do evil that good may come? God forbid!"

Q. But does the Discipline of the M. E. Church make it the duty of the members to support the ministry?
A. Yes; it is said in the Discipline, that the annual allowance of the travelling preachers shall be $100 and travelling expenses; their wives, $100; each child, to the age of seven years, $16; from seven to fourteen years, $24; and in addition to this, a house is to be provided in each circuit for the residence of the preacher, furnished with heavy furniture, together with fuel and table expenses, for the preacher's
family. Now does not all this imply an obligation on the part of the members to contribute; and if they refuse do so, do they not violate this obligation?

Q. By whom are the laws made for the government of the Wesleyan Connection?
A. By the General Conference. (See Discipline.)

Q. Of whom is the General Conference composed?
A. Of an equal number of ministers and laymen.

Q. By whom are the members of the General Conference elected?
A. By the joint ballot of an electoral college, composed of the itinerant ministers and delegates belonging to the Annual Conference, and of one minister, who is not under the stationing authority of the Conference, from each circuit and station; the minister thus added, to be elected by the unstated ministers of the circuit or station.* (See Dis. p. 26.)

Q. Are there any restrictions upon the General Conference with regard to the making of laws?
A. Yes; the General Conference shall have full powers to make rules and regulations for our churches; but, they shall

*Unstated ministers in the Wesleyan Connection, are what are termed local preachers in the M. E. Church.
not contravene any principle essential to Wesleyan Methodism, as expressed in our Articles of Faith, General Rules, the maintenance of an Itinerant Ministry, and the rights of our members and ministers, as set forth in our Elementary Principles; nor shall they make any distinctions in the rights and privileges of our ministers and members, on account of ancestry or color; nor shall they constitute any courts for the trial of members or ministers, except the particular churches or conferences to which they may belong. (See Dis. p. 27.)

Q. Of whom are the Annual Conferences composed?
A. Of all the ministers who are in full connection, and those who are to be received into full connection, and as many lay delegates from each circuit and station as there may be ministers in full connection or to be received into full connection on said station or circuit.

Q. By whom shall the delegates to the Annual Conference be elected?
A. The quarterly conference of each circuit and station next preceding the annual conference, shall elect from among the members in full connection within the bounds of their circuits and stations, the lay delegates to the annual conference, and give such instructions to the delegates as they may judge for the advantage of
the work, and the benefit of their respective circuits and stations.

[It has been suggested that it would be more republican to have the delegates elected by the male members of each circuit and station. This alteration will probably be made at the next General Conference.]

CHAPTER IV.

BISHOPS AND PRESIDING ELDERS; APPOINTMENT, POWERS, &c.

Q. Who are the highest officers in the M. E. Church?
   A. The Bishops.

Q. By whom are they appointed?
   A. By the travelling preachers.

Q. How long do they hold their office?
   A. During life, unless removed for crime.

Q. What powers do they hold which are objected to?
   A. They hold the power of stationing all the preachers.

Q. How many preachers are there, whose itinerant destiny is placed in the hands of the Bishops?
   A. Between 3000 and 4000.

Q. Have the preachers any appeal from the appointment of the Bishops?
A. No; they must either go to their appointments or leave the itinerant ranks.

Q. Does not this place the preachers in a state of dependence on Episcopal power?

A. Yes; as they can favor or oppress them, in giving them good or bad appointments, keep them near home or send them afar off; they may be under the necessity, sometimes, of learning obedience by the things they suffer.

Q. Do not the Bishops, from these circumstances, acquire very great influence over the preachers and people?

A. Yes; this was exemplified in the General Conference of 1820, in putting down what were afterwards called the suspended resolutions, after they were carried by a majority of upwards of two-thirds of the General Conference.

Q. Does not the New Testament speak of Bishops in the primitive church?

A. Yes.

Q. Were those prerogatives possessed by the Bishops spoken of in the New Testament?

A. No; the New Testament gives no account of such prerogatives being claimed or possessed by Bishops; and Mosheim, in his Ecclesiastical History, published by the M. E. Church, (vol. 1, p. 91,) states, that "a Bishop in the first ages of the Christian Church, was a person who had the care of
one Christian assembly, which at that time was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house." Again, in the same volume, (p. 88,) Mosheim says, "the rulers of the church were called either presbyters or Bishops, which two titles were undoubtedly applied to the same person." More in another place.

Q. What are some of the most alarming prerogatives of Methodis Bishops?

A. I. Their power to gag and put down the annual conferences. This power they exercised from 1836 to 1840 on the slave question particularly. Their right to prevent an annual conference from expressing a sentiment by resolution or report on what they considered an important moral question, was warmly contested. The General Conference, however, of 1840, approved their course, and gave them this power by express provision. This prerogative they have exercised since the last General Conference. Thus an annual conference of 200 members, many of whom are older, and perhaps wiser and better than some of the Bishops, however much they may feel impressed that they ought to express a sentiment on a moral enterprise, may be prevented by the Bishop, if he please pronounce the proposition unconstitutional or out of order; admitting no appeal from his decision, he may thus tran-
piece on the consciences of his brethren, and do it according to Methodist Episcopal law! He may know that nearly a whole conference are in favor of a measure; he may know they deem it of great importance to the cause of God; yet if it be not contained in the few items laid down in the Discipline, it must go by the board at his beck! And this is the monster which, if you touch, you are, in the opinion of a million souls, piercing your Holy Mother!

I could give many instances of the exercise of this arbitrary power, but will only refer to two or three:

In 1837, at the session of the New England Conference, at Nantucket, Mass., memorials from the membership were sent to the conference, signed by two or three thousand persons, praying the conference to express a sentiment in opposition to slavery. The presiding Bishop (B. Waugh) peremptorily refused to permit these petitions to be received for the purpose of expressing a sentiment on the general subject of slavery—refusing also any appeal from his decision—thus trampling on the laity as well as the ministry.

In 1838, at the session of the New England Conference, in Boston, Bishop Hedding refused to put the question for the adoption of a couple of resolutions which had been adopted, one in the Pittsburg, and the other in the Genesee Conference.

The following resolution was introduced, which the Bishop refused to put, and stated that it was “too late in the day to give his reasons” for such refusal!

Resolved, That it is the solemn conviction of the New England Annual Conference, that all slaveholding, that is, all recognition of the right of property in human beings, is contrary to the laws of nature and religion, and ought therefore to be discouraged by all wise and prudent means.”

How is it possible for a resolution to be more mildly worded than the above? How reasonable that such a resolution should have passed! How cruel and tyrannical the refusal! As lately as 1842, a body of Christian ministers denied the privilege of uttering the above language! Their rights and consciences trampled under foot by his Holiness in the chair!

And yet ten thousand preachers, travelling and local, and a million members, submit in silence to such treatment—to such a government! The same power and prerogatives which the Bishops have in the annual conferences, about two hundred presiding elders have in the quarterly conferences—and they have often exercised them. The exercise of this power, on the part
of Bishops and presiding elders, has been the cause, or the principal cause of the late extensive secession. But for this, the writer's eyes might never have been opened to see clearly the deformity of Methodist Episcopacy. If the secession results in ill to the M. E. Church, upon the heads of Bishops, presiding elders, and especially upon the General Conference, which has sanctioned their course, be the consequences. Could we have had an open field and fair play—could we have had free untrembled conference action from the beginning, which the South have always had, we should probably have remained longer, and fought the anti-slavery battles on the old Methodist Episcopal platform. But when, as lately as 1842, six years after Episcopal obstacles began first to be thrown in our way, a Methodist Bishop refuses to put such a resolution as the foregoing, and wraps himself up in his Episcopal dignity, and coolly says it is too late in the day to give his reasons for such conduct, we think it time to march round and attack slavery from a point where Episcopacy cannot hedge up our way.

A 2. The exclusive power which the Bishops have to appoint all the preachers to their several fields of labor, and that, in many instances, contrary to the wishes of the people, is very objectionable.
No matter how much any people may desire a particular preacher—no matter how much the preacher may wish to serve that people; unless the Bishop please, they cannot be gratified—and he don't always please, in such cases, as we shall soon see.

No matter how much any people may dislike a preacher—nor how much they may remonstrate against his being stationed with them, if the Bishop please, they must take him.

I will give a few instances, out of scores that might be selected to show what a mild clever little thing this Methodist Episcopacy is—and how it regards the rights and consciences of the ministry and laity.

At the session of the New York Conference in 1839, it was in some way intimated to the Washington Street Church, in Brooklyn, L. I., that the Rev. B. Griffin was to be appointed to that charge. The church accordingly, through a committee appointed for that purpose, presented itself before the Bishop and remonstrated against Mr. Griffin's being sent to them as their pastor. But the remonstrance was disregarded, and Mr. Griffin was stationed at Washington Street.

At the session of the New England Conference, in 1841, both of the large societies in Lowell, Mass., petitioned for a particular preacher, but they were told
that they should not have the men they asked for. One of the churches [St. Paul's] then requested to be left without a supply by the Bishop, having made arrangements to employ a local preacher. But the Bishop regarded not the request, but forced a preacher upon them. In both these cases the preachers petitioned for, also, added their request to the voice of the churches, so that the wishes of both preachers and people were disregarded.

