

CHURCH DISCIPLINE
AND
DOCTRINAL DECLARATION

OF THE

Evangelical Union Church,
TORONTO.

MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE first EVANGELICAL UNION CHURCH in the City of Toronto was organized on Sabbath, the 3d of November, 1861.

The Constitution, Order and Discipline of a Christian Church, adopted by the members at its formation, is here published for their own special use, and for the information of all who wish to become acquainted with their principles and church polity.

Instead of publishing a compendious view of the leading doctrines of Christianity, held by themselves as a distinct church, they have adopted the *Doctrinal Declaration* drawn up by the Evangelical Union Conference of Scotland in 1858, and generally held by that denomination.

H. M.

CONSTITUTION,
ORDER, AND DISCIPLINE
OF THE
EVANGELICAL UNION CHURCH,
TORONTO.

It is necessary to state that our object in giving an outline of the Constitution, Order, and Discipline of a Christian Church, is principally for the information of applicants for membership. It is also necessary to state that the Church is in connection with the E. U. of Scotland.*

I.—CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

Without entering into details, the following appear to us to be the leading features of the Constitution of a Church of Christ.

1st. In its external relations the Church is independent.

It is complete within itself. It manages its own affairs; elects its own office-bearers: and, if need be, calls upon any of them to resign, without interference from other Churches, beyond the fraternal liberty of tendering counsel and warning when required. This is one of the fundamental principles of Congregationalism; and we believe it to be an essential element in the constitution of a Christian Church. Each Church in the New Testament is spoken of, and addressed as separate and distinct from all other Churches.—See I Cor. i, 2. I Thess. i. 1. Rev. ii, 1; viii, 18. iii. 1. 7. 14.

* When we speak of this Church being in connection with the Evangelical Union of Scotland we do not mean to intimate, or insinuate that this Church is under the control of that Union, but simply that we believe, approve of, and adopt those fundamental truths of Christianity which are embodied in the *subjoined* statement of its principles.

2nd. *In its internal Constitution the Church is Presbyterian.*

It has a plurality of presbyters, or elders (including the minister), who are also in the New Testament called Bishops and Pastors, that is overseers and shepherds. Acts xiv. 23, xv. 4, xx. 17, x. 28. Phil. i. 1. Titus i. 5., 1 Tim. v. 17., Heb. xiii. 17. These elders are invested with the oversight of the Church. They attend to cases of admission and of discipline, and exercise a watchful care over the spiritual interests of the Church.

They meet as often as circumstances require, for consultation and prayer. They discharge their duties without interference from Church members, as long as they retain the Church's confidence, and remain in office. But they avail themselves as far as practicable, of the co-operation of their brother members; and they never admit, suspend, or expel members, or decide on any thing important, without communicating it to the collective brethren with the requisite particulars at a regular meeting of the Church.

3rd. The Church equally recognizes the scripturality of the office of Deacons to attend to the temporal concerns of the Church. Acts vi. 1-4. Phil. i. 1. 1. Tim. iii. 8. 13.

4th. The Church is composed of those who give evidence of having peace with God, and of being new creatures in Christ Jesus; and who can yield a cordial and practical submission to its recognized Order and Constitution.

5th. The only standard of doctrine recognized by the Church as infallible is the word of God, as that word is revealed in the Old and New Testament.

II.—ORDER OF THE CHURCH.

1st. The Public services of the Sabbath are conducted at the usual hours. 2nd. The Church hold the practice of infant Baptism.

3rd. The Church stately observes the Lord's Supper every three months, and more frequently if deemed expedient by two thirds of the members.

4th. The Church being bound to honour and worship God in their collective capacity, and to "do all things decently and in order," with a view to maintain uniformity of worship, to foreclose strife and division, and to prevent any ordinance which they deem Divine from falling into contempt or neglect, receive none into Church membership, but those who, besides giving evidence of being Christians and of one mind with them in their evangelical views, are able conscientiously and in good faith, to observe the various religious ordinances and ecclesiastical regulations recognized and established in the Church.

5th. The Church see it to be their duty, and feel it to be their privilege, to admit to the ordinances (which are not theirs but the Lord's) and to welcome to their fellowship at their various meetings, for prayer and exhortation, all brethren in whom they have confidence as Christians who desire their fellowship, and who are willing in peace and love to unite thus far with the Church.

The roll of communicants is not regarded as identical with the roll of members, and on this ground the Church and such brethren as those referred to, can enjoy each other's fellowship without compromise, dissimulation, division or restraint. The Pastor of the Church will deem it a duty and privilege to care for, and visit such brethren though not members of the Church.

6th. A meeting of the Church will be held on some evening of every month for the purpose of transacting any business that may be brought before the Church.

7th. A special meeting of the Church may be called by the elders as often as they deem it necessary, either at their own instance, or at the suggestion of other office-bearers or members; the meeting to be publicly intimated from the pulpit on the Lord's day.

III.—ADMISSION INTO THE CHURCH.

1st. Application for Church membership is made to the minister, or in his absence to one of the elders, who mentions it at the first meeting of the Church; when the Pastor will appoint two of

the brethren to converse with the applicant and report at next meeting.

2nd. Any member having objections to the admission of an applicant into membership, or desiring delay in his admission, makes his mind known to some one of the elders previously, and the information thus communicated is taken into consideration at their next meeting.

3rd. Should no one object to the applicant's admission, or desire delay, and should both elders and Church be satisfied with the case, the applicant is reported to the Church as approved of, and actually and solemnly received into fellowship.

New members are thus reported, recognized and received at meetings of the Church, at which the Lord's supper is observed, when the Pastor, if time permits, gives them an appropriate address, and along with the Elders, and in name of the entire Church, welcomes them into it by giving them the right hand of fellowship.

IV.—QUESTIONS TO BE PUT TO MEMBERS WHEN ADMITTED INTO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH.

1st. Do you believe that the Bible is the Book of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice ?

2nd. Do you believe that there are three Personalities in the one God, called in Scripture, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ?

