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Minutes Taken at the Annual Conferences, 1785

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MINUTES
TAKEN AT THE SEVERAL ANNUAL CONFERENCES OF THE METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
FOR THE YEAR 1785.

As it was unanimously agreed at this Conference that circumstances made it expedient for us to become a separate body, under the denomination of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it is necessary that we should here assign some reasons for so doing.

The following extract of a letter from the Rev. Mr. John Wesley will afford as good an explanation as can be given on this subject:

"Bristol, Sept. 10, 1784.
"To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America:—

1. By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the
British empire, and erected into independent states. The English government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the congress, partly by the state assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some hundreds of the inhabitants of these states desire my advice; and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

2. Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and prebendaries are the same order, and, consequently, have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers; but I have still refused, not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belonged.

3. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction, there are none, and but few parish ministers; so that for some hundreds miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's supper. Here, therefore, my principles forbid me to ordain any of our brethren, by baptizing and administering the Lord's supper. Therefore, at this Conference, we formed ourselves into an independent church; and following the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of church government, we thought it best to become an episcopal church, making the episcopal office elective, and the elected superintendent, or bishop, answerable to the body of ministers and preachers.

Quest. 1. Who are the superintendents of our church? Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury—2.


Quest. 3. Who are the deacons? John Dickins, Michael Ellis, Philip Bruce, Wm. Ringold—4.


Quest. 8. Who desist from travelling? Samuel Rowe, James Martin, James Morris—3.

Quest. 9. Who is laid aside? Lee Roy Cole.


Thomas S. Chew, Elder.
West Jersey, William Phœbus, Thomas Ware, Robert Sparks.
East Jersey, Adam Cloud, Matthew Greentree.
Trenton, Robert Cloud, John M'Cluskey, Jacob Brush.
New-York, John Hagerty.
Long Island, Ezekiel Cooper.
Shelburne, Freeborn Garrettson.
Port Roseway, James O. Cromwell.
Antigua, Jeremiah Lambert, John Baxter.

Quest. 13. What was collected for Cokesbury College?
£45 16s. sterling.

Quest. 14. What was the yearly collection?
£300.

Quest. 15. How was it expended?
In making up the yearly deficiencies, and sending out two missionaries, and the expenses of our Conference.

Quest. 16. What numbers are in Society?
Members 18,000. Preachers 104.

It is recommended to all our brethren to suspend the execution of the minute on slavery till the deliberations of a future Conference; and that an equal space of time be allowed all our members for consideration, when the minute shall be put in force.

N. B. We do hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of slavery; and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means.

Quest. 17. Where and when shall we hold our Conferences next year?
2. Lanes' Chapel, Virginia, Monday, April 10, 1786.