

embrace, were it not for that very connection. Is it to be supposed that the church in England would refuse to avail herself of the assistance which the laity only can afford, and to admit them into her councils in order to obtain it, if she should be suddenly deprived of her right to tithes and the other property she possesses. But I suspect that *the laity have more control over the church in England* than many imagine. I ask, by whose authority was the present order of common prayer confirmed and allowed to be used in churches, but by that of the Parliament, composed of the three estates of the realm, in one only of which have the clergy any voice, and that but a slight one? By whose authority are some sees being abolished and others established, but by the same? By what authority can tithes be commuted? In short, who has the regulation of her revenues, but the same king, lords and commons? But further, by whose authority only could the slightest alteration be made in the order of her services, as prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, except it be, by that of the same three estates of the realm? Indeed, the very authority, we wish for our conventions, composed entirely of churchmen, and the acquisition of which is objected to by some, because lay delegates are to be admitted thereto, is considered as well vested in a body of men, many of whom are papists, dissenters, unitarians and unbelievers, and who, altho' they number about a thousand in all, have amongst them less than thirty Bishops.

It may again be objected that the admission of the laity into the councils of the church is contrary to the practice of the apostolic and primitive church. To this I reply, that is not quite so clear as may be imagined. If we look at Acts 1 : 15, 16, 23 and 26, at 15 : 22, 23 and 25, we will find that the councils were not confined to the apostles. Ecclesiastical historians tell us, that the exclusion of the laity, and, soon after, of the inferior clergy from the councils, thence composed of the Bishops, was the beginning of that spirit which afterwards placed all the other Bishops under the feet of him of Rome.

Another objection may possibly be urged : such admission is unnecessary ; many other denominations do very well without it, and so may we. To this I answer, that where the laity are not admitted to the councils of the church, such measures are taken to gain their influence as *we can never take*. For this purpose the Romanists use the carnal weapons of a dark and gloomy superstition, and the Methodists the careful distribution of certain spiritual offices amongst her laity. And surely it is less objectionable to admit a layman to the councils of the church, where many matters of a purely secular nature must necessarily be discussed, than to the spiritual offices of preaching and exhorting.

It is said by some, that the Elders in the Presbyterian church, who have seats and voices in their councils, do not belong to