

BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF

EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

No. XXXIII.] SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 1824.

Τα πάντα καὶ ἐν καὶ Χριστός.—PAUL.

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

QUESTION.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 1824.

Who is intended by the poor man in ECCL. IX. 14?

SOLUTION.

BUT the grand and mighty siege which he laid against the city of God, was his attempt at the destruction of her Gracious King, the Lord Jesus, in his numerous and malignant temptation in the wilderness! He mustered all his forces, employed all his serpentine ingenuity and hellish tactics, and discharged all his artillery on the Son of God, the Lord's anointed, assuring himself, that could he but destroy the church's head, the church must then inevitably perish! But saith the Immaculate Lamb of God, "The PRINCE of this world cometh and finds nothing in me." He found no sin, no unbelief, no corruption whatever in the UNDEFILED ONE, as materials to work on by his cunning and malicious artifices!

Blessed be the glorious name of our Immanuel! he resisted unto blood, and foiled the enemy in his every attack; spoiled his principalities and powers, and having been tempted in all points like his brethren, he knoweth how to succour those who are tempted, and will, with every temptation, make out a way for their escape!

Yet the tempter's malice is not abated, his rage ceases not ! he is still indefatigably industrious in erecting *bulwarks* to keep his subjects, and to besiege the church of God. In order to keep his subjects, he blinds their eyes to their awful state, and works upon the enmity of their carnal minds against the gospel. His grand endeavor is to prejudice men against the true ministers of Christ, that he may keep them from hearing the glad tidings of *salvation by grace!*

His *bulwarks* against the church, are principally egregious errors ; called " the doctrines of devils," which are doctrines exceedingly pleasing to the flesh, and that will not ruffle the carnal mind : thus is Satan, in his ministers, " transformed into an angel of light !" These doctrines are as so many strong bulwarks against the success of the TRUE gospel : nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, " The Lord knoweth them that are his ;" and his sheep shall hear his voice. His other bulwarks against the christian's believing his own interest in Christ, and trusting him in times of trouble, are called his *wiles*, his *insinuations*, and his *snares*, of which, I sincerely pray, the dear children of God may not be ignorant : for in all these, he only aims to rob God of his glory, and you of the consolations of the *blessed gospel!*

We come now to that important part of our subject, which seems more particularly interesting to the querist, and in which every subject of regeneration, must feel himself peculiarly happy, as on it hangs his everlasting salvation and glorification with his covenant God : viz. The *poor* and *wise* man.

1. *Poor* : who is he ? that was remembered by no man ; slighted, neglected and forgotten, although he delivered the city ! The answer is easy, and no doubt, anticipated by you, who are acquainted with the Great Deliverer, that came out of Sion, and who shall turn away captivity from Jacob." The *man of sorrows*, from whom we once hid our faces ! The rock of ages, which we once lightly esteemed ! And which, alas ! we frequently forget now, " madly wandering after other lovers," that promise us felicity, while they pierce us through with anguish, and clothe us in shame and confusion before our God ! The fountain of living waters which we so ungratefully, foolishly and miserably desert ; vainly attempting to " hew out

for ourselves, cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water!" Notwithstanding, after all our wanderings and departures from him, O miracle of *unmerited* grace! he brings us back on the shoulders of his mighty love, rejoicing over us with joy and celestial delight, as his own children! Though prodigal, his own sons and daughters still! from whom he will never depart! Though rich, he became poor for our sakes! But before I speak of his unequalled poverty, let us take a scriptural view of the temporal and spiritual indigency of his redeemed people.

First, they are almost universally *poor* in their worldly circumstances. God seems to have chosen such, that they might more abundantly set forth his praise. That while they admire the riches of his grace, and live a life of faith on the Son of God, they might also in an additional song, bless and adore him for his kind interpositions in Divine Providence, and admire the munificent hand, that so wonderfully supplies all their *needs*, and trust that Omnipotent goodness, that sustains them amidst all the sorrows and cares of afflictive poverty!

