

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 127

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## Editorial

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thank you for your letters received since the last Circular Letter. While two correspondents have expressed disagreement with the article regarding the parables neither have offered alternative interpretations in time for this Letter, so we must wait until the next one for their views. I would also like to hear from anyone else who has any thoughts on any of these seven parables so that we can include them in an extended "Chat Section" in the next issue.

The Gulf Crisis continues to dominate world news but rarely do we see any news of the growing concern over water supplies for the area. In some countries of the Middle East water is being consumed at more than ten times the annual rainfall. Sea water is being converted into drinking water but as it costs about twice as much as producing a similar quantity of oil the expense prohibits its use for large scale irrigation. Wells for drawing water from ever greater depths is causing salt intrusion, which in turn will have a detrimental effect on soils for crop production and the two largest rivers in the Middle East, the Euphrates and the Nile, are both seriously affected by increasing populations needing water. As long ago as 1974 Iraq threatened to bomb Syria's al Thawara Dam because the Euphrates was reduced to about a quarter of its natural flow, but Syria was persuaded to release more water to Iraq. However, Turkey is now planning 22 dams along 1,400 miles of the Euphrates, with the first of these about to come into operation, for the growing demands of her own people. The increasing populations of both Turkey and Syria means more will have to be taken from the river, and inevitably, the remaining water is becoming more heavily polluted by these populations. Iraq is in a vulnerable position.

Egypt, too, has problems. Severe drought in the countries at the headwaters of the Nile has meant that the Aswan Dam has been so low on occasions as to barely drive the turbines, but added to this, Ethiopia is planning to dam the Blue Nile to supply water for the famine stricken areas, but the Blue Nile provides 80% of the water for the Aswan Dam, so not only would the Dam become useless but the very existence of Egypt would be threatened. Is this the prophecy of Isaiah? In chapter 19, verse 5 we read, "...and the river shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishers also shall mourn and, and they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish..."

However events work out, the coming of Jesus Christ is seen to be daily closer.

With sincere love to all, in the Master's service, Russell Gregory.

## **Some Thoughts and Comments on the Genesis History of Creation in Relation to Adam and his Posterity**

“In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.” Is it not obvious from science that the earth is part of the heavens? We must conclude then that the affix “the Earth,” to the statement “the Heavens,” is to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that the following record is an account of things related to the earth and its living inhabitants, the most important of which is man by reason of his higher intelligence as a gift from his Creator, and thus enabling him, if he will, to read what is written for his own good and to show him the ultimate Purpose of Creation.

We are informed that by the Word of God the earth brought forth the animal and insect creation after its kind, but the creation of man was a separate issue though also of the earth, earthy. God said, “Let us make man in our image after our likeness.” Obviously He, The Lord God, was addressing the Angels of His Power to combine in the wonderful making of man from the dust of the earth as a living soul in the “image” and “likeness” of they themselves, but not after their kind, for the latter would mean that Adam would be incapable of dying. Therefore the “image” and “likeness” was there to behold, but the nature was not the “kind” of Angels, incapable of dying, but of that “kind” related to temporal existence and with varying life-spans according to the species.

The law of nature was fixed by the Creator and He saw or beheld everything that He had made, and behold it was very good, animal life and man were included in this declaration even though that life was limited and temporal. So death occurs in general, not because the nature has been changed, but because the natural and physical law of duration of the species was ordained from Creation and could only be changed or improved by the Creator’s sole Right and Power. None, therefore, have the right or authority to teach that the description of the phrase “very good” in relation to Adam’s nature at creation, meant a nature superior to what we now have yet not up to equality with that of the Angels; Paul is definite about this in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 - remember he warned of false teachers, and these have been around a long time in relation to the subject of changed nature.

The Word of God to Adam, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.” This, I am sure, included the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden, but to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil Adam was forbidden of God on pain of death in the day he did so, and would convict him of sin and its penalty. To believe that Adam’s natural death at the age of 930 years was the penalty for his sin, is to believe, in effect, that he was under this death sentence until he died and had never been redeemed or forgiven. Also, if, as some are expected to believe and accept, this same sentence was transmitted to Adam’s posterity, the same position applies to them, they have neither been redeemed nor forgiven during their natural span of life, and die, therefore, under Adam’s transmitted condemnation untaken away by the Grace of God. Do not for one moment resort to the doctrine of Resurrection to escape from this position; it is not to be found in Holy Scripture. Resurrection is for those who are the subjects of Redemption and forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ, and by Him have in faith and baptism symbolically died the death due to Adam’s sin Federally imputed to them, so that in rising to newness of life from that symbolic death unto sin, they are federally in the New Man who died for them and rose again.

