

CIRCULAR LETTER.

(Written by Elder L. L. Schenck.)

1920

The Elders and messengers of the First Regular Old School Predestinarian Baptist Association called Kansas, unto the churches composing her body, greeting and Christian salutation.

BELOVED BRETHREN:—In presenting this, our annual Circular Letter, we hope we do it in the fear and love of Israel's God, whom we presume to worship. We can feel within us no inclination to depart from our former custom or doctrine, which we have practiced and preached ever since our organization as an Association, to wit, the doctrine of absolute predestination of all things, of eternal union of Christ and his people, of election, of salvation by grace, and all other principles of Bible doctrine, as have been promulgated by Old School Baptists throughout all ages.

As a starting point we will refer to the language of the apostle Paul in the first chapter of his letter to the church which is at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”—Eph. i. 3-5. The doctrine afore mentioned is all set forth in this Scripture, and is clearly borne out by other and corroborating expressions of prophets and apostles, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Let us notice briefly each expression of the apostle herein set forth. He breaks forth with an expression of praise and gratitude to God for the blessings he hath so freely bestowed on us. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In addressing the Corinthian brethren he speaks of him as “The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,”—2 Cor. i. 3, and again bursts forth with, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—2 Cor. i. 3. The apostle Peter in speaking of his abundant mercy is also filled with the same

spirit of praise, and uses the same words to express his feelings: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—1 Peter i. 3. These apostles are voicing the feelings of every heaven-born child when led to meditate upon the blessings and the unspeakable mercies of our God, and in effect are speaking as the psalmist when he said, “The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”—Psalms cxxvi. 3. The mode of the apostle in treating upon this point is conspicuous in the fact that he is telling the brethren, not what he has done for the Lord, but what the Lord has done for us: “Blessed us with all spiritual blessings.” This means that there is not one blessing overlooked or omitted which God the Father saw was for the good of his people whom he loves. All blessings, all things, he says are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. The blessings of life and salvation, the blessing of liberty to speak forth his praise, of preaching his everlasting gospel, the privilege of worshipping him under our vine and fig tree. These are not all, but they are some of the blessings with which God’s people are blessed. The “all” may be briefly comprehended in the words of Jesus, when he said, “All thou gavest me,” for he is our all.

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” The word “according” no doubt signifies, “in accord.” All of God’s works are in sweet accord. All things must work in perfect accord in order to fulfill God’s eternal purpose. There can be no jar, no discord, no miscarriage in the purpose of God, else it forever disproves his claim to omniscience and omnipotence. How unseemly it would be if one of God’s works should be out of harmony with his other works. The salvation and calling of his people are in accord with, or according to, his own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. They are “the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. viii. 28. “Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.”—Acts xv. 18. His works in this present day are the fulfillment of, or according to, his eternal purpose. Hence the “all spiritual blessings” of which the apostle speaks are in accord with God’s eternal choice, “not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus

Christ.”—2 Tim. i. 9, 10. God blessed his people with spiritual blessings because they are a spiritual people. It would be out of harmony with infinite wisdom to say a natural man is blessed with spiritual blessings. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”—2 Cor. i. 14. They, the spiritual people, are in union with their spiritual head, Christ. In him and of him, and as a spiritual house are built upon him, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter ii. 5) Time cannot record the choosing of this people. They were chosen before time began. Eternal union and eternal election are in evidence here, and are in accord with God’s eternal purpose. It is indisputable that if there be any union between Christ and his people it must be an eternal union or a time union. If it be a time union, it began in time and must also end with time. If it be an eternal union, it originated in eternity and it will endure throughout eternity.

“Chosen us.” The field is too great to dwell in full upon the election of God in the limits of a Circular

Letter, but from this apostolic phrase it is evident that God has chosen his people, and that in so doing he acted independent of any human means or instrumentalities, as has been said before, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace. This is the elect. “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”—1 Peter i. 2.

“Sanctified;” that is, set apart by the Spirit. This alone is sufficient proof that the choosing of this people is alone through the wisdom and mercy of God. The obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ has effected the salvation of all his elect, for he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The sprinkling of his blood upon them is a token of their ultimate safety. “And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are.”—Exodus xii. 13. The destroying angel can never enter where the blood of Jesus is in evidence.

“That we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Wonder of wonders, that we, a sinful race, should be accounted holy and without blame!

We are not so vain as to suppose this is because we are better by nature than others, but contrariwise, we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, but God, who is rich in mercy (here is the secret, brethren, God's mercy,) even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved). The washing of water by the word has made his elect clean, that he might present them unto himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. (Eph. v. 27.) "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."—Isaiah i. 18. It is alone through the efficacy of his shed blood that his people are accounted holy and without blame before him in love. In this light the apostle addresses some as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."—Heb. iii. 1. Why should they not be accounted holy and without blame, since Christ, the antitypical scapegoat, has borne their sins quite away, and declared he would remember them against his people no more forever! O the wondrous display of love! "Greater love hath no man than this,

that a man lay down his life for his friends.”—John xv. 13.

“Predestinated us onto the adoption of children.” In this expression is the indisputable evidence of God’s predestination, setting forth in a word his foreknowledge and almighty power. All things were predestinated, because all things are foreknown of him, and he works all things after the counsel of his own will. It is not given to finite man to know the workings of infinite wisdom, only as

“His providence unfolds the book,
And makes his counsels shine;
Each opening leaf, and every stroke
Fulfills some deep design.”

Each day brings its own developments. Thus “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.”—Psalms xix. 2. To predestinate is to predetermine or prearrange any time or event. Adoption is the process of making one an heir that is not born into the family. One that is a natural heir requires no adoption, and indeed the law would recognize no effort on the part of a father adopting his own child. “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for

the seed.”—Rom. ix. 8. The fleshly man then being not a child of God, is not an heir to his kingdom. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”—1 Cor. xv. 50. Briefly stated then, this adoption applies to the bodies of the saints of God. They are born of the flesh and are flesh. They can be made heirs only by adoption. The consummation of this event is predestinated.

It is fixed for some future time, and we are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”—Rom. viii. 23. It is then when our vile body shall be redeemed from the grave, and it will be redeemed. As well might we expect the wheels of time to turn backward as to presume that God’s predestination can be thwarted. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Then this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. Thanks be unto God, who

giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
(I Cor. xv. 52 57.)

L. L. SCHENCK, Moderator.

MARY ELLISON, Clerk.

The First Kansas Association of Regular Old School Predestinarian Baptists, to the saints scattered abroad, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus,

WE desire to extend an invitation to brethren of our faith and order, who are in good standing at home, to visit us. And that you may know of our belief in the truth, we will say that we are a people who believe in the predestination of all things whatsoever come to pass; that our Lord Jesus Christ is God-Man, and the only Mediator between God and man, and that without any means or instrumentalities of men's inventions no works and none can hinder, doing his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. We believe in personal, unconditional election of the saints in God before the foundation of the world, and their spiritual life is hid with Christ in God, and as his body they are in

eternal vital union with him, their Head. We believe in the total depravity of human nature, from which there is no recovery, save in the atonement of Christ Jesus, which was made exclusively for the heirs of promise, and they will be preserved through grace unto eternal salvation. We believe in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, all of which we find fully proven in the Scriptures. We have no fellowship for the many inventions sought out by men, no matter by what alluring or enticing name they may be called, or for what laudable purpose, in the minds of men, they may be intended.

Done by order of the Association.

L. L. SCHENCK, Moderator.
MARY ELLISON, Clerk.

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