

of all this, they believed that their views were inconsistent with the principles of the body with which they were connected, and with the professions which they themselves had made. Whatever reluctance, on personal grounds, might be manifested to interfere with them, they knew that they were liable to church censure, as acting unfaithfully as to the discharge of those duties to which, on receiving ordination, they had become bound. Impressed with this conviction, they sought relief, not in retiring from a station which they should have felt they could no longer honestly occupy, but in endeavouring to get the profession of the body altered, so as to suit the change which had come over themselves. The Rev. John Frazer of Auchtermuchty was the individual who had the courage to make the first public movement towards the accomplishment of this object, by the presentation of the following most extraordinary Petition, addressed to the Burgher Synod:

"To the reverend the Moderator, and remanent Members of the Associate Synod, to meet at Edinburgh the 12th day of May, 1793, the Representation and Petition of the Subscriber,

"Humbly Sheweth,

"That a concern for the interests of pure and undiluted religion, and for the prosperity of the ecclesiastical society with which he stands connected, prompts him to trouble this reverend Court with a declaration of his mind concerning some of our religious sentiments, and to solicit a necessary reform. It is a great mercy the gospel is hitherto preserved among us in its purity. The doctrine of grace, reigning through the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the eternal life of men, in connexion with all other fundamental truths revealed in the oracles of God, is, I hope, a doctrine cordially believed and explicitly preached by all the ministers belonging to this Synod; and, to their great honour, no Socinian, Arminian, or Neonomian errors repugnant to it have ever been tolerated by them. But we profess adherence not only to fundamental truths, but also to many other doctrines of inferior importance. Among these, are the power of the civil magistrate in regard to religion, and the perpetual obligation of our public national Covenants upon posterity. The former is expressly asserted in the 23rd chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith; and the 2nd question of our Formula, I apprehend, allows us not to differ from that Confession in the smallest jot or tittle of doctrine contained in it; for the words of it are, 'Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith—and do you acknowledge the said Confession as the confession of your faith?' &c. The obligation of our covenants is also the subject of the

fourth question of said Formula; the words of which are, 'Do you own, and acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant—and of the Solemn League and Covenant?' &c. At our license and ordination we solemnly professed to hold these principles, and this profession is renewed as oft as we concur in licensing and ordaining others: for we demand their assent to the questions of the Formula, as a test of their orthodoxy, and of their holding the same principles with ourselves.

"But it is a fact well known to us all, that, many years ago, a pamphlet was published against the Antiburghers, bearing the name of a late respectable member of this Court, and containing the following doctrines: 'That all legal establishments of religion are improper and unwarrantable, and that our covenants are obligatory upon posterity, materially considered, but have no obligation upon us entirely of the same nature with their obligation upon our fathers, who swore them.' Since the publication of that pamphlet, it has been read by many of us; and there is reason to think that its principles have been adopted, not only by private Christians in our communion, but also by some members of Synod, which I mention not to the discredit of any of them; for it is possible they imbibed such opinions without advertent to their inconsistency with our Confession of Faith and Formula. I know that some young brethren, sensible of this inconsistency, have acted so honestly, as to refuse an unlimited assent to the questions of the Formula, declaring themselves to be of these sentiments. The Synod also, with all the Presbyteries and members composing it, have always borne with such brethren, and we live in the closest fellowship with them, without making any distinction between them and other brethren, which to tolerant spirit I do not absolutely condemn. But since we are disposed to exercise such forbearance, and since we all seem now sensible, that the above mentioned pamphlet accords not with our Confession of Faith and Formula, I think it highly necessary that the Formula be altered, and rendered more consistent with the sentiments of all our ministers, elders, probationers, and students. What pity is it that the smallest contrariety should exist between the sentiments of any of us, and our solemn profession, when our principles and profession are in the main so consonant to the unerring Standard of Truth. Doubtless the profession of a church ought perfectly to harmonize with her real principles, and nothing either essential or circumstantial should be professed which is not fully believed.

"May it therefore please this reverend Synod to apply a proper remedy against the present corruption, and by that means relieve me and other brethren from the perplexity and uneasiness it gives us. That he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand,