

ing. In these and other matters the two bodies soon presented a visible difference, and each acquired a distinctive character of its own. The General Associate, or Anti-Burgher Synod, were never satisfied with the Revolution-settlement, but advocated and prosecuted the principle of progressive reformation. The Associate Synod, however, professed to be satisfied with the attainments of the Revolution-church, and seemed disposed to rest upon them. But it deserves to be noticed, that whereas from this difference we would expect that the Anti-Burghers would keep more in pace with the age, and the Burghers fall behind it, it was found to be rather the reverse. The former fell behind it, and the latter seemed to keep pace with its progress. Not accounting themselves to bear formal testimony against every prevailing evil, the Associate Synod were perhaps less severed from other denominations, and stood less aloof from them, than their brethren. They cherished a spirit of greater charity towards godly ministers and eminent Christians, by whatever name they were called. Professing to hold by the Revolution-settlement, which was that of the Established Church, they were likeliest to the Established Church in constitution and principles, whilst they were happily free from the many errors in doctrine and practice into which that Church had fallen. For we must do this Synod the justice to remark, that they maintained all along the honourable character of Seceders from the Establishment, although not from the standards of the Church of Scotland. They still looked to the Establishment as their mother Church, and anticipated their ultimate return to it according to the appeal of the *Four Brethren*, "unto the first, free, faithful and reforming General Assembly of the Church of Scotland."

The truth of these remarks will be sustained, and the decided faithfulness of this Church will be proved by the following quotations from the Preface to this *Rehabilitation* :—

"While we refuse that those creeds and confessions are, in any respect the foundation of our faith, we contend that they are founded on the divine word. Judicious christians will consider them as collections of divine truth in their proper connection, as tests of orthodoxy, or subordinate criteria, absolutely necessary for distinguishing truth from error, and for detecting the erroneous in their unmanly subterfuges, as avowed standing testimonies for truth, in opposition to error, and as authoritative representations, in an agreeableness to the word of God, of the principles and terms of christian communion, in particular churches, intended to direct their members how to hold comfortable and consistent fellowship with one another in the Lord. Our Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline, with the Directory for Worship, are perhaps the most excellent ecclesiastical standards in the Christian world. To renounce, therefore, any of these important truths exhibited in these standards, must involve this nation in proportional guilt; and the more so, as we are engaged by our covenants and other vows, to maintain and defend them against all opposition."

Again, "our Secession," they say, "is not a schism in the Church, for we never seceded from the principles and constitution professed and established at the Reformation and Revolution, but on every occasion declare our steadfast adherence to these, in opposition to the prevailing party who have seceded from them."

Further, they expressly declare that at this period (1778) the National Church was more corrupt than it was when their secession was first made, that, therefore, the reasons of their secession had multiplied, and that the prospect of re-union was more distant than ever. The following is the account they present of the Establishment at this time :—

"Doctrines that are no less derogatory to the honour, glory, and Godhead of the Son of God, than dangerous to the souls of men, are openly preached and printed, in some places: the exercise of discipline is, by many, either omitted, or accommodated to the temper of the times: the oppressive and unscriptural law of patronage is executed with an inflexible rigour, in spite of repeated remonstrances from reclaiming congregations: the seals of the covenant are prostituted by a promiscuous admission of those who are, by the revealed will of Christ, totally unqualified to receive them, and are, therefore, inadmissible by his ministers: a disregard, if not a contempt of strictness in a profession or practice of religion is become almost universal. These are melancholy truths, the knowledge of which is within the reach of the meanest individual: and upon supposition that the secession was groundless at the

period in which it commenced, they afford the most undeniable grounds for it in the present age. And notwithstanding the current language of the times, it is not easy to conceive how the purity and peace of communion are consistent with submission to these ecclesiastical decisions which, in their very nature, deprive it of an opportunity to discharge its duty by an open and faithful testimony against them. It is submitted to the impartial world, if there be another method by which the conscience, properly informed, and regulated by the divine law, can exonerate itself so fully and consistently, in bearing testimony against the above and other evils, as in the state of secession from the present jurisdiction of the Church. (To be continued.)

ANALYSIS OF PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

In the absence of the requisite historical information, we must have recourse to the contents of this epistle, for the purpose of ascertaining its occasion and design. The Church of Galatia does not seem, like many others in primitive times, to have been composed partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles; but it appears to have consisted entirely of converted heathens. The apostle, therefore, describes them, previous to their conversion, as doing service to them who by nature are no gods, as desirous of being under the law; and he reminds them, that if they submitted to circumcision, with the design of meriting the favor of God, Christ could profit them nothing. It appears from these, and similar statements, that after Paul had preached the gospel, and planted a Church in Galatia, some Judaizing teachers, styled "some that troubled you," taught that conformity to the ceremonial ritual, especially to circumcision, was obligatory on the Christian Church and necessary to salvation, saying, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved"—Acts xv. 1. Paul taught, in manifest opposition to this mixture of works and faith, of law and gospel, that all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, are guilty before God, and that the death of Christ, without the slightest mixture of human merit, is the only foundation of the trembling sinner's hope. All may, therefore, participate in the blessings of salvation, without any national distinction, and without any previous moral qualification to fit them for the reception of the gospel. When a heathen, consequently, believed in Christ, and relinquished his idols, he was under no necessity of submitting to circumcision; even the Jew was delivered by Christ from the burdensome yoke of the ceremonial law, and was as free from its rites as was the convert from heathenism. The gospel only contemplated men as sinners, under the curse of the law, and hasting on to an undone and ruined eternity; and it sets open the door of mercy to the penitent and believing, and proclaims pardon and forgiveness even to the chief of sinners.

The general design of this epistle, therefore, is to refute the erroneous doctrine of those false brethren who confounded faith and works, and who had withdrawn some of the Galatian converts from the faith of the gospel. They seem to have asserted, that Paul's consequence of his late conversion, was very imperfectly acquainted with the truths of the gospel; that he was instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, and commissioned to preach among the Gentiles by those who were in Christ before him; and they even asserted that Peter and the other apostles, whom they professed to follow, taught a very different doctrine. In opposition to those false teachers, Paul first proves the doctrine of justification by faith alone in the merits of Christ; and then, as is customary in his other epistles, concludes with a number of practical exhortations, urging us to the practice of various Christian duties. He proves the doctrine of free justification.

I. By the vindication of his apostolic authority. With that authority his doctrine either stood or fell; and he, therefore, maintained, that his commission was not derived either from the Christians of Jerusalem or Antioch—the two great centres of Christian influence in the primitive Church—but immediately from Christ Jesus. He styles himself an apostle, "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father." "When the apostle affirms," says Luther, "that he was not sent of man, he opposes himself to the false prophets; when he says that he was not sent by man, he opposes himself to those faithful individuals who were commissioned by the apostles." Thus, Paul asserts that he was not a simple messenger appointed through human instrumentality, as were the assistants of the apostles, but he held his commission direct-