

setting aside for the present any reference to the circumstances and prospects of individuals, and looking only to the great interests of the Church of God, I cannot but regard the transactions and events, relative to the Scottish Establishment, at once with inexpressible interest and with devout thankfulness. The Lord is carrying on what I believe to be his own work, for his own glory and his Church's highest benefit. He is conducting before our eyes a grand experiment. It is not, indeed, an experiment to him, for he "knoweth the end from the beginning," and has the entire results fully before him. But to us, who see only "a part of his ways," and cannot look with any certainty beyond the present, it wears this aspect. And I have no fears and no doubts about the result. He is working out his Church's emancipation. He is breaking her bonds; and he is doing this by an agency of his own—by an instrumentality in the enslaved portion of his Church, instead of an instrumentality *out of* it. Whatever may have been the influence of the Voluntaries in diffusing the spirit that has been agitating the Establishment—of which I do not wish to say a single word—there cannot be a doubt that, in that Establishment, the spirit of dissent has risen. Our Non-intrusion brethren are Dissenters *in* the Church. I am well aware that they do not admit this. They hold the principle of an Establishment; and I give them full credit for sincerity when they assure us of this. But still, in my apprehension, the principles for which they have been contending—contending honestly, manfully, unflinchingly, and perseveringly—are substantially the principles of dissent. They are contending for right principles in a wrong place. They are right and they are wrong. They are right in the principles which they advocate, but wrong in advocating them as the principles of a Church established by law. The freedom, independence, and spirituality of the Church of Christ we heartily concur with them in regarding as essential elements in its constitution, as that constitution appears in the Christian statute-book—the Scriptures of the New Testament. But they are elements of that constitution which, in our apprehension, must be sacrificed whenever the Church allies itself with civil authority, and accepts of State patronage and State endowments. To accept of these is necessarily to accept of shackles. This is a lesson which our respected brethren have been, and still are, slow to learn. They have in their minds, and are cherishing there, a Utopian notion of an Establishment, such as never have been, never can be, never ought to be realised. Their principles are excellent. They are Scriptural. They are the only principles by which Christ, as the sole Head of the Church, can be honoured, and by which the true prosperity and glory of His kingdom can be secured and advanced. But these principles and the principles of the twenty-third chapter of the Confession of Faith cannot be held together. They more than neutralise, they eventually destroy each other. Our brethren are learning this lesson. Their Divine Master is teaching them, by his providence, the meaning of his Word. And the very first thing which, on this point, I demand on their behalf is—*patience*. What we think we see clearly ourselves—what appears to us so simple that we can hardly imagine the possibility of any not seeing

it as we see it—we are apt to get fretted when others resist or take a long time to discover. But this only shows that we have not sufficiently studied human nature, or sufficiently attended to the tendencies of our own hearts. Unlearning is, in many cases, a much slower and more difficult process than learning. The notions in which we have been trained from our earliest years—in which our minds have been indoctrinated, and to which our practical habits have been conformed—which have been wrapped up with our first and fondest recollections, and in woven with all the religious associations of our childhood and our youth—and with which we have been taught and accustomed to consider all the interests and the very existence of religion to be vitally bound up—such notions it is many a time no easy process to throw off. They are hallowed. Their dereliction cannot be thought of but with fear and trembling. Piety itself trembles, and trembles in sincerity, for the ark of God. We are satisfied that the fears are vain, and they will soon come to be satisfied of it too. Why fret, and chide, and scold, and apply the epithets of "contempt and wrath," because they do not get on so fast as we think they should? A lesson learned slowly is often learned most effectually and most permanently. It takes a faster hold of the mind than when it is adopted hastily, ere the evidence of it, whether argumentative or experimental has been thoroughly investigated, understood, and felt. Let us wait, then, a little—"forbearing them in love." My Church friends will naturally think all this sufficiently presumptuous—taking a great deal more than enough for granted. But they must not forget that we speak, of course, according to our convictions; and that, with such convictions, we cannot either think or speak otherwise. It would be equal inconsistency and affectation to do so. And this leads me to mention a second thing, which I claim—and claim strongly on their behalf. It is *charity*. I claim it on *two* points, on both of which, as it appears to me, they had occasionally, and even to no small extent, somewhat hard measure dealt to them. The first of these points relates to the course they have pursued, in adhering so long and so pertinaciously—and, in the estimation of the civil courts of the country, so troublesomely and annoyingly—to the Church. I demand on their behalf the charity that thinketh no evil—that hopeth and believeth all things in regard to the principles by which, in this course, they have been actuated. I do not know a more important maxim, and I do not know a maxim which we are more constantly in danger of violating, whether through inconsideration or a captious and censorious spirit, than the maxim that we should form our judgment of other men's conduct, not according to the principles held by us, but according to the principles held by themselves. Now, what are the principles which they avow; and in the avowal of which we are not entitled, however much we may be astonished at their holding them, to question their sincerity? They hold that civil rulers are bound, in their official capacity, to employ their power and their resources for the support of the Church, and of the true religion—that this is the principle of an Establishment, and that it has the support of Scripture—that it is not only consistent with Scripture, but that Scripture recognises the obligation. They hold, moreover,