

ing their Church into a Synod; and on this occasion they freely conversed on those shades of difference on some points which it was understood existed. They differed about covenanting, they were not generally opposed to National Establishments of religion; and they did not even all agree about what was afterwards considered the grand distinguishing peculiarity of their Church—Free Communion, or liberty to sit at the Lord's Table with visible saints, although of other Christian denominations. "At the very first meeting," says Dr. Struthers, "which took place between the Eastern and Western Presbytery, to consult whether they should constitute themselves a Synod, the question as to their terms of communion was introduced as a matter on which they were divided. When the sons of God met together, this question, like an evil spirit, appeared in the midst of them. Cruden of Glasgow, and Cowan of Colingsburgh, wished ministerial and Christian communion restricted to Presbyterians who were visible saints. 'A motion was made by Mr. Cowan, desiring to know the mind of the meeting, with respect to holding ministerial and Christian communion with those of the Episcopal and Independent persuasion, and with respect to those who are unsound in the essentials of the Christian faith, particularly by their publications to the world.

"With respect to the last of these, the meeting unanimously agreed, that their principles did not allow them to hold communion with such.

"With respect to the other, viz., ministerial or Christian communion occasionally with those of the Episcopal or Independent persuasion, the meeting being of different opinions, put a vote:—Hold communion with those of the Episcopal or Independent persuasion occasionally, upon supposition always that they are by profession visible saints; or not? and the Roll being called, and votes marked, it carried, Hold communion. And, therefore, the meeting find it agreeable to the principles of the Presbytery of Relief to hold communion occasionally with such."

It thus appears that prior to this period the denomination had not been altogether consolidated in sentiment. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we consider that the ministers composing these Presbyteries had come from so many different bodies of professing Christians. This meeting, however, helped them forward to greater uniformity; and at the first meeting of Synod to which they now agreed, they seem, as will appear from another quotation, to have reached such unanimity on the points of former difference as to promise for the future harmonious and efficient co-operation among themselves.

It was in 1773 that the Synod of Relief was first constituted, and on this occasion they again held consultation about their principles and design as a Church; and now they seem to have come up to one mind as to the important objects of their Association. In particular, the subject of Free Communion was again discussed at this meeting of Synod, and, says Dr. Struthers, "the members of Court, after having had the matter a year before them, gave a deliberate and unanimous judgment on their terms of communion as a religious denomination. With respect to the overture concerning ministerial and Christian communion, the Synod were unanimously of opinion, that it is agreeable to the Word of God and their principles, occasionally to hold communion with those of the Episcopal and Independent persuasion who are visible saints."

In the circumstances in which this denomination arose, it is not surprising that there was at first, to some extent, a want of unity in plan and operation among the ministers. Coming from so many different denominations, at different times, and from different causes, it could hardly be expected that kindred sentiments and feelings would be matured among them. Some time was necessary to make them acquainted and give them confidence in each other, and thus to produce a thorough amalgamation, and direct to a common aim. They were not long in reaching these. This, their first meeting in Synod, gave the character and impulse to all their future proceedings.

There were cases, too, where, at the outset, a similar want of unity appear-