Wesley Chapel Station, after being denied the preacher they wanted, selected some four or five others, and stated to the Bishop that they would be satisfied with either of them. But no; they must not have either. And to cap the climax of insult, the very man was sent them to whom they had objected, either officially or unofficially.

It needs hardly be stated that in all the above-mentioned instances the preachers were rejected—though after a contest of some months, these churches wrangled out the Bishops and obtained the preachers they wanted.

There was no objection to the preacher appointed to St. Paul's;—under other circumstances he would have been well received. But the church did not wish the Bishop to send them any preacher, if they could not have the man they had petitioned for.
One circumstance connected with the Lowell churches ought not to be overlooked. In consequence of rejecting their preachers and electing others, they were publicly declared, through Zion's Herald, to be without the pale of the church. This was done by the two rejected preachers, with the approbation of the presiding elder, in a note appended to the Episcopal Bull. A very few who adhered to the rejected preachers, escaped these malcontents. This alarming step of dismembering whole churches without the forms of trial, develops another of the alarming features of Methodist economy—especially when it is considered that the subject was carried up to the Bishop, and he approved of the course of the preachers and pronounced it Methodism! Thus the doctrine is established, that when an M.E. society dares to reject their preacher, it may be dismembered at a blow! Who can desire membership in such a church. True, these exsiccated churches, by reconsidering certain resolutions which gave some offence to the Episcopacy, were graciously taken back again, en masse, by these divines, with another stroke of their Episcopal pens. A new way this to expel and receive churches—but it is pronounced to be Methodism! Good Lord deliver us from such Methodism as this! It is not Wesleyan Methodism!
The Chesnut Street M. E. Church, in the city of Providence, was treated by the Bishops in a similar manner, about the time of their rejection of the Lowell proclamations—viz., in June, 1841. This was a large church, and it had fixed on a particular preacher. The request was unanimous; but it was rejected. The consequence was a secession, which has resulted in the organization of a Wesleyan church, with a new and beautiful house of worship, all paid for, I believe.

The same administration in other places, will fill up the ranks of the Wesleyan Connection at no very slow rate. And why not carry out the same principle in other places? It is pure Episcopal Methodism.

A 3. The power which the Bishops have to transfer men from one end of the continent to the other, and that contrary to their wishes, is wrong. That they have power to transfer the whole or any portion of the New England Conference to South Carolina, and bring preachers from that Conference to New England, will not be denied. Bishop Hedding has openly published this doctrine to the world. He says, in his address on the Discipline, as the only sure method of curing "heresy," and other evils, "Let the General Conference command the Bishops to remove the cor-
rupted majority of an Annual Conference
to other parts of the work, and scatter
them among Annual Conferences, where
they can be governed, and supply their
places with better men from other conferen-
ces. But such men would not go at the ap-
pointment of the Bishop. Perhaps they
would not personally; but their names and
their membership would go where they could
be dealt with as their sins deserve. It is
ture, the Bishops have authority to do this,
and in some cases it might be their duty to
do it, without the command of the General
Conference."

It is by this power that an anti-slavery
conference may be scattered for its heresy,
and its "heretical" members be reduced
to subordination or expelled from the
church. In the language of another, "It
is as plain as daylight, that no men, in any
church in this country, have it in their
power to exert such an influence in favor
of slavery. Think of it! They have the
right, and according to the letter of the
Discipline, they may forthwith change the
residence of three thousand ministers,
for the purpose of carrying out their de-
signs against abolition, if they choose to
do so. They may, as soon as they can
persuade themselves it will be 'for the
good of the church', send every abolitionist
from the free conferences, and make them
members of the slaveholding conferences, by whom they might be expelled forthwith. And this they might do, as well as they could remove one presiding elder from his district, because he was an abolitionist, and put another in his place, because he was not an abolitionist."

What a tremendous power for five men to exercise over thirty-five hundred of their brethren in the ministry! How dangerous—how contrary to liberty of conscience! And yet scores of young ministers are annually bowing their necks at the feet of the Episcopacy, and taking upon them "ordination vows," which oblige them to obey their chief ministers—without making any provision for the exercise of a "good conscience towards God!"

What, are not Methodist itinerants independent? Independent enough of the people; (except in the mere item of bread and cheese) but yet in servile chains to the Episcopacy. To be sure, it is a voluntary enslavement on their part, but this only makes it so much the worse. Dependent as they are, primarily, on the Bishops, and, secondarily, on the presiding elders, for their appointments, and consequently for their bread, they are ever tempted to conciliate their spiritual lords by flattery, false respect, and fawning
around the source of power, hoping by this means to obtain a more favorable disposition of their lot. For the same reason, they are ever ready, for the most part, to surrender, or carefully conceal, their opinions upon any moral question, however vital to human interest, that may have fallen under the Episcopal ban. This is true, more especially of a multitude of young men, and the less talented of the old ministers of the conferences.

Q. Are there not officers in the M. E. Church called presiding elders?
   A. Yes.
Q. Who appoint the presiding elders?
   A. The Bishops.
Q. Is there any precedent to be found for this kind of officers in the Scriptures, or the usages of the primitive church?
   A. I know of none.
Q. What are the powers of the presiding elders?
   A. They are placed over the travelling and local preachers, exhorters, &c., in the absence of the Bishops. They also exercise a secret influence in stationing the preachers.
Q. May they not then be considered the agents of the Bishops, who exercise their power in their absence?
   A. Yes.
Q. May it not then be said of them, as
well as of the Bishops, that the preachers are in a state of dependence on them?
A. Yes.
Q. Has not this a tendency to trammel the ministry, and consequently to injure their piety?
A. We think so.
Q. Is there anything done by the presiding elders, in the circuits or stations, which might not be as well done by the preachers in charge?
A. No.
Q. Is it not then an unprecedented, as well as an unnecessary office, and attended with unnecessary expense to the church?
A. Yes.
Q. Are there any Bishops or presiding elders in the Wesleyan Church in the old country, where Methodism was first established?
A. They never had any there.
Q. Has not the Wesleyan Church been as successful there without these officers, as where they have existed?
A. Yes.
Q. What is the inference to be drawn from these facts?
A. It is obvious, that if our brethren have succeeded as well in Europe without them as those in America have done with them, they are unnecessary.
Q. And is the Wesleyan Church in
England, under a civil monarchy, more liberal and republican than it is in this country under our free institutions.

A. Yes; and Mr. Wesley, when he learned that Mr. Asbury and Dr. Coke had established an Episcopal form of government in the United States, addressed to them a very pointed and impressive letter, an extract from which has already been given.

Q. Are there any Bishops or presiding elders in the Wesleyan Church in this country?
A. There are none.

Q. Who are the highest officers?
A. The Presidents of the Conferences.

Q. How are they chosen?
A. They are elected by the Conferences.

Q. How long do they hold their office?
A. For one year.

Q. What are the duties of a President of an Annual Conference?
A. To preside in the conference as moderator. To decide all questions of law and order, subject to an appeal to the conference. To preside in the council for stationing the preachers. In the intervals of conference to employ and change preachers, with the consent of the churches and preachers.

He shall have his regular appointment
as a preacher on a circuit or station, and shall have authority to supply his place, with another preacher, whenever it shall be necessary for him to travel through the conference.

Provided, that each Annual Conference shall have power to employ its president to travel through the conference. (See Dis., p. 31.)

Q. How are the preachers to be stationed?
A. By a committee appointed by the conference, consisting of three ministers and three laymen, of whom the President of the Conference is to be chairman. It is the duty of this committee to confirm, as far as possible, previous arrangements between preachers and people.

Q. Is there any appeal from the decision of this committee?
A. Yes; any member of the conference may appeal, and the conference may confirm or annul as they think best.

CHAPTER V.
RECEPTION OF MEMBERS.

Q. How are the members received into the M. E. Church?
A. By the preacher in charge.
Q. Has he power to receive members contrary to the voice of the society?
A. Yes; it would seem so.
Q. Have the members no right secured to them in the Discipline, to reject a person they consider unworthy?
A. There is no such rule.
Q. But is it not generally asked, if there be any objections?
A. Yes, this is frequently done; but it depends on the will of the preacher, (as there is no rule requiring him to ask such questions,) whether he does this or not, and he can receive them if he pleases, after an objection is made.
Q. How are members received into the Wesleyan Church?
A. By the church.

APPOINTMENT OF STEWARDS AND LEADERS.

Q. How are the stewards appointed in the M. E. Church?
A. The preacher in charge has the right of nomination, and the Quarterly Conference confirms said nomination.
Q. Must not the stewards then always be the choice of the preacher?
A. Yes.
Q. How are the leaders appointed?
A. It is the duty of the preacher in charge to appoint all the leaders, and change them when he sees it necessary.
Q. Has he not power, according to this rule, to appoint a leader over the society, to whom they are generally opposed, or to take one from them that they love.
A. Yes.
Q. But is this ever done?
A. Yes, frequently.
Q. Has not this been a source of great grievance to the church?
A. It has.
Q. How are the stewards appointed in the Wesleyan Church?
A. By the Quarterly Conference.
Q. How are the leaders appointed?
A. They are elected by the respective classes, annually, or oftener if necessary.