If Adam had not sinned the Tree of Life would still have been available and necessary in some way. In my view of it, he had the right to freely eat of it while in the garden, but I suggest that it had no desirable attraction for either Eve or Adam and they were quite content with life as it was in the Paradise of God, and until the threat of that life being cut short by their sin, would not have sought escape from “inflicted death,” neither the natural death, that ultimately would return them to the ground.

Adam and Eve were redeemed in type by the shedding of blood. Jesus being the foreshadowed Anti-type, but restoration to their former relationship was not possible until ratified by the true Lamb of God, the substance. Their right to the Tree of Life was forfeited by sin and they must be driven out from

access to it by their own freedom and volition, which was open to them in their original state. But God kept the way to the Tree of Life for those who sought it by faith and as they had been taught of God.

I said in my earlier remarks that Adam and Eve might not have had any desire to eat of the Tree of Life by reason of its being unattractive. It has been the same down the ages even to our own time, concerning Jesus who is "The Way, The Truth, and The Life;" how many want to be partakers of the fruit of His lips? Who wants this man as Messiah of Israel? Crucify him, crucify him. "Why? said Pilate, What evil hath he done? I find no cause of death in him." Very strange this, seeing that some in our time profess and teach a cause of death in Jesus. The Prophet Isaiah was moved to say of Him, "Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? (It is revealed to those who see Jesus as the Tree of Life of the Lord's planting in what had become dry ground, a hopeless and barren situation without life.) For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Was it not as I suggested in regard to the Tree of Life - no comeliness, no beauty that Adam and Eve should desire to partake?

What of the priests and rulers of the Jews? Peter said of them, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead." Acts 3:14-15. Yes indeed, please note; Jesus was the Prince of Life before being impaled on the tree, therefore His death was not a penalty due to Himself and no case can be made out for it from the evidence of Holy Scripture; in fact, the Prophet Isaiah's words seem to anticipate that false teachers would arise and teach this error, so in verse 4 of chapter 53, he continues his report, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted" - but, for our transgressions and iniquities, - verse 6, "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Verse 7, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" - Verse 8, "He was cut off out of the land of the living: (the penalty Adam incurred by sin) for the transgression of My people was He stricken." Who can deny this? Some dare to. I venture a question to those people. "Is it pleasing to God to bruise and put to grief a man or woman because their flesh is obnoxious and contaminated by sin?" Praise God, this is not the teaching of Scripture in regard to human nature; if it were so then Jesus would have been included, of which this flesh and blood man of like nature as ourselves, A voice from the excellent Glory spoke to John the Baptist, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Seeing then that Jesus was prepared willingly to die and take away the Sin of the world (Adam's and all in him federally - Romans 5) it pleased the Lord to allow Him to be put to death and make His soul (life) an offering for sin. But if He were a sin-contaminated body of flesh and blood then all inspired Scripture rebels and protests that this is not God's Gift but the property of the Devil. He that hath ears to hear let him hear. We should thank God, therefore, for His great Love and Mercy in sparing Adam and Eve and consequently all who were in Adam's loins of reproduction, the exception being Jesus who was of the female seed to be fertilised by the direct Power of The Highest in order that Redemption might be wrought through this unique Son.

Typical Redemption was wrought in Eden and foreshadowed from there onwards to Calvary. God was merciful and kept the Way of the Tree of Life by placing at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. Those Cherubim were the Angels of God's Power, His ministering spirits of flaming fire with the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) turning every way (the message of salvation to all), to keep and preserve the Way to Life. Those Cherubim were not the Way, but merely figures of The Way through: which men could approach God and hear His Word. They were not a fixture, as we learn from later events when God still appeared to men through Angelic presence in presenting His Name and His Word. This went on until Israel's Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law and the making of the Tabernacle, in which was the Ark of The Testimony with the Cherubim shadowing the Mercy-seat from which He spoke. There was only one means of approach as recorded in Leviticus 16:2-6, even Aaron depended on the shed blood of the animal slain, a type of the true Lamb of God who declared, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." John 14:6. Jesus therefore had direct approach and communion with God - He was never in an alienated position like Aaron and all other men; He was, as John the Baptist said of Him, "The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father." By this we can understand Christ's own words to Nicodemus in John 3:13, "And no man hath ascended

up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven,” - this ascending up to heaven need not have been literal but in the way Paul was describing his own experience in 2 Corinthians 12:1-5, and also John on the Isle of Patmos who said, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day and heard behind me a great voice.” (Revelation 1:9-10).

