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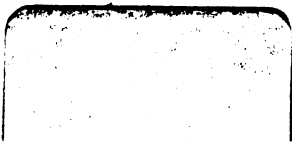
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LETTERS

BY THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

AND THE

REV. T. COKE, L. L. D.

~~~~~  
SECOND EDITION.  
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BALTIMORE;  
D. BRUNNER, BOOKSELLER,  
No. 4 NORTH CHARLES STREET.

1844.

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1 CORINTHIANS, i. 10, 11, 12, 13.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?

## LETTER I.

[Reprinted from a tract written by Dr. George Peck, a distinguished Methodist preacher, and published by the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at the Conference Office, No. 200 Mulberry street, New York.]

To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late fellow of Lincoln College in Oxford, presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting:

Whereas many of the people in the southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the same Church: and whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers—

Know all men, that I *John Wesley*, think myself to be providentially called at this time, to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, a Presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby, recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

JOHN WESLEY.

*Note*—It would seem from the above letter, that Mr. Wesley had at this date no formed idea of founding a new Church. He speaks of persons, who desired to continue under his care, and adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England. This is very different from a separate Church; it is only a Society within the Church, such as the English Methodists then were, to be under Mr. Wesley's care, and superintended by Dr. Coke as his substitute. He sets apart Dr. Coke, as a *superintendent*. He does not use the word Bishop, the technical term for one of that order of ministers, who have

the power of ordination, but the word superintendent. This last word is derived from Latin words having the same meaning, as the Greek words from which "Bishop" is derived, but which, (the Latin words,) had never been used with reference to the ordaining office. The word "superintendent" had been so used for a short time in Scotland; but then for the purpose of distinguishing those who bore it, from Bishops; and in modern usage it was well known as an English word to signify any one who observes or oversees any work. There seems also to be room for a remark, that Mr. Wesley, was a little hasty when he, thought, himself "providentially called at that time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America," because "there did not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers." On the *seventy-third day* from the date of this letter, an American was consecrated in Scotland, by the Bishops of the Church in that country, a Bishop for Connecticut; in less than two years and a half two others were consecrated for Pennsylvania and New York; and in little more than six years a fourth for Virginia; the three last by the English Bishops. The successors and spiritual descendants of these four, deriving their authority from the Blessed Redeemer, through the imposition of their hands, has now multiplied to twenty-two, with a prospect of further increase; and their authority is acknowledged by more than eleven hundred clergy who derive their ordination from them and their predecessors. It is sometimes best not to be too sure that we see the designs of Providence throughout. God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. Moreover if Mr. Wesley, had authority to ordain as a Presbyter so also had upwards of one hundred Presbyters on the spot, who could have done all that he did.

## LETTER II.

[Reprinted from the same.]

*Bristol, September 10, 1784.*

To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America :—

By a very uncommon train of providences many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the mother country, and erected into independent states. The English government, has no power 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 provincial assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of those states desire my advice, and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

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

But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish ministers: so that for some hundreds of miles, together there is none either to baptize or administer the Lord's supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.

I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint superintendents, over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's supper. And I have prepared a liturgy little differing from that of the Church of England, (I think the best con-



stituted national church in the world,) which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's day in all the congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

If any one will point out a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

It has indeed been proposed to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object, 1. I desired the bishop of London to ordain one, but could not prevail. 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings: but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them now, they would expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the state and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive churches. And we judge it best, that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free.

JOHN WESLEY.

*Note*—This letter seems to be intended as a sort of explanation of the transaction which is formally certified in the former. It would not appear that Mr. Wesley, after all attached much importance to that transaction, or considered the "setting apart" of Dr. Coke as an ordination, for he says, that he has appointed Mr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury, to be "joint superintendents," yet he had not laid hands on Mr. Asbury, who then pretended to be nothing more than a *lay* Preacher, and who was some time after ordained *Deacon*, by Dr. Coke. Dr. Peck, asserts that Mr. Wesley, in this letter uses the word appoint in the sense of ordain, but if so it is very strange that Mr. Asbury, was ordained afterwards; and at any rate it seems strange that a Bishop, as the Methodists now suppose Dr. Coke to have been, after the imposition of Mr. Wesley's hands, should be a joint superintendent with a mere layman, if any thing more was meant by superintendent than Mr. Wesley's agent.

