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Miscellaneous Articles.

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY.

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We are now, according to the plan formerly laid down, to notice some questions arising out of the Voluntary Controversy; and to trace with as much brevity as possible those movements which led to the organisation of what is called The Free Church.

It will be granted by all who take a comprehensive and impartial view of this controversy that it was the main cause . . . originating the disruption in the Church of Scotland,—an event most memorable and interesting, and which has been the means of incalculable benefit to Christianity both at home and abroad. Strange as it may seem, the enlightened scriptural views of Dissenters in Scotland, to which the evangelical party in the Establishment were the bitterest opponents, were over-ruled by God to bring that party into the very condition which they reprobated, and to make them the most liberal and zealous supporters of religion by voluntary contribution. The movements to which we refer, if correctly and seriously contemplated, and traced to their grand result, cannot fail to induce Christians to say, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

The United Secession Synod did nothing in their judicial capacity in regard to this controversy for more than six years after it was agitated, and even then it was not the discussion of the question itself, but of important matters arising out of it. It took its rise, as Dr. Chalmers would say not *ab intra* but *ab extra*. But as the ministers and people of the Secession had probably the principal share in the steps to which the controversy led, it has been so much identified with the United Secession that a correct history of our church would scarcely be given without giving a full account of it. We, however, claim not for the Secession the exclusive honour in this movement. Other liberal Dissenters became their able and faithful auxiliaries; and, indeed, the views themselves which were brought forward were not new, although of late they have been more fully developed. They are scriptural views, and therefore as old as Christianity; and in every period of the Christian church they have had their advocates. Christianity during the first three centuries depended solely for support on the resources of its friends. The interference of the civil magistrate, except to persecute, was never known till the fourth century, when Constantine the Great substituting flattery for persecution, incorporated the