

Answers to the Synod's queries were, to a considerable extent, lodged with the committee on calls and constitutions, and were before the Presbytery of Kingston, in framing the present sketch of a constitution. The result of these answers, and a full discussion of the whole case, may be found in the number of the Christian Examiner for October 1837, under the article "on the constitution for churches." This article contains the substance of the paper which the last Synod received as the report from the committee on calls and constitutions.

The answers to the Synod's queries show some difference of opinion respecting the mode of the minister's election. This diversity is found in particular on the question, who are entitled to vote in the election of a minister? Some see nothing objectionable in extending the right of voting to all classes of the congregation, who are fairly connected with it, and who contribute to the support of the minister. Others, again, are of opinion that the right of voting should be confined to the members of the church in full communion, and that it is unscriptural and dangerous to extend an absolute right of voting to all—though the wishes and feelings of all should be as much as possible studied and consulted.

Now the framers of the following draft cannot help thinking that the question has been a good deal embarrassed by the peculiar circumstances and in some respects anomalous condition of many of the congregations connected with our church in Canada.

Not only is the number of communicants in some of our congregations very limited, but the calling and settlement of ministers have, from time to time, been going on in a way ecclesiastically irregular. Bodies of persons who have never been organized into regular churches by appointment of officers for the church, administration of its sacraments, &c. &c., have been accustomed to call, and Presbyteries to ordain ministers over them.*

Now it will be for the church to consider and determine, whether in many such cases it would not be better to put in operation some preparatory process, prior to the formation of the pastoral relation, such as ordaining missionaries over Districts, forming congregations in those localities, where the adherents of the church are sufficiently numerous, and ordaining elders over them. As respects congregations not yet organized, the confining the right of voting to members in full communion, would be tantamount to a total denial of the right of forming the pastoral relation. In regard, again,

to congregations but recently organized, the number of church members is in some cases so very limited, as to render it difficult, if not impossible, to carry into effect a constitution that might suit a congregation in a more advanced state. And even in the case of congregations of long standing, and consisting of a considerable number of members, it might not be wise to propose sudden and great changes on constitutions already existing.

The time, however, seems to have arrived for watching over the progress of the constitution of our church in Canada, with the most tender solicitude. For upon the mould in which it is now to be cast, its character in all generations to come is likely to depend; and it were, therefore, not only unwise but highly blamable to allow any thing essentially wrong, or subversive of scriptural principles, to be gaining ground.

Under all these views of the subject, it has occurred to the Presbytery of Kingston, that it may not perhaps be easy to frame such a constitution as shall be, in all respects, equally suitable to all the congregations in connection with our church; and that it may be necessary in some measure to distinguish and adapt, according to the different circumstances of congregations. On the other hand it seems obviously a most desirable object, to get our constitution put upon a right foundation, and to secure as far as possible, among the different congregations, a conformity to it. Towards the accomplishment of these ends, it may be useful that the church issue something in the shape of a model constitution, to be adopted in all cases practicable.

The framers of the draft constitution now submitted, are far from presuming to think that it is so perfect as to admit of its being at once adopted, or as not to be liable to alterations and improvements. If it shall be found in the main, to be constructed upon right principles, or should it only serve the purpose of putting the case into such a shape as shall aid the full and thorough consideration and discussion of it, the object shall have been gained.

The Presbytery of Kingston would humbly suggest some such course as this:

1. That the Synod after maturely considering the matter, and fixing upon a model constitution as perfect as the present state and circumstances of the church will admit of, should issue it among all the Presbyteries and congregations already organized into churches, with such advice and instructions as shall secure its provisions being carried into effect as soon as practicable.

2. That if no such model constitution can be

* See Christian Examiner for October, p. 249, 250, 251.