That poverty is a bitter draught must be allowed, and especially when the *poor* man is brought *almost* to its utmost boundary—not only to a temporary want of provision, but approximates to starvation itself! when the Christian exclaims, O the cruel grasp of poverty! How does it prevent all my enjoyments, and seems to corrode the very vitals of my spirituality! All these things are against me! But let the afflicted believer, take the advice of Solomon. "In the day of adversity consider." Let him CONSIDER; let him deliberately think, and most seriously reflect before he makes his consequence, or come to any determinate conclusion. The Lord trieth the righteous in providence, that they may have most indubitable evidences of his kind care over them, and his power to appear for them in the very nadir of adversity! "My God will supply all your *needs*, saith the apostle; but if you had no *needs* they could not be *supplied*, and in course you could not praise God for his providential interpositions in the time of trouble!

"From all our afflictions his glory shall spring
And the deeper our sorrows the louder we'll sing."

when he brings deliverance, supplies our wants, and appears for us in a way we could not have devised: and so

unexpectedly, that it seems a very miracle. Then the heart dissolves with gratitude, and tears of joy bedew the cheeks of the delivered recipient of Jehovah's providential and tender mercies! Thus poverty affords the very soul a meal, it could not have relished without it! Thus joy *succeeds* sorrow, and that deliverance is rendered the *sweetest* which has been preceded by the heaviest affliction:— Thus the *mariner* more abundantly enjoys the serenity of the morning, after the most tremendous night of storm and tempest!

Then let it be rather a matter of rejoicing, than of lamentation, that you are numbered with God's poor. Thus saith the Lord to his ancient people, the Jews: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people; and they shall *trust in the name of the Lord.*" (Zeph. iii. 12.) He has now in the ungodly world, and in the midst of haughty professors a *poor* and *afflicted* people: but who are indulged with the same invaluable privilege; they "*trust in the name of the Lord.*" To this inestimable blessing of humble poverty, the Lord calls your particular attention, by the pen of James, (ii. 5.) "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the *poor* of this world, *rich in faith*, and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to them that love him?"

Second. They are spiritually poor: the Lord has blessed them with such a knowledge of their own soul's circumstances, as is peculiar to themselves! for to all the world besides the following description is applicable: "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and *poor*, and blind, and naked." (Rev. iii. 17.) The *broken* and *contrite* heart, is the delight of Jehovah, and with such a one he has declared he will dwell. With the self-condemned sinner who confesses before the Lord his wretchedness and unworthiness, and who with an aching, panting, longing heart, pleads humbly for a revelation of Christ in him, the hope of glory. On such a truly humble, and affectionately seeking soul, Christ has pronounced his especial benediction: (Matt. v. 3.) "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

They have the gospel preached unto them, and to them especially, for to them alone can the gospel prove a joyful sound. (Matt. xi. 5.) "The *poor* have the gospel preach-

ed unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." They are blessed with a love to, and faith and confidence in Christ the sure foundation of their salvation; as it is written. (Isaiah xiv. 32.) "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the *poor* of his people shall TRUST in it."

The Lord does in his sovereign mercy, and to effect his own gracious purposes, sometimes call the *rich* of this world to a participation of gospel blessings: but "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." (1 Cor. i. 26.) They are few indeed; like berries on the uppermost branches, after the gathering in of the vintage. When a *great man* in the world is effectually called, by a miracle of grace, to know and love Christ, it will be conspicuous to the church and to the world, proportionate with his *greatness*. For he will, if the *work is real*, like the excellent *Countess of Huntingdon*, and some others, "come out from among them"—from among the world, and erroneous professors too—"and be separate." So wonderful to himself will be his regeneration, that if he "should hold his tongue, the stones would cry out." And so singular in the eyes of the world, that he could not pass without their particular notice, nor without their persecution. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."

Great men may, and some of them do make a zealous *profession* of Christianity: but alas! profession, without the life of genuine godliness in the soul, will pass unnoticed in this *religious* nation; or if noticed, will have the praises of men, rather than their frowns and persecutions. But such men's religion is vain!

