

10

SYNODICAL ACTION IN IRELAND.

A SPEECH

DELIVERED AT THE DOWN AND CONNOR DIOCESAN CONFERENCE,
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1864.

BY THE

Rev. ALFRED T. LEE, M.A.,
LL.D.,

*Rector of Ahoghill and Rural Dean, and Honorary Secretary to the
Diocesan Conference, and to the Church Institution for the
Province of Armagh.*

LONDON & OXFORD: J. H. & JAS. PARKER.

1865.

HYGIENICAL ACTION IN IRELAND.

SPEECH

DELIVERED AT THE DUBLIN AND GORRUM HIGHER CONFERENCE.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1864.

Rev. ALFRED T. LEE, M.A.

Professor of Hygiene and Rural Hygiene, and Secretary to the
National Conference, and to the General Committee for the
Federation of Hygiene.

LONDON & OXFORD: J. H. & J. A. TAYLOR.

1864.

SYNODICAL ACTION IN IRELAND.

Rev. ALFRED T. LEE (Rector of Ahoghill) said—I rise, with some diffidence, after the able paper of Dr. Reichel, and the eloquent and learned speech of Mr. Napier, to make some remarks on the subject before the Conference. Agreeing thoroughly, as I do, with very much of Dr. Reichel's paper, I am sorry that I am forced entirely to disagree with what he has said respecting the admission of the laity into Convocation, as well as with his remarks on the part taken by the laity in the Council of Jerusalem. If the account of that council, contained in the Acts of the Apostles, be thoroughly investigated, I think it will be found that the Apostles and elders alone made the decree, and that the brethren present were merely a consenting party to it. (Hear, hear.) In my opinion, the laity had nothing whatever to do with enacting the decree. When it was determined that Paul and Barnabas should go up from Antioch to Jerusalem, it was to ask the opinion of the "Apostles and elders" (Acts xv. 2) about this question. We are next told that "the Apostles and elders" (Acts xv. 6) came together to consider of this matter; and after the Council was held, and the decision arrived at, we are again told that St. Paul, as he passed through the cities of Asia Minor, "delivered them the decrees, for to keep which were ordained of the Apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" (Acts xvi. 4). It is true that the decree, in the Authorized Version, runs in the names of "the Apostles, and elders, and brethren;" but it will be found, on investigation, that this text by no means supports the argument that is attempted to be built upon it.* I maintain, then, that in the Council of Jerusalem, the laity were only a consenting party to the decree, and that its authoritative enactment was entirely the act of the Apostles and Presbyters of the Church. If this point was at all doubtful, the practice

* The *καὶ οἱ* before *ἀδελφοί* in Acts xv. 23, does not exist in any manuscripts of importance.—(See Woodsworth and Alford.) It is not found in the new Codex Sinaiticus. The decree, therefore, runs only in the names of "the Apostles and the Presbyter brethren," so that no argument for the admission of the laity into Convocation can be founded on this text. The testimony of that eminent canonist, Bishop Beveridge, is important on this point. He says—"Laici ad iudicium de doctrinâ aut disciplinâ Ecclesiasticâ ferendum nunquam admissi sunt."—(Codex Canonum Vindicatus, p. xx., 1678.—[Ed.]

