

BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF

EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

No. XXVII.] SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1824.

Τα πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.—PAUL.

Christ all and in all. COL. III, 11.

QUESTION.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, JULY 12, 1824.

What are we to understand spiritually, by the living creatures and the wheels, in the first chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel?

SOLUTION.

WE are called upon by the Question, to be "Old Testament saints," so far as the expression implies an attention to the Old Testament, and the dispensations of divine grace, under its varied economy of worship.

It is peculiarly pleasant, and very instructive, to read the prophesies, with the New Testament in our hands, and its invaluable contents in our hearts! It is admirably calculated to confirm our judgment in the truth, to strengthen our faith, and to establish our minds in the blessed assurance, that he who has promised is faithful, and will, to the greatest accuracy of time and event, fulfil his prophecies, in the deliverance of his church from all her enemies, the destruction of Antichrist, and the diffusion of gospel light, life, and love, to the ends of the earth: The one Testament is divinely exegetical of the other; they reciprocally explain and elucidate, till we are lost in astonishment, at the accomplishment of those divine purposes,

which hundreds of years before, were promised and described by the announcement of the prophets.

This part of Ezekiel's prophecy, on which the question is founded, seems, on the first reading, dark and intricate; but viewed in a gospel light, it untolds with the most glorious circumstances, calling our attention to the vast expansion of Immanuel's kingdom, when he shall shed the lucid beams of divine love on the nations, and the ends of the earth know the salvation of our God! And in this case, the very name of Ezekiel, is strikingly significant, which is compounded of זק strength, force, and קל God: the strength of God, or God my strength: for the precious promise of the Father to the blessed Christ, is, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies: thy people shall be willing, in the day of thy power." Psalm cx. 2. The force of truth shall be felt, and the strength of Christ to save, by his blood-bought flock, who shall be taught of God to embrace him as the author and finisher of their faith. Ezekiel was of the sacerdotal race, and was carried captive with Jehoiachim, the king of Judah, to Babylon, by Nebuchadnezzar, before Christ, 599 years.

To arrive at a proper understanding of the subject, it will be necessary to read the chapter with especial attention. At the 4th verse, he says, "I looked, and behold a *whirlwind* came out of the north, &c."

The *whirlwind*, evidently sets forth, to me at least, the various political changes and revolutions in the nations, to the removal of impediments, and making way for the spread of the genuine gospel of loving kindness and tender mercy; and to the total destruction of the man of sin. "THE GREAT CLOUD," the gospel itself, advancing with a "cloud of witnesses," (Heb. xii. 1.) for God: when it shall be said, "Who are those, that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" (Isaiah lx 8.) And as a cloud, big with the gracious doctrines of peace and good will toward men in a precious Jesus: when the pure "doctrine shall drop as the rain," the sandy deserts rejoice, and the barren wilderness become pools of water; that pure water of life, which is dispensed without money and without price.— "The fire infolding itself, the amazing love of God,

warming and dissolving the hearts of his people, to penitence, and a return of affection to the Lord." And "the brightness," the marvellous light of gospel truth, and the enjoyment of the divine presence; which shine with all the brilliance of the unity and glory of the divine attributes, in the sinner's salvation, as they are exhibited in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Ver. 5. "Also out of the midst thereof, came the likeness of four living creatures." These are not angels that surround the *ethereal throne*, as some have thought;—but apostles, *ministers*, and all those of the church of Christ who are divinely employed, in carrying on his cause in the earth: for *first*, they are *LIVING*; quickened, and made alive by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim life eternal for ruined sinners, through their gracious master: who is the resurrection and the life. *Second*, creatures, *new creatures*, in Christ Jesus, who are born of God, and can describe the new birth, as well as insist upon its necessity. *Creatures* dependent on him who *created* them anew, and not *deities*: *creatures*, which look humbly to their great Creator, their king and their God, for daily support; out of whose fulness of grace, they daily receive strength proportionate to their necessities. *Third*, there are *four* of them, which is emblematical of the great plenitude of gospel ministers, or sinners sent to preach to their fellow sinners, salvation by the Redeemer's blood. *FOUR* sent to the *FOUR* quarters of the globe, when the glorious prediction shall be verified, "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it."

We must take notice now, of their formation, appearance, and component parts: they had

1. *Four faces*. We have frequently heard of a "*two-faced man*," and some of us, perhaps, have not only heard of, but have known such characters to our sorrow: for it is a term expressive of hypocritical duplicity. But here it seems, that God's servants are *four-faced* men; and yet are made honest and free from duplicity. Indeed, no other can preach the gospel, in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. "They had, *first*, the face of a man;" which indicates wisdom, understanding, and discernment in spiritual things. For as a man is distinguished from, and exalted above the brute creation by his rationality, so

a spiritual man, who can discern the things of the Spirit, is distinguished from the rest of mankind, who are dead in trespasses and sins, and as far exalted above them by communion with God and a life of faith in Jesus: they grovel in the dust, and grasp at empty vanities, that can never satisfy the soul: he enjoys the things of time and sense with gratitude to his creator and preserver, but those are not his God: under the animation of a glorious hope of life and immortality, his eye of faith penetrates that blissful mansion in the skies, which he shall occupy, when time with him is no more; which he shall occupy with ceaseless raptures of purest delight, for ever with the Lord.

