

nently and extensively beneficial ; but the sword must be confined to the civil department, as that which alone comes within his jurisdiction. In a' that relates to religion, the command of Him, whose exclusive dominion is over the conscience and the heart, would be—"Put up thy sword into the sheath."

If such simple first principles are kept in view, they will enable us to unriddle all the complications, and perplexing labyrinths of argument, which have been wasted on the Voluntary Question by opponents ; and to discern, on this subject, the truth as in Jesus, through all the haze of human discussion which they have thrown around it : and to lament that they have been so often left to substitute wrath for reasoning, misrepresentation for truth, and personal hostility towards those who conscientiously exposed their system, instead of candidly acknowledging that on no scriptural principle could they defend their own views, or object to ours.

In our own church the principles of Voluntaries are not new. The Associate Presbytery, as early as the year 1742, in their answers to Mr. Nairn's reasons of dissent embodied principles on the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, which are substantially the same as those which have been recently more fully developed. Towards the end of last century, Mr. Graham of Newcastle, and since the beginning of the present, Mr. Ballantyne of Stonehaven, wrote luminously on the subject of ecclesiastical establishments, showing their unscriptural character and injurious tendency ; and although no practical results followed their valuable publications, yet their sentiments took a deep root in some portions of the public mind, and prepared it not only for stronger impressions, but for active movements. The honour of bringing the subject into practical operation is justly due to the Rev. Dr. Marshall of Kirkintilloch. The occasion may be briefly stated. The Catholic Relief Bill, as it was called, had just passed into law by an act of the legislature, and in consequence British subjects of that persuasion were admissible to seats in Parliament. Now the discussion of this question, and its issue, had produced a high degree of political excitement. Many were filled with fear lest Popery should gain the ascendancy, whilst others rejoiced in the progress of liberal opinions. Dr. Marshall considered it very probable that the Roman Catholics in Ireland would now agitate for a civil establishment of their religion, and he saw not why in justice it could be refused as they were the great majority of the population, which was the principle by which the Establishments of England and Scotland were maintained ; and he judiciously argued that the best preventive of this was to abolish ecclesiastical establishments altogether, and then the ambition of Popery would be at an end, its efforts paralysed, its hopes cut off, —and then viewed as a religious system it would quickly become of all others the least considerable, because of all others it had the least support from reason or Scripture.

These principles Dr. Marshall advocated in a powerful sermon delivered in 1829, before an Association in Glasgow for the propagation of the gospel in connection with the United Secession Church. In this celebrated discourse, under ten heads, he exposed the injustice, impolicy, and injurious consequences of civil establishments of religion. The attention of his audience was rivetted, and a deep impression was produced. Immediately after public worship, when the annual business of the Society was to be discussed, Dr. Haugh took occasion to declare, respecting the principles just enunciated, that the time had come when those who held them should justify their convictions to the world. The sermon was published and eagerly perused by persons of all persuasions. Several editions were soon called for, and a feeling produced of opposition to Establishments, not only among Dissenters, but among multitudes belonging to the Established Church. Little was it thought that this sermon would lead to consequences the most important to the interests of true religion ; little was it thought that this was as the first step to movements, which after a series of strife and hostility between religious parties in Scotland, would, in the course of fourteen years, bring about one of the most memorable events in