

that any of them should ever entertain a proposition for effecting or incorporating an union between us and them. Having at the period of the Disruption retained my conviction that a country could not exist without a national church, and being equally persuaded that no other communion would ever be recognised in that capacity by the legislature, or the community at large, than that which continued in possession of the status, privileges, and temporalities awarded to it by the civil powers, I remained on principle within its pale, and never suspected that I had become a Seceder, by continuing to be where and what I had always been before.—In fact, it seemed very problematical whether the new church (as I supposed it to be) would be able to support itself for any length of time; and I expected that my services might be made available in bringing back the excellent men, with whom my sympathies and sentiments united me, upon just and honorable terms, once more within the “national” fold. In conformity with these views, I, from time to time conversed and corresponded with some of them, and especially with my industrious and venerated friend Dr Chalmers; but the terms which were suggested appeared to me so unreasonable and so untenable that I was not surprised at the astonishment, and I almost said incredulity, with which they were received and repudiated by such eminent public men as I ventured to sound upon the subject. After the lapse of a few years, I found my position so chilling and comfortless, and became so strongly impressed by all that I observed or read, in reference to the deadening and deleterious influences which union with the State appears to entail upon every communion which submits to the yoke, that I resolved to become a member of the Free Church, and imagined that, in doing so, I dis severed myself from all connection with the “national” church, and became identified with one of the bodies (and not the only one) which holds that the church is, *quoad sacra*, independent of the civil magistrate. From that moment, however, I felt that it was useless to entertain any hope of ever seeing in this country a truly “national” church, according to the standard by which I had been used to measure the functions, duties, responsibilities, and advantages pertaining to such an institution. There never will exist, in my judgement, any national Establishment in Scotland but that which is at present in possession of the rights and emoluments connected with that position. There are, I know, many office-bearers in the Free Church who think differently. I have met with not a few elders, and especially ministers, who are more or less impressed with a sort of indefinite expectation, that sooner or later we shall be invited or enabled to resume our pristine status. When I have questioned my friends on this subject, I have received occasionally for answer, “There seems at present little probability of such an event.” “A great change must first take place in the minds of our public men.” “With God all things are possible.” But that such an occurrence is utterly out of the question, and still more that it is rather to be deprecated than longed for, are statements which, when propounded as a matter of conviction, on my part very rarely meet with an affirmative, and still more unfrequently with a hearty response, whilst, at the same time, I never hear it maintained in any quarter, that the keeping up of the present Establishment is, in any point of view, either salutary or desirable, even by the most zealous sticklers for the necessity of a State Church. The substitution of a Romish, Prelatic, or Independent Establishment would meet with just as little favour in their eyes, so that the whole matter amounts to this, “we shall never be satisfied until we resume the rights and benefits of a State Church on such terms as we ourselves propound;” and I can only repeat, that I regard this as a contingency, which all classes and parties not included within the precincts of our own communion, however widely they may differ among themselves on other points will strenuously, and I have no doubt successfully, co-operate in preventing. Under such circumstances I am at a loss to imagine with what grace we can venture to state that we alone (or at least more strongly and more fully than some other denominations) maintain the doctrines of Christ’s headship in all its integrity. In one sense (though, as I think, very defectively), it is held by the Established Church; for the State, or the lay patron, cannot appoint to ecclesiastical offices in Scotland any person who has not been examined and pronounced worthy to be a candidate by the authorised tribunals of the Church—“the King cannot, the King dares not” give such a nomination to an Episcopalian or an Independent. The United Presbyterian and Dissenting bodies, again, evidently consider this princi-