Second. “*The face of a lion on the right side.*” Indicating strength: they are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, run through a troop of foes, and leap over every wall of difficulty; looking by precious faith, to the LION of the tribe of Judah. (Rev. v. 5.) They are also *lion-like* in their courage, fortitude, and zeal for Christ and truth. They are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, knowing it to be the power of God unto salvation: neither will they trim their way to please men, nor shun to declare the whole council of God, through fear of offending the rich and the great, who can bestow on them pecuniary favors: they “covet no man’s silver nor gold;” but are the Lord’s servants, who conscientiously look to him for guidance, direction, and support, and are stimulated with courage, boldness, and zeal, peculiar to themselves, by his word of command, “Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good—be ye faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.” Animated by his gracious voice and fired with love and zeal in his cause, they boldly face every foe and glory in tribulation for his name sake. “The lion turneth for no beast. The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a LION” “The hireling fleeth, because he is an *hireling*,” saith Christ, and will desert the flock in their poverty; but God’s ministers shall persevere, through evil report, and good report, till they have accomplished the work, God intended to execute, through their instrumentality, to the glory of his all-supporting grace!

Third. *The face of an ox.* They are God’s laborious oxen that tread out the corn, and bring forth the finest of the wheat, for the sustenance of the redeemed family.—

They labor in word and doctrine, and are instrumental in breaking up the fallow ground of sinner's hearts, that the good seed may be sown, not among thorns, but on good ground; well cultivated, watered, and manured by the Holy Spirit. They labor to convince sinners of the error of their way, and to win them to Christ. To convince God's children of their self-righteousness, which keeps them from the enjoyment of Christ, that they may, as sinners, venture wholly on him, and make his blood and righteousness their only hope, confidence, and object of their faith. They "watch for souls as those who must give an account" of their stewardship; and by rightly dividing the word of truth, lead them (instrumentally) from SINAI to SION from bondage to liberty, from Moses to Christ — Their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord; for "where no oxen are the crib is clean; but *much increase* is by the strength of the ox." (Prov. xiv. 4.) God's word preached, and experimentally opened by them, shall not return unto him void; but he will accompany it with his Almighty power, according to his gracious promise, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Fourth. "They four had also the face of an eagle." In their exaltation in Christ, above sin, earth, and hell; the law, wrath, and condemnation, they bear the likeness of the eagle, who maketh her nest on high; they dwell in the rock Christ, secure from all their enemies! And soaring with affection heavenward, they "mount up with wings as eagles," (Isaiah xl. 31) flying toward the sun of righteousness, in whose radiant beams of grace, their souls are enlightened, and warmed with love and zeal in his delightful cause! The figure is, indeed, strikingly expressive of their swiftness to obey the high commands of Sion's king, and their readiness to engage in his excellent service: willing to spend, and be spent, for his name's sake, and in the promotion of his interest on earth!

And as an eagle, the penetrating eye of their spiritual discernment searches the deep things of God, while the piercing eye of their faith, gazes on the oath, covenant, immutability, promises, and faithfulness of Jehovah, and the beautiful eye of love, feasts on the charms of Immanuel, till they are constrained to proclaim to sinners around them, the wonders of grace and love, shining in the

face of **JESUS CHRIST**. The language of an individual, so divinely indulged, and called to proclaim the glories of Immanuel, is the following fervent determination,

‘ Now, will I tell to sinners round,
What a Dear Saviour I have found ;
I’ll point to his atoning blood,
And cry, *Behold the way to God!*’

2. We will now take a survey of their **WINGS** ; “ every one had four wings.” A beautiful figure, as we have already observed, of their readiness, and eagerness to fly with the genuine gospel to the ends of the earth.

First, “ their wings *stretched upward* ” All their faith, love, and zeal, displayed in their preaching, point upward, to the risen and ascended Jesus, to God and the Lamb!—Not stretched downward to the earth, to man and his free-will, but stretched upward to the heavens, where the enthroned Saviour waiteth to be gracious!

Second, “ two wings of every one were joined one to another.” This is beautifully descriptive of the unity of God’s own qualified, and divinely commissioned ministers. They are loved with one and the same love, bought with the same blood, born of the same spiritual birth, taught the same blessings of grace, by the Holy Comforter, and consequently, are of one faith, one heart, and one soul gloriously “ joined together,” in carrying on the same cause, ‘ like a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots,’ (S. Song i. 9.) unitedly zealous for the furtherance of the gospel, the destruction of error, and the promotion of the truth.

Third, “ two wings covered their bodies.” They are clad with zeal and love, which cover as an external garment, the body of their *solid experience* in divine things; it is not zeal without knowledge; but that which adheres to their knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Their language is, “ we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard ”

3. Their **FEET**, now claim our notice. “ Their feet were *straight feet* ;” which expresses their walk of faith in Christ Jesus, as promised most graciously by the Lord our God : “ I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a *straight way* in which they shall not stumble : (Jer. xxxii. 9.) and Christ himself saith, “ I am the way.” They have received Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him! leaning

on the omnipotent arm of his salvation, and if ready to faint, they recline on the bosom of his tenderest love. And in their ministry, their feet are straight feet. They do not deviate, nor turn aside from the pure, unadulterated, unmixed gospel of grace, infinitely more free than they can express! They are not of one sentiment to-day, and another to-morrow: rooted and grounded in the truth, as it is in Jesus, they persevere in declaring the counsel, the whole counsel of God! They preach not themselves: their own free-will ability to save themselves, but "CHRIST the power of God, and the wisdom of God," displayed, exerted, and alone glorified in the salvation of sinners.

Second. "the sole of their feet, was like the sole of a calf's foot." The calf *parteth the hoof*, and cheweth the cud, and is consequently a clean beast. "Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven footed, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that shall ye eat." (Levit. xi. 4.) They are clean, being cleansed from every pollution in the blood of Jesus; and chew the cud; they not only feed in the green pastures, but he causeth them to "*lie down*" and rest in them; and by sweet contemplation, and blissful recollection of past experience, they can tell what the Lord hath done for their souls; for his gracious gospel, is "like bread cast on the waters, found after many days." They also, according to the above quotation from the chapter, divide the hoof. They separate, and rightly distinguish between law and gospel, works and grace, flesh and Spirit, the elect and the non-elect, the regenerate and the unregenerate, the precious and the vile, and are as God's mouth to those who know the joyful sound!

Third. I must add, that their *feet* are so exquisitely beautiful, as to excite expressions of admiration from those who can behold them. "How beautiful, (saith Isaiah) upon the mountains, are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." (Isaiah lii. 7.) For they walk on the high mountains of God's eternal love and grace—their FEET, their coming, their approach, is beautiful to those, whose ears are circumcised to hear the glad tidings which they are sent to proclaim. In sweet explanation of Isaiah, Paul is led admiringly to exclaim, "How beautiful are the FEET of them that preach the gospel of peace."—(Rom. x. 15.)

4. We will now just glance at their hands. "And they had the hands of a man under their wings, &c." The hands of their faith, which take fast hold of Christ! and the hands of experience, which are under the wings of their love and zeal, judiciously directing them. Those "hands which have handled of the word of life." Further, their ministerial hands, full of choice blessings for the people of God. They are the reapers of our *spiritual Boaz*, their *hands* gather in the finest of the wheat, and whom he commands, "Let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her" Of purpose for the **SPIRITUAL Ruth**, the church of the living God!

Lastly, the hands of their skill and dexterity, against the enemies of the church, and the errors that would infest and darken the gospel, in its purity and simplicity! "He teacheth my hands to war, (saith David,) so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms." (Psalm xviii. 34.) They are not ignorant of Satan's devices, but enabled to expose them publicly, for the benefit and direction of tempted souls. As for error; the precious truth of God is so unspeakably dear to their souls, that they cannot but oppose error, in all its shapes and bearings; in all its insinuations and self-righteous pretensions, for they are "set for the defence of the gospel" to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot suffer thieves and robbers, to take their master's property, and divest him of his own essential honors, without the most manful detection of their abominable injustice! Place the laurels of renown, on the brows of *free-will*, and *creature goodness*, which were so gloriously won on Calvary by a bleeding Christ! It is insufferable! And the man who will not detect, and expose the villainy, is unworthy the name of a minister of the gospel, and the attention and confidence of the children of God!

An Adjournment of the Subject to next
MONDAY EVENING,
was put, and unanimously carried.

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No. XXVIII.] SATURDAY, JULY 24, 1824.

Τα πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.—PAUL.

Christ all and in all. COL. III. 11.

QUESTION.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, JULY 19, 1824.

What are we to understand spiritually, by the living creatures and the wheels, in the first chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel?

SOLUTION.

How full and how exceedingly comprehensive is every part of God's precious word! so full of the most rich and soul-enriching knowledge, that it is impossible, even for the most spiritually intelligent minds, while clothed in dull mortality, to discern one *thousandth part* of the beauty and grandeur, even of a particular paragraph or chapter, into which they are especially enlightened by divine grace. It is therefore no wonder that many things were omitted, which might have been, with much propriety, introduced in our last discussion. One thing particularly, and which ought to have taken the lead, I shall now introduce to your attention: viz. That the prophecies open with a detail of the effectual calling of Ezekiel, prior to his prophesying in the name of the Lord. "He saith, "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel, the priest." It came *expressly*, powerfully, clearly, decisively: as Paul is directed to phrase it, "Our gospel came unto you, not in

word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess i. 4.) Under such a clear display of divine grace, and such a sweet reception of the word of the Lord, he received authority to prophecy:—And thus, to the end of time, shall all God's ministers, make their calling and election sure," that they may bear a personal and individual testimony for God, and preach, with blessed assurance of its truth and sweetness, THE GOSPEL, which standeth not in the power of man, but in the wisdom of God: *the gospel*, and its unconditional promises, which are not *yea* and *nay*, but *yea* and *amen*, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The prophet had *first*, a full display of the gospel, and the glorious scheme of salvation by the aboundings of grace in Christ, as is shewn in our last number. Without such a soul-overcoming display, no man has authority or ability to speak in the name of the Lord. Preachers may, and do abundantly, go forth in his name, without being *sent* of him; and some of them, in doctrines, are tolerably orthodox —“but they shall not profit my people, saith the Lord.”—God's ministers are sent to bear witness for him, on the ground of their own regeneration.