**CHURCH PROPERTY.**

Q. Who controls the property in the M.E. Church?
A. The travelling preachers.
Q. Is not the society who buy or build the property, allowed to hold it under all circumstances?
A. No; the preacher, who is the agent of the Bishop, and appointed by him, claims the power to control the pulpit so long as it is the will of the Bishop to leave him there, who can send another agent in his place.
Q. Are not the churches held by trustees?
A. Yes; but for the use of the preachers.

Q. What is the probable amount of church property thus controlled by the travelling preachers?
A. It is supposed that it cannot be less than five millions of dollars.

Q. Is not this interest greatly augmented by the quarterly and yearly collections?
A. Yes.

Q. Have they not, also, a large chartered fund and book establishment under their exclusive control?
A. Yes; they have in the city of Philadelphia, a chartered fund of about thirty thousand dollars, and in the city of New York, they have a large book establishment, with a capital of from five to eight hundred thousand dollars, and their periodicals bring them an immense revenue, one of which is worth, perhaps, forty thousand dollars per annum.

Q. Is not this interest rapidly increasing?
A. Yes; great efforts are making to extend the interest of the establishment; hence it is made the duty of presiding elders and preachers to promote the circulation of books, make collections, &c.

Q. What is the aggregate amount of the whole?
A. Perhaps not less than six millions of dollars.
Q. Does this establishment receive a liberal support from the members of the church?
A. Yes.
Q. Have the members who thus liberally contribute their support to this establishment, any voice or control in its management or government?
A. No; they have no voice, either directly or indirectly; but it all belongs to the travelling preachers.
Q. Does not the history of the church in past ages admonish us of the danger of placing in the hands of the clergy, and under their exclusive control, such a vast amount of wealth?
A. Yes; but we are slow to learn from such examples, and consequently, they have to be repeated again and again.
Q. Well, but have not the local preachers as much right and interest secured to them in the meeting-houses, as the travelling preachers?
A. No; they are secured for the special use and benefit of those preachers authorized by the General and Annual Conferences.
CHAPTER VI.

TRIAL OF MEMBERS.

Q. How are the members brought to trial in the M. E. Church?
A. Before the society, or a select number, in the presence of a bishop, elder, deacon or preacher.

Q. What time is allowed the accused to prepare for trial?
A. This depends entirely on the will of the preacher in charge.

Q. Can the accused have his choice, whether he will be tried by the society, or a select number?
A. No, the preacher decides, and tries him accordingly.

Q. Who appoints the jury to try the accused?
A. The preacher in charge.

Q. Is there any inconvenience arising out of this power, exercised by the preacher in charge?
A. Yes, he can pick a jury, either favorable or unfavorable to the accused, as he may stand affected.

Q. Is the right of challenge secured to the accused?
A. No, his enemies may be kept on or removed at the pleasure of the preacher.
CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Q. Are there any privileges secured to the accused?
A. He is allowed an appeal to the next Quarterly Conference.

Q. Can the accused, if acquitted by the jury appointed by the preacher, be arraigned again on the same charge?
A. Yes, if the preacher in charge differ in judgment from the committee, he can refer the case to the next Quarterly Conference?

Q. Can any person who sits on the case as a committee-man, vote again on the same case in the Quarterly Conference?
A. Yes, if he be an official member, which is very often the case.

Q. Of whom are the Quarterly Conferences composed?
A. Of the travelling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards and leaders.

Q. Upon whom are a majority of the members of the Quarterly Conference dependent for their office?
A. On the preacher in charge, as he appoints all the leaders; these generally make a majority. He nominates the stewards, licenses the exhorters, &c.

Q. May not the Conference thus constituted, be considered, in the case of appeals, as the preachers' jury?
A. Yes.
Q. With all these advantages, may he not turn out or keep in whom he pleases?
A. It does appear so.

Q. How are the members brought to trial in the Wesleyan Church?
A. Before the society, or a committee, as the accused may determine.

Q. What time is allowed the accused for trial?
A. A reasonable time, at least ten days.

Q. Who appoints the committee?
A. The church.

Q. Are there any other privileges secured to the accused?
A. He is allowed an appeal from the decision of the committee to the whole church, whose decision is final.

Q. Can the accused, if acquitted by the jury, be arraigned again on the same charge?
A. No, the decision in such case is final.

Q. Of whom are the Quarterly Conferences composed?
A. Of all the ministers, preachers, exhorters, stewards, leaders, and trustees, belonging to the circuit or station.

Q. Are any of the members of the Quarterly Conference dependent upon the preacher for office?
A. No, the preachers and exhorters are licensed by the Quarterly Conference,
after being first recommended by the society; the stewards and trustees are elected by the church, and the leaders are elected by the classes, so that they are ipso facto the representatives of the people, and dependent on them alone for office.

Q. Who presides over the Quarterly Conference?
A. Each Conference elects its own chairman, [if they are members of the church.]

CHAPTER VII.
DOCTRINES, GENERAL RULES, AND MEANS OF GRACE.

Q. In what respect do the doctrines and general rules of the two churches differ?
A. There is no essential difference with regard to doctrine. The Wesleyan Discipline omits a few obsolete articles respecting Popery, &c., and adds one or two new ones. The general rules are very nearly the same as the old ones, with the exception of the rules on temperance and slavery; these are much stronger in the new Discipline.

Q. Are the means of grace peculiar to Methodism, such as love-feasts and class-meetings, enjoyed by the members of the Wesleyan Church?
A. They are; but there is this difference with regard to the love-feast:—In the M. E. Church no person can be admitted oftener than three times, without becoming a member, while in the Wesleyan Church serious persons may be admitted to the love-feasts at the discretion of the preacher in charge, and to class-meetings at the discretion of the leader. The Discipline fixes no limit as to the number of times.

CHAPTER VIII.


Q. Is there any warrant in Scripture, or the usages of the primitive church, for this kind of government?

A. No, but right in opposition to it. (See Matt. xx. 25, 27. Chap. xxiii. 8, 12. Chap. vii. 12. See also, the following extract from Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. 1, 87.)

"In those early times, every Christian church consisted of the people, their leaders, and the ministers and deacons; and these, indeed, belong essentially to every religious society. The people were undoubtedly the first in authority, for the Apostles themselves showed..."
by their examples, that nothing of moment was to be carried on, or determined, without the consent of the assembly.* and this method of proceeding was both prudent and necessary, in these critical times."

It was therefore the assembly of the people which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others. The same people rejected or confirmed, by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers to the assembly, excommunicated profligate or unworthy members of the church, restored the pious to their forfeited privileges, passed judgment on the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community; examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons; and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power."

Lord King says, in his account of the Primitive Church:

"But as for the legislative, decretive or judicatorial power, that appertained both to clergy and laity who conjointly made up that supreme consistorial court, which was in every parish," &c. (Page 99.)

Nothing is plainer, both from Scripture

*Acts i. 15. vi. 4, xxi. 22.
and the early Christian writers, than that the laity constituted an essential part of the councils of the church. But the laymen in the M. E. Church, as we have seen, have no part either in her legislative or judicial assemblies. The doctrine of the predominant priesthood, in respect to this participation of power on the part of the laity is, "We know no such rights—we comprehend no such privileges."

The primitive bishop was limited in his jurisdiction to a single parish or church, being indifferently called bishop, presbyter, elder, or pastor: while a bishop, in the M. E. Church extends his authority over all the ministers and societies within its limits. King says, in the work already quoted from, (p. 13) "that the ancient dioceses are never said to contain churches in the plural, but only a church, in the singular."

He remarks, (p. 16) "The bishop had but one altar in his whole diocese, at which his whole flock received the sacrament from him." To confirm this, he gives numerous proofs, which the reader may see by consulting his work. The fact is, the term bishop was originally applied to the minister of any particular church as overseer of that flock.

In addition to this, each individual church elected its own pastor or bishop.
Says the author alluded to, (p. 20) "When the bishop of a church was dead, all the people of that church met together in one place to choose a new bishop." He gives instances: Speaking of the church at Rome, he says, (p. 28) "Upon the death of Anterus, all the people met together in the church to choose a successor, where all the people unanimously chose Fabianus."

Lord King further says, "A parish and a particular church are synonymous terms, signifying one and the same thing; and consequently, a Bishop, having but one parish under his jurisdiction, could extend his government no farther than one particular congregation; because a single congregation and a parish were all one, of the same bulk and magnitude." (p. 15.)

"When a parish or bishopric was vacant, through the death of the incumbent, all the members of that parish, both clergy and laity, met together to choose his successor!" (p. 29.)

"If a presbyter did all a Bishop did, what was the difference between them? A Bishop preached, baptized, and confirmed—so did a presbyter. A Bishop excommunicated, absolved and ordained—so did a presbyter. Whatever a Bishop did, the same did a presbyter: the particular acts of their office were the same." (p. 53.)
The only difference Lord King makes between the two is, that a Bishop or overseer had charge of a particular parish or church, while a presbyter had no particular charge. But is this the only difference between a Methodist Episcopal Bishop and an elder? No; the dominion of a Methodist Bishop more nearly resembles that of the Pope of Rome than that of a scriptural, primitive Bishop.

