

the SECESSION, and gave birth to the United Presbyterian Church.

At the meeting of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, in October, 1732, the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, one of the ministers of Stirling, and retiring moderator, in preaching the opening sermon, which he did from Psal. cxviii. 22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner," testified with great plainness of speech against the course pursued by the courts of the church.

Mr. Erskine had long stood forth the consistent friend, both of the doctrines of the gospel and the freedom of the church. In the controversies of the previous twenty years he had held a prominent place among those who were struggling against the defections of the majority. But his present measure brought matters to a crisis. The Synod resolved, that for the statements and language of his sermon he should be rebuked at their bar, and admonished to behave orderly in future. On an appeal to the General Assembly, that court approved of the sentence of the Synod, and appointed him to be admonished and rebuked at their bar. Against this decision, Mr. E., together with the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy, the Rev. William Wilson of Perth, and the Rev. James Fisher of Kinclaven, tendered a paper containing their solemn protest, and claiming the liberty of preaching the same doctrines, and of testifying against the same, or like defections of the church, upon all proper occasions. The indignation of the Assembly was aroused by the faithful language of their protest, and without allowing the protesters a hearing before the court, it ordered them to appear before the Commission in August, and to retract, and express sorrow for what they had done, on pain of being suspended from the exercise of the ministry in the first instance, and of being deposed should they still continue refractory. On their refusal to retract or express sorrow, the Commission of Assembly did in August, 1733, and in a way which set at defiance even the forms of justice, suspend the "four brethren," from the exercise of the ministerial function, and all the parts