Lord King had convinced Mr. Wesley, that Bishops and Presbyters were the same order, and consequently had the same right to ordain. Dr. Coke was a Presbyter of the Church of England, and therefore, according to Lord King, a Bishop—What further power could he acquire by an ordination by Mr. Wesley, also a Presbyter of the same Church? his equal in Church authority, however much his superior in the Methodist connexion or in any other point of view. What is the meaning of one Presbyter appointing another Presbyter superintendent? Is it not plain that it is an appointment by Mr. Wesley, the chief superintendent of all the Methodists in the world, of superintendents for the American Methodists? What a strange proceeding is it if superintendent means Bishop, and Bishop and Presbyter are the same thing, and the parties are both already Presbyters, and consequently superintendents and Bishops? And here I would remark upon the singular expression “*recommend*,” in the last paragraph of the first letter, which seems to disclaim any power to *appoint* a person “to preside over the flock of Christ.”

To proceed with another remark on the second paragraph of the second letter, Mr. Wesley there states that he had always refused to exercise his alleged right of ordaining; some other persons having said the same thing, are alleged to have broken the ninth commandment, by Dr. Peck, who produces a certificate of ordination of a Mr. Moore, dated five years after the period we are now considering, as a proof of their guilt. This seems a little harsh, for up to this period the persons in question had Mr. Wesley's own authority for what they said, and might well be supposed ignorant that in his extreme old age he had departed from the principle, which in this letter, he asserts had influenced his conduct with respect to the English preachers.

It farther appears by the letter upon which we are observing that he, Mr. Wesley, had appointed Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey “to act as Elders among them (the American Methodists) by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper.” It is to be supposed that he, Dr. Coke and Mr. Creighton, ordained them in pursuance of the power of ordination which they, as Presbyters had, according to Lord King's principles. The three gentlemen, Dr. Coke and Messrs. W. and V. then came to America, and with the assistance of Mr. Otterbine, a minister of the German Reformed Church, ordained Mr. Asbury, first deacon,

• See Mr. Wesley's letter, page 9.

then elder, and finally either superintendent, or Bishop. If the latter title was not used in his ordination, it was soon assumed both by him and Dr. Coke. But again, what was the meaning of his third ordination, what did it confer upon him? According to Lord King's principle, Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey were ordained Presbyters, that is Bishops, at Bristol. Of Dr. Coke's presbyterate nobody ever doubted. These three gentlemen, all Presbyters and Bishops, and all having the power of ordination, if Lord King be right, ordained Mr. Asbury a presbyter, that is one of Lord King's Bishops, their own equal, and afterwards they ordain him something more. This seems an unintelligible proceeding. Lord King is right or he is wrong; if Presbyters or Elders have the power of ordination, why does not every Methodist Elder ordain?—if they have not, where do the Methodist Bishops get it from? The truth is, that what Mr. Wesley calls Lord King's account of the primitive Church, is a mere sketch of a very young man's fancy, very unlike the primitive Church, and not more like to the Methodist system. It has been fully answered by the Rev. Mr. Slater, in a book called "An original draught of the primitive Church." Lord King's book is entitled "An enquiry into the constitution, &c. of the primitive Church." Both have been republished in this country, and I would recommend every intelligent man, whose attention has been drawn to these subjects, to read both.

## LETTER III.

*John Wesley to Francis Asbury.*

[To be found in Wesley's Works, Vol. VII. page 187, N. Y., Conference office, Edit. 1833.]

*London, September 20th, 1788.*

There is, indeed, a wide difference between the relation wherein you stand to the Americans, and the relation wherein I stand to *all* the Methodists. You are the elder brother of the American Methodists; I am, under God, the Father of the whole family. Therefore, I naturally care for you all, in a manner no other person can do. Therefore, I, in a measure provide for you all; for the supplies which Dr. Coke provides for you, he could not provide, were it not for me—were it not that I not only permit him to collect, but support him in so doing.

