gradually exhausted itself ; but towards the close of the eighteenth century, both synods were disturbed by an angry discussion respecting the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, and the obligation of the national co­venant upon posterity. In 1796 the synod commenced their revision of the Testimony, a business of no small importance and difficulty, as this document “ consisted of two hundred octavo pages, and included all the controver­sial points in divinity and church-government which had been discussed in this country for successive generations.”

During the progress of this laborious work, which lasted for a period of nearly eight years, considerable dissatisfac­tion was expressed by a small minority ; and when at length the revision was brought to a close in May 1804, and the Introduction, Narrative, and Testimony, as correct­ed and enlarged, were adopted by the synod as the term of admission for those who shall apply for joining in commu­nion with them, five ministers, Messrs Whytock, Aitken, Chalmers, Hog, and M'Crie, protested against the decision, and, after various ineffectual attempts at accommodation, left the body, and formed themselves into a distinct pres­bytery.

Nearly about this period a fierce controversy was carried on in the Associate or Burgher Synod respecting the same subject, which was under consideration for a considerable time, and various controversial publications issued from the press respecting it. At length, in April 1797, the synod by a majority agreed to the following motion. “ That whereas some parts of the standard books of this synod have been interpreted as favouring compulsory measures in religion, the synod hereby declare that they do not re-

3uire an approbation of any such principle from any candi- ate for license or ordination ; and whereas a controversy has arisen among us respecting the nature and kind of the obligation of our solemn covenants on posterity, whether it be entirely of the same kind upon us as upon our ancestors who swore them, the synod hereby declare, that while they hold the obligation of our covenants upon posterity, they do not interfere with that controversy which has arisen re­specting it, and recommend it to all their members to sup­press that controversy, as tending to gender strife, rather than godly edifying.” Notwithstanding this decision, the ferment which had been excited by the discussion on this subject rather increased than abated, and the question was again brought under the notice of the synod in September 1799. After a lengthened discussion, it was decided by a large majority, that “ the synod adjourn the further discussion of this question till a future meeting, and in the mean time appoint a committee to draw up a synodical address to the people of their charge, expressive of their adherence to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland.” Against this decision several members pro­tested, and two of them, Messrs Willis and Hyslop, declared in their protest, that as the synod had refused to reverse their former act, they would no longer acknowledge their autho­rity. In consequence of this declaration their names were erased from the roll, and shortly afterwards they, along with Mr Watson, minister of Kilpatrick, constituted themselves into a distinct presbytery, and became the founders of that body which is ordinarily known by the appellation of the Original Burgher Synod. An attempt was made by these separatists to obtain possession of the property belonging to the *synod,* by alleging that they had abandoned the prin­ciples which their predecessors in the Secession had always maintained. An appeal to the courts of law was made on this point, in the case of the Associate congregation in Perth. Mr Jervie, one of the ministers of this congrega­tion, joined the Original Burgher Synod, while his colleague Mr Aikman continued in connection with the Associate Synod. The congregation were also divided in sentiment, and each party claimed the exclusive possession of the

manse and place of worship. After a long and expensive litigation, in the course of which the process was carried from the inferior courts to the House of Lords, and thence remitted back to the Court of Session, it was ultimately de­cided that the defenders had not departed from the original standards and principles of the association, and that the pur­suers had separated from the congregation to which they belonged, without any assignable cause, and without any fault on the part of the Associate Synod. They had, therefore, no right to disturb the defenders in the possession of their property. The question w as one of great importance, and the principle laid down in this instance as the ground of judgment, has been since regarded as the settled law of the country in all similar cases.

No other event of much importance occurred in the his­tory of the Secession Church, till the period when the two great branches of which it was composed were again hap­pily united into one. A junction had previously taken place between the Burgher and Antiburgher ministers in America, Nova Scotia, and Ireland. For a number of years an amicable feeling had gradually gained ground among the ministers and people connected with both branches of the Secession, and their intercourse in bible, missionary, and other religious societies tended powerfully to strengthen the feeling of mutual regard. From the moment that the proposal of a junction was made, both synods entered on the matter with cordiality and zeal. The religious public generally took considerable interest in the movement. The town councils of Glasgow and Paisley abolished the religi­ous clause of the oath which had occasioned the strife, and the Convention of Royal Burghs unanimously recommend­ed its entire abolition, for the express purpose of removing any obstacles that might obstruct the progress of this de­sirable event At length the articles of union having been agreed upon and sanctioned by both synods, and all the necessary preliminaries settled, the union was completed on the 8th of September 1820, in Bristo Street church, Edinburgh, the spot where, seventy-three years before, the separation had taken place.

All the ministers of the Associate Synod became mem­bers of the United Synod ; but Professor Paxton, and other nine ministers of the General Associate or Antiburgher Synod, refused to concur in the union, and soon after form­ed a junction with Professor Bruce, Dr M'Crie, and other members of the Constitutional Associate Presbytery, who withdrew from the Antiburgher body in 1806.

Since the period of the union the Secession Church has continued rapidly to increase in numbers and strength, and the extraordinary controversy which is at present agitating the whole country has brought the Seceders much more prominently into view than during any preceding era of their church. The question respecting the power of the magistrate in religious affairs had frequently been discussed among Seceders themselves, but of late years it has become a matter of national interest. The founders of the Seces­sion Church doubtless approved of the interference of the civil magistrate in matters of religion ; but they appear to have changed their opinions on this subject at no distant period after their secession from the Established Church, as appears from the language of the Associate presbytery as early as 1743, in their answers to Mr Nairn : “ If true reli­gion became a part of the civil constitution, it inevitably follows that the church became a part of the state, which doctrine, as it is absurd in itself, lays a plain foundation for Erastianism, overturning the distinction betwixt the king­dom of our Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdoms of this world.” The same sentiments were expressed by the Reve­rend Adam Gibb in his Display of the Secession Testimony, published in 1774, and by the Antiburgher Synod in the revision of their Testimony. This explicit condemnation of the connection between church and state was one of the