Second. He saw the risen and glorified Christ, on his throne of everlasting exaltation: “And above the firmament that was over their heads, was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire-stone, and upon the likeness of the throne, was the likeness as the appearance of a man above, upon it.” (ver. 26.) Such a delightful view of the Lamb, slain on his throne, fills the soul with indignation against sin, self, all free-will, and *fleshly*, and *flesh-pleasing* doctrine; and inspires the man with such heart-melting love to Jesus, and such an holy zeal for his glory, that he goes forth in the strength of Christ, speaking the things which become sound doctrine; testifying the truth by the word and testimony of God, which have been confirmed in him, and witnessed by the Holy Spirit.

Third, and he saw, “As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.” The brightness round about the throne of Immanuel was as the appearance of the *rainbow*, which we know was, and is, the token of God's covenant with “every living creature,” that all flesh shall never any

more be cut off by the waters of a flood. (Gen. ix. 11.) And here, the rainbow encircling the throne of Christ, is the more glorious covenant of grace, that God hath made with his chosen, and confirmed by an oath unto David his servant. (i e) Christ. The brilliance of his throne is the covenant which he has sealed with his own blood, called the blood of the everlasting covenant. (Heb. xiii. 20.) In the *rainbow*, we see the glorious token, that our sins shall not bring upon us floods of divine vengeance! for though they are "as a cloud, and as a thick cloud," the bow appears upon the cloud, and how glorious the colours are! the *red*, the *purple*, the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin! The natural formation of the *rainbow* is by reflection and refraction from the sun, which must be directly opposite the cloud: thus our precious Christ, directly opposite the frightful and threatening cloud of our sins, and the cloud of divine wrath, shines with the beams of his great atonement, and the *bow* of the everlasting covenant is seen! Our hearts rejoice, our fears are dissipated, and peace with God ensues! And remember poor sinner for your comfort, that the bow is never seen without a cloud, nor can Christ and his covenant blood be seen, only as we are first led to a view of the black cloud of our multiplied and enormous iniquities! The dark cloud of merited vengeance against sinners, with Christ opposite, reflecting the perfect satisfaction he has given for his people, with his most precious blood, like a well painted landscape, appears the more beautiful, as the dark shades gives prominence to the principal characters and objects intended to be exhibited: O how beautifully, how invitingly shines free grace, in the salvation of sinners, *black* with innumerable iniquities, and most aggravating crimes! "Though your sins are scarlet, saith infinitely free grace, they shall be white as snow, and though red like crimson, they shall be as wool!"

Fourth. He saw the glory of the Lord. "This was the appearance of the likeness of *the glory of the Lord*: and when I saw it, I fell upon my face." The sinner taught of God, when Christ is revealed as his Saviour, beholds the glory of all the divine attributes, shining with untold brilliancy in the face of that able, willing, and ever precious deliverer of his redeemed Israel! and O what a soul-humbling effect! He sees the glory of God in his salvation and

falls immediately on his face, in humility, adoration, and praise!

I proceed, now, consistently with our proposal, to take farther notice of the living creatures, as it respects their *appearance*.

1. "Their appearance was like burning coals of fire."— Their zeal for Christ, their invincible pertinacity in the cause of truth, and their jealousy for the Lord of hosts! For the love of God hath kindled such a flame in their hearts, as sin, earth, and hell, in union, can never quench! "Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave, the *coals thereof, are coals of fire*, which hath a most vehement flame!" And these "burning coals of fire," which must ever blaze with untold indignation against all that is opposite to free grace, and derogatory to Immanuel's glory, have often been misconstrued into want of charity, a bad temper, and a censorious and contentious disposition, by the self-justiciaries, who have charity for all, it seems, except the church of Christ, who contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. But let them ask themselves, whether this flame of holy zeal, for the honor and glory of Christ, was ever lighted up in their hearts! If so, God's word would be in them as a fire in their bones, and they would say with David, "while I mused the fire kindled:" and then, they themselves would advance against the enemies of eternally free and sovereign grace, with the zeal of a faithful Paul; and unreservedly exclaim, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 9.)

These "burning coals of fire," lead God's ministers, through love to Christ, to his truth, and invaluable interest, to hazard all consequences, to dread no danger, to fear no foe, when conscientiously engaged in the felicitous service of their exalted Master. And little indeed do their enemies think how much they enjoy of delight and satisfaction of soul, when Jesus, their sun and shield, rises upon them with healing in his beams!

2. The appearance of *LAMPS*. God's written word; the two Testaments which he hath given for the illumination of the nations, that before sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death: hence the acknowledgement of David: "Thy word is a *lamp* unto my feet, and a light unto my

path." (Psalm cxix. 105.) And concerning his Sion, the Lord hath said, "There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a *lamp* for my anointed." (Psalm cxxii. 17.) which shines with the salvation of Israel, whose "righteousness goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." (Isaiah lxii. 1)

4. "It (the appearance) went up and down among the living creatures." As the Holy Spirit guided and directed them, so they went forth with fiery love and zeal, and with the lamp of God's word, publishing salvation in the name, and alone by the power of God! They went up in their affections and supplications to the Lord, that he would guide, bless, direct, comfort, strengthen, and give them seals to their ministry: and that they might, themselves, partake of the blessings they were instrumental in imparting to others. And when they had thus gone up into the sanctuary of God, for his blessing, they went down into the valley of Achor, and proclaimed liberty to the captives, through Christ, who had made them free by a glorious redemption!