"The whole body of the church were members of the spiritual court, clergy as well as laity, and laity as well as clergy; not one without the other, but both together." (p. 102.)

"The members that composed these synods, were Bishops, presbyters, deacons, and deputed laymen, in behalf of their respective churches." (p. 121.)

From the above, it appears that the government of the M. E. Church is as contrary to the usages of the primitive church, as it is to the principles laid down in the Holy Scriptures. It is not pretended that any form of government is expressly laid down in the Scriptures; nevertheless, the Scriptures abound with elements or principles of church government. The Methodist black law of 1840 is a gross violation of those principles. But there is no more Scripture for Methodist Episcopacy than for the black law. We say this without the least fear of refutation.
Q. But do not the Episcopalians pretend that the great success which has attended their system of operations is an evidence of the righteousness and utility of Episcopacy?

A. Certainly.

Q. Well, inasmuch as the last three years have been the best that Methodism ever experienced, especially the last year, (the increase being about 150,000,) may they not argue with as much propriety, that the black act of 1840 is right, and is one cause of this unprecedented prosperity, as that the government of the church is right, from the fact that God has blessed the church?

A. If the argument is sound in the one case, we see not why it is not in the other. The M. E. Church is charged before heaven and earth, with wickedness and cruelty in the passage of the black law, and probably more than one half, both of that church and of the whole nation, believe a criminal and most outrageous act has been committed! The records of the church are stained with blood, and are wet with the sweat and tears of God's suffering poor!

The M. E. Church has reduced the image of God to a level with the brute creation! "A wonderful and a horrible thing is committed in the land," and the
M. E. Church has done it. She has violated and trampled upon that command of Christ which requires a brother or sister, who has been injured, to tell it to the church. She has said some eighty thousand of her members shall not tell their wrongs to the church; and if they do, it is "highly unjustifiable and inexpedient" to receive their testimony! Blush, O ye heavens, and be thou astonished, O earth!

This villanous act of the church has produced a tremendous excitement. Many ministers and members of the M. E. communion have written and preached against it—and still God has blessed the church; and the last year, one hundred and fifty thousand were added. But God could not bless the church so wonderfully, if it were wrong to trample on the dearest religious rights of eighty thousand poor and oppressed Christians; therefore, it is not wrong, but right.

This is precisely the mode of reasoning adopted by Episcopal Methodists to support their system of church government. "It works well"—"the Lord blesses it!" So did that which is now the Apocalyptic beast, once work well. The Church of Rome was once pure—and much purer, when it was the age of the M. E. Church, than the M. E. Church now is. None but those blinded by ignorance, prejudice, in-
terest, or the love of sect, can fail to see the seeds of Popery in the M. E. polity. Indeed, those seeds are pretty well sprouted already. The church is not yet sixty years old, and Methodist Episcopal Bishops have more power, in some respects, than Roman Catholic Bishops! And the history of the last seven years teaches us that these Bishops have still an open field. They may assume almost any prerogative, and the General Conference will sanction their assumptions! And why not? Of what is the General Conference composed? Perhaps one-half are presiding elders—creatures of the Bishop; and perhaps one-eighth are looking for some General Conference office, such as Editor, Book Agent, Missionary Secretary, &c.; and then not a few of the younger members are looking for the presiding elder’s office; and more are looking for the bishopric than ever can wear the triple crown. Is it therefore strange that a General Conference, composed of such materials, should sustain all Episcopal innovations and assumptions, and even authorize the Bishops, by legal enactments, to continue their encroachments? Such is human nature, that it would be strange if it were otherwise.

Never was there an ecclesiastical system so well contrived, by the dependence of all its parts upon a great central wheel, to
accumulate power, and put down every opposing thing, as that of METHODIST EPISCOPACY. Hence its dangerous tendency, both to our civil and religious institutions.

Q. Well, if the government of the M. E. Church cannot be justified on the grounds of reason, Scripture, or the history of the church, may it not be justified on the ground of expediency?

A. Let Dr. Bascom reply: "Expediency and right are different things. Nothing is expedient that is unjust. Necessity and convenience may render a form of government useful and effective for a time, which afterwards, under a change of circumstances and an accumulation of responsibility, may become oppressive and intolerable. That system of things, which cannot be justified by the word of God, and the common sense of mankind, can never be expedient." (Declaration, Art. 11.)

Q. Since this system is inconsistent with Scripture, reason, the history of the church, and the principles of expediency, may it not be justified on the grounds of its utility? for none, perhaps, have been more successful in reforming mankind, than the M. E. Church. Now, if these principles were so very pernicious, would God sanction by his blessing the people who patronize them?

A. Though the answer to this question
has already been anticipated in part, yet as this is the strong hold of our opponents, a few additional remarks seem to be called for.

If revivals, or the success of the M. E. Church, prove the government to be right, then it would prove absolute contradictions; for while it would prove aristocracy to be right in the M. E. Church, it would as clearly prove republicanism to be right in the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist Protestant, and other churches, for these all have revivals and success, as well as the M. E. Church. Moreover, if this is a good argument in favor of any peculiar form of church government, it would be equally good in favor of doctrines; hence it would prove Calvinism right, Arminianism right, Campbellism right, and every other ism, and by proving too much, destroys itself, and proves nothing at all. But the fact is, this has not been the ground of their success; no one has ever been awakened, or converted, or joined the church, because of the government, but have been influenced in this by the goodness of their doctrines, the industry of their ministry, and the piety of the church, while some, it is to be feared, have joined the church from motives less praiseworthy than the above.

Q. And are these the principles the Episcopalians are supporting and endeavoring to send down to posterity?
A. Yes.

Q. Upon what principles can the local preachers and lay members support this system?
A. Only on the principles of passive obedience and non-resistance.

Q. Are not many of the ministers, as well as the members, who are yet in the M. E. Church, Wesleyan in sentiments?
A. Yes.

Q. Why, then, do they not act according to their convictions, and not throw their example and influence in favor of erroneous principles, and in opposition to truth?
A. Several considerations may induce them to take this course, such as the Wesleyans being in the minority, fears of final success, and, not among the least, fears of pecuniary support.

Q. Well, do not such persons act a little like Bunyan’s waterman, who looks one way, and rows the other?
A. They do.

Q. But should not Christians follow their honest convictions, whether popular or unpopular; whether it makes in favor of, or against their secular interest?
A. Yes; we think this is required by Christian sincerity.

Q. Well, did the Wesleyans make sufficient efforts to reform the church before
CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

they seceded; if they did not, were they justifiable in this course?
A. Yes; they did all that could reasonably be done, to effect this object.
Q. What was done in order to effect this reformation?
A. The subject was discussed for nearly eight years, freely and fully, with great clearness and ability, in which some of the most distinguished ministers, as well as members, took an active part.
Q. Was any thing more done?
A. Yes; they sent in petitions from the ministry and membership, from different parts of the United States, to the General Conference of 1838 and 1840, asking for a redress of grievances.
Q. What did they do with the petitions?
A. They refused to grant them.
Q. How has the Wesleyan Church prospered?
A. Beyond the expectations of the most sanguine. The church was organized in June, 1843, and now, March, 1844, (nine months) it consists of six Annual Conferences, extending from Maine to Illinois, and between 300 and 400 preachers, and more than 15,000 members.
Q. Have there been any secessions from the dominant body of Methodists in England?
A. Yes; there are the "Primitive Metho-
so called, numbering upwards of 65,000 members, and 5,803 preachers, itinerant and local; and besides these, there are other very large bodies of seceders from that church, namely, the Kilhamites, the Wesleyan Association, and the Protestant Methodists. The communicants in the above named bodies of the seceders, at our last returns from that country, amounted to 200,000. There have, also, been very considerable secessions in Canada, Nova Scotia, and the British West India Islands. So much does arbitrary power contribute to dismember churches of the same faith.

Q. What injury would the travelling preachers of the M. E. Church sustain by allowing the people a voice in the government?

A. None at all; they could preach as much, pray as fervently, and be quite as useful, as they can under the present form of government; and more so; for it is reasonable to suppose, the people would have more confidence in them if they did not manifest such a fondness for power and prerogatives.
CHAPTER IX.
PROSPECT OF REFORM.

Q. Are there not many, both in the ministry and membership, who remain in the M. E. Church from a hope that she will be reformed, both in her government and in regard to slavery?
A. Undoubtedly there are.
Q. Well, is there any real prospect that she will reform?
A. There is no prospect that she will give up slavery till forced to do so by the Legislatures of the different States where slavery exists. But more on this subject in another work now in the course of preparation. As to her government, all efforts at modification and improvement have proved abortive; and the Episcopacy of the church never was established on so firm a basis as at present.
Q. How long after the church was organized was it before attempts at reform were commenced?
A. About six years.
Q. Will you give me a brief summary of the facts relating to attempts to reform in the M. E. Church government?
A. Yes: Two things have been aimed at in all efforts at reform,—one has been
to curtail the Bishop's power, and the
other to bring the influence of the laity
into the councils of the church.