Jesus, from a very early age derived much wisdom and understanding in the things pertaining to His Father’s will and purpose from the teaching of His supposed father, Joseph and from Mary, His mother, together with what was read and expounded in the Synagogues, yet John the Baptist went further than this in his declaration of Jesus in John 3:31-36. Read it all and please note verses 32 & 33, “And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received His testimony (John the Baptist) hath set his seal that God is true.” To read these words of John as confirmation that “the Father loveth His Son and hath given all things into His hand,” that man’s everlasting life depended on Him as The Way, The Truth and The Life, - how serious must the position be of any professing to be Christ’s disciples believing that Christ was never in this unique and exalted position whereby He was free to lay down His life in the blood and by virtue of His righteousness take up life again in Spirit nature (flesh and bones)! Jesus was The Way to Life for others, but Himself was “Life,” never under the Adamic federal condemnation which came by sin. It was necessary for their redemption and salvation that He pay the debt incurred (natural life), forfeited by sin committed in Eden. If Jesus, on God’s authority, is to be a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec and could not be a Priest on earth, then by only one offering (His life in the blood) could He remove the Veil and enter Heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us. This is precisely what He did. Jesus was not in the Holiest of All once every year as was the Aaronic High Priest, (and this through blood of others) but He was always in the presence of God as His Son, but the Way into the Holiest was not open to the people, but Jesus opened up that Way for them through the Veil, that is to say. His flesh, and by the Atoning Blood of His Sacrifice for them only. God raised Him in Spirit Nature and gave Him a Name above every name because though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered. This is what made Him the perfect High Priest. He was touched with the feelings of our infirmities and though He was without sin, yet He was tempted in all points like as we are. God, having provided The Way to Life, His own Son, so Jesus justified that provision, and when asked the question, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” He answered in parabolic fashion, Luke 13:24; “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able...” Why Not? we may ask. Jesus had walked that narrow way of experience that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest and as God’s chosen Captain of Salvation for His people. So in Matthew 7:13 Jesus uses similar words, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” No room here for the false teaching of immortal-soulism - the broad way where all are saved. Perhaps some false prophets teach a new theme of the Atonement whereby men can get into the true sheep-fold by climbing up some other way, other than the Way God has provided in Him who is The Door. These are classed as thieves and robbers. John 10. Jesus said of these false prophets, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” I have come to know them by the very contradictory, false and erroneous, paradoxical nonsense, and bitter taste of their fruits, yet some having got this far and facing the strait gate will not strive (agonise) to enter in and traverse the narrow Way to Life. “If any man will follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Can people follow Him if they have not entered through the strait gate and found the narrow Way which leads to life? The mistaken view some take is in the belief that certain sects or denominations have entered in at the strait gate and so they follow the people who form those sects, and become believers of their teaching. Thus doing they are not following Christ who left an example that we should follow His steps and consequently veer from the Way which leadeth to Life where Jesus is waiting to receive those who have followed Him to the end. Many will have taken to the broad way because many enthusiastic people are already on it, but there comes a time of indecision, “Am I on the right path? Have I been misguided and missed the strait gate thinking that all ways lead to the same? Have I heeded the voices of false teachers instead of the voice of the true Shepherd who said, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture?” “People are inclined to follow the crowd. Bad governments are very often elected by majority votes but are not good toward the majority. Jesus has assured those few that follow Him faithfully, “Fear not little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to

give you the Kingdom.” This little flock is indeed the minority by comparison with the world, but to this minority Jesus said, “Whither I go ye know, and the Way ye know.” The good pasture is My Word, the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life.”

“Follow Me.”

Brethren and Sisters, “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Jude verse 21.

Your Brother in The Hope of Life Eternal, Phil Parry.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17.

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## OUR CONVERSATION

The word conversation appears 20 times in the A. V. of the Bible - twice in the Old Testament and 18 times in the New Testament. There is little need to say that word carried a wider meaning than merely verbal communication between people though that, of course, is included. It was translated from the Hebrew and Greek words which generally implied “behaviour,” “way” or “manner (of life),” “citizenship,” etc. Reading this fuller sense into the word we derive much more from the passages of Scripture where it occurs.