of the sub-apostolic Church would be the best interpreter of its meaning. In the early councils the laity never took an authoritative part, they might be present during the debate, and afterwards sign the decree as a consenting party, but they never attempted to take a part in defining doctrines, that they left entirely to the spirituality.* For these reasons, I think it most unadvisable to attempt to admit the laity into Convocation itself. Yet, with this exception, I would gladly see the Clergy and laity co-operating in every possible way. I am an earnest advocate for the admission of the laity into Diocesan Conferences and Rural-Decanal meetings, and, I think, if such opportunities of co-operating with the Clergy were freely offered to the laity, they would gladly avail themselves of them, and they would then find themselves possessed of that due influence, which they ought to have in all those matters which concern the practical welfare of the Church. This subject of admitting the laity into Convocation has been fully discussed in England some years ago, and the general result arrived at was, that it would be most unadvisable to admit the laity into Convocation itself, and the reason given was this—Convocation is essentially a *Convocatio cleri*, admit the laity and it would cease to be Convocation. (Hear, hear.) The House of Commons is purely a lay body—Clergy are excluded from it, and if the Clergy are excluded from the Lower House of Parliament, why should the laity be admitted into the Lower House of Convocation? The advantage derived from the admission into Parliament would at least be equal to that liberty to be derived from admitting the laity into Convocation. Now, with regard to what Dr. Reichel said about the way in which Canon Trevor's remarks were received at the Bristol Congress. I was present during the reading of Canon Trevor's paper, and I can certify that the opinions referred to were received by many with decided marks of disapprobation. (Hear, hear.) Again, we are told that the Church in America admits the laity into her Synods, and we are therefore urged to admit them into ours. I do not think we are likely in this, or in any other matter, to take America as our model—(hear)—but even if such a step were desirable, we should remember that it is a very different thing to admit laymen into a new constitution, framed for a newly formed Church, and to seek to admit them into an old constitution from which they have all along been excluded. Mr. Hoare, who we

* The opinion of Dr. Field on this subject is so much to the point, that I cannot forbear quoting it in a note. "The persons that may be present at Councils are of divers sorts: for some there are with authority to teach, define, prescribe, and to direct. Others there are to hear, set forward, and consent unto that which is then done. In the former sort, none but only ministers of the Word and Sacraments are present in Councils, and they only have deciding and defining voices; but in the latter sort, laymen also may be present, whereupon we shall find that Bishops and Presbyters subscribe in this sort. 'Ego, N. *definiens* subscripsi;' but the Emfeior, or any other lay person, 'Ego, N. *consentiens* subscripsi.'"—On the Church, BKV. c. 49, p. 646, Ed. 1635.—[Ed.]

all know so well here, earnest advocate as he is for all the legitimate rights of the laity, is most decidedly opposed to their admission into Convocation. Nothing could be more emphatic than Mr. Hoare's declaration on this subject at the Manchester Church Congress.* One word now with regard to what has been said with respect to the preamble of the Act of Submission, where it states that Convocations in England were *always* assembled by the King's writ. It has been said that this preamble merely recites that which had been previously the common law of the land. I know this has been, and still is, the opinion of eminent lawyers; but although this is the case, I would venture to remind the Conference of the remark of the learned Mr. Joyce, in his Book on "England's Sacred Synods," viz.:—that this statement of the preamble of the Act of Submission is "*directly contrary to the truth.*" I must refer you to the book itself for the proofs by which Mr. Joyce supports this statement, for this is a question which cannot be fully entered into on such an occasion as the present.† I would therefore now only enter a protest against the preamble of the Act of Submission being taken as expressing historical truth. But the important question before us at present is, how can Synodical Action be best restored to our own branch of the United Church? Synodical Action is our right, and we must not cease our exertions till we obtain it. Our Bishops have taken the lead in this movement, although the first step in this matter came from our own Diocese. (Hear, hear.) In April, 1861, a Diocesan memorial was forwarded through the Lord Bishop to the late revered Primate, requesting His Grace to take steps for the revival of our Synodical Action; but it was not till July, 1861, that a unanimous address from all the Irish Prelates, requesting the Crown to call a National Synod of the United Church, was forwarded to Her Majesty. Nearly a year afterwards, in June, 1862, a reply was received from Sir George Grey, the Home Secretary, in which he informed the Primate that "Her Majesty's Government did not feel it to be their duty to advise Her Majesty to convene a General Synod of the United Church of England and Ireland. They believe," he continued, "that no such

* "He was grieved to hear of gentlemen in Manchester talking of lay co-operation in Convocation. . . . He had come to stamp to pieces the idea of laymen taking part in Convocation. (Hear.) He had learnt the duty of obedience, and he hoped the Clergy would also learn that duty." Report, pp. 98-99.—[Ed.]