It has always been seen by a large por-
tion of the travelling preachers, that if the
presiding elders were elected by their suf-
frages, and associated with the Bishops by
right in making out the appointments, it
would abridge the Bishop's power over
them, and afford them some little voice in
determining their own fields of labor. To
secure this point, therefore, has been an
object with many of the preachers, almost
from the first.

The secession, already mentioned, that
took place in 1792, with James O'Kelly at
its head, was in consequence of the unlim-
ited power of the Bishop in stationing the
preachers. It was a very small abridge-
ment of the Bishop's prerogative that Mr.
O'Kelly and his friends asked, but the
General Conference refused, to grant it.
The restriction desired was in the follow-
ing words:

"After the Bishops appoint the preach-
ers at the conference to their several cir-
cuits, if any one thinks himself injured by
the appointment, he shall have liberty to
appeal to the Conference and state his ob-
jections; and if the Conference approve
his objections, the Bishop shall appoint
him to another circuit."
After a debate for three days on this proposition, it was lost; probably through the great influence that Bishop Asbury held over the preachers, as it was understood that he was decidedly hostile to the measure.

At the Conference of 1800, another attempt was made to abridge the stationing power, by associating a committee of preachers with the Bishop, in making out the appointments. This also failed. The same question was introduced into the Conference of 1812, and lost by only three votes.

In 1816, a resolution was introduced into the Conference to make the presiding elders elective, and to constitute them a council to assist the Bishop in stationing the preachers. This was also lost.

The same resolution, with slight modifications, was brought forward in 1820, and passed by quite a majority. After its adoption, however, the Rev. Joshua Soule, who had just been elected to the Episcopal office, refused to act under the restriction, and consequently resigned his office. Bishop McKendree joined with Mr. Soule in his opposition to the measure, and through their joint influence they succeeded, at length, in bringing over a majority to their side, and obtained a suspension of the resolutions for four years. In 1824, their
suspension was continued, and at the General Conference of 1828, they were rescinded.*

Thus an effort to abridge the powers of the Bishops, and continued for more than thirty years, was finally defeated by the Bishops themselves!

This effort was renewed at the last General Conference, (1840,) but met with its usual fate. The disposition on the part of the Conference to weaken any of the Episcopal functions, has grown less and less from the time that McKendree and Scicle took a stand for themselves and their successors in 1820.

Q. What efforts have the laity made to be represented in the councils of the church?

A. There never has been a period in the history of the church when the laity have been universally satisfied with its government. Several strenuous efforts have been made by the laity, at different times, to obtain their just rights—but all to no purpose. Secession has been their only remedy.

The secession from the church that took place in 1828, was preceded by an energetic struggle for reform on the part of a

* For the validity of the facts here stated, see Bangs' History, Vol. II. p. 330, and onward.
large number of local preachers and laymen, together with some few travelling preachers. Of course the latter class, in any such reform, will be always small, as they are the party interested in sustaining the "ancient régime" of priestly prerogatives.

The reformers at the time alluded to, commenced their discussions in favor of the rights of the laity, first in the "Wesleyan Repository," and afterwards in the "Mutual Rights." They argued strenuously against the Episcopal form of church government, and insisted on a lay representation in the General Conference. Memorials were sent up to that body both in 1824 and 1828, to secure for the laity a share in its deliberations. But it was like asking the despot to yield his sceptre in favor of his vassals. In the report which the Conference made on the subject of the memorials in 1824, they modestly reply to the petitioners, "Pardon us if we know no such rights—if we comprehend no such privileges."

At the next Conference (1828) the injured people made another rally, and once more laid their grievances before this clerical judiciary. In answer to their claim, the Conference deny that the right of the laity to representation is a natural right, because, as they affirm, "the foundation
of rights in ecclesiastical bodies rests on a
different basis.” They also deny that it is
an “acquired right” which they are en-
titled to, either on the ground of becom-
ing Christians or of becoming Methodists.
And as the right, if it exist at all, must be
either natural or acquired, therefore they
greely conclude that no such right exists.

It was with such logic that they justified
themselves in the exercise of arbitrary
power, and resisted the claim of ineffec-
tive right on the part of the people.
After this defeat of liberty in 1828, little
was said or done by the disappointed and
exhausted people to gain their right, until
the Conference of 1840, when petitions
again flowed in upon this subject. But the
Conference had become so confident of its
authority, so callous to the claims of jus-
tice, and so void of all sense of religious
freedom, that it did not give the memorials
a respectful consideration, nor deem the
petitioners worthy of an honorable answer.
It is true the petitions were referred to a
committee and were reported on. But
such was the manner of their reference,
(having been first laid on the table,) and
such the report upon them, (consisting of a
peremptory refusal of the prayer, accom-
panied with a reflection upon the manner
in which the memorials had originated,) that the whole subject was treated with
utter contempt.
Q. What has been the result of treating in this manner preachers and people who have sought for reform in the M. E. Church?

A. It has resulted in repeated secessions. Dr. Bangs tells us, in the History of which he is the author, that in 1791, (about six years after the organization of the church,) the Rev. Wm. Hammet, a very popular preacher, became dissatisfied, and withdrew with a party from the church. He passes over this secession very rapidly, leaving us to guess at the probable number of the seceders. About a year after this, according to the same author, Rev. J. O'Kelly, with a number of travelling and local preachers, left the church on account of their dissatisfaction with the power lodged in the hands of the Bishops and presiding elders. "In the latter part of 1793," says the Dr., "they began to form societies, and hundreds of the people were induced to forsake the M. E. Church, so that in some places whole societies were broken up." And he tells us that this disaffection was not confined to Virginia, the place of Mr. O'Kelly's residence, but extended also into North Carolina. Here, then, in about eight years after the organization of the M. E. Church, Dr. Bangs tells us of two very important secessions on account of the odium of the government.
The next secession that he mentions, took place in 1813. This, he tells us, was composed of local preachers and laymen; several of the former, and a considerable number of the latter. This body, which originated in New England, under the name of "Reformed Methodists," the Dr. tells us, "has long ceased to exist." On what authority he makes this assertion, I know not; but I do know that the "Reformed Methodist Church" still flourishes, and numbers in its communion, about fifty ordained, and twenty-five licensed preachers, and two or three thousand members.

The next prominent secession took place in 1827-8. The seceders organized under the name of the "Methodist Protestant Church." Some thousands soon gathered to their standard, and at the present time they number about seventy-five thousand members.

Since that time, a multitude of smaller separations from the church have taken place, besides a host of individual withdrawals, both from among the ministers and laity.

In consequence of the pro-slavery character of the M. E. Church, and also the oppressive and unscriptural character of her government, after long and prayerful deliberation, in November, 1842, Rev. Messrs. J. Horton, L. R. Sunderland and O. Scott.
publicly withdrew from the M. E. Church, and started a new paper called the True Wesleyan. The second number of this paper contained the withdrawal of Rev. Luther Lee, and the 3d number, that of Rev. L. C. Matlack, one of the M. E. stationed preachers in the city of Boston. And from that time to the present, (March, 1844,) not a week, I believe, has passed, but has brought to the Wesleyan office the news of secessions either from the ministry or membership of the M. E. Church, and generally from both.

A convention was called at the city of Utica, N. Y., in the month of May, 1843, of ministers and laymen, which formed the "Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America." This connection extends to every free state and territory in the Union. It has six annual conferences, with from 300 to 400 preachers, and from 15,000 to 20,000 members!

It is but just to remark, that previously to the secession of Horton, Sunderland and Scott, a local secession had taken place in Utica, N. Y., another in Cleveland, O.—and also pretty extensive secessions in Michigan. Our brethren in Michigan had formed themselves into an annual conference, and were in successful operation previously to the above-named secession. They numbered, at the time of the Utica
Convention, over twenty preachers, and about a thousand members. They now constitute a very important branch of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America.

The probability is, the number of annual conferences will be increased at the next General Conference, which meets in Oct., 1844, in Cleveland, O. The Wesleyan Connection is now in a state of great prosperity, and new recruits are weekly coming to us from the old church.

Probably there are not less than one hundred thousand Methodists in the United States, under various names, who stand disconnected with the M. E. Church, and in hostility to her government. Such an amount of dissatisfaction and disruption is without a parallel in the history of any other church in this country, if, indeed, in any other. And let it be noticed, too, that these secessions have taken place notwithstanding the strong bond of union calculated to bind the Methodist body together, growing out of unity of faith, homogeneity of usage and religious habit, strong attachment to the early pioneers of the cause, and endearing relations, strengthened by a thousand delightful considerations.

With what expulsive power, therefore, must a system operate, that can sunder such bonds of union, and throw off thou-
CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER X.

LOCAL PREACHERS.

Q. What provision does the M. E. Church make for local preachers?

A. "If a local preacher be distressed in his temporal circumstances on account of his services in the circuit, he may apply to the quarterly meeting conference, who may give him what relief they judge proper, after the allowance of the travelling preachers and their wives, and all other regular allowances are discharged."