In Psalm 37:14 and 50:23 the wicked are said to cast down and slay those that be of upright conversation “way” but the salvation of God is promised to those who order their “way” aright. In Galatians 1:13 Paul looks back on his former “conversation” or “behaviour” in the Jews religion; how he persecuted the Church of God and wasted it, and in verse 23 contrasts it with his behaviour as a Christian - preaching the faith he once destroyed.

There is hope for those whose way of life is wrong that God may intervene and cause their way of life to change, though not in such a spectacular way as it was in Paul’s case but equally effective in outcome.

Paul exhorts the saints at Ephesus, in chapter 4 verse 22, that they “put off” concerning the former conversation, or manner of life, the “old man” (Adam) which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that ye “put on” the new man (Christ) which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”, and to Timothy he writes (1 Timothy 4:12) “to be an example of the believers in word, in conversation (behaviour), in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” The apostle James uses the same expression in relation to example in chapter 3 verse 13. A wise man must show out of a good conversation, or way of life, his works, not inflated by his knowledge, but in meekness by his wisdom.

We are taught that not only our conduct should be an example to our fellows but also that we may be helped by the good conduct of others. “Remember,” says the writer to the Hebrews, “them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow considering the end of their conversation” or way of life (Hebrews 13:7), and we may turn to the 11th chapter of the same” epistle to see many of these listed - they all died in faith and hope of an incorruptible resurrection; and in the same epistle again the brethren are exhorted not to be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12.)

The apostle Peter uses the same word “conversation” freely in his epistles as follows: 1 Peter 1:15 & 18; 2:12; 3:1,2 & 16; 11 Peter 2:7; 3:11, and he covers the whole ground when he says, in the first

reference, “Be ye holy in all manner of conversation” i.e. in thought, speech and action, etc. or, as the R.V. says, “in all manner of living.” Paul, writing to the Philippians, says, in chapter 3 verse 20, “Our conversation” or citizenship, or life, is in Heaven from whence we look for the Saviour who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His Glory. (Phil. 3:21).

based on an article by C. A. Ladson.

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## THE TWO SONS OF GOD

### Chapter Nine

#### Concerning Election

This is a subject upon which very little has been said among us. It almost seems to have been left over to “orthodoxy,” as not worthy of being examined; at any rate, it has been neglected. The dissension and trouble it has caused in “the Christian world,” may to some be an admonition that it is best left alone. There is no reason, however, why it should not be temperately entered upon; and the prominence given to it by the apostle, is a good and sufficient ground for making it a matter of careful study. Notwithstanding the obscurities which heated controversy has heaped upon the subject, we cannot, upon calm reflection, maintain that the apostle’s language is necessarily dark, or that he did not intend those to whom it was addressed to understand it. Surely it is but reasonable to infer that he designed it to be comprehended, and that it was comprehended.

First, then, as to the term ‘Elect.’ *Eligere* is the Latin word from which it springs, consisting of *e*, ‘out,’ and *legere*, ‘to gather, to choose.’ Hence, to pick out, to select from among a number, to make choice of; to fix upon by preference; to choose; to prefer. Some use expressions as though they had contrary meanings; one sense in secular usage, and another in theology; but we are not ready to allow this to be correct. We believe the Scripture to employ the word elect according to its definition as above given, which is undoubtedly the true one. We, therefore, shall neither frame nor adopt a theory of election and make the Bible a text-book to support that theory; but shall proceed in quite the opposite direction; namely, take the proper meaning of the word, apply it to the passage where the word is found, and abide by the conclusion to which we are brought by this method.

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold”, or upon whom I lean, in reference to the eastern custom of kings leaning on the arm of their trusty servants - “mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” - Isaiah 42:1. By the general consent of Jews and Christians this passage speaks of Christ. He is presented beforehand as Jehovah’s chosen one; His elect upon whom He poured out His spirit for the preaching of the good news of the kingdom, and the performance of many mighty works. (Luke 4:18,19). But it ought not to be concluded that, because the Father made choice of His own Son for the work assigned to Him according to the prophet and repeated by Luke, that His elect had no power to do otherwise. The struggle betwixt Jesus’ “own will,” or natural inclination, and the will of His Father, is sufficient to prove the possibility of failure, or even disobedience. “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done” - Luke 22:42. The natural inclination led Him to turn away from the horrors of that cup; but the Father’s will was that He should drain its bitterness to the dregs. To say, “not my will,” if there were no will, no power to refuse, is a mockery too solemn to find credence, at least where reason is not absent. “I came down from heaven not to do mine own will” - John 6:38, which implies He might have done it, if He had sought; but He said, “I seek not mine own will.” “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.” “If any man will do His will,” which leaves it to the option of the man who knows what that will is,

Our voluntary service He requires,  
Not our necessitated; such with Him  
Finds no acceptance, nor can find; for how

Can hearts not free, be tried whether they serve  
Willing or no, who will but what they must  
By destiny, and can no other choose?" - Milton.