But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both the Doctor and you differ from me. I study to be *little*, you study to be *great*; I *creep*, you *strut* along. I found a *school*, you a *college*. Nay, and call it after your own names! Oh, beware! Do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and Christ be all in all.

One instance of this, your greatness, has given me great concern. 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 consent, call me a Bishop! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.

Thus, my dear Franky, I have told you all that is in my heart, and let this, when I am no more seen, bear witness how sincerely,

I am your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

*Note.*—It would seem from this letter that Mr. Wesley's conviction that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and have the same right to ordain, had somewhat abated, else why so averse to being called a Bishop? But perhaps Mr. Wesley, only objected to the title of Bishop, as assumed by Mr. Asbury, because it was used in the sense which it had always borne in

**English, except in the translation of the Scriptures, of a church officer of an higher order than a Presbyter. If so, Mr. Wesley denied that Mr. Asbury was what he and his successors pretend to be, Bishops overseeing elders and superior to them. To such Bishops the exclusive power of ordination was always attributed on the Church, before the sixteenth century; such Bishops were Timothy and Titus, and such a Bishop Mr. Wesley very truly denied Mr. Asbury to be. If the Methodists are to sustain any claim to an external appointment to the ministerial office, it must be on the ground that Presbyterian ordination, that is the ordination by Elders, as the Methodists call them, is valid, not on any ground connected with the idea of Episcopal ordination, which is that which only they practise. But some will ask, is any such external appointment necessary? Mr. Wesley clearly thought that it was, or he would not have written the second letter in this collection, or have taken the trouble to ordain Whatcoat and Vasey to assist Dr. Coke's ordinations. Read also the following extract from a sermon of his, which is acknowledged as genuine by Dr. Peck:**

**"I wish all of you who are vulgarly termed Methodists would seriously consider what has been said. And particularly you whom God hath commissioned to call sinners to repentance. It does by no means follow from hence, that ye are commissioned to baptise, or to administer the Lord's supper.—Ye never dreamed of this, for ten or twenty years after ye began to preach. Ye did not then, like Koran, Dathan, and Abiram, 'seek the priesthood also.' Ye knew, 'no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.' O. contain yourselves within your own bounds."**

**Modern Methodists think the same thing; or why do they ordain. Now, whence does the power of ordination come. The Apostles had an external appointment, a mission; Christ sent them as his father had sent him. Paul was an apostle "not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead," Galatians i. 1. But who has such an original commission now? who has had a direct appointment from the Lord Jesus? Those who had, proved it by miracles; who does so now?**

**But some persons say that successful preaching, that making converts is the evidence of a divine appointment. But how does this prove the authority to begin preaching? It should never be forgotten, moreover, that the question is not about authority to preach, but about authority to administer the sacraments. How does successful preaching prove that? What**

were Mr. Wesley's views here? Look at the extract from a sermon of his which has just been given. Those preachers were successful preachers. Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey were successful preachers, yet he ordained them—Mr. Asbury was a successful preacher, yet Dr. Coke ordained him. Why were these doings allowed, if success in preaching proved a divine mission to administer the sacraments?

But if success be not evidence of such mission, and miracles cannot be had, the proof must be ordination. Who are to ordain?—Any body?—No! During the Revolutionary war, some Methodist preachers elected ordainers from among themselves, and were ordained by them. Mr. Asbury denied the validity of their ministrations, and they gave them up. (See Coke and Moore's life of Wesley, page 351.) Why were their ministrations invalid? Because those who ordained them had no right to do so, they exercised a power which they had never received, and their act was void. If so how could a similar act be valid at any former period? An ordination without authority in the second century would be no better than in the eighteenth. And if at first defective it could get no better by transmission. The one hundredth link in a chain cannot be more united with the object to which the chain is designed to be attached than the first.