3rd. Do you believe that the Divine Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love all men, and sincerely desire the salvation of all men, without distinction and without exception ?

4th. Can you conscientiously say that you have experienced the saving power of the gospel in your own heart, and that you wish to enjoy the privileges of the Church, and do what you can for its peace, purity, and spiritual prosperity ?

5th. Do you promise while you remain in connection with this Church, to be subject to those who are over you in the Lord in such a manner as to receive their admonitions, their warnings, and, if need be, their reproofs ?

6th. Do you promise in the strength of Divine grace to try and

adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel, and will you also try and win souls to Christ?

V.—DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

1st. Should any member be found guilty of acting disorderly; after due investigation by the Pastor and Elders he is suspended from Church fellowship, and the Church is informed at its next meeting of what has taken place.

2nd. In a case in which the Pastor and Elders may deem expulsion to be necessary, they delay decision for at least seven days after the Church meeting; thus affording an opportunity to members who may object to the contemplated excommunication to state their objections to the Elders privately. Should no objection be lodged with the Elders, it is understood that the whole Church agrees to the contemplated expulsion. Silence is understood to mean consent. Should objections be made, the Elders prayerfully and carefully consider them, and give them the fullest weight in their deliberations, and then pursue the course which appears to them most likely to glorify God, and advance his cause.

3rd. In the case of suspension the Elders affectionately interest themselves in the individual, and take opportunities of dealing with him in order to bring him to a satisfactory state of mind.

If they have reason to believe that they have been successful in their dealings, they state their opinion to the Church and delay for seven days, and after that, provided no objections be lodged, they proceed in the manner indicated in the preceding article.

4th. In the case of expulsion should the individual expelled afterward desire to be restored to Church membership, he must go through the same process as an entirely new applicant.

DOCTRINAL DECLARATION.

THE members of the Conference of the Evangelical Union assembled in Glasgow, September 29th and 30th, 1858, understanding that many parties are desirous to possess, at once, for purposes of denominational convenience and for public information, a compendious view of the leading doctrines generally held by the adherents of the Evangelical Union, deem it fitting to issue the following Doctrinal Declaration, which though approved of by the Conference, is nevertheless to be regarded, not as anything tantamount to an authoritative imposition, but simply as a Manifesto declarative of the distinctive views, on the topics treated, of the members of the present Conference. Without presuming to speak for others, or even to hold each other bound to every shade of thought or expression in such a document, they nevertheless agree to issue it, for the end specified, as a correct and *bonâ fide* Declaration of their sentiments.

An aim so specific would probably be hindered rather than helped by any attempt to give this Declaration the symmetrical form of an outline of a complete theological system; for this would be to occupy it needlessly with the formal statement of a multitude of doctrines which we hold in common with all other evangelical Christians. On the being and attributes of God; the trinity-in-unity of the adorable Godhead; the existence of divine moral government; the rational and moral nature of man as an accountable subject of that government; the moral law, in the varied forms in which it has been revealed; the universal guilt and ruin of men as transgressors of that law; the sovereign scheme of recovery through the mediation and atoning merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; his true and proper Divinity, and true and proper humanity; his true and proper atonement as the meritorious ground of forgiving mercy; the Divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of his work to the salvation of men; repentance and faith, as the means, on the sinner's part, of receiving salvation; free forgiveness and justification, as the immediate result, and sanctification as the continuous and pro-

gressive result of believing; the divine authority and permanent obligation of baptism and the Lord's Supper; and the true and plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures as the infallible record and rule of faith; on these and many other important doctrines that might be named, we shall either not touch at all, or touch but lightly, seeing that the sentiments entertained in regard to them by the members of the Evangelical Union present no denominational peculiarity that distinguishes them from those held, with less or more uniformity in matters of detail, by all other classes of evangelical Christians.

As respects the particular doctrines now to be stated, they are by no means to be regarded as distinctive of the Evangelical Union in any such sense as to imply that they are not shared in by others. The contrary for the most part, will be at once apparent. They are exhibited simply as the doctrines for which we are most generally known, and which are most characteristic and representative of our particular type of theology. They may be reduced to the following heads.

1. *Free-will.* The human will is free: not merely in the evasive sense that we are free to *do* as we choose, which is often not true, but that we are free *to choose*, which is always true. While thought and feeling are under the law of necessity, will is free. God has made it free. Since the fall, as truly as before it, man is in this sense free; and free in this same sense he remains, whatever the character he develops. Bias or settled character is in no respect subversive of freedom, as witness the case of angels, good and bad, and especially the great Jehovah, whose character is infinitely and unchangeably holy, while his will is not less infinitely and absolutely free. Free-will is in man a lineament of the divine image that will eternally remain, misuse it as much as he may. It is essential to his accountability. Under this character he is dealt with in all the arrangements of mercy. His free-will is respected throughout; and this illumines difficulties otherwise inexplicable. And thus, in opposition to the scheme of a necessitated will as held not by Calvinists only, but (as would appear) by all classes of infidels, the E. U. Conference holds tenaciously the doctrine of free-will as lying at the foundation of all religion, natural and revealed. In holding this, they do not hold the heathen doctrine of chance, or that any event happens without a cause; but they hold that the will-endowed mind, though acting in view of motives, is the free and self-determining cause of its own choices. The proof of the perfect freedom of the human will is to be found in universal consciousness, universal conscience, universal language, and in universal law.

2. *Divine Sovereignty.* By the Sovereignty of God, we, in common with

all our fellow Christians, understand his supreme and absolute prerogative to do what it pleases him. Any controversies we may have had that bear on this point have to do, not with the question, Is God in this sense sovereign? but with the ulterior question, What, in the exercise of this sovereignty, has it pleased and does it please him to do? These controversies are to be determined by an appeal partly to fact, but mainly to his own testimony in the volume of inspiration.

