

all acknowledge the moderation with which the *Primus* had brought this subject before them. For himself, he felt the necessity of being still more cautious than even he was, because he could not go along with him in saying that he thought there was nothing in Scripture or in the authority of the Primitive Church to oppose the recognition of the laity as constituent members of Church Synods. His own opinion with regard to the scriptural argument was the other way. His opinion with regard to the argument derived from the practice of the Primitive Church was certainly not such as would allow him to concur in the remark made by the *Primus*, that there was nothing in the constitution of the Primitive Church to forbid their taking the step proposed.

The *Primus* said his remark was that there was no canon of the church universal recognised by this church which seemed to him to prohibit it.

The Bishop of St. Andrews said he was quite prepared to deal with this question in the most practical way; and the most practical way, he thought, was not to lay down any general principle, but to take the circumstances of the church as they stood, and apply the best rule they could towards bringing the laity to participate to some extent in synodical action. But on the other hand, if there was nothing to authorise the admission of the laity in the practice of the Primitive Church, he did not think it followed that they were precluded from admitting them, their circumstances being those of a voluntary and non-established communion. He should draw a strong distinction between the case of the church as established and a church circumstanced as the Scotch and American Churches were. He considered it to be quite competent for him to say what, under their circumstances, it would be expedient for them to do, because he did not think that the principle which would be applicable to an established church, and which would forbid the introduction of the laity, for instance, into Convocation in England, was applicable to this church; and therefore they were at liberty to go into prudential considerations further than he thought they might do in the case of an established church. Therefore, looking at the question from that point of view, he would be disposed to recommend something short of what the *Primus* had proposed. They all admitted that the laity did not do, and were not called on to do, so much as they thought was desirable for the good of the church. He would not go so far as the *Primus* in saying that they were excluded at present from the general management of the church's affairs, because the Church Society had been really a canonical society, and its affairs were practically to a great extent in the hands of laymen, and the working of the committees was also very much in the hands of the laity. But looking to the question of bringing laymen into Diocesan Synods, he should first ask himself what was the proper theory of a Diocesan Synod. He believed that the proper theory was, that it was the Consistory of the bishop, and that he brought around him the clergy to assist him with their counsel in the administration of the affairs of the diocese. He granted that it was quite competent for the church to go beyond that, and say that the bishop shall bring into his counsels his presbyters, and that they shall have certain rights in relation to the Consistory. That he believed to be fully authorised by the example of the Primitive Church in a way in which he did not think it was authorised with reference to any right on the part of the laity. Fully admitting, therefore, that the church may do what it had done, and give to the presbyters certain rights in the Consistory, he would say with regard to the admission of the laity—let them try what could be done by authorising, and

may be even requiring, the bishop to invite a certain number of his most intelligent laity to his Diocesan Synod, and let him place the laity on the same footing in which the non-instituted clergy were placed. They would by following this course feel their way, and ascertain how far they were likely to succeed in raising a sufficient interest in the laity with respect to the church's affairs—an interest which, as the Bishop of Edinburgh said, they did not sufficiently feel at present, and which it became their duty to attempt to awaken in the least objectionable and dangerous way. He thought, as a first step (and he wished it to be understood that he merely proposed it as a first step,) something of this kind might safely be adopted:—"Each bishop shall be at liberty to invite to his Diocesan Synod any of the laity who take a helpful and intelligent interest in the affairs of the church, and such laymen when present shall have the same right as the non-instituted clergy to speak on all matters that are brought under discussion at the Synod." The *Primus* had reminded them that this was a matter which, if they advanced, they could not retrace their steps. He believed that whatever power they granted to the laity in this matter would be granted beyond hope of recall. Bearing that in mind, and believing that no right on their part could be founded either on Scripture or antiquity, he thought it would nevertheless be a wise course to try to get all the advantages which they felt the want of in the laity's assistance, avoiding so far as possible any danger that might arise from indiscreet meddling with the constitution of the church, which they had hitherto succeeded in retaining in its primitive purity. In making this proposal, it would still be open for them to consider how the question with regard to the election of bishops should be dealt with. He believed the voice of the laity would be exercised very beneficially in the choice of the supreme governors of the church, and he must guard himself against saying that they ought not to have votes in that matter.