There must then be a succession from the Apostles. Through what channel is it to come?—Mr. Wesley and Lord King think that Presbyters and Bishops are the same order, and have the same right of ordination. In the twentieth chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, is an account of a conference which St. Paul held with the Elders of the Church in Ephesus, and of his parting instructions to them, he says not a word about the mode of exercising the power of ordination. He sent Timothy to reside in the same city, and wrote him two epistles, in which he gives to him instructions about ordinations. It seems a fair inference that Timothy had a power of ordination which the other Elders had not. If the Elders had it, it was because it was given to them,—if they used it without rebuke, we might infer that they had it, but there is no scriptural evidence that they ever used it. Their successors certainly did not. The three orders of the ministry are distinctly alluded to by Clement, "whose name is in the book of life," in an epistle written before the death of St. John; and Ignatius seven years after the death of the beloved Apostle, describes fully the three orders, and ascribes all power in the Church to the highest, to whom he for the first time applies the name of

**Bishop.** From this time the power of ordination was confined to those Bishops, and not extended to the Elders or Presbyters, until after the reformation a supposed right for Presbyterial ordinations was discovered. But the Church of England retained Episcopal ordination. There is then in England and in the United States no necessity for Presbyterial. But suppose there were, will necessity give a man a power which he has not. The necessity under which the lay preachers, during the Revolution, ordained each other, was at least as great as any that has existed before or since. Yet Mr. Wesley and Mr. Asbury regarded the act as void. There is a common mistake about the matter; people ask for a prohibition upon all men except a particular class, to administer the sacraments or to ordain, but as these things are done in the name of Christ, the true principle is that those who undertake to do them should show their authority. Now if John Knox or John Wesley, or any other modern Presbyter had any authority to ordain, he received it through those who did not know that they gave it. A circumstance which seems to throw some shade over his claim. And this is not less true, if the ancient Presbyters had such an authority. The modern Presbyters have their succession not from them but from Bishops, who did not give to Presbyters a power of ordination. If Lord King's theory be right, modern Presbyters are a new order of men, distinct from the old scriptural Presbyters. The only scriptural Presbyters upon his view are the Bishops, to whom alone the power of ordination has been transmitted. To the mind of the writer this is a conclusive argument against Lord King's theory. He does not believe that the whole Church, for fifteen centuries, committed the administration of the sacraments, to an unscriptural class of ministers.

## LETTER IV.

*Dr. Coke to Mr. Wesley.*

[This letter is to be found in the London edition of Whitehead's life of Wesley ]

Honored and Dear Sir,

The more maturely I consider the subject, the more expedient it appears to me, *that the power of ordaining others, should be received by me from you*, by the imposition of your hands; and that you should lay hands upon brother Whatcoat, and brother Vasey, for the following reasons: 1. It seems to me the most scriptural way, and most agreeable to the practice of the primitive churches. 2. I *may* want all the influence in America, which you can throw into my scale. Mr. Brackenbury informed me at Leeds, that he saw a letter in London, from Mr. Asbury, in which he observed, that he would not receive any person deputed by you with any part of the superintendency of the work invested in him; or words which evidently implied so much. I do not find any, the least degree of prejudice in my mind against Mr. Asbury, on the contrary a very great love and esteem; and am determined not to stir a finger without his consent, unless mere sheer necessity obliges me; but rather to lie at his feet in all things. But as the journey is long, and you cannot spare me often, and it is well to provide against *all events*, and an authority *formally* received from you, will (I am conscious of it) be fully admitted by the people, and my exercising the office of Ordination without that *formal* authority may be disputed, if there be any opposition in any other account: I could therefore *earnestly* wish you would extend that power, in this instance, which I have not the shadow of a doubt but God hath invested you with for the good of our connexion. I think you have tried me too often to doubt, whether I will in any degree use the power you are pleased to invest me with, further than I believe absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the work. In respect to my brethren (Whatcoat and Vasey) it is very uncertain indeed, whether any of the clergy mentioned by brother Rankin, will stir a step with me in the work, except Mr. Jarratt; and it is by no means certain that even he will choose to join me in ordaining: and propriety and universal practice make it expedient, that I



should have two Presbyters with me in this work. In short it appears to me that every thing should be prepared, and every thing proper to be done, that can possibly be done *this side the water*. You can do all this in Mr. C—n's house, in your *chamber*; and afterwards according to Mr. Fletcher's advice [Mr. Fletcher advised ordination by a *bishop*] give us letters testimonial of the different offices with which you have been pleased to invest us. For the purpose of laying hands on brothers Whatcoat and Vasey, I can bring Mr. C. down with me, by which you will have two Presbyters with you. In respect to brother Rankin's argument, that you will escape a great deal of *odium* by omitting this, it is nothing. Either it will be known or not known; if not known then no *odium* will arise; but if known, you will be obliged to acknowledge that I acted under your direction, or suffer me to sink under the weight of my enemies, with perhaps your brother at the head of them. I shall entreat you to ponder these things.

Your most dutiful,

T. COKE.<sup>b</sup>

*Note*—This letter shows the true author of Mr. Wesley's action in the matter of ordination. The tone of the letter is worthy of notice, from beginning to end. It speaks of expediency, of difficulties to be removed out of Dr. Coke's way, of the good of the connexion. There is nothing said or hinted of a new Church. It speaks indeed of a power of ordaining, to be received by Dr. Coke from Mr. Wesley, but it is in virtue of a power with which Mr. Wesley was clothed for the benefit of the *connexion*, not of the Church of Christ. What power in the Church of Christ could one Presbyter receive from imposition at the hands of another Presbyter.

<sup>b</sup> "This letter is taken from an *attested* copy of the Doctor's letter in *Mr. Charles Wesley's hand-writing*.

## LETTER V.

*Dr. Coke to Bishop White.*

[This letter is reprinted from Bishop White's Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church, first edition, pages 424 to 429 ]

RIGHT REV. SIR,

Permit me to intrude a little on your time upon a subject of great importance.

You I believe, are conscious that I was brought up in the church of England, and have been ordained a presbyter of that church. For many years I was prejudiced, even I think to bigotry, in favor of it : but through a variety of causes or incidents, to mention which would be tedious and useless, my mind was exceedingly biassed on the other side of the question. In consequence of this, I am not sure but I went farther in the separation of our church in America, than Mr. Wesley, from whom I had received my commission, did intend. He did indeed solemnly invest me, as far as he had a right so to do, with Episcopal authority<sup>c</sup>, but did not intend, I think that an entire separation should take place. He, being pressed by our friends on this side of the water for ministers to administer the sacraments to them, (there being very few clergy of the church of England then in the states,) went farther I am sure, than he would have gone, if he had foreseen some events which followed. And this I am certain of—that he is now sorry for the separation.

But what can be done for a re-union, which I much wish for; and to accomplish which Mr. Wesley, I have no doubt would use his influence to the utmost ? The affection of a very considerable number of the preachers, and most of the people, is very strong towards him, notwithstanding the excessive ill usage he received from a few. My interest also is not small; and both his and mine would readily and to the utmost be used to accomplish that (to us) very desirable object; if a readiness were shown by the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church to re-unite.

It is even to *your Church* an object of great importance. We have now about 60,000 adults in in our society in these states, and about 250 travelling ministers and preachers; besides a

<sup>c</sup> See Mr. Wesley's letter, page 9.

great number of local preachers, very far exceeding the number of travelling preachers; and some of those local preachers are men of very considerable abilities. But if we number the methodists, as most people number the members of their church, viz: by the families which constantly attend the divine ordinances in their places of worship, they will make a larger body than you probably conceive. The society I believe, may be safely multiplied by five on an average to give us our stated congregations; which will then amount to 300,000. And if the calculations which I think some eminent writers have made, be just, that three fifths of mankind are un-adult (if I may use the expression) at any given period, it will follow that all the families, the adults of which form our congregations in these states, amount to 750,000. About one-fifth of these are blacks. The work now extends in length from Boston to the south of Georgia; and in breadth from the Atlantic to lake Champlain, Vermont, Albany, Redstone, Holstein, Kentucky, Cumberland, &c.

