

invite your attention, is the fact (in my judgment not an unimportant one) that the solution of this question rests solely and exclusively with the parties selves. No reference need be made to states men or senators, to courts of royalty, or to courts of law. Let but the various denominations cordially resolve to bring about this, in many quarters, much-longed-for union, and they can at once give effect to their own free and uncontrolled determination. On ourselves, therefore, may devolve the privilege of entering into the most endearing bond of Christian love and Christian fellowship,—and on ourselves, also, will rest the responsibility of rejecting so great a boon at this critical period, and remaining, as heretofore, in a state of chilling alienation, or comfortless neutrality.

2. I proceed to remark, in the second place, that such a union as I anxiously contemplate, and earnestly recommend, is in my judgment the only one which any of the parties could possibly adopt with credit or comfort to themselves. Although a much esteemed friend of mine lately claimed, on behalf of the Episcopal communion in Scotland, three-fifths of the landed interest, it is far from being, in any thing like a corresponding ratio, embraced or diffused amongst the people—in fact, as an accomplished member of that church lately wrote to me, “the (Episcopal) church services in Scotland always seem to me to be exotic; and all around in the chapels I see well-dressed gentlemen and ladies. I feel more comfortable when a large assembly of farmers and peasants assure me that the worship is national.” According to our views of divine truth, the Episcopalians have added to the primitive and easy yoke of the Presbyterian party, the grievous and intolerant bondage of prelatical haughtiness and usurpation. A junction with the Established Church is, of course, impossible, in so far as the United Presbyterians are concerned, and would, I think, even if practicable, be neither wise, salutary nor honourable, in the case of the Free Church. Not the slightest intimation has, during the last ten years, been manifested, on the part of the Establishment, to recommend, or on that of the State to propose, such concessions as would be indispensable for effecting that object, if in other respects desirable; and, without pretending to dispute the piety, or to parage the talents of many of its ministers and office-bearers, the tenacity with which the former has clung to the perpetuation of every abuse, and the upholding of every monopoly, however much it may have elicited the approval of their own adherents, has rendered them so obnoxious to all other classes of the community, that an incorporating union with the “Moderates” on any terms would excite a loud and universal feeling of surprise and disappointment from one end of Scotland to the other. If ever the Free Church should purchase (no matter on what terms,) at the expense of again wearing the State collar of dependence, its re-admission to the State crib of endowment, I believe that the deteriorating influence of such a connection would be developed in the course of a very few years, as it so often was exemplified before the Disruption, in the case of probationers and missionaries, who, in these subordinate capacities, were distinguished by zeal, moderation, and humility, but became, as the favoured nominees of the patrons, or even, in some cases, as the objects of the people's choice, proud, careless, litigious, and insatiable. The Church would soon be again overrun by all the evils which spring from irresponsible, monopolising, and mercenary Moderatism; or there would be manifested the still more dangerous anom-

aly of sound evangelical preaching, coupled with unseemly and worldly-minded practice. I question much whether many of our ministers or members would, before the Disruption, have been as zealous as they are now for the repeal of the tests or the opening of the parish schools to general competition. I may add, that any scheme, such as was suggested by my illustrious friend Dr. Chalmers—viz., a parliamentary recognition of the Free Church as constituting the ecclesiastical establishment of Scotland, and replacing its ministers in their former *status*, and pensioning off their successors—was, when brought by myself under the notice of some of the distinguished public men of the day, regarded by them (and I may add, by myself also,) as a wild and visionary proposal, insomuch that it would, I am sure, be impossible to find one adventurous enthusiast, who would risk the forfeiture of his reputation for common sense by venturing so much as to name it in either House of Parliament. I am aware that some highly respectable members, and even Presbyteries, of the Free Church, have not long since transmitted overtures for bringing the subject of the Claim of Right before Parliament. What impression this procedure may have produced in other quarters, I cannot pretend to say; but I own that I was both startled and mortified when the proposal was adopted. It seemed to me equivalent to hoisting signals of distress, intimating that the good ship Free Church had sprung a leak—that the crew had been put on short allowance, and were anxious to be towed back as soon as possible into the commodious harbour of state endowment. It would, I think, be well if the respected advocates of such an application to Parliament would frankly specify the precise object which they have in view, and what they wish the Government to do. They can only contemplate the alternative of an Act for the substitution of the Free Church in the place of the existing Establishment,—a measure (as I have just stated) so fraught with injustice and absurdity, that it would not receive the support or countenance even of a solitary politician connected with any party; or they must be desirous to witness an amalgamation of the Free Church with the present Establishment,—a measure which, no matter on what conditions (and no advances of any kind have ever been made by the latter body,) would be extremely distasteful to, at all events, a very large proportion of the Free Church ministers and lay-adherents throughout Scotland; and would be regarded by every other Evangelical communion throughout the empire as one of the heaviest blows and greatest discouragements which could be inflicted on the cause of vital Christianity.

It must, at the same time, I think, be admitted, that the Free Church at present occupies a somewhat anomalous, Mahomet-coffin-like position of suspension between the Establishment and the unestablished bodies, and must, I think, ere long, gravitate towards the one or the other. We must either, like Abraham, dwell with our unendowed brethren in the Mamre of self-sustaining independence, where they have built an altar unto the Lord, or we must lift up our eyes like Lot, and beholding all the plain of state endowment and privileged monopoly, that it is well watered every where, return to the Sodom of the Annuity Tax, and the Gomorrah of the Court of Tiends. It appears to me, that the ardour of our ministers, the zeal of our elders, and the liberality of our people, are not a little chilled and paralysed by the lingering hope, which is only faintly hinted at, but perhaps fondly cherished, in some quarters, that our present condition is transient and