

that an Established Church is indispensable to the maintenance, to the very existence for any length of time, of true religion in the land—that without it, religion would be more than in danger of a rapid decline and cessation, and that infidelity, irreligion, and vice, would speedily overspread the country with moral and spiritual desolation and death. In all this, we think them very strangely and very miserably mistaken. But, still, such have been their avowed convictions.—Ought we not, then, to form our estimate according to them, of the course they have pursued? For my own part, I frankly declare that, had I held such principles, I do not see that I could consistently have acted very differently from what they have been doing. Certainly, if I held the sentiment that an Establishment was necessary to the maintenance and existence of religion in the land, while at the same time I conceived that, in order to its efficiency, it was necessary to introduce some change in the principles of its union with the State, and in the conduct of the State towards it—it does appear to me that I should feel it incumbent upon me to stick by the Church to the very last moment of my retaining even the remotest hope of any efforts of mine, or of others, proving successful in bringing about those changes, and placing the Church and the State in what I conceived their proper relative position. If I thought the vessel of a State Church the only vessel in which the cargo of Divine truth could be permanently secured for the spiritual enriching of the country, I should think it my duty to hold by the vessel so long as there was any chance remaining of her timbers holding together. On this ground, I have never been able to censure so unsparingly their course of procedure as many have done. I have wondered—I have been astonished with a great astonishment—at their not seeing sooner that they were labouring after what never, in the nature of the thing, could be obtained; but, still, they have thought otherwise; and with their convictions, have they been doing anything else than consistency required of them? I must here, however, make one exception. There are some among them by whom the sentiment has been avowed that patronage is a violation of Christ's law for his Church, and that it is, therefore, essentially *sinful*. Here my charity is at a stand. I have no charity for those who can retain situations which they have obtained by sinful means; nor for those who can remain in fellowship with a Church where that which is sinful is constitutionally established and systematically practised.—There is a second point on which I demand charity for these brethren—namely, their declared and often and publicly-repeated determination to stand to their principles, and, at whatever cost, to leave the Church, with all its emoluments and advantages, when these principles are finally and hopelessly disowned, and their demands decidedly refused. There has, on this subject, been prevalent a large amount of incredulity. Many have treated all their professed determinations with a sneer, and have laughed at the very idea of such a thing. It is all very fine, it has been said—all very fine—it sounds well; but it is mere fudge. Let us see them out, and then we shall believe them in earnest. It is no better than a feint to intimidate the Government and frighten them into com-

pliance with their wishes. They want to hold out something formidable as the consequence of their demands being refused. But they will realise the threat. There may be a few of them possibly who are in earnest, and who will have resolution enough to follow out their avowed determination. But they will be *rari aves*—extraordinary cases—exceptions to the general practice—which will be that of finding some salvo to their consciences, and sticking fast to the manes and the glebes. I have very rarely found a charity that could go so far as to fifty. It has much more frequently been limited to twenty, or even to *ten*! This has ever appeared to me hardly fair play. What right have we to doubt or question their sincerity? Do we like our own to be questioned? If not, can we, in consistency with the claims of the royal law, question theirs? For my own part, I do entertain, and, although occasional misgivings may have come over me, I have ever entertained the most assured confidence that a large majority of those who have avowed the principles of Non-intrusion—that is, the principles of the Church's exclusive independent authority in her own department, in everything that relates to her own government and discipline—will hold them fast—will act them out—will submit to whatever difficulties, privations, and trials the consistent maintenance of them may cost. Should I prove wrong in this confidence—should any large proportion of them show by their conduct that it has been misplaced—I shall deeply bewail it; and, in such circumstances, my sorrow will be, not for the failure of own anticipations, and the belying of my own sagacity, but for the tergiversation and disgrace of those whose steady adherence to conscientious principle I shall find myself to have placed a confidence too implicit. The reasons of my regret may appear by and by. In the meantime, in saying what I have said, I am far from being callously-insensible to the trying nature of the position in which they stand. It is a trying one—a testing one—though, of course, in various degrees, to the reality and power of principle and of conscience. And, on this account, there is a third thing which I claim on their behalf, on the part of their fellow-servants and fellow-Christians, namely, *sympathy*. I cannot but think there has been a sad lack of this, and the cause is evident. It is the want of *charity* that has given rise to the want of *sympathy*. Had there been such charity as to induce a belief that they really would be so constant and firm as to expose themselves to the trial in question, there would, no doubt, have been an accompanying fellow-feeling and condolence with them in the prospects thus before them. But the incredulity as to this has defrauded them of the sympathy. Another thing, too, has contributed to the same result—the light in which their conduct has by many been viewed. They have been looked upon, in a manner, as rebels against the law of the land, as having taken up unreasonable and illegal ground, and as having thus brought all upon themselves. On points of this kind neither time nor inclination admit of my entering. I think it can hardly admit a question that, to a certain extent, if not entirely, the change has been in them—not in the constitution of the Establishment or in the law of the country.—Circumstances have forced upon them a feeling of the control of that law, such as had not before