Who can mark the terms of this provision, and not pronounce it a monstrous outrage upon justice, and an aggravating insult to misfortune? One would have thought that the conference which adopted it would have blushed for very shame in the act. It is, however, but another proof of the heartless and merciless character of absolute power. Mark; in the case alluded to in the provision, it is admitted that the local preacher is "distressed in his temporal circumstances on account of service in the circuit." This, of course, would
give him a claim in right, paramount to the claims of all others not thus afflicted. Yet he can claim nothing. "He may apply to the quarterly meeting conference, who may give what relief they judge proper, after the allowance of the travelling preachers and of their wives, and all other regular allowances are discharged! If there is anything left, the conference "may give what relief they judge proper."

Thus we see that the travelling preacher must first receive his allowance, however comfortable his circumstances may be, while the local preacher, who has broken down under excessive labors "in the circuit," and is "distressed in his temporal circumstances," can receive nothing, unless there should be a surplus "after all other regular claims are discharged," and the conference should "judge proper" to bestow the fragments of its funds upon him. Alas! for the poor man, even on this tenure: for it is seldom that all the regular allowances are discharged.

In concluding this brief notice of the local ministry, I would say, that though they are thus subordinated to the ruling hierarchy, some of the most talented, pious and liberty-loving men are found in their ranks. They have always furnished a large proportion of the leading spirits who
have entered reformatory measures in the church, though it is to be regretted that many of them are either too insensible to their own condition, or too regardless of their own rights and responsibilities, to make the necessary efforts to pluck themselves and the church from the grasp of a spiritual despotism. Six thousand local preachers, with such proportion of the laity as they might secure to their cause, could shake the fabric of Methodist Episcopacy to its foundations.

Q. What provision is made for local preachers in the Wesleyan Church?
A. Any unstationed preacher in the Wesleyan Connection is at liberty to labor wherever there is an opening, and receive what the people are willing to give, and whenever he performs regular pastoral labor for at least one-half the Sabbaths, he is eligible to membership in the annual conference. The unstationed ministers of every circuit and station can be represented in the election of delegates to the General Conference; and all unstationed elders are eligible to membership in the General Conference.
CHAPTER XI.

INFLUENCE OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL SYSTEM ON THE REPUBLIC.

Q. What is the influence of this system on our civil institutions?
A. No one, I think, can have failed to see, during the course of this investigation, that republicanism and the Methodist Episcopal economy are perfect antagonists. While republicanism recognizes the right of the people to frame the government under which they are to live, we have seen the government of the M. E. Church organized exclusively by the travelling preachers, without even consulting the laity in respect to it. While republicanism provides for the frequent election of law-makers, by the voice of the citizens, Methodist Episcopacy invests the law-making power in the travelling clergy, by a provision unalterable, except by the travelling preachers themselves! In a republic, the people also elect their executive and judicial officers; but the conference preachers in the M. E. Church have usurped both these departments of responsibility and power. In a republic, the public moneys and public edifices are under the supervision of the sovereign people; but the vast funds of the M. E.
Church, together with the houses of worship, with a few exceptions, are under the absolute control of her regular ministry. In a republic, the people choose their own public servants; but the Methodist societies are obliged to receive such teachers as the Bishops may see fit to send them. In a republic, a man is tried for an alleged offence, by a jury empanelled upon just principles; but, in the M. E. Church, the stationed preacher tries the accused member, by a committee of his own selecting.

This series of particulars, showing the antagonistic character of Methodist Episcopacy to republican principles, might be greatly extended; but it is by no means necessary, since the most superficial observer cannot fail to see that it has no one feature compatible with the civil polity of our country. What, then, must be the influence of this ecclesiastical superstructure on the American Republic? Must not its legitimate tendency be dangerous and destructive? With its eight hundred thousand members, its nine thousand preachers, its million and a half of supporters, its central organs of information, its half million of money, its archly constructed machinery, set in motion by the great central wheel of the General Conference, and extending its influence, by means of a thousand subordinate wheels, to every
society and class throughout the Union, together with its absolute head in the persons of the Bishops, render the Methodist Episcopal organization a most dangerous institution to the liberties of the nation. It is, indeed, far more dangerous than Catholicism itself; for the corrupt and liberty-crushing character of that organization has long since been exposed, so that the ever-watchful eye of liberty is always open to its dark plottings and Jesuitical designs. But Episcopal Methodism is a Protestant system, sprung up almost imperceptibly in our midst, under circumstances and auspices which have, till lately, shielded it from public reprobation, and, for the most part, even from any general suspicion. Here lies the difference.

It is easy to see that a people, trained under the influence of such a system, are poorly prepared to appreciate the benefits of civil freedom, and consequently are dangerous hands into which to commit the guardianship of our free institutions. At least one-twelfth part of the American population are either directly or indirectly connected with the Methodist Church; and when the consolidated and homogeneous character of the organization is taken into view, it must be readily discovered that the same political views must generally obtain throughout this entire body. The
political power, therefore, of this numerous people, subject as they are to a central control, may be brought to bear, in any given case, with tremendous effect upon the destiny of the republic. A hint may be suggested by the Bishops to their presiding elders, by the presiding elders to the preachers on their several districts, and by the preachers to their class-leaders in the several societies, by the leaders to the members of their classes, and thus a scheme may be extended, and simultaneously adopted, from one end of the Union to the other, in every society of the connection.

It is not intended by these remarks, to intimate, that this church was instituted for any corrupt purpose, or that the present generation of her ministers entertain any treasonable designs towards the government of our country; but the object is, to show, that when, under the influence of rapidly increasing wealth and power, and the despotism of its principles, it shall become corrupt, then it will afford a most ready and efficient agency, by which a worldly and ambitious priesthood, joined with some intriguing and liberty-hating political party, may upturn the foundations of our government, demolish the temple of freedom, and establish an absolute despotism over the land. Such is the tendency
of this system; and, if the result is not realized, it will not be from any want of adaptation in the principles which the system involves, but because the spirit of liberty will be too vigilant to suffer herself to be slain by its perfidious hand.

By tracing the parallel lines of civil and ecclesiastical history up to antiquity, it will be found, that in proportion as religious freedom has obtained, in the same proportion has civil government been administered according to free principles. Do we not owe our own republic to a band of religionists, who fled to the wilds of America, to secure to themselves and their posterity the God-given and inviolable rights of conscience?

Is not the church designed of God to be the standard of justice and right? But are not the recognition and administration of justice and right, the essentials of civil as well as religious freedom? If, then, the church exerts her appropriate power on the community in which she exists, and does not at the same time sustain the principles of freedom by securing liberty of conscience to her own members, can we expect that civil freedom will long continue? It is manifest that if the church exerts the power it is its province to exert, it will give character to a nation; in which case, if a despotism exists in the former it
will sooner or later sway its iron sceptre
over the latter. If not, why is the spread
of the Romish Church in this country con-
sidered so dangerous to its liberties? If it
is no matter what church organization we
have, then let Catholicism multiply itself
till it swallow up all sects and banish
Protestantism from the land. Why not?
Is despotism any more dangerous in the
Romish than in the Methodist Episcopal
or any other church? Does not the M. E.
Church, in effect, set up infallibility, deny
the right of private judgment, and cut off
the exercise of individual conscience?

In alluding to the rights of self-govern-
ment, do not her authorities say, "We
know no such rights?" And yet it is this
organization, involving as it does princi-
pies at deadly war with inalienable rights,
that is exerting a direct control over a
large proportion of the American people,
and by an influence, more remote, but not
less certain, is wearing away the founda-
tions of civil freedom itself.

The M. E. Church not only exerts a dan-
gerous influence on the liberties of the na-
tion, by the direct and legitimate tendency
of its principles, but also by the support
which it gives to the system of slavery in
our land. This church has taken the
ground, either in her declaration or acts,
that slavery, as it exists in the United
States, is not a moral or political evil; that is, that it is no evil at all. It has cast the broadegis of Episcopal authority over the system as a shield of defence. It has prohibited the agitation of the slavery question, and enforced the violation of its edicts with the severest of ecclesiastical penalties. It has shaped its policy, on this question, according to the slave laws of the South, in rejection of the plainest precepts of Jesus Christ. It admits to its communion and ministry hundreds of slaveholders who hold in cruel bondage tens of thousands of their own brethren and sisters in Christ; and, to accommodate slavery, has disfranchised all its colored members throughout the slaveholding States of the Union.

In doing all this, and much more that might be mentioned, the M. E. Church is giving its support to an institution which, more than all others, is calculated to sap the foundations of our civil freedom, and hasten the republic into the grave where lie the mouldering kingdoms of antiquity.

In looking in upon the state of things in the M. E. Church, it does not require a very sagacious observer to see, in their incipient beginnings, the very corruptions of the Romish Church. And as sure as the Bishop of Rome was ever vested with the name and power of a Pope, and as certain
as John Tetzel, in the name of Leo X, bartered indulgences to sin, so sure the E. Methodist Church, unless it change its policy, or is controlled by some foreign influences, will degenerate into a Popedom, in which a cringing and degraded laity will be but the passive tools of a despotic priesthood.