5. "Out of the fire, went forth lightning." Out of the fire of their zealous labours, went forth the quick and powerful lightning of the Blessed Spirit, to quicken, and make alive dead sinners. All their zealous assiduity proves ineffectual, except he is pleased to accompany it with his almighty energy.

6. "As for their *rings*, they were so high, that they were dreadful." By their *rings*, or *circles*, we are evidently to consider the immeasurably high *decrees*, *appointments*, and gracious designs of a covenant God. They are *rings*, or *circles*, for they have neither beginning nor end. They are like himself, eternal, unalterable, and will never know the shadow of a turn! Such knowledge is too high for me, saith David, I cannot attain unto it. They were so *high*, that they were *dreadful*—awfully sublime, not to be trifled with, nor treated lightly by mortals: who are prone, daringly to arraign God himself at their bar, and summon him to give an account of the eternal purposes of his heart! Such is the ignorance of the human mind, and such its hardened enmity against the sovereignty of Jehovah! But to the child of God, his unalterable purposes are replete with **never-failing consolation**. For how sweet must be the consideration, that **whatever are my trials, whoever are my**

enemies, whatever changes and vicissitudes I must undergo, Jehovah's appointment is at the helm of my affairs, and my song of praise is still, with the afflicted Job, "He knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth like gold. He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him."—(Job xxiii. 10, 14.) On the ring of his unalterable decrees hang all the creatures on earth. For he performed all things "after the council of his own will." He hath fixed the bounds of man—of every man. But it is sometimes objected that the doctrine would lead to sin, that a sinner might take the advantage of it, and say, "well I have sinned—but I am not to be sorry about it, for it was decreed." Those who draw such a conclusion, say expressly, they know nothing of the matter. For the child of God knows exceedingly well, two things. First, that he cannot keep himself from sin; but second, that he is kept from its dominion, by the power of divine grace; not on account of his own goodness or worthiness, but because Jehovah absolutely decreed that his people should be so graciously kept: that indeed, he is entirely indebted to the gracious decree of God for his deliverance, from sin's hateful domination, and all its baneful consequences! He is supported and preserved by the ring of God's everlasting love, which was put on the finger of his faith, in the day of his espousals to Christ, his heavenly bridegroom.

The *ring* or *circle* of predestination directs the living creatures, and where God has a people predestinated unto eternal life, chosen in Christ Jesus, and adopted in him into his family, there the Holy Spirit guides them; that in the dispensations of his divine grace, those elect vessels may be brought home to glorify their God and Father, in an endless song of praise!

7. "Their *rings* were full of EYES round about them four." The eyes of Jehovah's infinite and eternal wisdom, which surveys the end from the beginning, and has all his people with all their circumstances perpetually in view! The EYES of him with whom the darkness and the light are both alike: with whom there is no change, and to whom no time but the present attaches itself. There is neither past nor future with our God, as it respects his infinite wisdom, and all his other infinite and unsearchable

attributes. We cannot say concerning him, he *was*, or he *has been*, what he *is* not now, nor that he *will* be, that which we are not now to consider him: "his age is one ETERNAL NOW." He looks upon poor sinners with eyes of pardoning grace, and on all his people with the eyes of continual watchfulness, care, delight, and love, ever surveying them as the dearest objects of his choice in Christ, and who are, and ever will be, unspeakably precious in his sight!

8. "And their appearance, and their work was as it were *a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*" The wheel of divine providence, went as the living creatures went, and all were conducted by the Holy Spirit; "Whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went." (ver. 20.) The Eternal God, according to his gracious appointment, sends the living creatures, or his ministers, with his gospel where he has a people, to be graciously called: for "there the spirit is to go" to effect their regeneration. And in the *middle* of the wheel of unerring providence, is the wheel of grace; that revolves with irresistible velocity in the in-gathering of the people of God. Let us remark here, that in all the works and operations of divine providence toward God's children, there is a *wheel* in the middle of a wheel. Afflictive visitations in providence, shall eventually prove visitations of divine grace. The external wheel rolls on heavily and painfully, according to our view, and miserable sensations; but though we cannot, in that dismal hour of darkness, behold it, the unerring wheel of grace, in the midst of the painful dispensation, is regularly going round: working in our behalf, by executing the gracious will of our covenant Father! The wheels work together, and without the bitter trials of our faith, we should not, we could not possibly, know the exceeding sweetness of divine support, and eventual deliverances. Thus "all things work together, or are compounded, the bitter with the sweet, for good, for real profit, for spiritual advantage, to those who love God, and who are the called, according to his purpose."