But there are many hindrances in the way. Can they be removed?

1. Our ordained ministers will not, ought not, to give up their right of administering the sacraments. I don't think that the generality of them, perhaps none of them, would refuse to submit to a re-ordination, if other hindrances were removed out of the way. I must here observe that between 60 and 70 only out of the two hundred and fifty have been ordained presbyters, and about 60 deacons, (only). The presbyters are the choicest of the whole.

2. The other preachers would hardly submit to a re-union, if the possibility of their rising up to ordination depended on the present bishops in America. Because though they are *all*, I think I may say, zealous, pious and very useful men, yet they are not acquainted with the learned languages. Besides, they would argue,—If the present bishops would wave the article of the learned languages, yet their successors might not.

My desire of a re-union is so sincere and earnest that these difficulties almost make me tremble: and yet something must be done before the death of Mr. Wesley, otherwise I shall despair of success: for though my influence among the methodists in these states as well as in Europe is, I doubt not increasing, yet Mr. Asbury, whose influence is very capital, will not easily comply: nay, I know he will be exceedingly averse to it.

In Europe, where some steps had been taken, tending to a separation, all is at an end. Mr. Wesley is a determined ene-

my of it, and I have lately borne an open and successful testimony against it.

Shall I be favored with a private interview with you in Philadelphia? I shall be there, God willing, on Tuesday, the 17th of May. If this be agreeable, I'll beg of you just to signify it in a note directed to me, at Mr. Jacob Baker's, merchant, Market street, Philadelphia: or, if you please, by a few lines sent to me by the return of the post at Philip Rogers, Esq. in Baltimore, from yourself or Dr. Magaw, and I will wait upon you with my friend Dr. Magaw. We can then enlarge on these subjects.

I am conscious of it, that secrecy is of great importance in the present state of the business, till the minds of you, your brother Bishops, and Mr. Wesley, be circumstantially known. I must therefore beg that these things be confined to yourself and Dr. Magaw, till I have the honor of seeing you.

Thus, you see, I have made a bold venture on your honor and candor, and have opened my whole heart to you on the subject as far as the extent of a small letter will allow me. If you put equal confidence in me, you will find me candid and faithful.

I have, notwithstanding, been guilty of inadvertancies. Very lately I found myself obliged (for the pacifying of my conscience) to write a penitential letter to the Rev. Mr. Jarratt, which gave him great satisfaction: and for the same reason I must write another to the Rev. Mr. Pettigrew. When I was last in America, I prepared and corrected a great variety of things for our magazines, indeed almost every thing that was printed, except some loose hints which I had taken of one of my journeys, and which I left in my hurry with Mr. Asbury, without any correction, entreating that no part of them might be printed which would be improper or offensive. But through great inadvertency (I suppose) he suffered some reflections on the characters of the two above-mentioned gentlemen to be inserted in the magazine, for which I am very sorry: and probably shall not rest till I have made my acknowledgment more public; though Mr. Jarratt does not desire it.

I am not sure whether I have not also offended you, sir, by accepting of one of the offers made me by you and Dr. Magaw of the use of your churches about six years ago, on my first visit to Philadelphia, without informing you of our plan of separation from the Church of England. If I did offend, (as I doubt I did, especially from what you said on the subject to Mr. Richard

Dallam, of Abington,) I sincerely beg yours and Dr. Magaw's pardon. I'll endeavor to amend. But, alas! I am a frail, weak creature.

I will intrude no longer at present. One thing only I will claim from your candor—that if you have no thoughts of improving this proposal, you will burn this letter, and take no more notice of it (for it would be a pity to have us entirely alienated from each other, if we cannot unite in the manner my ardent wishes desire.) But if you will further negotiate the business, I will explain my mind still more fully to you on the probabilities of success.

In the meantime permit me with great respect, to subscribe myself,

Right Rev. sir,

Your very humble servant in Christ,

THOMAS COKE.

*Richmond, April 24, 1791.*

The Right Rev. Father in God, Bishop White.