The Roman Church at the close of the third century, was not so subject to the dominance of the clergy, nor so liable to a reign of spiritual despotism, as is the Methodist Episcopal Church at the present moment. The corruptions and usurpations in the primitive church sprang up incidentally, and were nourished by circumstances, but the M. E. Church, as has been seen, has its origin in usurpation, and involves in its organization the very elements of ABSOLUTE POWER.
The powers and investments of the Ministry of the M. E. Church
Anti-Primitive.

1. The government of the M. E. Church is wholly under the control of the ministry, and ever has been since its organization. Proof—Discipline, page 8, giving the particulars of the organization of the M. E. Church in Baltimore, 1784. Those who composed this conference were ministers, and only ministers, though there were then in the societies in the States 14,988 members. And from that time to the present, the only body claiming the right of making laws for the government of the church, have been ministers and only ministers. There never was a layman admitted to an assembly in the M. E. Church, which was organized for the purpose of regulating its government; nor was ever a layman admitted to vote in the election of delegates who compose the General Conference, the law-making body. All and every alteration that is made in the Discipline and government of the church, is effected solely by the ministry; and the only alterna-
tive left for the membership is, to submit to laws enacted without their being represented, or to leave the church.

2. Bishops are empowered with the prerogative of overseeing the spiritual and temporal business of the church.—Dis. p. 27, answer 5. How much is meant by overseeing the temporal business of the church, the writer never knew; but as the overseeing of the spiritual business is an authoritative investment, the conclusion is, that it is the same in relation to the temporal business of it.

3. Both deacons and elders are constituted by a body of ministers only.—Dis. pp. 32, 33. In the case of local preachers, the quarterly conference recommend them to the annual conference, but no one can be ordained without an election by the travelling ministry of an annual conference; and in the case of itinerant ministers, the people have nothing to say in relation to their being constituted either deacons or elders.

4. A Bishop, or presiding elder, can either of them receive a preacher to travel in the interval of a conference, independent of the voice of the people.—Dis. p. 36.

5. Those who have charge of circuits, can choose committees independently of all the members of their charge, to appropriate moneys that have been raised for
building churches, and paying debts upon churches.—Dis. p. 44, answers 17, 18.

6. The Bishops of the M. E. Church have the absolute power of determining the appointments of the whole of the travelling ministry, where and how they please; and neither the ministry or membership have the right to interfere in any manner whatever. This is the right of the Bishop unchecked; nor is there any possible means for the abridgment of this power by the people.—Dis. p. 26.

7. The power of Bishops absorbs all the power of presiding elders and preachers in charge. Proof.—They are general superintendents. A superintendent has authority to do by himself what he can do by another. This is universally true. But we are not left to rest the matter here. The proof is abundant from the Discipline, as well as from the nature of their office. When a Bishop is present, he is the first one named to do the business to be done. If a preacher is to be received in the interval of the annual conference, the bishop or presiding elder is to do it. Showing that the bishop is to do it of right, if present, and disposed to exercise it.—Dis. p. 36.

A preacher must have his license signed by a bishop or presiding elder; showing the same fact, that if a bishop is present, he has the authority, and not the presiding
elder, to sign such license: p. 37. Presiding elders have authority to try a travelling preacher only in the absence of the bishop. The bishops have the authority in all these cases when present: p. 65. In the trial of members, bishops are the first class of administrators named to preside, and then elders, and deacons, and preachers: p. 92. Stewards are to be subject to bishops, presiding elders, &c.: p. 168. The same fact of precedence is here observable, as in the foregoing instances. The truth is, when a bishop is present, he absorbs all the power of presiding elders and ordinary ministers, unless it be in some trifling instances where the General Conference has, by special enactment, devolved some duty upon those in charge of circuits. But nothing is now recollected that is done while the bishop is present, that would form an exception to this statement. Now to sum up: when a bishop comes to a quarterly conference, he possesses, all the authority of controlling the meeting, by virtue of his general superintendency, which is made up of particulars, of which this is one. The presiding elder for the time being loses his authority by the presence of the man who gave him his authority. All the authority a presiding elder has when the bishop is in his district, is to "attend him."—Dis. p. 31. But when the bishop
is present he cannot change, receive or suspend preachers in his district, unless by the special permission or order of the bishop: p. 30. And when a bishop comes to a station, the preacher in charge loses his authority in the conducting a trial, and in all other instances, unless the General Conference has, by positive enactment, ordered otherwise. In the trial of members, the sole authority is in the bishop to preside, if present; next is the presiding elder, and then the preacher in charge. But of right, the preacher in charge of the circuit is utterly dispossessed, if the presiding elder is present, and both of them are without authority to preside in the trial, if the bishop be present. Now see how this might work in the trial of a member, should the bishop preside, and then be president of the quarterly conference. All questions of law are to be decided by the president at both trials; and in case of an appeal of this nature, it might be made to the same person at the trial at the quarterly conference, and finally at the annual conference, should the bishop be present and exercise the authority with which he is invested. And thus, the very object for which an appeal is taken would be defeated; as it is a question that is not debatable, and in the instances here mentioned, it would be the same man who should decide in all the three cases of adjudication.
Let it not be said that this absorption of power is unprecedented, or too monstrous to ascribe to any good man in the M. E. Church. Mr. Asbury formerly possessed this power and more too. In the bound minutes for 1779, we find the following question and answer:—

"Ques. 13. How far shall his (Asbury's) power extend?

"Ans. On hearing every preacher for and against what is in debate, the right of determination shall rest with him according to the minutes."

8. The power of presiding elders, in their districts, while the Bishops are absent, is the same as that of Bishops when present, ordaining excepted. They oversee the spiritual and temporal business of the church in the districts. They have charge of all the preachers and exhorters in the districts. They can change, receive, and suspend preachers in their districts. And they are to take care that every part of the Discipline be enforced in their districts; as also to decide all questions of law in a quarterly meeting conference. A presiding elder is in all cases the representative of the Bishop, and can do all the Bishop could, within the limits of his district, ordaining excepted.

9. All the power the lay members of
the M. E. Church possess, is the power to withhold their support from the ministry and institutions of the church, and, when a man is to be licensed as an exhorter or preacher, the class or society vote to approve or disapprove, when there is no leaders' meeting held in the place. But, as in most places there are leaders' meetings held, the practical results are, in most cases, they do not vote even here. And though the laws of the States authoritatively invest members of churches and congregations with the right of voting, in the election of trustees for holding churches, yet the Discipline provides, that in all cases, when new boards of trustees are to be created, it shall be done (except in those States where the statutes provide differently) by the appointment of the preacher in charge, or the presiding elder of the district.—Dis. p. 167.

"We know nothing of the right of the society to admit members into church fellowship; and the Methodist preacher who concedes this right, betrays his trust, and should be held amenable for delinquency to his brethren. We know not if this has ever happened; but Mr. Lee speaks of the contrary doctrine as a matter which is not questionable: and hence we have inferred that he, at least, practised upon this opinion when he was a travelling preacher;
and, as he has done so with impunity, if he has done so at all, we have been led to fear that some portions of the church may be gradually sliding into a compromise which would alter the relation between pastor and people, as to subvert our whole economy.

"The admission and expulsion of church members by a vote of the society, is as absurd in theory, as it would be ruinous in practice."—Editorial, Christian Advocate and Journal, Nov. 25, 1840.

Here we have the secret let out: that if the management of church affairs are so far under the control of the laity, as for them to admit members into the church, it would tend to "subvert our whole economy."

Primitive Church Usages... Testimony of Moshiem.

"In those early times, every Christian church consisted of the people, their leaders and the ministers and deacons; and these indeed belong essentially to every religious society. The people were, undoubtedly, the first in authority; for the apostles showed, by their own exam-
people, that nothing of moment was to be carried on or determined without the consent of the assembly.—Acts i. 13; vi. 3; xv. 4; xxi. 22. It was therefore the assembly of the people which CHOSE RULERS and TEACHERS, or received them by a FREE and AUTHORITATIVE CONSENT, when RECOMMENDED by others. The same people REJECTED or CONFIRMED, by their SUFFRAGES, the LAWS which were PROPOSED by their rulers to the assembly; EXCOMMUNICATED profligate and unworthy members of the church; RESTORED the penitent to forfeited privileges; PASSED JUDGMENT upon the different subjects of CONTROVERSY and dissension that arose in their community; EXAMINED and DECIDED the disputes which happened between the ELDERS and DEACONS; and, in a word, EXERCISED ALL THE AUTHORITY which belongs to such as are invested with SOVEREIGN POWER."—Vol. I. page 37. Wood & Co., Baltimore, 1832.

