contrary to the appointment of Jeſus Chriſt, and the practice of the apoſtles, when they filled up the firſt vacancy in the apoſtolic college, and appointed the elec­tion of deacons and elders in the primitive church.— Many of thoſe alſo who were thought to be the beſt friends of the church, expreſſed their fears that this act would have a tendency to overturn the eccleſiaſtical conſtitution which was eſtabliſhed at the Revolu­tion.

Mr Ebenezer Erſkine miniſter at Stirling diſtinguiſhed himſelf by a bold and determined oppoſition to the meaſures of the aſſembly in 1732. Being at that time moderator of the ſynod of Perth and Stirling, he opened the meeting at Perth with a ſermon from Pſalm cxviii. 22. “The ſtone which the builders rejected is become the head ſtone of the corner.” In the courſe of his ſermon he remonſtrated with no ſmall degree of freedom againſt the add of the preceding aſſembly with regard to the ſettlement of miniſters, and alleged that it was contrary to the word of God and the eſtabliſh­ed conſtitution of the church. A formal complaint was lodged againſt him for uttering ſeveral offenſive expreſſions in his ſermon before the ſynod. Many of the members declared that they heard him utter no­thing but found and ſeaſonable doctrine; but his accuſers inſiſting on their complaint, obtained an appoint­ment of a committee of ſynod to collect what were called the offenſive expreſſions, and to lay them before the next diet in writing. This was done accordingly; and Mr Erſkine gave in his anſwers to every article of the complaint. After three days warm reaſoning on this affair, the ſynod by a majority of ſix found him cenſurable; againſt which ſentence he proteſted, and appealed to the next general aſſembly. When the aſ­ſembly met in May 1733, it affirmed the ſentence of the ſynod, and appointed Mr Erſkine to be rebuked and admoniſhed from the chair. Upon which he pro­teſted, that, as the aſſembly had found him cenſurable, and had rebuked him for doing what he conceived to be agreeable to the word of God and the ſtandards of the church, he ſhould be at liberty to preach the ſame truths, and to teſtify againſt the ſame or ſimilar evils, on every proper occaſion. To this proteſt Meſſrs Wil­liam Wilſon miniſter at Perth, Alexander Moncrief miniſter at Abernethy, and James Fiſher miniſter at Kinclaven, gave in a written adherence, under the form of inſtrument; and theſe four withdrew, intending to return to their reſpective charges, and act agreeably to their proteſt whenever they ſhould have an opportunity. Had the affair reſted here, there never would have been a ſeceſſion; but the aſſembly reſolving to carry on the proceſs, cited them by their officer to compear next day. They obeyed the citation; and a committee was appointed to retire with them, in order to perſuade them to withdraw their proteſt. The committee ha­ving reported that they ſtill adhered to their proteſt, the aſſembly ordered them to appear before the com­miſſion in Auguſt following and retract their proteſt; and if they ſhould not comply and teſtify their ſorrow for their conduct, the commiſſion was empowered to ſuſpend them from the exerciſe of their miniſtry, with certification that if they ſhould act contrary to ſaid ſen­tence, the commiſſion ſhould proceed to an higher cenſure.

The commiſſion met in Auguſt accordingly; and the four miniſters ſtill adhering to their proteſt, were ſuſpended from the exerciſe of their office, and cited to the next meeting of the commiſſion in November fol­lowing. From this ſentence ſeveral miniſters and elders, members of the commiſſion, diſſented. The commiſ­ſion met in November, and the ſuſpended miniſters compeared. Addreſſes, repreſentations, and letters from ſeveral lynods and preſbyteries, relative to the buſineſs now before the commiſſion, were received and read. The ſynods of Dumfries, Murray, Roſs, Angus and Mearns, Perth and Stirling, craved that the commiſ­ſion would delay proceeding to an higher cenſure. The ſynods of Galloway and File, as alſo the preſhytery of Dornoch, addreſſed the commiſſion for lenity, tenderneſs, and forbearance, towards the ſuſpended miniſters; and the preſhytery of Aberdeen repreſented, that, in their judgment, the ſentence of ſuſpenſion inflicted on the foreſaid miniſters was too high, and that it was a ſtretch of eccleſiaſtical authority. Many members of the com­miſſion reaſoned in the ſame manner, and alleged that the act and ſentence of laſt aſſembly did not oblige them to proceed to an higher cenſure at this meet­ing of the commiſſion. The queſtion, however, was put, Proceed to an higher cenſure, or not? and the votes being numbered, were found equal on both ſides: upon which Mr John Goldie the moderator gave his caſting vote to proceed to an higher cenſure; which ſtands in their minutes in theſe words: “The commiſ­ſion did and hereby do looſe the relation of Mr Ebene­zer Erſkine miniſter at Stirling, Mr William Wilſon miniſter at Perth, Mr Alexander Moncrief miniſter at Abernethy, and Mr James Fiſher miniſter at Kinclaven, to their reſpective charges, and declare them no longer miniſters of this church; and do hereby prohibit all miniſters of this church to employ them, or any of them, in any miniſterial function. And the commiſſion do declare the churches of the ſaid miniſters vacant from and after the date of this ſentence.”

This ſentence being intimated to them, they proteſt­ed, that their miniſterial office and relation to their re­ſpective charges ſhould be held *as* valid as if no ſuch ſentence had paſſed; and that they were now obliged to make a *ſecession* from the prevailing party in the eccleſia­ſtical courts; and that it ſhall be lawful and warrantable for them to preach the goſpel, and diſcharge every branch of the paſtoral office, according to the word of God and the eſtabliſhed principles of the church of Scotland. Mr Ralph Erſkine miniſter at Dunfermline, Mr Thomas Mair miniſter at Orwel, Mr John M'Laren miniſter at Edinburgh, Mr John Currie miniſter at Kinglaſſie, Mr James Wardlaw miniſter at Dunfermline, and Mr Thomas Nairn miniſter at Abbotſhal, proteſted againſt the ſentence of the commiſſion, and that it ſhould be lawful for them to complain of it to any ſubſequent general aſſembly of the church.

The ſeceſſion properly commenced at this date. And accordingly the ejected miniſters declared in their pro­teſt that they were laid under the diſagreeable neceſſity of ſeceding, not from the principles and conſtitution of the church of Scotland, to which, they ſaid, they ſtedfaſtly adhered, but from the preſent church-courts, which had thrown them out from miniſterial communion. The aſſembly, however, which met in May 1734 did ſo far modify the above ſentence, that they empowered the ſynod of Perth and Stirling to receive the ejected