tor, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, gave his casting vote to proceed to a higher censure. At this stage of the proceedings the Commission proposed certain terms of ac­commodation, which the suspended ministers, after mature deliberation, declared they could not conscientiously accept. The Commission, therefore, on the 16th of November 1733, passed sentence upon them ; loosing their relation to their respective charges, declaring their churches vacant, and prohibiting all ministers of the Church of Scotland from em­ploying them in any ministerial function.

The 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 ; that they were now obliged to make a *secession* from the prevailing party in the ecclesiastical courts ; and that it should be lawful for them to preach the gospel, and discharge all the duties of the pastoral office, according to the word of God, and the principles and constitution of the Church of Scotland.

The Secession properly commenced at this date. 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 expressed their steadfast adherence, but from the present church-courts, which had thrown them out from ministerial communion. In the new and trying circumstances in which they were placed, they conducted themselves with great caution and prudence. A few weeks after their expulsion from the national church, they met, according to previous appointment, at Gairney Bridge, a small village in the neighbourhood of Kinross, on the 5th of December 1733. Having spent the whole of that and the greater part of the succeeding day in prayer and pious conference, they finally resolved to constitute them­selves into a presbytery, under the designation of *the Asso­ciate Presbytery.* This presbytery, at its first formation, con­sisted only of the four ejected ministers; for though Messrs Ralph Erskine and Thomas Mair were present at this in­teresting meeting, they were merely spectators. Anxious, however, to avoid every thing like rashness or precipitancy, and cherishing a solemn impression of the responsibility attached to their conduct, in the remarkable circumstances in which they were placed, the seceding ministers resolved to hold their meetings chiefly for prayer and religious con­ference, and to defer proceeding to any judicial acts till they should see whether the ecclesiastical courts would retrace their steps. They considered it necessary, however, to pub­lish a Testimony to the doctrine, worship, and government of the Church of Scotland, and a statement of the grounds of their secession from the national church. This has been since known by the name of the Extrajudicial Testimony.

In the Assembly which met in May 1734, a conciliatory spirit was manifested by the ruling party ; the agitated state of popular feeling, and the knowledge that the Se- ceders had many friends among the clergy themselves, dis­posed them to make some concessions to prevent the spread of disaffection. When the commission-book was examined, there were some reservations made in the approval of its proceedings ; the act of 1730, forbidding church-courts to record dissents and protests, and the act of 1732, respecting the settlement of vacant parishes, were repealed ; the Com­mission was appointed to petition his majesty and the par­liament for the repeal of the patronage act ; and they au­thorized the Synod of Perth and Stirling to receive the ejected ministers into the communion of the church, and restore them to their respective charges, but with this ex­

press direction, that the “ synod should not take upon them to judge of the legality or formality of the former procedure of the church judicatories in relation to this affair, or either approve or censure the same.” But as the appearances of reformation which had been exhibited were, in the opinion of the four seceding brethren, dictated merely by a calcu­lating worldly policy, and by no real regard for the cause of truth, after solcmn and repeated deliberation, they were unanimously of opinion that, in existing circumstances, it was their duty to remain in a state of separation, till they should see unequivocal and decided evidence that the cause of defection was in reality abandoned. Having prepared a statement of the reasons of their refusal, and the terms upon which they were willing to return to the Established Church, they published it some time before the meeting of Assembly 1735. The proceedings of the Assemblies of 1735 and 1736 seemed to the seceding ministers fully to justify the opinion which they had formed respecting the measures proposed in the preceding Assembly, and to dis­pel, for the time at least, all hopes of a re-union with the Established Church ; and they now considered it “ full time to proceed to the exercise of the powers with which they were intrusted by the Head of the church, for the vindica­tion of His truths and ordinances, and for the relief of the Christian people, by supplying them with sermon."@@1 They now prepared what they termed an Act, Declaration, and Testimony to the doctrine, worship, government, and dis­cipline of the Church of Scotland, and condemning the numerous instances of defection from these, both in former and in the present times. Some time after this, having re­ceived the accession of Messrs Ralph Erskine of Dunferm­line, Thomas Mair of Orwell, Thomas Nairn of Abbotshall, and James Thomson of Burntisland, the Associate Presby­tery now consisted of eight members. Numerous applica­tions for sermon having been received from all parts of the country,@@\* and the seceding ministers having now renounced all hopes of a re-union with the church, resolved to adopt measures for extending and perpetuating the benefits of the Secession ; and accordingly Mr Wilson of Perth, a per­son of great ability and learning, was chosen professor of divinity, and intrusted with the education of candidates for the ministry.@@3 These measures necessarily produced a com­plete separation between them and the Established Church. The Assembly of 1739 declared the refractory ministers wor­thy of deposition ; but, from motives of expediency, delayed giving sentence against them till next year, when they were all deposed, and ordered to be ejected from their churches. In some places, such as Stirling and Perth, the seceding ministers were forcibly excluded from their usual places of worship the first Sabbath after the decision of the Assem­bly, while in others, such as Dunfermline and Burntisland, they continued to occupy their pulpits for at least two years after sentence of deposition was pronounced against them. All of them, however, continued to discharge the duties of the ministry in their respective congregations, who still adhered to them, erected places of worship for them, and provided for their support. Meanwhile cases of violent settlements of ministers increased throughout the country, and the opposition was frequently so formidable, and po­pular excitement so great, as to render the attendance of a guard of soldiers necessary at ordinations. These contests had of course a powerful influence in increasing the adhe­rents of the seceding ministers. New accessions were made to them from all quarters. Some even of the probationers of the Established Church placed themselves under their superintendence, and their theological hall was in such a

@@@‘ Testimony of the United Associate Synod, p. 52.

@@@, During the years 1737-38, upwards of seventy petitions for sermon were laid on the table of the presbytery.

@@@3 Me Wilson devoted the months of March, April, and May, to bis course of theological tuition. He not only read his lectures, but

conducted the whole business of the class, in the Latin language.