† "Certain it is, that most astonishing lapses are frequently committed by those learned persons who prepare drafts of Acts. . . . But to invest with all the solemn circumstance of an Act of Parliament, historical statements *directly contrary to the truth*, is not a common practice, and when such a contingency occurs, as in the present case, it augurs most unpardonable carelessness or ignorance, or somewhat even still less deserving of forgiveness. . . . In fact, the statements that our Convocations were always assembled by the King's writ, is *simply false*; and to say that they were only so assembled, is to take another step *still further from the truth.*"—Joyce's Sacred Synods, p. 362.—[Ed.]

Synod ever was convened, and they are not aware that, if convened, it would have any legal power." The next step taken by the Irish Prelates, was to ask for the revival of Irish Convocation. This also was refused by the Government. Under these circumstances of continued refusal of an undoubted right of the Church in Ireland, the present Primate proceeded to take the opinion of that eminent ecclesiastical lawyer, Dr. A. J. Stephens, Q.C., who has declared that, in his opinion, "the Archbishop of Armagh has power, as Metropolitan, without any authorization from the Sovereign, to convene when, and as often as he may think fit, the Provincial Synod of Armagh."—(Armagh opinion, p. 20.) So that, the Primate can, whenever he sees fit, *ex mero motu*, summon his own Provincial Synod; and this right of the Metropolitan seems to me to be clearly acknowledged in the Church Temporalities Act, 3rd & 4th Wm. IV., c. 37, sec. 46, which, whilst transferring the Metropolitan jurisdiction in the Province of Tuam and Cashel, to the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, respectively, specially reserved the rights of the Metropolitan intact. It is also remarkable that Archbishop King, in 1709, summoned his own Provincial Synod, although the Convocation which had been summoned by Royal writ had not been dissolved, so that if the Royal writ issued to-morrow for the summoning of Irish Convocation, this would not in any way interfere with the rights of the Metropolitans of Armagh and Dublin to summon, whenever they pleased, their own Provincial Synods. (Hear, hear.) This then is the present state of the case. The Crown has refused to permit the assembling either of a National Synod of the United Church, or of Irish Convocation. The Primates therefore may either call their own Provincial Synods *ex mero motu*, or they may go to the Crown and request that at the summoning of the new Parliament the same Royal writ shall be issued to each of the Metropolitans of Canterbury, York, Armagh, and Dublin. If this was done, the four Provinces of the United Church would be placed on exactly the same footing, and, all things considered, this would seem the most desirable course to pursue. The four Provincial Synods being thus assembled, they might deliberate on all matters connected with the interests of the Church, and also act together, and arrive at a uniform conclusion by means of delegates. I think it most important that we should continue to press this matter by petition and otherwise, both upon the Government and our own Bishops. For the last ten years the Convocations of Canterbury and York have met and discussed questions of interest connected with the Church's welfare. Their members are acquainted with the mode of procedure, and their precedents are settled, and therefore if they are called upon to legislate, they are now in a fit state to do so; but our Synods have never been allowed to meet, and therefore we have still this work to do. There can be no doubt that it is a crying injustice to the Church in Ireland that we are kept perforce silent and not permitted to meet in Synod and deliberate on matters of the deepest interest to our

Church's welfare. Can we for a moment think that our ten Bishoprics would have been sacrificed in 1834, had we then been enabled to speak in our corporate capacity? (Hear, hear.) Or, that in 1857 the House of Commons would have been permitted, by a mere side wind, to despoil our Church of £12,000 of her yearly revenue? I earnestly trust this Conference will not separate without taking some active steps in this matter, and I think our energies should now be directed to obtain the issue of the Royal writ to each of our four Metropolitans. (Hear, hear.) This seems to me the most practical way of obtaining what we wish for. We have exactly the same Synodical rights as our brethren in England; why are we not permitted to exercise them? If the Royal writs were issued to the Archbishops, the Royal supremacy would be fully recognized, whilst, at the same time, the inherent rights of the Metropolitan would remain intact. If we are united and persistent in action the result is certain. (Applause.)

W. AND G. BAIRD, PRINTERS, ARTHUR STREET, BELFAST.