

Patronage, joined the Relief Church, where they felt they had a better chance of success. Thus the Synod of Relief injured itself by remaining so long without a Professor of Theology for its own students. So much was this the case that it has been said they never rose as a Church, like the Secession Churches, to have a phalanx of learned and talented ministers among them to give prominence to their denomination, till they cured this evil, and established their own Theological Seminary. From this long-continued defect in their system, it was facetiously remarked, and we believe that to some extent it was true, that there was a visible inconsistency between some of the Relief people, and some of their ministers, in that the former were Relief from the existence of Patronage, but the latter from the want of it.

It was in the year 1825, that this defect in the constitution of the Relief Church was remedied by the institution of a Divinity Hall, and by the appointment of the Rev. Dr. Thomson of Paisley, to be the Professor; and from this period the students were collected under his inspection in the prosecution of their studies for the holy ministry. Dr. Thomson was an ornament to his Church, and from his talents and acquirements, the urbanity of his manners, and other accomplishments, was well qualified to undertake the duties which now devolved on him. He entered on his labours in the Chair with diligence and zeal, and was the successful instrument in training many young men for the gospel ministry, and in greatly advancing the respectability of the Relief Church. He continued his labours till his death, when he was succeeded by Drs. Lindsay and McMichael, who still labour in that department.

The effects of this arrangement were salutary, and were soon felt. The Institution told on the interests of the denomination. It made them more compact in their organisation, it separated them effectually from the corrupt Establishment, it brought them forward to take a more decided stand in advocating the independence of the Church, which soon became the great subject of national interest and discussion, and it brought a host of talented ministers into their Synod, and tended greatly to produce closer intercourse and greater confidence between them and other liberal churches in pushing forward those measures of ecclesiastical reformation for which Providence was now so evidently opening the way, and especially with the United Secession for paving the way to that union of the two Churches which was soon to be realized.

The union of the two Secession Bodies, which took place in 1820, could not fail to interest the Relief Church, especially from these denominations having so great a resemblance to them in principle and administration; and this auspicious event did not fail to suggest the idea of union with themselves. We well remember to have travelled at this period with that respectable Relief minister, the Rev. Mr. Barr,* of Glasgow, to the neighbouring town of Paisley, where the Lord's Supper was to be dispensed among the various denominations, and where he was to assist Dr. Thomson, of the Relief Church, and I, Mr. Smart, who belonged to what had been the Burgher side of the Secession. My fellow-traveller was much interested in the union that had so recently taken place, and spake of it with enthusiasm. We both met Dr. Thomson as we entered the town. Mr. Barr remarked to his brother, that he rejoiced to find what he called "*a new thing*," that I was to assist, not as usual with my father, but with Mr. Smart, and added, "I hope the time is not distant when he will come to assist you." This, doubtless, would have happened, had I remained in Scotland, and had Dr. Thomson, with whom I was well acquainted, lived to the time of the union between the Secession and Relief. I believe that in a similar manner the greater number of the ministers of the Relief Synod rejoiced in the union referred to, and regarded it as a prelude to a union with themselves. In proof of this it is proper to state, that at the first meeting of their Synod after this union, in May, 1821, they unanimously passed the fol-

* Author of two excellent Catechisms on the sealing ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.