

Dr. McCall, were reviewed, and their opposition to divine truth, as well as their dangerous tendency, is pointed out. This warning was widely circulated, and there is reason to believe had a salutary effect in establishing the faith of many in the grand peculiarities of the doctrines of grace.

Whilst the Associate Synod sat in September, 1788, they received a communication from some members of the Reformed Presbytery, expressing their desire to hold conference with any deputation which might be appointed with a view to ascertain whether they might be able to unite in church-fellowship. Accordingly the Synod nominated ten of their members as a committee to converse with the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery. But the result was unsatisfactory, as it was found that such differences of opinion existed between the two denominations that they "could not walk together in Church-fellowship to the edification and comfort of one another." It was agreed that a declaration should be made to this effect by the Synod to the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery.

About this time several measures of improvement in the constitution and operations of the Church, came under discussion. But no measure more extensively useful was proposed and adopted than the institution of a fund for assisting weak congregations, for the support of aged and infirm ministers, for defraying the expenses connected with the Theological Seminary, and for other pious and charitable purposes. This fund was supported by annual collections from congregations, and voluntary contributions from individual members of the church. It was placed under the management of a Committee of an equal number of Ministers and Elders, equally appointed by the Synod. This fund became the means of extensive good to many congregations struggling with difficulties, and especially to wit: a few aged servants of Christ, who through infirmity were not able to prosecute their labours in public, and whose congregations were not able to raise as much as was necessary for the support of two ministers. By this means these worthy ministers were enabled to spend the evening of their days in comparative comfort.

It was found necessary about this time, as the congregations of the church had greatly multiplied to form three new Presbyteries. These were, the Presbytery of Perth, constituted for the first time, by order of the Synod, on the 4th of September, 1788, Mr. John Frazer of Auchtermuchty being Moderator; the Presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk, constituted by Mr. John Bellfrago, of Falkirk, on the 16th of May, 1793; and the Presbytery of Kilmarnock, constituted by Mr. John Maie of Tarbolton, on the 2nd of September, 1793.

It was about this time likewise, that two brethren, Messrs. Toller and Clark, who had been labouring in Pennsylvania, in connection with this Synod, effected a union with several ministers, in that state, on the Anti-Slavery side, and with some connected with the Reformed Presbytery, and formed a Synod, which was declared to be independent of any of the ecclesiastical judicatories of Scotland, and which assumed the name of the Associate Reformed Synod of North America. This Synod was first constituted on the 30th October, 1782. They adopted as the basis of their union the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; excluding, however, from this profession such parts of the confession as describe the powers of civil government in relation to religion. These they reserved "for candid discussion on some future occasion, as God should be pleased to direct." In the article of their union, relating to the National Covenants, they give no opinion about the duty of covenanting, or about the "binding nature" of the covenants on posterity: but they agree to declare their "heartly approbation of the earnest contending for the truth, and magnanimous sufferings in its defence, by which their pious ancestors were enabled to distinguish themselves in the last two centuries;" and they assure each other "that they have an affectionate remembrance of the National Covenants of Scotland, England, and Ireland, as well intended engagements to support civil and religious liberty." One of their articles of union had for its object the restoration of the doctrine of free communion, "which," say they, "some of our denomination, through inattention, have long opposed." On this subject they expressed themselves in the following language:—The United Presbyteries acknowledge it to be their duty to treat pious people of other denominations with great attention and tenderness. They are willing, as God offereth opportunity, to extend communion to all, who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. (Confer-

ence Chap. xvi. Sec. 2.) But an occasional communion, in a peculiarly divided state of the Church, may produce great disorders, if it is not conducted with much wisdom and moderation, they esteem themselves and the people under their inspection inviolably bound, in all ordinary cases, to submit in every restriction of their liberty, which general edification renders necessary."

Of this union, although their own brethren in it were the majority, the General Associate Synod of Scotland disapproved, so far at least as afterwards to send their missionaries to strengthen the hands of two brethren who had stood out against it, and with whom alone they continued their correspondence, and this was done till that became, as it now is, a considerable body of Christians in the United States. But the Associate Synod seem to have given this United Church their sanction, and to have regarded them as a sister Church. It is perhaps to be regretted that in its formation there was not more deliberation, and more friendly consultation with the different churches at home which they represented; for this might have led to some general approbation of the step taken; might have helped to heal divisions even in Scotland; and at any rate might have satisfied all parties concerned, that in a foreign land, and in circumstances where the grounds of difference had no practical bearing, it was expedient that those guilty ministers, all holding the great doctrine of grace, and differing only in a few circumstantial matters, should waive their minor differences, and co-operate for the grand end of securing strength and efficiency, by uniting together in one Christian church, for the glory of Christ, and the everlasting interests of the souls of men. To us in this generation, who have risen above some of those prejudices by which many of our fathers were influenced, there seems to have been an expediency in this union, without any thing like compromise of principle; and we cordially concur in the following sentiments of the respected historian of the Reformed Church of Scotland:—

"The rule which this Synod adopted for regulating the admission into this society of persons connected with other Presbyterian denominations, displayed an excellent spirit, and ought to regulate the conduct of all religious denominations in receiving into their communion persons who apply to them from other societies. As the Associate Reformed Synod was avowedly established on the general principles of the Presbyterian system, as detached from the local peculiarities by which the most considerable parties of Presbyterians had been hitherto distinguished, so they agreed 'to reject all such applications for admission to communion to the Synod, that may at any time be made by persons belonging to other denominations of Presbyterians, as evidently rise from caprice, personal prejudice, or any other schismatical principles. And the only admissible application shall be such as, upon deliberate examination, shall be found to arise from conviction of duty, and to discover meekness towards the party whose communion is relinquished; or such as are made by considerable bodies of people, who are not only destitute of a fixed gospel ministry, but cannot be reasonably provided for by the denominations of Presbyterians to which they belong.'"

The Associate Synod in Scotland received a communication from this American Synod some time after its formation, expressing the continued regard of these transatlantic brethren for the covenantal reformation of Britain and Ireland, and particularly of Scotland, and requesting Preachers to be sent to aid them in the great work of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. To this communication a friendly answer was returned, in which the Associate Synod expressed their happiness in hearing that their brethren in America adhered to the same principles with themselves, and wishing them all success in the work of the Lord. At this period they could not send them any supply of ministers. But they did this on future occasions; and these churches recognising each other as sister churches, agreed to maintain regular correspondence by better, and, when found practicable, by deputations to each others Courts.

During these proceedings the mission to Nova Scotia was not forgotten. After an interruption of correspondence with their brethren there, it was renewed, and steps taken to strengthen their hands by sending out a supply of ministers. In several attempts they were unsuccessful; but in 1794 two or three preachers were sent out to that country.

Whilst the Associate Synod thus laboured for the spiritual interests of foreign lands, they manifested a liberal spirit in approving of friendly co-operation with other denominations at home for the spread of the gospel in the dark places of the earth. About this time the London Mis-