Now if the six or seven things that the primitive members of the churches did, by authoritative investiture, not more than one of them can be done by the members of the M. E. Church, and even that one is denied them by pretty good authority, as will be seen hereafter.
Lord King on the Primitive Church affords the most ample proof of the correctness of the foregoing quotation from Moshiem. 1. He proves that bishops were common pastors: p. 27. 2. "When the bishop of a church was dead, all the people of that church met together in one place to choose a new bishop. So Sabinus was elected bishop of Emerita by the SUF-FRAGE of ALL THE BROTHERHOOD, which was the custom throughout all Africa, for the bishop to be chosen in the presence of the people."—p. 37.

"In all ordinations all the people were consulted, and none were admitted into holy orders without their approbation, as is assured by Cyprian, bishop of this diocese, who tells us that it was his constant custom in all ordinations to consult his people, and with their common counsel to weigh the merits of every candidate of the sacred orders."—p. 47.

Of the members of the primitive churches, Lord King observes, "As soon as they were baptized they commenced members of the church universal, and of that particular church wherein they were baptized, and became actual sharers and exerters of all the privileges and powers of the faithful. What the distinct and separate powers of the faithful were, must be next considered; several of them, to make the dis-
course under the former head complete, we touched there, as their election and choice of their bishops, their attention to those who were ordained, and such like, which will be unnecessary and tedious to repeat here; and others of them cannot be well separated from their conjunct acts with the clergy. As they had power to elect their bishops, so if their bishops proved afterwards scandalous and grossly wicked in life, or at least heretical in doctrine and apostates from the faith, they had power to depose them and choose others in their room."—p. 101.

"As for the judges that compose the consistory or ecclesiastical court, before whom offending criminals were convened and by whom censured, they will appear to have been the whole church, both clergy and laity; not the bishop without the people, nor the people without the bishop, but both conjunctly constituted that supreme tribunal, which censured delinquents and transgressors."—p. 109.

"But as for the legislative or judicatorial power, that appertained both to clergy and laity, who conjointly made up that supreme consistoral court which was in every parish, before which all offenders were tried, and if found guilty, sentenced and condemned."—p. 111.

"And whosoever will consider the fea-
quent synods that are mentioned in Cyprian, will find that in his province they met at least once and sometimes twice or thrice in a year. As for the members that composed these synods, they were bishops, presbyters, deacons, and deputed laymen in behalf of the people of their respective churches."—p. 132.

"When a synod was convened, before ever they entered upon any public causes, they chose out of the gravest and renowndest bishops among them, one, or sometimes two, to be their moderator or moderators. The office of a moderator was to preside in the synod, to see all things calmly and fairly debated and decreed; and at the conclusion of the cause to sum up what had been debated and urged on both sides, to take the votes and suffrages of the members of the synod; and last of all to give his own."—p. 134.

"When a moderator was chosen, then they entered upon the consideration of the affairs which lay before them, which may be considered in a twofold respect, either as relating to foreign churches, or to those churches only of whom they were representatives. As for foreign churches, their determinations were not obligatory unto them, because they were NOT REPRESENTED BY THEM; and so the chief matter they had to do with them was, to
give them their advice and counsel, in any
difficult point proposed."

"But with respect unto those particular
churches whose representatives they were,
the decrees were binding and obligatory,
since the regulation and management of
their affairs was the general end of their
conversing."—p. 134.

In Dr. Ruter's History of the Church,
published at the Methodist Book Room,
we have the same testimony substantially,
as that of Mosheim and Lord King. He
says: "Presbyters were chosen by the
united consent of their clerical brethren
and the people at large, and ordained by
the Bishops, assisted by the presbyters."—

Of the beginning of the second century,
be says: "The Bishops and presbyters
were still undistinguished by any superi-
ority of station or difference of apparel;
they were still chosen by the people,
and subsisted upon a proportion of the vol-
untary offerings which were paid by every
believer according to the exigencies of the
occasion, or the measure of his wealth and
piety.

The following scriptures show the part
the members of the church took in eccle-
siastical affairs, in the primitive church.
Acts i. 15. The multitude were instructed
to choose Matthias, to fill the vacancy
caused by the apostacy of Judas. Chap. vi. 3. The multitude of the disciples, by the directions of the apostles, chose the seven deacons. Chap. xv. The important question respecting circumcision, which agitated the church at Antioch, was considered and decided by the apostles, elders and brethren. And the letter written to the church at Antioch, began in this Christian and republican manner: "The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting, &c." At the same time, this assembly chose Barabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren, to go with Paul and Barnabas, and convey the letter upon this subject. Chap. xi. 22. The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas on a mission to Antioch and other places. The church did it. Chap. xiv. 27. Paul and Barnabas give an account of their labors among the Gentiles, to the church; not to a body of ministers—not even to the apostles themselves. Chap. xviii. 27. The brethren wrote, recommending Apollos, eloquent Apollos, to the reception of the disciples in the region of Achaia. Besides all this, churches sent their salutations to other churches—sent messengers to their brethren. 2 Cor. viii. 23. Luke was chosen of the churches to travel with St. Paul.

Ministers had some voice in the selection of their fields of labor, and at times
declined to comply with the wishes even of an apostle. This is evident from 1 Cor. xvi. 12. Titus went to Corinth of his own accord.—2 Cor. viii. 17.

The above contrast is presented to the consideration of the thinking and considerate, in the hope that it may awaken to open investigation, and as constituting a part of the radical difference between the government of the M. E. Church and the primitive churches. The italicizing is my own. And this subject, but a mere outline of what might be exhibited,—a subject upon which the author has bestowed much thought—is now submitted, in the hope that it may render some aid to those who are seeking to understand the character of the church "built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

C. PRINDE.
N. Ferrisburgh, Vt., March 21, 1844.
Strange Things.

Written for the American Wesleyan Observer in 1840, by Rev. J. D. Bridge, a Minister of the N. E. Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Another strange thing which is worthy of being chronicled in all our periodicals, is the cause of the Springfield District controversy. And what is it?—Ecclesiastical domination,—an unwarrantable exercise of episcopal and clerical power. Is not this a strange thing? Yes, and true as it is strange. Had almost any other man beside the incumbent now on that District been appointed as supervisor of its interests, the painful breaches of confidence and fellowship which have taken place, would not have been realized, at least to such an extent and degree as we now behold them. There are some points to which we should pay special attention.

1. The Bishop had good reason for apprehending that Mr. Dorchester would not be acceptable to a large portion of the brethren on the District, when he first appointed him to be its spiritual head.

2. It is known that in the town of Sprin-
field, when the news arrived that Mr. D. was appointed successor of Joseph A. Merrill, both abolitionists and anti-abolitionists were roused and filled with feelings of regret and disappointment. 2. Mr. D., in those Quarterly Meeting Conferences where anti-slavery resolutions were introduced, did go to the utmost limits of his power in his endeavors to crush the subject. He trampled upon the feelings, consciences and rights of his brethren.

4. This course roused the dormant energies of all the freemen in the District, and they determined never again to submit to such tyranny and dictation. 5. But at the next Conference this Presiding Elder was fully sustained by the "prime ministers" [not by the Conference] of our church, and sent back to stretch the rod of oppression another year over the fair fields and churches of Springfield District!! 6. It has been said that Mr. D. resisted this appointment as far as is consistent for a man to do who has vowed "reverently" to "obey" the "godly advice" of his "seniors in office"; but still, these reverend "seniors in office" knew better than the people on Springfield District what kind of a Presiding Elder they needed, and so they decided that Mr. Dorchester must go back; and to make his birth more comfortable, some of the
more unmanageable of the preachers on
the District were removed, that they might
not so easily annoy the Bishop's vice­
gerent in the exercise of his official powers.
Here I pause, and ask—Is this Methodism! If it is, good Lord deliver me from it. Such powers as our Bishops are
now exercising, never ought to be invested
in the hands of any man, or body of men;
for power depraves the heart, blunts the
conscience, darkens the understanding,
freezes the philanthropy of the soul, and
converts its possessor into an unfeeling
tyranst! Will our abolition preachers and
people submit to such dominion as is claim­
ed by Bishops and Presiding Elders! Never, unless we mean to be slaves out­
right. But I may be answered, It is Methodism. So much the worse; for if
this is the case, Methodism has deceived
us until now; but she can deceive us no
longer. The slumbers of bigotry and at­
tachment to church polity are broken; and
some, at least, will henceforth stand dis­
enthralled. For one, I am fully determi­
"ned never to submit to the PRESENT
EXPOSITION of Methodist economy!
When I do, let my right hand forget her
cunning. Ecclesiastical thunder falls ter­
rorless on my ears!
Messrs. Editors,—In view of the aston­
ishing powers which have been exercised,
is it not high time that the fundamental principles of our church government were fully discussed? So it seems to me. Why should we fear to do it? Do we love to slumber in the lap of an ecclesiastical Delilah so well as to risk all in the hands of the Philistines? If so, I will mark this fact as worthy a place in the chaos of unaccountables. Let our lay brethren come out boldly and assert their rights, and discuss them, proclaim them, and defend them. None is the time, and emphatically the day of their salvation. Let not this opportunity pass unimproved. Persecution we shall have, it is true, but what of that? Martyrdom were better than slavery. Let us stand up, then, in the name of God, and do the work which, in His providence, He has assigned us to perform.

J. D. Bridge.
Arvin L. Reeves

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