

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY.

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Having given a detail of the proceedings of the Associate and General Associate Synods in their separate state, embracing a period of seventy-three years, we now proceed to speak of their auspicious union, which took place in the year 1820. There are few events in ecclesiastical history more interesting, and which have led to more important results than this union. It is especially entitled to hold a permanent place in any full and faithful account of the Christian Church in Scotland. It will be ever memorable as an event which laid the foundation for an Evangelical Church to be augmented by other unions, past and future; and which will probably become, if it has not already become, the largest and most influential denomination adhering, as we humbly think, to the leading principles and grand design of the Protestant Reformation.

Already the Branches of the Associate and General Associate Churches in Nova Scotia and Ireland had united, and it was felt by many that a union in Scotland should soon follow, as a necessary consequence. How soon, none could say. But so soon as it did come, none could have ventured to anticipate. So distant did such an event seem to many, as the writer remembers to have felt himself at the time of his Ordination only two years before the union, that it was looked upon as what might happen in the next generation, but few then living had the expectation of seeing it realized. The denominations, even two years before the union, were still in hostile array, although not in actual skirmish. There was what might be considered an armistice, but neither of them had declared for peace. There were some occasional intercourses among ministers and private Christians, and even friendships formed, but the denominational pride of both parties was still unbending, and each felt as if wedded to the distinct line of separate operation which had been delineated by their fathers. To imagine that a union was so near would have appeared visionary, had any individual ventured to suggest it. It is true that less exclusive feelings were cherished by the different Churches, and that a more kindly feeling of brotherhood, and a closer and more frequent intercourse had begun. But still the idea of union was in the distance. In a letter by the late Dr. Hough, then in Stirling, to a brother in the ministry, written so late as the year 1817, he thus expresses himself:—

“It is not long since each religious party was surrounded with lofty walls of its own rearing, partly for separation, partly for defence, and partly for annoyance, and there was little either of ingress or egress, but for its own exclusive friends. If the walls are not thrown down, the artillery is dismounted, the works are neglected or going to decay, and there is a constant going and coming by the gates. There are, moreover, many pieces of neutral ground discovered, where men from all the various enclosures assemble, and if they do not construct a formal treaty of union, they at least construct attachments, form the habits of peace, and feel strange longings for the entire demolition of their old scowling parapets. A good many in each enclosure grumble when their friends issue from their precincts, and meet old enemies on these newly-discovered commons, and look with a jealous eye, from a distance, at these strange festivities; but even these grumblers venture sometimes from curiosity, or other motives, to visit them themselves; and it is wonderful what tendencies to revolution even they experience. When they get out from their old walls, and narrow streets, and old-fashioned dark lanes and tenelements, to the open green commons, they feel they breathe a freer air, their very hearts warm and expand, and something within them says, ‘It is good for us to be here.’”

Again:—

“If the ancient obstructions to intercourse be removed,—if the monuments of