3. *Divine Foreknowledge and Foreordination.* God's foreknowledge is not his foreordination, nor is it based on his foreordination; though his foreordination is in every case conditioned on his knowledge or foreknowledge. His foreknowledge is absolute and universal, embracing all events, actual or possible, fixed or contingent, just as they are—necessitated events as necessitated, free events as free, without making them either the one or the other. His foreordination, on the other hand, is neither absolute nor universal. The doctrine of the Westminster Confession, that God hath eternally, unchangeably, and unconditionally, foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, we take to be in principle subversive of all morality and of all religion. Notwithstanding the *caveat* that it is not so held as to make God the author of sin, it does, if held at all make God the author of sin, the prime author, and, properly speaking, the only author. The mitigating distinction advanced by some between direct ordination and efficacious permission, is a distinction without a difference, or with such difference only as is altogether devoid of doctrinal significance. The foreordination in either case is alike absolute and universal, and is therefore such as to inwreath all events into one adamant chain of necessity. Nor can we admit the justice of the retort that God's universal foreknowledge, which we hold, necessitates all events, sin included, as truly as universal foreordination. Not by any means. To *know* is an act or state of the *intelligence*, and never necessitates its object; and for God to know a crime, say the crucifixion of Christ, before it comes to pass, no more identifies him with it, than our knowledge of it after it has come to pass makes us sharers in its criminality. To this it is no answer to say, that God could have prevented it, had he so chosen; for this, in so far as it is true, means simply that God's great moral plan admits the possibility of sin, but has nevertheless been benevolently adhered to, as, all things considered, the wisest and the best. To *ordain* on the other hand, is an act of the *will*, and directly implicates the ordainer with the action ordained; the planner of a crime being, in the moral estimate of mankind, even more criminal than the subordinate perpetrator. In contrast then to the doctrine of the Westminster standards, we hold that God's foreordination is not universally absolute, but is conditioned

by his wisdom as often inclusive of his foreknowledge; and that though his foreordination has relations to everything that comes to pass, he has not foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, but only whatsoever he himself brings to pass.

4. *Original Sin.* On this topic it may suffice to state, in order to prevent or correct misconception, that we hold as strongly as any the doctrine of the depravity of man and his utter helplessness and hopelessness in the matter of salvation till he comes under the gracious provision of the plan of mercy. We believe the divine constitution with Adam to have been federal in its character, and that his sin in consequence is, to the extent of the primeval curse, imputed to his posterity. We believe that the imputation of Adam's sin extends to the whole race, and thus embraces infants; but as infants were in no respect morally implicated in that transgression, we reject with abhorrence the dogma that any who die in infancy are subject, on the ground of Adam's first sin, "to the pains of hell for ever."

5. *Unity of the Godhead in the remedial plan.* Our theology enables us to discern in the adorable Trinity a gloriously harmonious universality of aspect and operation for the salvation of mankind. We reject the limitarian distinctions of a double will in God the Father, a double reference in the propitiation of God the Son, and a double kind of influence in the work of God the Holy Ghost. In contrast to these unscriptural dogmas, we hold the love of the Father, the atonement of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit, to be mutually consistent and co-extensive throughout, and that each embraces, in its merciful scope, the entire family of man.

6. *The Nature and Extent of the love of God the Father.* In its nature the love of the Father is free, sovereign, unbought; embracing us as sinners, guilty and ruined; so compassionating us as to contemplate not only our deliverance from hell, but also our elevation to heaven; and of such unparalleled intensity as to embody itself in the unspeakable gift and sacrifice of his own Divine and well-beloved Son. In its extent this love of the Father embraces all mankind, of every age and land, without distinction, without exception, and without respect of persons. The dogma of a double contradictory will in God the Father, — a public will and a secret will, a will of command and a will of decree, — we reject, as a libel alike on God's truth and love. Scripture expressly disowns and contradicts it. "God is no respecter of persons." "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." "As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." He is

'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' He "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

7. *The Nature and Extent of the Atonement of the Son.* As respects the Nature of the Atonement, we believe the Saviour's "obedience unto death" to have been strictly vicarious or substitutionary, and to have constituted a propitiation, or sacrificial satisfaction for the sins of men. In harmony with this, and, indeed, as inextricably involved in all this, we believe Jesus to have been, in his person, ministry, and work of atonement, the grandest revelation ever given of the unutterable compassion and love of God the Father to the entire fallen and undone family of humankind; and in this grand feature of the atonement as an embodied revelation of God's unparalleled benignity not only to the wretched but to the hell-deserving, lies the crowning secret of its virtue as an instrument of sanctification to the sinner, and of potent and permanent benign influence to the entire universe of God.

We reject the teaching of those who would strip Christ's work of its peculiar or expiatory character, and make it efficacious merely in the way of moral influence upon men, as the grandest moral act ever performed in our world. That it was indeed the grandest moral act ever performed in our world, and that its moral influence, as such, is mighty, through God, to promote our sanctification, we admit, and have all along held. But we also hold, that it was an expedient introduced into the moral government of God, in which, to the extent required, Christ was treated as we deserved, that we might be treated as he deserved; in which his obedience until death so fills the place of the sinner's punishment as to render the remission of sin's penalty morally possible and safe, and thus remove all legal barriers to the salvation of man; and on the ground of which, accordingly, God can be at once "the just God and the Saviour,"—at once "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This aspect of the atonement is vital to the blessed doctrine of man's justification, while yet a sinner, on the ground of the Saviour's merits, and through the free grace of God; a doctrine which, with Luther, we hold to be the criterion of a standing or a falling church. If the former aspect of the atonement tends to promote our sanctification, it does so by virtue of its connection with this aspect of it, which directly provides for our free justification. To accept the former as *the* atonement, and reject the latter, is to halve the gospel: it is to retain an aspect of it which bears on our sanctification, and reject another which makes express provision for our justification. And as, on every principle of free grace, a gratuitous justification by faith, for the sake of