The wheels are entirely under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: they revolve round the earth, and stop wheresoever God has a people effectually to call, and then are "*lifted up,*" and removed to another place. Instance the gracious dispensation of especial mercy, to ancient Greece and

Rome: the wheels there revolved with blessings to thousands in the apostolic age. But alas! what is the state of those beautiful countries, at this present time, the wheels are "*lifted up,*" and removed, and the *living creatures*, that preached to them the everlasting gospel, are *lifted up* also, and taken long since to the world of glory; but alas! their posterity is left in the darkness of ignorance, exposed to the impositions, superstitions, and cruelties of Antichrist; but blessed be God, "*the wheel amidst the wheel,*" has long since reached this highly favoured, but (ungrateful) nation, where it now graciously revolves. The Lord in his loving kindness, grant that its continuance may be perpetuated, till error is exterminated, and Antichrist totally destroyed by the brightness of the appearance of the Son of God!

In answer to the Querist, then, the general contents of the first chapter of Ezekiel, are the following: the prophet is effectually called by grace, and commanded to prophesy in the Divine name. In vision, he beheld the *living creatures*, which are Christ's ministering servants; endowed with love, zeal, discernment, and ability, to publish, with gladness and success, the everlasting GOSPEL: the *wheel* of providence conducting them whither the Spirit was to go, and work by them, in making God's people willing to be saved alone by grace; and the still more glorious *wheel* of grace, in the *midst* of the movements of Divine Providence, felt and sweetly experienced by the Redeemer, who are led to behold, the *rainbow* of the covenant, shining round the enthroned Son of God; the *rings* of divine decrees, which are replete with the omniscient EYES of Jehovah's love, ever fixed on his children here, with watchful care, and with ineffable delight, to all eternity!

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

Do the persons alluded to by Peter, in his 2 Epistle, chap. ii. 1. constituted part of Christ's purchase? if not, to what does he allude, when he asserts that they deny the Lord that bought them?

BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF
EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

No. XXIX.] SATURDAY, JULY 31, 1824.

Τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πανί Χριστός.—PAUL.

Christ all and in all. COL. III. 11.

QUESTION.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, JULY 26, 1824.

Do the persons alluded to by Peter, in his 2 Epistle, chap. ii. 1. constitute part of Christ's purchase? if not, to what does he allude, when he asserts that they deny the Lord that bought them?

SOLUTION.

THE Question calls for a decision, on the ground of scriptural truth, between two contending parties, those commonly denominated Arminians, who warmly contend for *universal redemption*, and the people called Calvinists, who as strenuously insist upon *particular redemption*; or that the purchase of Christ's blood, extends no farther, than to the elect of God; whose persons were well known to him, from eternity, as the flock which his Father gave him, and for whom he laid down his life! It may be said, perhaps, that as I attach myself most warmly and zealously to the latter, I shall feel myself too interested in a defence of their doctrines, to treat the subject with *impartiality*! To which I would reply, that if by *impartiality*, we are to understand a cool indifference to the truth, and glory of God, attended with a carelessness of which sentiment obtains, I ingenuously acknowledge myself as destitute of *impartiality*, as any man on the globe, and glory in making the acknow-

ledgment. For I cannot treat with a cool indifference, bordering on total negligence, that truth which is more precious than fine gold: which the Lord has rendered so infinitely sweet to me, that could I part with it, worlds would not purchase it, and I hope in the grace of my God, that rather than give it up, I should yield in its defence my natural life, clasping it to my immortal soul, as a treasure to be enjoyed for ever!

But if by *impartiality*, we are to understand, on a theological ground, an *unbiassed* reference to the Sacred Volume, with a determination to set down by its decision, then, I am persuaded I may venture to promise you, the most scrupulous and conscientious *impartiality*, in the discussion of this subject.

In order to come at the truth, we must first enquire into the description of character, who *denied* the Lord that bought them, for which read the whole of the chapter; where we find that they are represented “Presumptuous, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities—as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, who speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption, &c.” (verses 11, 12.) And I think that such a description must convince any person, who has a knowledge of the scriptures, that they are not of the blood-bought family of God. There are two descriptions of persons in this first verse, bearing a similarity to each other: “First, *false prophets* among the people, among God’s ancient people, the Jews, and FALSE TEACHERS; *ψευδοδιδασκαλοι* *falsi doctores*, false doctors, as Beza renders it, or *falsi majestri*, false masters, as rendered by CASTELLIO.

These are your *Doctors of Divinity*, and *Masters of Arts*, who have not the life of God in their souls, but whose God is their bellies, who mind earthly things; and study chiefly their own aggrandizement.

I. They deny the *Lord that bought them*. If scriptural authority is to be allowed—and I flatter myself that there is not an individual in this respectable assembly, deistical enough to question, for a moment, that Divine authority—then the purchase of Christ’s blood, is *not* here intended; for,

1. He purchased his *church*, not the world, (John xvii.

9.) but his *church*, especially and particularly, with his own blood! (*Acts* xx. 28.) “Ye are bought with a *price*,” saith an apostle; with the precious blood of Christ. And surely, sirs, it is too precious, over to lose its efficacy, or to fail in accomplishing the great design of Jehovah, in bringing many sons to glory!

2. He laid down his life for his sheep, which are his especial people, in contradistinction to the world; which is confirmed by the striking language of Christ himself, to the unbelieving Jews. “Ye believe not, because ye are *not of my sheep*.” which is positive proof, that the whole world are not the sheep of Christ; and as he laid down his life *only* for his *sheep*, it follows unavoidably, that he did not die for those who perish: for he declares concerning his sheep—“they shall *never perish*, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands!”