You must excuse interlineations, &c. as I am just going into the country, and have no time to transcribe.

*Note.*—This letter scarcely needs any other remark than that it shows that Dr. Coke exceeded the authority given him by Mr. Wesley, and that Mr. Wesley disapproved of his proceedings. But both it and the following one, show that Dr. Coke was very desirous of becoming a real Bishop, either in the Church in this country or of England. When a Methodist preacher accepts ordination in the Protestant Episcopal Church, every one understands it as an admission that his first ordination was invalid. Dr. Coke was willing to make this admission as to his Episcopal claims if he had any, and it is clear from the preceding letters, that he, and not Mr. Wesley, was the founder of Methodist Episcopacy.

## LETTER VI.

*Rev. Dr. Coke to Wm. Wilberforce, Esq.*

At Samuel Hague's, Esq.  
Leeds, April 14, 1813.

*Dear and highly respected Sir,*

A subject which appears to me of great moment lies much upon my mind; and yet it is a subject of such a delicate nature, that I cannot venture to open my mind upon it to any one, of whose candor, piety, delicacy, and honor, I have not the highest opinion. Such a character I do indubitably esteem you, sir; and as such, I will run the risk of opening my whole heart to you upon the point.

For at least twelve years, sir, the interests of our Indian empire have lain very near my heart. In several instances I have made attempts to open a way for missions in that country, and even for my going over there myself. But every thing proved abortive.

The prominent desire of my soul, even from my infancy, (I may almost say,) has been to be useful. Even when I was a Deist for part of my time at Oxford, (what a miracle of grace!) usefulness was my most darling object. The Lord has been pleased to fix me for about thirty-seven years on a point of great usefulness. My influence in the large Wesleyan connexion, the introduction and superintendence of our missions in different parts of the globe, and the wide sphere opened to me for the preaching of the Gospel to almost innumerable large and attentive congregations, have opened to me a very extensive field for usefulness. And yet I could give up all for India. Could I but close my life in being the means of raising a spiritual Church in India, it would satisfy the utmost ambition of my soul here below.

I am not so much wanted in our connexion at home as I once was. Our committee of privileges, as we term it, can watch over the interests of the body, in respect to laws, and government, as well in my absence as if I was with them. Our missionary committee in London can do the same in respect to missions; and my absence would only make them feel

their duty more incumbent upon them—Auxiliary committees through the nation (which we have now in contemplation) will amply supply my place, in respect to raising money. There is nothing to influence me much against going to India, but my extensive sphere for preaching the Gospel. But this I do assure you, sir, sinks considerably in my calculation, in comparison of the high honor (if the Lord was to confer it upon me in His Providence and grace) of beginning or reviving a genuine work of religion in the immense regions of Asia.

Impressed with these views, I wrote a letter about a fortnight ago to the Earl of Liverpool. I have either mislaid the copy of it, or destroyed it at the time, for fear of its falling into improper hands. After an introduction, drawn up in the most delicate manner in my power, I took notice of the observations made by Lord Castlereagh in the House of Commons, concerning a religious establishment in India connected with the established church at home. I then simply opened my situation in the Wesleyan connexion, as I have stated it to you, sir, above. I enlarged on the earnest desire I had of closing my life in India, observing that if his Royal Highness the Prince Regent and the government should think proper to appoint me their Bishop in India, I should most cheerfully and most gratefully accept the offer. I am sorry I have lost the copy of the letter. In my letter to Lord Liverpool, I observed, that I should, in case of my appointment to the Episcopacy of India, return most fully and faithfully into the bosom of the established Church, and do every thing in my power to promote its interest, and would submit to all such restrictions in the fulfilment of my office, as the government and the bench of Bishops at home should think necessary—that my prime motive was to be useful to the Europeans in India; and that my second (though not the least) was to introduce the Christian religion among the Hindoos by the preaching of the Gospel, and perhaps also, by the establishment of schools.