Having noticed the poverty of his people, we proceed to survey, so far as we are capable, the unparalleled poverty of him, "who had not where to lay his head." His *poverty*, who though eternally rich, that he might reach our circumstances, and suffer for our offences, divested himself of all the riches of his glory, and *tabernacled among us!* "For ye know, saith the apostle, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) He took our poverty, that we might par-

take of the riches of his grace, and by faith inherit his perfect righteousness; made our own by gracious imputation! Blessed be the infinitely condescending Immanuel! who thus wonderfully visited this *poverty-struck earth*, and entered into all the sorrows, miseries, woes, and temptations of his people, that he might, with sympathetic love, succour them in all their trials, and conflicts with their enemies, and save and deliver them from the malicious fury of the great and terrible Beelzebub.

1. He stripped himself of his *eternal glories* for our sakes. Not that he could divest himself of his eternal divinity: for he was no less God, when occupying human nature in the manger, as the infant of days, than he is now the angelic hosts perpetually worship and bow before his imperial throne above! But he left that unsearchably glorious throne, and dwelt in clay, to accomplish his great undertaking in the ancient covenant, in bringing many sons to reign with him, and to behold for ever, not only his glory as God, but as God and the Lamb, who redeemed them with his own most efficacious blood! His poverty will appear unequalled in its *depth*, if we take into the astonishing account, the immeasurable *height* from whence he stooped to snatch us from ruin. The heaven, nor the heaven of heavens, can contain his glory: his condescension therefore is infinite! It is the condescension of Jehovah himself!

History furnishes us with striking instances of those who from the most noble and exalted situations, have fallen into the depth of human *poverty*. Instance, among several more that might be named, *Alfred the Great*, who was so reduced as to become a kind of menial, or a poor stranger dependent upon the hospitality of his hostess, who severely reprimanded him for not turning the cakes, baking on the hearth, during her absence. This was certainly a degradation to so great a king! He also, condescendingly put on the garb of a *harper*, that he might inspect the Danish camp, and recover his crown, in order to deliver his nation from their invaders and merciless usurpers. But his poverty is mensurable. True, he was a great king, and *well-deserved* the emphatical title of *Great*: yet he was but a man, the subject of the same corrupt nature and vitiated passions as other men, and equally exposed, with them to the vicissitudes, changes, woes, and calamities attendant on human life. He fell from a *mortal* throne, into the lap

of humble poverty; but our Jesus, “The *king eternal, immortal, invisible*, the only true God, left all his eternal and immortal honors and glories, and though “the only true God,” became truly man! *Socinians, Arians*, and the world at large, that know not God, discredit the glorious and important fact; and we need not wonder, when we are informed that it requires *especial* faith to give it credence; and that such especial faith is the gift of God. It seems, indeed, incredible to us as creatures; and especially to us who know our unworthiness. “Will God, in very deed, dwell with man upon the earth?” was the exclamation of Solomon, lost in overcoming astonishment, at the condescension of Jehovah! But he gave the greatest credit to the absolute necessity of the descension of our God to the earth, when the Divine glory filled his temple! The *temple*, typical of the man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily!

2. He not only, by becoming very man took our place, but by becoming a *poor* man he took the *lowest place*.—Though the Great Shepherd of Israel, and the BISHOP of our souls, we behold him with no brilliant equipage, no gilded carriage, no pomp, no worldly power: his kingdom is not of this world! Born in a stable, laid in the manger, and trained, it seems, even to manual labor; for he is called “THE CARPENTER,” and after entering upon his public work, in order to execute the will of his heavenly Father, his whole life was one perpetual series of poverty and persecution; till the Jews nailed him to a cross of wood, and imbrued their hands in his precious blood.

3. He became *poor* and immensely in debt, by taking the debts contracted by his people, into his own account: for which he had before made himself responsible in the covenant of redemption. For these debts, he was arrested by stern justice, and held as the debtor till he cancelled the IMMENSE sum of all their offences, by laying down his life, and pouring forth his sin-removing blood, as a complete and (blessed be the bleeding Lamb!) an irrefractable atonement!

4. He became *poor*, by taking upon himself the *filthy rags* of his people. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” we are told by an inspired prophet; but he has made an atonement “for the sins,” of what we once considered “our most holy things;” so that through the *pover-*

ty of our Jesus, or his taking all our poverty upon himself, we are delivered from *righteous-self*, as well as from *sinful-self*, and are *pure for ever*, and saved for ever, alone in him, our holy and omnipotent head!