3. Let the word *purchase* exercise your serious consideration for a few minutes; and then ask yourselves, would not justice be most flagrantly violated, if our dear Lord Jesus should lose those, or any one of them, that he bought and paid for with his own life? He has *purchased*, by paying an adequate *price* for that flock, which was the object of his love from everlasting, and demands them, as his right and property!

4. He gives unto them *eternal life*. “I go, saith he, to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” This is the blessed assurance of the glorification of the purchase of Immanuel’s precious blood. He did not say, “I die to make a *provision* for the whole world, but am not assured yet, who will be glorified with me; that rests entirely, with the caprice of their own free will and merits: that depends on the *performance* of certain terms and conditions, by which they must put a finish to my yet incomplete work!” No, no; Christ has secured his own glory, by securing the glorification of all for whom he bled.

He is their *forerunner* in the skies; representing as their covenant head, and complete Redeemer, his whole family, and expects to see the travail of his soul, to his eternal satisfaction! (*Isaiah* liii. 11.)

5. The magnitude, completeness, and glories of his

work, in the atonement made for their sins, and the redemption of their persons with his precious blood, every way forbid that those should perish for whom he died; and confirm the *irrefractable* certainty of their everlasting salvation!

First, he took their sins into his own account, and bore them on his own body on the tree! "He bare the sins of many." (Isaiah liii. 12.) "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) and by a complete atonement, he *removed, finished, and made an end of all their sins.* (Dan. ix. 24.) And if sin is thus put away from those, for whom Christ died; where is the possibility of their perishing? He hath put it away for ever; "by one offering, he hath perfected FOR EVER, those who are sanctified," when their sins are sought for, they shall not be found!" Surely, then we may sing with WATTS,

"If sin be pardon'd I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside;
The law gives sin its damning power,
But Christ my RANSOM died."

Second. He hath completely and for ever satisfied justice, by his *active* and *passive* obedience. He became *obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross! And that obedience is considered as much the *obedience* and righteousness of the saints, as if they had each, *prima persona*, obeyed in thought, word, and action, the whole law of God!—"Blessed is the man to whom God will not impute sin." (Psalm xxxii. 1 Rom. iv. 6.) Even as David described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness, without works." For our covenant Father is "well-pleased, for his *righteousness sake*," and accepts of us in the beloved; whose glorious name, is the *Lord our righteousness.* And it is our unspeakable privilege, to sing with a joy peculiar to faith, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength!" Can this spotless *vest* ever be polluted? Can a sinner perish, who is thus so beautifully clothed in the royal robes of Immanuel's obedience? No: impossible! we might as well imagine the dethronement of Christ himself, as the destruction of that soul for whom he obeyed, and which stands justified in the very *righteousness of God.*

Third. The complete fulfilment of the *holy law*, in the behalf of his people, must secure their salvation. He is the *end of the law*, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. The Holy Spirit gives them the faith of God's elect, and instead of going about any longer to establish their *OWN*, they with cordiality and unspeakable delight submit themselves to, and venture wholly on the righteousness of Christ, for their justification, before an infinitely Holy God: rejoicing that they are not under the law, but under GRACE—under the government and dominion of grace!—that “they are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, and are married to him, their Maker, who is their husband, that they might bring forth fruit unto God: which they never could do under the law, that shewed them no lenity, nor afforded them any aid: “*To convince and to condemn, is all the law can do.*” But grace is influential, it subdues sin, and directs and enables the saved sinner, most affectionately to serve and worship with adoration, the Lord Jesus Christ! And shall the blessed Comforter, thus regenerate and lead the soul to Jesus, and after all, desert his own workmanship, and leave that sinner to perish, to whom he has manifested the bleeding love of Jesus! No: “He who hath begun the good work in a ransomed soul, will carry it on to the day of Christ! That pure water of everlasting life, given him shall be in him, continually springing up, till he is brought into the beatific vision of the eternal Jehovah!

Fourth. The triumph of Christ on the cross, secures their salvation, and imperiously forbids their final destruction! In that day of unparalleled darkness, when the wrath of men and devils unitedly oppressed his holy soul: when “the pangs of hell got fast hold upon him, and the floods of ungodly men made him afraid!” When, infinitely more terrific! the flood gates of heaven's indignation and wrath against our sins, were opened, and torrents of Divine vengeance inundated his immaculate soul! a soul entirely devoted to our salvation, and suffering all for us! when he struggled with death, and cried, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!*” Darkness covered the earth, rocks rent with a frightful crash! graves gave up their dead!—nature was universally convulsed!—Some exclaimed, “*Surely this was the Son of God!*” And a phi-

osopher, at a great distance from the tremendous scene of his amazing woes, struck with the awful phenomenon, cried in wonder, “*Surely the God of nature suffers!*” Why all this? Why did our Jesus thus suffer? Merely to make provision for the salvation of the world, upon an uncertainty, whether the whole would be saved, or the whole through their own negligence, perish! No: my soul burns with indignation, at the very mention of such a Christ-dishonouring doctrine! He dies upon an uncertainty of who would be saved! No: the great promise was fulfilled, “He shall not *fail*, nor be discouraged till he has brought forth *judgment unto victory*. And hear his shout of glorious victory, “It is finished!” Though he fell in his struggle with death; death fell undermost, and he arose the mighty conqueror!—The complete Saviour!—having spoiled principalities and powers, completely removed, washed away, the sins of his people, and so gloriously redeemed their persons, that the powers of darkness may as soon destroy Christ himself, as a soul, *bought* and *paid* for by his redeeming blood!