I have not, sir, received an answer. Did I think that the answer was withheld, because Lord Liverpool considered me as acting very improperly by making the request, I should take no further step in the business. This may be the case; but his Lordship's silence may arise from other motives: on the one hand, because he did not choose to send me an absolute refusal; and, on the other hand, because he did not see it proper, at least just now, to give me any encouragement. When I was in some doubt this morning whether I ought to take the liberty of writing to you, my mind became determined on my being

informed about three hours ago, that in a letter received from you by Mr. Hey, you observed that the generality of the House of Commons were set against granting any thing of an imperative kind to the Dissenters or Methodists in favor of sending Missionaries to India. Probably I may err in respect to the exact words which you used.

I am not conscious my dear respected sir, that the least degree of ambition influences me in this business. I possess a fortune of about 1200*l.* a year which is sufficient to bear my traveling expenses, and to enable me to make many charitable donations. I have lost two dear wives and am now a widower. Our leading friends through the connexion receive me and treat me with the utmost respect and hospitality. I am quite surrounded with friends who greatly love me; but India still cleaves to my heart. I sincerely believe that my strong inclination to spend the remainder of my life, in India originates in the Divine Will, whilst I am called upon to use the secondary means to obtain the end.

I have formed an intimate acquaintance with Dr. Buchanan, and have written to him to inform him that I shall make him a visit within a few days, if it be convenient.—From his house I intend *Deo Volente*, to return to Leeds for a day, and then to set off next week for London. The latter end of last November I visited him before, at Moat Hall, his place of residence, and a most pleasant visit it was to me, and also to him I have reason to think. He has been, since I saw him, drinking of the same bitter cup of which I have been drinking, by the loss of a beloved wife.

I would just observe, sir, that a hot climate peculiarly agrees with me. I was never better in my life than in the West Indies, during the four visits I made to that archipelago, and should now prefer the torrid zone, as a climate, to any other part of the world. Indeed, I enjoy in this country, though sixty-five years of age, such an uninterrupted flow of health and strength as astonishes all my acquaintance. 'They commonly observe that they have perceived no difference in me for these last twenty years.

I would observe, sir, as I did at the commencement of my letter, that I throw myself on your candor, piety, and honor. If I do not succeed in my views in India, and it were known among the preachers that I had been taking the steps that I am now taking, (though from a persuasion that I am in the Divine Will in so doing,) it might more or less affect my usefulness in the vineyard of my LORD, and that would very much afflict



me. And yet, notwithstanding this, I cannot satisfy myself without making some advances in the business. I consider, sir, your brother-in-law, Mr. Stephen, to be a man of eminent worth. I have a very high esteem for him. I know that his yea is yea, and what he promises, he certainly will perform. Without some promise of confidence he might (if he were acquainted with the present business) mention it to Mr. —, with whom, I know, Mr. Stephen is acquainted. If Mr. — was acquainted with the steps I am taking, he would, I am nearly sure, call immediately a meeting of our committee of privileges and the consequence might be unfavorable to my influence, and consequently to my usefulness among the Methodists. But my mind must be eased. I must venture this letter, and leave the whole to God, and under Him, sir, to you.

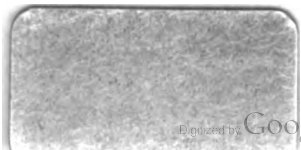
I have reason to believe that Lord Eldon had, (indeed I am sure of it,) and probably now has an esteem for me.—Lord Sidmouth I do think loves me. Lord Castlereagh once expressed to Mr. Alexander Knox, then his private secretary in Ireland, his very high regard for me: since that time I have had one interview with his lordship in London. I have been favored on various occasions with public and private interviews with Lord Bathurst. I shall be glad to have your advice, whether I should write letters to those noblemen, particularly to the two first on the present subject; or whether I had not better suspend every thing, and have the pleasure of seeing you in London. I hope I shall have that honor. I shall be glad to receive three or four lines from you, (don't write unless you think it may be of some immediate importance,) signifying that I may wait on you immediately on my arrival in London.

I have the honor, to be, with very high respect,  
My dear Sir, your very much obliged,  
very humble, and very faithful servant,

T. COCKR.







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Letters

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