The idea that Christ was to God something like what an axe is to a wood-cutter, finds no countenance in the Scripture doctrine of election. The above testimony goes to show that Jesus was an instrument only in the sense of being a willing agent. But if the other were the signification, it would follow that the love of the Father had for Him was of the same nature as that which the wood-cutter has for a good axe; that is to say, of no higher character, thereby excluding all love on the part of the instrument towards its owner. This is the certain out-come of the doctrine; it renders foolish and nugatory all that is recorded in the Psalms, the Prophets, and the New Testament, of the trial, love, pity, and joy of this obedient Son.

But we must regard this Elect One with a discriminating eye. He differed from all other elect in this respect, that besides being God's chosen one. He was also His own Son; so that sonship, in this case, is one thing, and election another. Begettal first, then choice. God begat a Son that He might choose Him to fulfil His purposes; but the Son was not absolutely compelled to fulfil those purposes because He was begotten. On the other hand, unless He had been a begotten Son to the Father, He would have had no power to do His will in this matter, for it is a self-evident proposition that none but one who is free-born can give freedom to those who desire it.

"Mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there" - Isaiah 65:9. This sets forth the purpose of God to place His chosen servants upon the land of Israel, for the reference is to Jerusalem and Palestine. The testimony points to a still future inheritance, but our present argument is not affected at all by that; it would stand precisely the same if the prophet had been speaking of the first possession of Canaan; for while it is true that the inheritance is the result of their election, it is equally true that their election is not devoid of all conditions; so that the possession of the land arises out of their compliance with the conditions on which they were elected by God. Concerning the future settlement, the apostle shews that, although it is determined by God, it is not an absolute decree having no relation to circumstances, but that it is a decree based upon conditions which God foresees will arise. But the Jews are surely not compelled to acquiesce in these stipulations just because God foresees they will do so; or else His foreknowledge would deprive all intelligent beings of will, and therefore of responsibility. "They also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graff them in again." Belief is the condition; and without belief God cannot, consistently with His decree, graff them in again.

"When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God), He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee; nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He sware unto them" - Deuteronomy 4:30,31. Here the conditions of choice are plainly stated, and irrespective of these there can be no inheritance in the latter days. Again in chapter 7 verses 9 and 10: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate Him to their face." "As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God;" 8:20. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" - Isaiah 1:19,20.

To private individuals and their descendants the Almighty has applied the same principle upon which we have seen in the foregoing passages He deals with the whole nation. "And He said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house, and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father." But hear the terms on which all this rested: "If he be constant to do my commandments and my judgements, as at this day" - 1 Chronicles 28:6,7. Passages of the same tenor are very numerous, but it is not needful to cite more at present: these teach unmistakably that God's election is not an arbitrary act of supreme power only, but that it is a decree based upon the fulfilment of clearly defined conditions, the parties themselves being free to comply or refuse.

The choice God made of the nation of Israel is always represented as exalting them to a great height above all other nations; but He whom God styles "My first born," Israel, Jesus, the Prince of God and Saviour of men, rode high above all His chosen nation. "The honours to which they were elected He received by birth-right. They were chosen to a conditional inheritance. He was born to that inheritance, and could only loose it by disobedience. He, as the Heir to the estate ("whose right it is"), having established His right through every necessary form of trial, stands as the great Elector, offering the said estate upon His own terms. He being also the born Heir to eternal life, and having by obedience passed from the heirship into the possession, couples this unspeakable gift therewith. The great work of election, or taking out a people for His name, required that God, "in all things," should give the Elector the pre-eminence. Jehovah's first-born, Jesus, is "the beginning of His strength," "higher than the kings of the earth." Herein lies the primary elective power, the secondary, or conditional, belongs to the elected.

"...in thee  
As from a second root shall be restor'd  
As many as are restor'd, without thee none."  
- Milton.

The principles of the gospel are in strict harmony with the doctrine of election thus far considered. The promised future wealth and glory of God are bound by certain stipulations, all of which imply the power of man to act up to them; and whoever teaches to the contrary, affirming man's inability so to act, does in effect construe divine election into fatalism. "To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality God will render (verse 6) eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jews first, and also of the Gentiles; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God" - Romans 2:7-11. What indeed were the use of all this if we could not obey the truth? To obey the truth does not mean to obey part and part not obey, for that were "to obey unrighteousness." The promise and threat proceed on the clear understanding that the elect can perform every condition under which they are chosen, "according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" - Romans 16:26. "And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" - 2 Corinthians 10:6. "Bringing every thought to the obedience of Christ." Verse 5. "Whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" - Romans 6:16. "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness." Verse 19. "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men" - Chapter 16 verse 19. "His inward affection is more abundant toward you whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all" - 2 Corinthians 7:15. Paul, shows that Christ "wrought by him, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed" - Romans 15:18. He also wrote to the Corinthians, "that he might know the proof of them, whether they were obedient in all things" - 2 Corinthians 2:9.

Now, what is the teaching of these Scriptures? Is it that we cannot or that we can fulfil all obedience? The latter, unquestionably. To assert that we do not is no excuse, nor any proof that we cannot; but rather to declare our own condemnation in the face of God's righteous commandments; and, as we before said, it establishes the doctrine of fate, than which nothing is more absurd, or more relaxing to morals. But none would protest against the sceptical doctrine of fate more than those who say we cannot render full obedience; although it is quite easy to shew that such is the issue of their own position; nay, worse, for the result is to bring in God, in whom they believe, as the author of their own faults. For as regards fate, it is but an empty sound, and when referred back to the laws of nature it implies in the clearest manner a legislator or maker of those laws; if therefore, man by reason of the law of his nature cannot obey righteousness, upon whom does the blame fall, but upon God, the maker of that law?

"... to perseveres  
He left it in the power; ordain'd thy will  
By nature free, not over-rul'd by fate  
Inextricable, or strict necessity."  
- Milton.

Indeed, though at first sight it may not be observed, the ground held by some, is level with that of heathenism, as derided by the old Greek poet:

“Perverse mankind! whose will, created free,  
Charge all their woes on absolute decree:  
All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,  
And follies are miscalled the crimes of fate.”

But in considering the Scripture doctrine of election there are two points to be noticed; one, is the obedience for which we are chosen; the other, the obedience unto which we are elected. Though we have spoken of the first, it is the last which properly stands first in the Divine arrangement. Before we can possibly begin to work out our obedience, it is imperative that we be planted in the obedience of Jesus. Peter will help us to explain this matter:

“Elect... unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Two things are mentioned, “Obedience” and the “sprinkling of the blood;” and unto these, in the order given by the apostle, were those to whom he wrote “elect.” This election places us on new standing ground; it causes us to change sides, or to use the English version of Colossians 1:13, to be “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” We are, as it were, on “holy ground.” It is here we approach “the blood of sprinkling,” and beyond these limits not one drop can reach us. Being “elect” unto these things we are “made righteous.” There is no power in us, as of ourselves, to make us righteous; this is accomplished “by the righteousness of One,” even Jesus. Helplessly we were all “made sinners;” and equally so, in a certain sense, are we all “made righteous;” for, had not Christ already established “obedience and the blood of sprinkling,” there could neither be any election unto these, nor could any movement or desire on our part effect any help whatever. “By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” This favour being bestowed, we are now commanded to act righteously. “He that doeth righteousness is righteous.”

When these two points are clearly seen, we are constrained to join the apostle, and exclude all boasting as touching our righteousness, as though it, of itself, were effectual in justifying us before God; with the Apocalyptic throng we exclaim: “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father to Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen,”

How then does the matter stand? We are parts of Christ’s mystical Body; that is to say, when we have been made such; not by birth. But in this process we are “made righteous,” so that we do not need, as members of His Body, to be made clean. Christ’s Body does not consist of unclean members, but of clean. No one can become a member thereof who has not experienced “the washing of water by the word.” To become part of His Body, it is incumbent upon us to be cleansed and adopted by Him who came to cleanse us. It is possible for a washed and justified person to become defiled, and so to defile the Body, thereby incurring a fearful vengeance, but this is no answer to the foregoing argument, which shows that at first it was needful to be made clean in order to induction into the Body. Subsequent defilement, therefore, rather establishes than breaks down the position.

That election is not arbitrary, but conditional, appears from Paul’s saying, that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” “O faithless generation, how long shall I suffer you?” This rebuke proves faith to have been within their own control; by vigilance it comes, by negligence it departs. No faith, no election, is a proposition easily supportable. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” There is no choice, or election, without belief of the truth; hence it follows that the elect are believers. “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it.” Who are these, but the believers? These are mentioned again in the same chapter: “Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear.” The revelator saw a multitude of sealed ones; these he describes as having the Father’s name written in their foreheads; but the sealing did not precede the writing; it was the proper sequence to hearing and belief. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye learned the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed,

ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” “Then one said unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” They are not able because they do not believe, for it is written, “If thou believest, thou shalt be saved.” The elect, then, are the few who believe. “Many are called, but few are chosen;” which is only another way of saying, few there are that believe.

“For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” This, however, is not intended to convey that believers cannot be deceived, for it was to believers that Christ said, “take heed that no man deceive you;” and the apostle Paul, who was surely one of the elect, feared that, after having preached to others, he himself might be cast away. “The very elect” appears to mean here the actually saved; that is, those ultimately accepted, for the passage shows that to deceive them would be impossible. It is an expression used to describe the strong persuasiveness of the coming impostors, but not intended to teach that the elect cannot fall away.

There are several other texts on the subject of election upon which we have not touched, but which rigid Calvinism would never leave out of the discussion. The history of Moses and the reference of Paul to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart by God are the favourite refuge of those who will have it that the Almighty makes wicked men as well as good men for Himself. Theodoret, the author of ecclesiastical history, has a happy observation in his commentary on this text, “What am I to understand,” he asks, “by God having hardened Pharaoh’s heart?” And after some other remarks he gives the following illustration: “The sun is said to melt wax and to harden mud, although it possesses only the property of giving heat; so the patience and goodness of God produce two contrary effects in different individuals, being useful to the one, and rendering the other more guilty; hence it is said that some are thus converted and others hardened.”

Another difficult passage is that of Romans 8:28-30, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose, for whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son... Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them also He called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” On this text Milton writes as follows, which seems to us a very good handling of it:-

“In the first place it must be remarked, that it appears from verse 28, that those who love God, are the same as those ‘who are the called according to His purpose.’ and consequently as those ‘whom He did foreknow,’ and ‘whom He did predestinate,’ for them He also called, as in verse 30. Hence it is apparent that the apostle is here propounding the scheme and order of predestination in general, not of the predestination of certain individuals in preference to others. As if he had said, We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, that is, to those who believe, for those who love God believe in Him. The order of this scheme is also explained. First: God foreknew those who should believe, that is. He decreed or announced it as His pleasure, that it should be those alone who should find grace in His sight through Christ, that is, all men if they would believe. These He predestinated to salvation, and to this end. He, in various ways, called all mankind to believe, or, in other words, to acknowledge God in truth, those who actually thus believed He justified; and those who continued in the faith unto the end He finally glorified. But that it may be more clear who those are whom God has foreknown, it must be observed that there are three ways in which any person or thing is said to be known of God. First, by His universal knowledge, as Acts 15:18, ‘known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.’ Secondly, by His approving or gracious knowledge, which is a Hebraism, and therefore requires more explanation. (Exodus 33:12). ‘I know thee by name and thou hast also found grace in my sight.’ Psalm 1:6, ‘Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous.’ Thirdly, by a knowledge attended with displeasure. Deuteronomy 31:21, “I know their imagination which they go about, etc. 2 Kings 19:27, ‘I know... thy coming in, and thy rage against me.’ Matthew 7:23, ‘I never knew you,’ Revelation 3:1, ‘I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.’ In the passage under discussion it is evident that the approving knowledge of God can be alone intended; but He foreknew, or approved no one except Christ, and no one in Christ except a believer.”

Hence, the sum of the matter is this. God has elected all who believe, and has glorified those who hold fast their belief to the end.

Next: we cite Romans 9:11,12,13: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth; it was said unto her. The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." The view of this passage from which we differ, asserts that, all conditions out of account. God determined to love and save Jacob, while he also resolved to hate and curse Esau. But no power of asseveration can make this view of the matter avoid giving great offence to a mind at all tinctured with just ideas. To picture Divine love acting thus is to degrade it to what has been seen in Nero and Henry the Eighth.

