

effect of bringing out so important and satisfactory an avowal. After all, however, probably Dr. Ferrier is right in supposing that our brethren and we are not quite agreed about what the principle of establishments is. Indeed, I imagine that Mr. Ure in a great part of his letter, is just pleading for what a thorough-going Voluntary would call an establishment under a mask. I leave that, however, to be handled by some one more competent to the task; and as the present communication is getting too lengthy, let me simply, before I conclude, advert to the deed of the Free Church Synod in June last, respecting the Confession of Faith which will be found in your numbers for July and for October, and to which I think great attention is due in connection with the question of union.

The Synod renew their adherence to the Confession as approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, and "hereby declare that they do not understand the passages relating to the duty of the Civil Magistrate, as teaching and sanctioning an Erastian control of the church by the Civil Magistrate, or the persecution of individuals for conscience sake." Now Sir, I cannot refrain from saying that this is, to me, a great deal short of satisfactory. To say that one does "not understand" such and such to be Erastianism and persecution, is widely different from repudiating these abominations. Suppose that two individuals walking together on the street, hear cursing and swearing, and that the one says, "I abhor that profanity," while the other replies, "I do not consider that to be profanity," what conclusion could we draw but that these two persons totally disagreed respecting profanity, and that the latter went far to approve of it? Let any person read the third section of the twenty-third Chapter of the Confession, and then ask himself if it be not brim-full of Erastianism. It declares that the magistrate "hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." This, like every other portion of the Confession, is supported by references to Scripture. The only passage adduced from the New Testament in favour of the above, however, is Mat. ii. 4, 5, where we read of Herod calling together the chief priests and scribes, and demanding of them where Christ should be born, that he might put him to death! Further, the Synod of the Free Church heartily disclaim Erastianism and persecution "as inconsistent with the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free." Very good, but it is not the liberty of Christ's people alone that we should look to. There are certain rights of man, which ought not to be invaded, and which the golden rule binds Christians especially to respect. Persecution, therefore, ought to be disclaimed on other, and on broader grounds. The Synod also pronounce Erastianism and persecution, to be "opposed to the spirit and terms of the said Confession, and repudiated by the Church in her purest times." Now that there are portions of the Confession, the spirit and terms of which are opposed to those hateful objects is true. But it not unfrequently happens that when a document is framed to meet the views of a numerous body not at one among themselves, the method not only of compromise, but of self-inconsistency is, to some extent, had recourse to. Each party gets in a clause to suit itself, for the sake of which, it has to admit a clause to suit its opponent. It is related, if I mistake not, in Dr. Cook's History of the Church of Scotland, that, some time prior to the Reformation, the question arose in that ancient kingdom.