Fifth. His resurrection and ascension to glory, so illustriously confirm his complete and everlasting victory over the church’s enemies, and our certain salvation, that it ought “to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,” who would willingly dishonour him, by the attempt to prove that he died in vain!

Sixth. The covenant engagement and promise of the Father, in the 110th Psalm, shines brighter than the sun in its meridian, to establish the glorious doctrine of the *particular*, and *irrefractable* redemption of the elect; whose salvation nothing can possibly prevent, and to whom there is no condemnation, for they are in Christ Jesus our Lord! Our covenant Father has promised his Son, in that excellent Psalm: “*Thy people shall be willing, in the day of thy power.*” Let thy power be exerted in their redemption, and the power of the Holy Spirit shall be most effectually exerted, in their calling and perseverance to eternal glory! On the ground of which, either the Eternal God must be degraded to a level with his vilest creatures upon the earth, in becoming perjured by a violation of his oath and promise, or the people of God must all be brought to the world of eternal glory: the latter of which must take place, on

the ground of absolute necessity, as with the Lord Jehovah there is no variation, nor the shadow of a turn, change, or alteration of infinitely wise council; whose thoughts are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil," to give to his dearly beloved people an expected end.

Seventh So complete is their redemption, that if one of them could possibly perish, devils would for ever triumph at the entry of such a soul into the gloomy regions of damnation, and Christ our Lord, as the *Redeemer* of that soul, would be everlastingly disgraced!

Eighth. He demands, authoritatively, eternal glory for them, and the Father will not, cannot, withhold the request of his lips from him—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Since then, it is evident from these, and a variety of other *scriptural* arguments, that might be adduced, that the purchase of Christ's blood can never perish, those mentioned in the scripture, on which the question stands, who "bring upon themselves swift destruction," cannot be the purchase of that most precious and efficacious blood. It will then be enquired what we are to understand by the expression, "*denying the Lord that bought them?*" To which I answer,

1. That the precious blood of Christ, is not here mentioned, neither is there any apparent reference to his death and sufferings.

2. That the word *αγορασαστα* rendered *bought*, is from the verb, *αγοραζω εμο*, "to buy, to procure, to farm, to take a farm:" from the theme *Αγορα forum*, a market-place where things are sold. And has a reference to the deliverances of ancient Israel, from their various captivities by the Lord their God, whom afterwards those false prophets, were in the habit of denying: of which Jehovah complains by the mouth of Isaiah, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider: He had bought, or delivered them from bondage, as slaves are bought in a market, and again taken possession of them, as a man of his farm or estate, "but these, as natural brute beasts, had no understanding:" no not so much as the ox or the ass!

3. The Lord has given us a circumstantial account of the purchase of his ancient Israel, in Isaiah xliii. 3. "I

gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia, and Seba for thee, &c." By a strong hand, and an out-stretched arm, he brought them out of Egypt, and other captivities; yet they most ungratefully rebelled, and denied him; who had thus wonderfully delivered them!

4. But it may be replied, that the term, "*The Lord that bought them,*" applies as strongly to the false teachers, that Peter said should arise, who were never in any *political bondage*, as to the Jews. Admitting that the phrase applies to them also, since we have *sufficiently proved*, that they have no interest in the purchase of Christ's blood, that redemption cannot possibly be intended: it must then as it concerns *them*, allude to temporal and bodily preservations, in which the goodness of God, in his Divine Providence, is displayed, and by which their shameful ingratitude to him, is rendered more aggravating and enormous, in their *denying his truth, which they once doctrinally knew and professed*; (verses 20—22.) and in their stead, bringing in damnable heresies! to the dishonour of his holy name!—For, as the God of providence, our Jesus, is: "The Savior of all men," but a bleeding Saviour, "*especially of those who believe.*"

For the word, as I have shewn, not only carry in it, the idea of *purchase* but also *deliverance*, and who are there, even in the unbelieving world, who have not deliverances by the kind hand of him, who causeth his sun to shine upon the just and the unjust:—But after this admission, I am still of opinion, that the *primary* meaning of the sentence, is the deliverances of the Jews, their captivity, as has been shewn by scriptural evidences!

However of this, it is our happiness to be assured, that the purchase of Christ's blood is too dear in his gracious estimation, ever to perish! For why should he lay down his life, shed his blood, endure ignominy, reproach, temptation, and the very pangs of hell for their salvation, and then suffer them to perish! We have his own word for it, "that they shall never perish;" they are his invaluable jewels, and shall, with all the brilliance of everlasting glory, decorate his mediatorial crown, when time shall be no more!

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

What is to eat and drink unworthily, at the table of the Lord, as expressed in 1 COR. XI. 29.