

expresses it, "to ditter from that Confession in the smallest jot or tittle of doctrine contained in it." They knew, too, that, in answering affirmatively to the fourth question, they had acknowledged the continued obligation of the Covenants, National and Solemn League. Many of them, however, having departed from this faith of which they had made a profession, and according to the principles of which they were engaged to train up the people who were placed under their charge, the attempt now to be made was, not to conceal or deny the change which had come over them, but to accommodate the standards to the new faith which they had embraced.

The Synod to whom Mr Fraser's petition was presented were not unwilling to make the attempt. They appointed a committee "to bring in an overture for uniting the members of this court in their sentiments respecting the power given in our Confession of Faith to the civil magistrate in matters of religion, and respecting the obligation of our national Covenant upon posterity." In that committee, it was objected to the first part of the said [second] question, *as requiring an approbation of the whole doctrine of the Confession*, because said Confession gives greater power to the civil magistrate in matters of religion than to many seems agreeable to the Word of God.—After long reasoning, it was moved, "that said doctrine of our Confession, respecting the magistrate's power, and of our Covenants, be a matter of forbearance." Notwithstanding the opposition of some faithful men in the committee, who entered their dissent, this motion was carried. Still further, the committee, knowing that an adherence to the Confession of Faith, *as it was received by the Assembly 1647*, bound them to the whole of its doctrine, agreed to recommend that the expression "as the said Confession and Catechisms were received and approved by the Acts of the General Assembly, 1647, and 1648," should be left out of the second question, and, instead thereof, the following words should be substituted: "As said Confession and Catechism were received and approved by the Act of the Associate Synod, 17—," the tenor of which Act they proposed should be as follows:—

"The Associate Synod hereby declare their attachment to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, which were adopted by the General Assembly of the

Church of Scotland, in the years 1647 and 1648; at the same time hereby declaring, that although they wish to fear God and honour the King, and consider subjection to the powers that are as an important duty incumbent on all men; yet, as the power respecting religion ascribed to the civil magistrate in said Confession and Larger Catechism, as also in the national Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant, has been, and still is, a matter of doubtful dispute among good and faithful men, the Synod no longer make it a term of ministerial and christian communion, but will exercise forbearance with brethren, whatever their sentiments be on that article; and they hereby declare, that the assent of probationers at their license, and of ministers and elders at their ordination, to the second question of the Formula, is not in future to be considered as an acknowledgment of said powers"—The committee, in like manner, agreed to recommend that the fourth question in time coming should run thus: "Do you, with the limitations specified in question 2d., approve of our covenants national and solemn league, as a solemn engagement on the part of our fathers, to cleave to the truths of Christ, and to hand them down to succeeding generations? And do you acknowledge that, in virtue of these covenants, an additional guilt will be contracted by present and future generations, if they shall renounce these reformation principles?"

The overture contained in these recommendations of the committee came to be known as the overture of forbearance. Having been read in the Synod, it was ordered to be printed, and it was agreed that it should be fully considered at a meeting of Synod to be held in 1797.—There is every reason to believe that, when the Synod met in Edinburgh in 1797, a majority of the ministers were fully prepared to go all the length that was proposed in this overture. In the mean time, however, the attention of the people had been directed to the movement; and, as they were still sound in their principles, they poured in petitions, remonstrating against this attempt to alter the profession which they were solemnly engaged to maintain. This rendered a change of tactics necessary; lest a breaking up of their congregations might be the result of proceeding undisguisedly, and with too much precipitation, towards the object which the leaders contemplated.—No intelligent reader can have failed to