Christ's deservings, is the divinely appointed and only avenue to sanctification, the rejection of that vital aspect of the atonement which provides for man's free justification as a sinner, is in effect the rejection of the latter aspect as well, seeing that it leaves unspanned that yawning gulf which our sins have interposed between our souls and God. Instead of accepting one of these aspects of Christ's work, to the exclusion of the other, we accept both as embraced in the idea and scope of the atonement; and, so doing, we can see, what else we could not, how "Christ Jesus is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

As respects the extent of the Atonement, we hold it to have been made for all men without distinction, exception, or respect of persons. We reject the modern dogma of a Double Reference in the atonement—a special and efficacious reference to the elect, a general and inefficacious reference to the non-elect. What the atonement as an atonement, was adapted and intended to accomplish for any, *that* it actually did accomplish for all for whom it was made—otherwise it was more than an atonement in relation to the one class, or less than an atonement in relation to the other. That Double Reference scheme, as it is termed, owes its existence entirely to the necessities of a false or transitional theological position: it is an ambiguous provision for the special and temporary benefit of those who at present stand with one foot in Calvinism, and with the other beyond it. It is destitute of foundation either in Scripture or reason; and it sheds on the sinner, when on the very threshold of peace, the eclipse of a chilling and repelling doubt;—for, by declaring that Christ so died for the non-elect as to remove legal barriers to their salvation, but not so as to procure for them a converting influence of the Spirit, whereas he so died for the elect as infallibly to secure their faith and final salvation, it leaves the returning sinner in hopeless perplexity as to whether, in the saving sense, Christ has died for him. In opposition to this notion, we hold that Christ's atonement wears the same plenary aspect to one and all for whom it was made; and that there lives not, nor ever lived, in any age or clime, the human being for whom Christ did not shed his sin-expiating blood. Proofs of the strict universality of the atonement are of the most varied and abundant character, consisting of direct statements; types and emblems; world-embracing invitations every one of which is a cruel mockery if Christ died not for all;—to which may be added, in addition to the nature of the case, all the aspects of the dispensations and all the analogies of Providence. Among the direct proofs may be mentioned, for their sententious brevity, the one or two following: Christ "died for all"; "gave himself a ransom for all"; "tasted death for every man"; "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours

only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (2 Cor. v. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Heb. ii. 9; 1 John ii. 2.)

8. *The Nature and Extent of the work of the Holy Spirit.* As respects the nature of the Holy Spirit's work, we believe, in harmony with the view above set forth on the perfect freedom of the human will, that the influence which that Divine Agent exerts on the human soul is moral and resistible. In thus rejecting the dogma of irresistible, will-suspending, and faith-necessitating grace, we do not limit the Holy Spirit, nor do we deny the necessity of his work, in order to salvation. We trace faith in every instance, with all its antecedents and consequents, to his free, sovereign, anticipating grace; and we could admit as many inscrutable modes and media in his operation as may reasonably be imagined, provided none of them imply any antagonism to the responsibility of man, or any infringement of the inviolable freedom of the human will. This moral and resistible feature imparts a grandeur and sublimity, and a transparent consistency, to the work of the Spirit, which the doctrine of irresistibility completely destroys. It is in harmony alike with every principle of the moral Government of God, and with every dictate of the moral nature and conscious experience of man. Its proofs are inwoven into the entire texture of revelation—the Bible throughout being one sublime and majestic Persuasive. Every warning, entreaty, remonstrance, promise, and threatening of the Book of God, and every instance in which a believer makes shipwreck of his faith, is a proof of the moral and resistible nature of the Holy Spirit's influences—not to mention such direct proofs as those in which inspired men speak, on the one hand, of the Spirit "striving with man," and on the other, of sinners "vexing," "grieving," "quenching the Spirit," and "always resisting the Holy Ghost." We reject, then, the distinction between the special and the common influences of the Spirit usually propounded; and hold, on the contrary, that, notwithstanding all the varieties, complications, and inscrutable mysteries connected with his work, its essential character is in every instance one and the same, namely, to do all that infinite Love, guided by infinite Wisdom, morally can, to arrest the sinner in his hell-ward career, and hedge him up to attend to and believe the glorious gospel of the grace of God; and to promote the sanctification and comfort of the believer.

As respects the *Extent* of the Spirit's work, we believe that, compatibly with all the varieties and specialities it implies, its aspect and bearing are as impartially benignant, and strictly universal, as the love of the Father, and the atonement of the Son. This is demonstrated by the nature of the case; for, besides the harmony of counsel and aim that ever

pervades the Godhead, the Spirit is sent on his evangelical mission by the Father and the Son ; and if he truly lays bare the heart of the Father, who " will have all men to be saved," and truly unfolds the work of the Son, " who gave himself a ransom for all," he will exert an influence co-extensive with the fallen family of mankind. As there must be infinite harmony of heart and aim among the co-eternal Three, to limit the work of the Spirit is, in effect, correspondingly to limit the love of the Father and the atonement of the Son. No inconsistency, then, can be greater than that of maintaining that the Son died for all, and that his atonement expressed the Father's love for all, while at the same time, it is contended that the needed influence of the Spirit stops short of all, and embraces those only who are included in the circle of the unconditionally elect. Either the limitation belies the universality, or the universality belies the limitation. We, for our parts, have chosen the alternative of universality ; and we do so, not merely because (though this were proof sufficient) the love of the Father and the work of the Son are demonstrably universal, but also because the language of Scripture is not less explicit in proof of the universality of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is said to " strive with *man*"—a generic term inclusive of the whole human race. He " convinces the *world*"—a term identical and co-extensive with that world which the Father loved, and for which the Saviour died. He, equally with " the Bride," says " Come—Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely ;" which it were unwarrantable to affirm, if, along with this invitation, an influence which it was his to bestow and which was indispensably necessary to enable men to come, he gave only to some, and withheld from all the rest.

9. *Concurrence of the Divine and Human agencies in the matter of salvation.* By comparing what has been just advanced on the nature and extent of the Spirit's work, with what is above set forth in Articles 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, relating to the free-will of man, and the sovereignty, foreknowledge, and foreordination of God, it will be seen that we believe in a synergism or concurrence of the Divine agency and the human, in the matter of salvation. Instead of running away with the Divine element, as Calvinism does, to the virtual exclusion of the human and to the stultification of the innumerable statements of Scripture that teach us our responsibility and urge us to action ; and instead of running away with the human element, as Pelagianism does, to the virtual ignorement of the divine, and the contradiction of every text that sets forth the free grace and sovereignty of God ; we believe in the indispensable necessity and harmonious concurrence of both, and are thus enabled to reconcile all the varieties of Scripture phraseology, otherwise irreconcilable, on

the agencies and instrumentalities connected with salvation. Saving results in the soul of man stand connected in Scripture, sometimes with the agency of the Divine Spirit, sometimes with the agency of the sinner himself. Sometimes they are ascribed to "the truth," and sometimes to the sinner's faith in that truth. Thus variously in Scripture are conversion, regeneration, sanctification, salvation, accounted for. This, on our principles, is precisely what was to be expected; and on the same principles we at once discern the congruity of all those passages that urge us to prayer, and consequent dependence on the Divine agency, with those others that urge us to the employment of our own. Both agencies being necessary to salvation, both are recognised. This concurrence of the Divine and human in our salvation can have no true place in any theology based on absolute and universal foreordination and necessitation; but in our theology it has. The inviolable freedom of the human will being recognised as a pervading principle in the Divine administration, the sovereign agency of God shapes itself to it; and thus we are enabled to explain,—what, on other principles, are not only utterly inexplicable, but also ominously becloud the character of that God to whose foreordination and necessitation they must all in that case be traced,—the perplexing anomalies and failures, to wit, that mark the course of the dispensations, and the suasive character throughout of the entire structure of revelation.

10. *Human ability and inability.* Man, as a sinner under condemnation and hopelessly depraved, is wholly unable by his own resources to save himself. He cannot make atonement: for this he is entirely dependent on God the Son. Nor can he, after atonement has been made, bring himself, by his own unaided strength, under its saving influence: for this he is entirely dependent on God the Holy Ghost. In these respects, we are truly described as "without strength." (Rom. v. 6.) But when the atonement has been made, and the Holy Spirit has not only embodied the record of it in the inspired gospel, but is himself present to persuade and guide the sinner to the faith of it, the sinner is able to surrender himself to this divine influence, and believe, and be saved. Surely if we can "believe the witness of man," the witness of God, being greater and infallible, may be more easily believed. (1 John v. 9.) Else, on what ground is man responsible for his belief? And how could God be vindicated from the charge of being "a hard task-master, reaping where he had not sowed, and gathering where he had not strawed?" To affirm that God, on pain of "the wrath to come," yea, and of "the sorer punishment," commands men to believe and be saved, to whom he has not given the power to believe, is to attribute to Him what, if attributed to a man,

would brand that man as a remorseless and a relentless mocker of human helplessness and woe!

11. *Repentance and Faith.* In harmony with the usage of the original terms, we understand repentance to mean simply a change of mind, and faith to mean simply "the belief of the truth." When both terms are employed in connexion with the gospel, they denote a change of mind that issues in the reception of the truth. When only one term is used, the other is implied. Each is to be distinguished from its consequents—such as peace, love, godly sorrow, or godly joy. As respects faith, there is but one term in the original for the two English words which are indiscriminately used to represent it, namely faith and belief; and this denotes simply what is understood by belief in every day life, the difference between saving and common faith consisting not in the manner of believing, but in the saving and sanctifying virtue of the gospel-truth believed. This truth is, that "God so loved the world," including every soul in it, that "he gave his only begotten Son," on the ground of whose atonement for every man he is now, in relation to all, "the just God, and the Saviour," and pardons and justifies, on the ground of the Saviour's merits, every sinner that believes, the very moment he believes. Such, and so world-embracing, being the object of faith as understood by us, we are under no temptation whatever to complicate the nature of faith, as limitarians do. The object of faith, as taught by them, being limited, and as such insufficient to give peace to any man's soul, they are driven to supply that radical defect in the *object*, by supplementing and complicating the *act*,—thus perplexing the sinner who is inquiring after peace, and averting his eyes from the Crucified in whom alone he can find it, and sending him in to his own heart where ground of peace there is none. In our theology, on the other hand, the more we simplify our views of faith, the more consistent are we; for so gloriously full and complete, as meeting the sinner's entire case, is the object of faith presented to us in the free and universal gospel, that it will be found to be "the power of God unto salvation" to every man, even the worst, who really believes it, and perseveres therein to the end.

12. *Relations of Prayer and Faith.* To remove or prevent misconception, it may be desirable to state, that we would greatly deprecate any attempt to stand between the anxious sinner and his God, in the way of discouraging him to pray. The more the sinner gets himself into the felt presence of God, and realizes that it is God and not man that is pleading with him, the better. Far be it from us to seek to stifle in any anxious soul such genuine breathings as, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "The Lord direct me into all the truth!" What we urge on the sinner is, that

the sole ground on which God can hear and answer prayer is that propitiation of Jesus for him and the whole world which he, by his continued unbelief, persists in rejecting ; and that if he can believe in the efficacy of prayer which implies the propitiation, he can believe in the simpler truth of the propitiation itself. We, moreover, caution him not to pray for that which God has nowhere promised to give, and which has no existence whatever save in a limitarian creed—namely, an irresistible influence to necessitate faith in his soul. We further tell him a converting influence is already at his heart, that he is bound immediately to yield to it, and that it is at the peril of his soul if he longer delays. We tell him further, that the Apostles and primitive heralds of salvation never urged unconverted sinners to pray for faith, but told them there and then to believe and live ; and seeing—the entire New Testament being witness—that God's command in the gospel is not " Pray for faith and be saved, " but " Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, " we warn the anxious sinner to take care lest he should put a theological figment and delusion in the place of a present evangelical fact, and an urgent evangelical duty ; and thus pray himself past the Cross into greater hardness of heart, when the Spirit is all the time praying him, " Be ye reconciled unto God. " The system of urging sinners to pray for faith is the direct result of a limited theology, which first mutilates the Gospel, and then sends the sinner away past it, to ask God to supply, by a miraculous influence, the defect which men have made in it. Ah, how is the Gospel made void through the traditions of men !

13. *Justification by Faith.* On this vital subject we hold as strictly as any, and more strictly than many, of our fellow professors of Christianity who are recognized as evangelical, that great Protestant doctrine which Luther revived and propounded as the criterion of a standing or falling church,—namely, that every sinner is justified the moment he believes the Gospel ; is justified, not as in himself righteous, but as a sinner believing in, and thereby united to, Jesus ; is justified, therefore, not on the ground of his own righteousness, past, present or to come, in whole or in part, and least of all on the ground of his mere act of believing, but solely on the ground of the substitutionary, propitiatory, and infinitely meritorious righteousness, consisting of the " obedience until death, " or propitiation, of the Lord Jesus, which stands to us instead of a personal righteousness, and, as such, has, in free sovereign mercy, been provided for all the race ;—being proclaimed in the Gospel charter as " unto all and upon all them that believe, "—as the free gift of righteousness unto all men, unto justification of life. " (Rom. iii. 23 : v. 17, 18.) The doctrine of imputation, accordingly, as a prominent feature in God's moral government of

our world,—as seen, for example, in the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, in the symbolical imputation in the ancient Sacrificature of the offerer's sin to the victim, in the imputation of our sins to the Saviour as "made sin for us," and finally, in the imputation of his righteousness to us, as thereby made "the righteousness of God in him,"—is a doctrine which has all along been "most surely believed among us," as one which cannot be denied or explained away without marring the entire scheme of revelation, and rendering many portions of it, both in the Old Testament and in the New, incapable of any consistent or intelligible exposition. We disclaim as an injurious imputation sometimes cast upon us, and for which we never, in any of our teachings, furnished the slightest occasion, the disposition or tendency to make a saviour of our faith. On the contrary, we claim to be more free from this tendency than our brethren who hold limited views of the gospel, and we claim to be more true than they to the great doctrines of free grace; for by limiting the provisions of mercy, the inquiring sinner is naturally thrown in upon his own worthless experiences, to supplement, by evidences of saving faith the defect which has been introduced into the Gospel-testimony; and thus he is tempted to make a saviour of his faith, or in some other way to pervert the evangelical doctrine of free grace. Whereas by presenting a full, free, and unfettered gospel, which brings, in the finished work of Jesus, "the free gift of righteousness," in the same sense, "unto all men," to be received by faith, the door is open to any and every sinner, as such, to enter, by the simple belief of God's testimony, on a justified state, and "have peace with God," on the sole ground of the Saviour's atonement; without the slightest occasion or inducement to magnify the act of believing, or to look into his own experiences at all for a ground of safety and peace.

14. *Peace with God.* The immediate and invariable result of believing in Jesus is, besides justification, such a realisation of this first great blessing as gives a sense of safety, or sentiment of peace in relation to God. Peace with God is not to be confounded with "the full assurance of faith," or "full assurance of hope,"—for these are urged on believers as attainments, which, by supposition, some of them, believers though they are, have yet to make. Peace admits of degrees, and is subject to interruption. As the result of the truth believed, it will necessarily partake in the vicissitudes to which our faith itself is liable, as weak or strong, intermittent or sustained. But still, peace with God, to the extent of a true and genuine filial sentiment toward God, is the fruit of true faith, and is essential to sanctification. Its place is not at the goal, but at the starting point of the Christian race; and with Dr. Chalmers we be-

lieve that "grievous indeed is their misunderstanding of the gospel, who think that peace must be postponed till we know that holiness is in progress within us, and that repentance is going onwards even unto perfection."

15. *Regeneration.* With all evangelical Christians, we understand this to denote a vital change of disposition and character; but considering the Jewish usage from which the term was borrowed, it may be a question whether the prior change of relationship implied ought not also to be included. If so, regeneration will embrace adoption, or the restored relation of sonship, and the initial stage of sanctification, or the restored filial disposition. Under this latter aspect, it displaces "the spirit of bondage" by "the Spirit of adoption"—the disposition of the slave by that of the "dear child." It is of vital necessity to the sinner. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It consists, not in a change of intellectual faculties, nor in a change of emotional susceptibilities, nor in a change of natural temperament, for in these respects, as in bodily feature and figure, the subject of regeneration remains the same; but in a change of disposition and character by virtue of which those natural powers are exercised on new and worthy objects, and thereby come themselves to be reactively expanded, harmonized, and sublimed. The agencies concerned in regeneration are, First in the order both of nature and of time, and transcendently so in the order of importance, that of the Holy Spirit; concurrent with which are, Secondly, that of the sinner himself, in the way of voluntarily attending to and taking in the regenerating truth of the gospel; and Thirdly, that of the preacher, or other Christian agent, by whom, through voice or pen, that gospel truth has been exhibited and enforced. Hence regeneration, while the result of free sovereign grace, is at the same time the sinner's duty: who accordingly is expressly commanded to "make himself a new heart, and a new spirit." (Ezek. xviii. 31) And hence, too, as illustrative of the co-operative human agency, Paul says to the Corinthians, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." (1 Cor. iv. 15.) The instrument of regeneration is the gospel-truth: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." (Jas. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23.) It is, accordingly, the duty of the sinner, in the calm and earnest exercise of his rational faculties, to attend to and believe the gospel truth, which, with innumerable accompanying inducements, the Holy Spirit brings him; and as that truth is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. i. 16.) he is, in the belief of it, regenerated in heart and life. (James i. 25.) Hence we read, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus

is the Christ, is born of God." (1 John v. 1.) Regeneration, then, is not to faith, but *through* faith—not *before* it, and *in order* to it, but *after* it and *by means* of it. The notion that regeneration is an immediate, mysterious, and in fact miraculous renewal of the human faculties, before believing, and to enable them to believe, we reject as unscriptural, as subversive of free-agency and moral government, and as of pernicious tendency in the way of leading the sinner to postpone the immediate duty of believing the gospel, under the fatal and delusive expectation of a so-called "day of power." Whatever doctrine teaches the sinner, implicitly or explicitly, that any kind of influence is yet needed to enable him to believe, other than that which is exerted on him now, by that very feature demonstrates itself to be a gospel-beclouding and soul-ensnaring doctrine,—as sure as the divine declaration, "*Now* is the accepted time, behold, *now* is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

