

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY.

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Having now, with considerable minuteness, brought down the history of the Associate and of the General Associate Synods to the year 1820, the period of their auspicious union, when they took the title of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church, and having described the manner in which this union was consummated, it is proper, in following out our plan, again to look back and give some sketch of the history of the other constituent part of our Church, namely, the Relief Synod, and so far as possible to trace its proceedings from the time it was constituted into an ecclesiastical Court till, in 1846, it agreed to become one with the Secession Church. After this we shall be prepared to bring up the history of the United Secession from 1820 to the same year; and then to describe the preliminaries and consummation of the Union between these two denominations—forming what we call the United Presbyterian Church. When this is overtaken, if God permit, we may look at the now fully-organized United Presbyterian Church, in its progress and operations, from that period to the present day.

Already, as may be remembered, we gave some account of the causes leading to the origin and organisation of the Relief Church. We found that in 1761, on the 22nd of October, three Ministers, with three Elders, met at Colingsburgh, and constituted themselves into a Presbytery, which they called the Presbytery of Relief. These ministers were, the Rev. Thomas Gillespie, Dunfermline; the Rev. Thomas Boston, Jedburgh; and the Rev. Thomas Collier, Colingsburgh. It is rather remarkable that these three brethren all bore the same Christian name, and it is an apostolic name. We trust they had the blessing of which Christ spake to their prototype when he said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The constitution of the Presbytery was an important step in their history. Before this Mr. Collier was in England, and had no connection with the others; and Messrs. Gillespie and Boston, although from similar causes they had left the Established Church of Scotland, had as yet no common tie of connection. They laboured in parts of the country considerably distant from each other, when there was little facility for intercourse. The views of these excellent ministers were similar, and they had embarked on ministerial labours, distinct from the National Establishment, in circumstances and for purposes in which there was a sufficient agreement. But for a succession of years they presented their respective duties without any ministerial intercourse. It would scarcely be expected that their common cause could advance with much efficiency whilst they remained isolated. But now that, with a third brother, they were united in an ecclesiastical court, they were in some manner prepared for extending their influence beyond the sphere of their respective congregations. They were also prepared to receive the accession of other ministers to assist them in the cause on which they had embarked, and to license and ordain young men to the holy ministry. And in proportion as they succeeded in obtaining new labourers to co-operate with them, were they prepared to meet the many applications which from time to time they received for supply of sermon from different parts of the country. As a Presbytery they formed a centre around which ministers and people might collect; and they began to be known in the country as having a standard raised for affording relief to the Christian people who, in various localities, were oppressed by the rigorous exercise of lay patronage, or other tyrannical measures by which the Church of Scotland was now, as it had been for a long time, crippled and corrupted.

It will be impossible for the writer to go into much detail in tracing the history of this denomination. We have not the same extent of materials as for the histories of the other denominations. It is true that the Rev. Dr.