The *Primus* said he felt quite disposed to adopt the suggestion of the Bishop of St. Andrews, that the bishop should nominate a certain number of lay members to sit in Synod. The proposal he made was drawn up very much with the view of getting rid of that which was made in the report of the committee on the revision of the canons—namely, that there should be an election by each congregation. The remarks of the Bishop of Edinburgh bore strongly against that form of congregational representation; but he felt no objection to adopt the suggestion of the Bishop of St. Andrews. He desired to approach this subject by the slowest degrees, and he was rather fortified in his remarks by the experience of those Colonial Churches with which they were in communion. Suppose they adopted this proposition, it would not of course carry out the further view, in which he entirely concurred, as regarded the election of bishops.

The Bishop of St. Andrews said that was quite a different thing, and it would not come under this canon.

The Bishop of Ayr said he was very anxious to see the introduction of the laity into the deliberative assemblies of the church, but he thought they should be truly represented, and should neither come in by the nomination of the bishop nor by the election of the clergy—but by nomination from among themselves, from the communicants deputing or electing one or more representatives. He thought anything short of that would not be a true representation of the lay element, and would be without value as a distinct opinion from the opinion of the clergy, if at any time the opinion of the laity and of the clergy should happen to be distinct. He did not

think that the proposal of the Bishop of St. Andrews would have the effect of bringing the laity into their assemblies, if they found their coming there was of no use, and that they could not attain any practical object by attending. But he should be sorry to come to any hasty decision, and he thought the question was so important that they ought to defer consideration of it to a future time—perhaps till the adjourned General Synod, to be held after the meeting of the Diocesan Synods.

The Bishop of Brechin said he had dissented from the resolution of the Episcopal Synod in 1852. The amendment he proposed on that occasion was as follows:—

"That whereas it is very doubtful what is the interpretation of the passage quoted in the Acts of the Apostles for the admission of the laity into church councils, and whereas the historical evidence for this proposition is very insufficient, this Synod cannot affirm the principle that the laity may sit and vote in ecclesiastical synods."

Having thought the matter over very carefully since that time, he was still much of the same opinion. He did not think any sound argument could be adduced either from Scripture or from antiquity in favour of admitting the laity to their Synods. No doubt many of the early fathers, as Cyprian showed, hardly took any step without consulting the laity, but there was no trace that the thing was done in Synod. He believed, however, the earliest records would show that the laity had a certain voice in the election of bishops; and if that could be carried out, he, for his part, should not oppose it, although he saw great practical difficulty in regard to it from the constitution of some of the congregations, all of whom would need to be represented if it were to be a real representation. But with regard to the point before them, they had seen how the experiment had answered in America, and in some of the British colonies. In Australia particularly it was not working well, and he thought they ought very much to guard against empirical legislation in this matter. Nothing could exceed the caution shown in the propositions his right rev. brethren had made, but he must express a strong opinion that now was not the time for such a change. There was no cry for it, and even if there were, it was not quite clear that they ought to listen to it. In the present circumstances of the church there seemed no demand for it.

The *Primus* said the demand was more felt by those who would be indisposed to come forward and make it in the shape of a demand. He believed the desire was felt by many of those who would be most valuable to them if admitted into consultation; but they were not the persons likely to agitate such questions, and hence they found nothing in the shape of petitions coming before them.

The Bishop of Aberdeen said the question was very important, and he had not quite made up his mind concerning it. It seemed to him that the laity ought to have some voice in the election of the bishop, and he believed this was in strict accordance with the practice of the Primitive Church; and perhaps, under certain restrictions, the presence of the laity in Synods might be useful in many ways, and give more force to legislative enactments. But he did not wish to come to any determination on either point, and he would not pledge himself to support either of the two motions made till he knew more accurately whether the laity felt anxious to have this privilege placed in their hands. When the draft was discussed in the Diocesan Synods they should then have the opinion of the clergy, and no doubt the laity would also take some method of letting their opinion be known.