16. *Election and Reprobation.* The undeserved mercy for man revealed in the gospel, being a provision of infinite wisdom as well as of infinite love, develops its blessed and stupendous results according to a divinely devised and eternal plan. This, in its general aspect, is recognised in Scripture under such expressions as "his eternal purpose," or "the counsel of his own will." In its relation to human destiny, it is specially referred to in the word predestination, and kindred terms; and, in harmony with its illustrious character as a "counsel of peace," in terms of which Christ "came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved," these expressions will be found in Scripture to have, for their proper connexion, "the glory to be revealed" as the inheritance of the faithful, and not "the wrath to come" as the sad alternative of the lost. Under such benignant aspects, the general plan of mercy will be found referred to, as in many other passages, so more fully and specifically in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and in the Eighth and Ninth of Romans. In the last named chapter the doctrine of the divine sovereignty is built up, not as a wall of unconditional exclusion, in favour of the few, against the overwhelming majorities of the human family, but as a wall of defence, in favour of the many, against the exclusiveness of the Jews, who would have unconditionally shut the gates of mercy on all the rest of mankind. As absolutely sovereign, "God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy;" and as sovereignly, impartially, and universally benevolent, he will adhere to his plan, in opposition to all the heartless and partial systems of men. That plan is there exhibited (see Rom. x.,) as one of universal and impartial love to the human race, in terms of which, and on the ground of Christ's "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," God's sovereign

and unalterable determination is, to save all who believe in Jesus, Gentile as well as Jew, and to condemn all the finally impenitent, Jew as well as Gentile. Ah, to what hideous views have men dared to wed the truly august and gracious doctrine of the sovereignty of God! In the matter of salvation, as in so many others, we might well appropriate the words of David, "Let me fall now into the hands of the Lord, for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hands of man." (1 Chron. xxi. 13.)

In beautiful accordance with these general features of the divine plan, are the teachings of Scripture on the subject of election and reprobation, the only terms, in this connexion, which it seems further needful to explain. The two terms are manifestly correlative and antithetic; and the explanation of the one will go far to elucidate the other.

To begin with election, believers are, in Scripture, called the elected or elect. (Rom. xi. 7; Eph. i. 4; 1 Thess. i. 4; 1 Pet. i. 2; ii. 9.) In the last of these passages, the designation occurs as one of a series which are transferred from the theocracy of the Old Testament to the Christian church of the New. As Christians are "a royal priesthood," "an holy nation," and "a peculiar people," in a spiritual and vital sense analogous to that in which Israel was in the external and typical sense, so in a similar sense are they a "chosen generation." In what sense, then was Israel a "chosen generation"—or, as Jehovah calls them, "Israel mine elect"? Certainly not in the sense of having been eternally, unconditionally, and personally pre-appointed unto salvation; or in any sense at all analogous to that: but simply in the sense of having been actually separated from among the nations, by a divine process with which their own free agency concurred, to special privileges and honours, and to corresponding duties, in the character of God's theocratic or peculiar people. To rejoin that what God thus did in time he decreed in eternity, is to say what we at once admit, but dismiss as irrelevant; for the same thing falls to be affirmed of every divine act: and surely no one will affirm that because these were all decreed in eternity, therefore creation, the deluge, the call of Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the rest, belong to eternity and not to time. This will suffice to dispose of the one or two passages, of which Eph. i. 4 may be taken as a specimen, in which, along with the act of election, there is allusion made to its purpose from eternity. In these, as in other cases, the act is contemplated in purpose, but not on that account the less,—on the contrary all the more,—does the fact remain evident, that election is one thing, which dates in time, and that the purpose of it is another, which dates from eternity. From the nature

of the case, moreover, it was natural and quite to be expected, that the connexion or occasion that suggested the mention of election, would sometimes also make it needful or expedient to refer to that sublime and eternal plan whose provisions determined its principle, objects, and ends.

The sense, as above explained, in which Israel was God's elect, will be found analogically to correspond in every particular, to that in which Christians, in the New Testament, are called God's elect. The original of the verb "to elect" means to select, pick out, or set apart for one's self. This of itself proves election to be an actual process in time; for the verb is often so used with reference to other objects, and always in this sense, whether the selecting act be affirmed of God or of man. As truly, then, as Israel's election meant an actual process, in time, of separation from among the nations, the election of Christians means their actual separation in time from a "world lying in wickedness." As it was God that selected and separated Israel "with a strong hand and a stretched out arm," so it is God that elects Christians; who, accordingly, besides being called "the elect of God," which might merely mean the elect *belonging* to God, are expressly declared, in other passages, to be persons whom "God hath chosen." (Eph. i. 4 : 2 Thess. ii. 13, &c.) As God's election of Israel did not preclude, but called into requisition, the concurrent agency of Israel, so in Christian election : It is God that elects or separates us from the world, but his wisdom sees meet to do it in concurrence with our own agency ; for Christians are said, by one Apostle, to be "elect through *sanctification* of the Spirit," which implies their own concurrent agency ; and by another, to be "chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and *belief of the truth*," a text in which the vital element of that concurrent agency, namely faith, is positively expressed. (1 Pet. i. 2 : 2 Thess. ii. 13.) God's end in Christian election, in addition to his supreme and infinitely benevolent end, "the praise of his glorious grace," is twofold : as in the case of Israel, it is an election to peculiar privileges and to peculiar duties. Christians are elected to peculiar privileges, namely, forgiveness here and eternal glory hereafter :—unto forgiveness here, for they are said to be "Elect *unto* the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ ;" and unto glory hereafter, for they are further said to be "chosen to salvation," and to be chosen "heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him." (1 Pet. i. 2 : James ii. 5.) And Christians are chosen to peculiar duties : they are said to be "elected *unto* obedience," and to be "chosen that they should be holy and without blame before God." (1 Pet. i. 2 : Eph. i. 4.) To these gracious and glorious ends the believer is elected, not only in consideration of

