

A violent storm in 1733 may have caused a small sundry portion of its waters to detach itself from the parent channel, and pursue its course onwards amidst sundry subdivisions and re-unions. In 1843 a still more violent tempest occasions a still more dreadful convulsion—the principal volume is separated into two distinct streams of nearly equal dimensions. It is surely a question of little practical moment which of these rival branches shall be regarded as the great “national” river, since they both trace their origin to the same spring. A philanthropic projector need not be accounted officious or visionary, who is engaged in an anxious endeavor to render that branch, which he deems incomparably superior to its rival in point of purity and importance, still deeper, more useful, and more navigable, by diverting into its bosom the stream that separated from the main trunk about a century before, and has not only been constantly increasing in magnitude, but preserving, without the slightest diminution or defilement, the virgin purity of the fountain, from which the waters originally issued. Might not an engineer, who was intent on the accomplishment of such a scheme, if informed that the undertaking must prove abortive, until the controverted genealogical question had been settled, have been excused for exclaiming—“I am doing a great work; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” and would not the difficulty as to this recognition be not a little enhanced, if in every map, published by authority, the branch, whose claim we denied, was invariably indicated as the parent river, although, in our estimation, far less salubrious or beneficial.

There is, in my judgement, one striking contrast between the Dissenting bodies and the Establishment. Many aged and pious members of the former travel ten or twenty miles every Sabbath to hear from the lips of a beloved pastor “all the words of this life,”—whilst not a few decent, devout parishoners walk as great a distance for the purpose of avoiding the frigid or flippant ministrations of a careless and unpopular stipendiary. I believe, also, that infidels are sooner and more strongly influenced by the addresses of a congregation-paid than by those of a State-paid minister. They are much more inclined to believe in the disinterested earnestness of the former, in whose case they think that there is less probability of his having been actuated, when resolving to study for the Church, by secular and sordid considerations. They are unwilling to acknowledge, as the successors and representatives of Paul and Peter, such pastors as look for the enforcement of their rights to the Court of Session, and for the augmentation of their incomes to the Court of Teinds. To such an exhorter they would be inclined to say, “*unus es orfèvre*,”—you are only an ecclesiastical tradesman; they regard all his labours as professional rather than spontaneous. They “cannot away with” such “grievous wolves,” as, neither sparing the flock, nor the sheep which does not belong to it, and to which their voices are the voices of strangers, covet every man’s silver or gold or apparel, whether he does or does not enter in and out their fold to find pasture, and give all diligence (I mean all legal diligence) to enforce the erection of churches which they cannot fill, and effect the augmentation of incomes which they do not earn.

I must be pardoned for once more expressing my regret that there should be so much importance attached on our part, not merely to our own assumption of this appellation of “national” church, but to the unqualified acquiescence in our claim on the part of all other denominations. We ourselves object strenuously to the epithet “catholic,” as usurped by the Romish apostasy, because such a title implies an unmerited and exclusive supremacy, and virtually debars all other churches from being comprehended within the “universal” pale. The adjective “national,” as applied to a particular body, is not less grating and offensive to the feelings of all other communions, inasmuch as it substitutes pre-eminence for parity, and may be construed into a pretension on the part of those who appropriate it, to be acknowledged as the “nation,” since they expect to be regarded as being alone and exclusively the members of the “nation’s” church. I must reiterate my conviction that such a title ought not to exist at all in any country where the “nation” is split up into sects and parties, any more than, in the House of Commons, any faction would be justified in expecting to be exclusively designated as forming the “national” representation.

At the commencement of the sixth letter, Sir George gives some addi-