Let us look carefully at the wording of the verse. God had declared the elder should serve the younger. Before they were born God said this, and He said it that the "purpose of the election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." But what is here intended by election? Is it the eternal and preordained salvation of Jacob and the eternal and preordained destruction of Esau? By no means. It is clearly an election to the privileges of a first-born, "The elder shall serve the younger." God foresaw that this would be so, and spoke of it; but it will not do to say, on account, that God forced Esau to sell his birthright, or that He forced Jacob to lie and deceive his father Isaac. Neither, if we take the statement to refer to the nation, can we maintain that the perdition of Esau was thus decreed. Paul shews here that God determined to exclude all men from attributing their election to their own works. Election comes first, then works. The foreknowledge of God was written concerning Jacob and Esau before they were born; His determination that the younger should become the first born was also written; but He did not hate Esau and love Jacob before they had done anything. Paul does not say this; he merely points out the right God had of primogeniture; but this history of Jacob and Esau manifests that God's choice was conditional.

When Paul says, "As it is written," etc. he quotes from Malachi. Now, Malachi spoke of these two brothers, not before they were born; but long after they were dead. Neither does he speak of election; but simply calls the attention of his nation to the fact that, though Esau was Jacob's brother, yet God hated Esau. He then tells us how God's hatred was displayed. "I laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." And when the apostle mentions this hatred of God to Esau, he does not inform us that it existed while he and his brother were unborn; but adds it as a proof that what he had stated before about the election of the one and the rejection of the other, was true. But this does not prove that arbitrary love and hatred were in God's mind before the birth of Esau and Jacob; nor that it was thus after their birth. The sum of the matter is this; God foresaw what would be. He resolved thus and so according as He foresaw. His resolve was not arbitrary, but conditional. The lives of Esau and Jacob voluntarily produced these conditions, and the blessing and the curse followed in agreement therewith.

Paul anticipates the very objection which arises out of the supposed arbitrary power of God. "Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" This question assumes that it was God's will to make Pharaoh wicked. But this is false. The wickedness was Pharaoh's; the mercy, endurance, and long suffering were God's. Upon such a man as Pharaoh this produced just what God foresaw it would. "I know," said God, "Pharaoh will not let you go." On a lower scale, we have many instances of this in the ordinary incidents of life. A son often construes the kindness and forbearance of his father into weakness, and so continues reckless. An army interprets a retreat to mean fear, and pursues to its own destruction. Then why not have adopted other measures? This was the case. We behold both "the goodness and severity of God." Under the latter, Pharaoh relented. Justice then demanded that the plague should be stayed; but no sooner was the plague stayed than this lenity hardened Pharaoh's heart; to repeat Theodoret's saying, "as the sun hardens mud, while by the same power it melts wax." A calm consideration clears God from all cruelty or despotism, and shows both His justice and mercy all the more vividly by contrast with Pharaoh's tyranny and rebellion.

To be continued...

## Jesus said...

## No. 15.

“The Kingdom of heaven is like unto...” Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, etc.  
“Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God?” Luke 13:20, etc.

Then follow word pictures depicting some aspects or facets of the Kingdom.

Although Almighty God bears rule over all nations for the working out of His purpose, the nation of Israel became His special Kingdom to which He gave His laws and promises.

In the days of Samuel the people rejected God as their King (1 Samuel 8:7) and desired to be like other nations having a king they could see and look up to and who would go out before them. However, it was God who chose their King, thereby His supreme authority remained, for His Sovereignty was absolute and He continued as their King and Ruler whether or not they accepted Him. The Kings appointed were meant to look to God for their help and guidance but history shows that the prophets provided a check on their waywardness, yet this remained the Kingdom of God. (Until perhaps the time referred to in Jeremiah 17:4).

It seems evident that the Kingdom of God consisted of those whom God took into covenant relationship down through the ages, and with the ending of the Covenant with the nation of Israel at the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, began the New Covenant through faith in Him for all who would accept it, thereby continuing the Kingdom of God into the Christian Era.

That Christendom corrupted God’s way is history, and in many ways a repetition of Israel’s earlier days - even to the choosing of a head whom they could look up to, and so began the Papacy, whose Popes, like the kings of Israel, misled the people according to their own desires. Also the introduction of false doctrines as did the Pharisees before them, making the word of God of none effect.

That the purpose of God is being worked out within Christendom is not in doubt for God is calling for a people to “come out of her... that ye receive not of her plagues;” plagues upon those, who, like Israel of old, make a pretence of true worship, but in fact, “would not have this man to reign over them.”

Jesus Christ has been King to all believers and mis-believers (but not unbelievers) since the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount, while the ultimate Kingdom of God is yet to come when “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”