his being a believer, but, as already proved, by means of his believing as the vital element of the human agency that must here concur with the divine ; and as faith is the instrument of his justification, regeneration, and progressive sanctification, it is, by virtue of this, and all its other developments, the instrument of the Christian's progressive separation from the world. Hence he is commanded to "make his calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 10) ; the sureness here inculcated being, as the original shows, an objective confirmation, or a making sure of the election itself, and not a subjective certainty, or a sureness merely in the mind ; which, moreover, on predestination principles, it were very hard to attain.

On the subject of election, accordingly, our views present a marked and decided contrast to those of the Westminster theology. The election we hold is not unconditional, but conditional ; not an absolute decree, but a selecting process, not a thing of eternity, but a thing of time ; not an election *to* faith, but an election *through* faith, and a result which, accordingly, and as the Apostle Peter expressly declares, it is the duty and within the power of every man to secure. *Chosen to faith* : that is the watchword of predestinarians ; but not a text can they bring out of the Bible that shall as much as seem to teach any such thing. *Chosen THROUGH faith* : that is our watchword ; and our Scripture vouchers for it are such explicit testimonies as this ; "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.)

On the subject of reprobation, we hold the attribution to that God whose name is Love, of an absolute and unconditional decree of reprobation, to be the climax of blasphemy, a *monstrum horrendum* in theology. The one solitary respect in which, on this subject, we agree with Calvin, is in acknowledging the fidelity with which he himself characterizes his own doctrine, when he calls the reprobating act, as understood by him, "decretum horribile." So revolting is the dogma, that, by modern Calvinists, it is for the most part disowned. And yet nothing is more demonstrable than that, if they hold eternal, personal and unconditional election, they are bound in consistency to hold all that is essential in the doctrine of absolute reprobation. Whether they choose to retain that phrase, or disown it as reprobate, the thing expressed by it essentially remains, so long as the doctrine of unconditional election remains. The predestinating decree can have no side of unconditional brightness for the elect, without an antithetic side of equally unconditional blackness for the non-elect. The latter is the logical correlate, the inseparable shadow, of the former ; and whether it be conceived of, with the stern

old Calvinists, as a thundergloom of positive and absolute reprobation; or, with their more relenting successors, as the chill of a negative but not less absolute, and therefore not less deadly, act of preterition, is of little moment, so long as the infinite *virus* of unconditionalism remains.

Rejecting, as we do, the doctrine of unconditional election, we naturally and consistently hold the doctrine of conditional reprobation. The word "reprobate" means disapproved, rejected, condemned; and the original terms have the same significance. The word reprobate occurs but once in the English version of the Old Testament, namely, in Jer. vi. 30; and six times in the New Testament, to which may be added other two passages in which the original occurs,—namely, Rom. i. 28; 1 Cor. ix. 27. 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 6, 7; 2 Tim. iii. 8; Tit. i. 16; Heb. vi. 7, 8. Let these passages be examined in detail, and in every one of them it will be found that, so far from betraying any trace of unconditional reprobation, the reprobation they teach is in every instance conditional, and so far as it respects the final destiny of the sinner, it has its place at the directly opposite pole to that assigned to unconditional reprobation. Instead of preceding the sinner's career, its proper place is at the end of his career. It is not the absolute fore-dooming of any man considered merely as a creature. It is not even the conditional fore-dooming or actual dooming of a man considered simply as a sinner. It is not even the conditional fore-dooming or actual dooming of a sinner considered as a gospel rejecter. The object of Scriptural reprobation, in its ultimate form, is the Gospel rejecter on whom has been expended the last resources of a wise benevolence, and who is thus reprobated under the character of one who has proved himself incorrigible and finally impenitent. In Jer. vi. 30, the "silver" is not called "reprobate" till "the bellows," in the assaying process, are described as "burnt." In Heb. vi. 7, 8, the ground is not "rejected" and "burned," till it has been often rained on, and after all yielded nothing but "briars and thorns." So in the other passages above-named. In so far as reprobation is described as the present condition of sinners, it expresses merely their state as disapproved and condemned, though not as yet finally, on account of their sin. And in so far as it relates to their ultimate destiny, it is described as in no case taking effect till the last and the utmost to prevent it has been done; and it has thus for its sole objects, the finally impenitent.

We have thus touched on the main points embraced in our distinctive views. We have endeavoured to be explicit; for it is alike our wish and our interest to be understood. In prosecution of this aim, we have necessarily given expression to much that is not peculiar to ourselves,

with the view of bringing out our distinctive sentiments in bolder relief. It only remains to add that we claim to share with our Christian brethren of every name, on the one hand, in all the rights of free and independent investigation, and on the other, in all the charities and catholicities of our common faith. As honest and earnest men we will speak what we believe, but we should ever do our best to "speak the truth in love." At a great price have we purchased our freedom from the bonds of traditional imposition; and having thus bought what we take to be truth, and along with it more enlarged rights of Scripture investigation, we will not sell these advantages for any consideration whatsoever. It is, however, our wish, and prayer, and shall be our increasing endeavour, to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We own and esteem as brethren many who, from culpable ignorance or narrow-mindedness, speak and think of us only as the disseminators of dangerous error. We long and pray for the increased prosperity of the entire Israel of God. From the heart we say, "Peace be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces." "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."