We have now the high pleasure of contemplating his wisdom, by which he delivered the city.—And FIRST, he is not only wise, but wisdom itself: the grand source whence emanates all the spiritual knowledge which his church possesses. Consequently, it is called “wisdom from above.” (James iii. 17.) And hence, his remarkable exhortation, “Get wisdom, get understanding and forget it not.”—(Prov. iv. 5.) Christ himself is the wisdom, and an experimental knowledge and enjoyment of him, the *understanding*.

Second. He is the *wisdom* of God, and as such was set up, or rather established from everlasting—not as a human soul, (beware of that species of ARIANISM) but as the Eternal Word, the head of the gracious covenant; and has displayed his wisdom; in forming the astonishing plan of salvation; so glorifying to God, and so suitable to the lost condition of his people!—How precious, in this plan, are his thoughts; how great is their sum! Nothing was omitted through want of thought, nothing neglected, however trivial; every want of his church provided for, and every blessing treasured up in that precious covenant necessary to our salvation! Sometimes a human plan is, on the whole, exceedingly well concerted; but something omitted through inconsideration, has been the fatal cause of an awful failure in its execution! Not so the plan of infinite wisdom! He provided every thing necessary to destroy the works of the devil, and to pull down his strong holds! And he has carried his plan most effectually into triumphant execution! He has put away sin by the blood of his cross, led captivity captive, presented the church in all the beauty of holiness and righteousness before God, and most admirably united justice and mercy; and all the divine attributes, which now harmonize, and shall be eternally glorified in the salvation of sinners!

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AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF

EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

No. XXXIV.] SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1824.

Τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πανί Χριστός.—PAUL.

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

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 1824.

QUESTION.

What is the difference between the unbelief of the regenerated child of God, and that of the world?

SOLUTION.

UNBELIEF is the great enemy of God and man, which entered into the world as an inlet to iniquity of every description, and is now, that most powerful vicegerent of the devil, in the human heart, to lead mankind into the highest rebellion against the Lord. It discredits the word of God, calls in question his threatenings and his promises, doubts his veracity, and most awfully disputes his Divine Authority and rightful sovereignty! It was introduced to the notice of Eve by the serpent, which shews us that, not the *infinitely holy God*, but Satan himself was the Author of this leading sin. Eve acknowledges it, and Paul ascribes it to the serpent's diabolical subtilty. "The woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." (Gen. iii. 13.) And saith the apostle in his excellent cautions to the Corinthians, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. xi.

3.) He first, most insinuatingly, suggested a doubt of the veracity of God, or whether he had spoken it at all: "*Yea hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" This question shook her confidence in God. Then he proceeds farther in his diabolical work, and as the father of lies, at once beguiles her with the abominable falsehood, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" Thus he goeth about now with his cunning insinuations and persuasives; and sometimes as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And thus he plays very frequently on the UNBELIEF of the Christian, attempting to set aside the promises of God altogether, or insinuating that God is unfaithful, and will never perform them! But glory to free grace! which is sufficient to support us under all the buffetings of Satan, and which will never fail to give us the victory over him, through faith in the great Redeemer's precious blood!

Ever since unbelief thus entered into the world, all unregenerated persons have been the vassals of Satan, who keeps them from God, and stirs up their natural enmity to the gospel of Christ, by operating upon that awful principle; persuading them that God's truth is a falsehood, his Holy Bible unworthy regard, and that he will not punish for iniquity as he has threatened. Thus, "Satan binds their captive minds, fast in his hellish chains!" But those who follow Christ in the regeneration, are delivered from his vassalage, blessed with precious faith in the blood of the Lamb, and are enabled to resist the devil: for they are not ignorant of his devices. Yet they have to lament the prevalence of their UNBELIEF which leads them sometimes, to question the faithfulness of their covenant God! And in such a state of mind, they are of all persons the most disconsolate!

I am asked to shew the difference between this distressing UNBELIEF of a *believer*, and that of the *unbelieving* world?

1. There is no difference between the two parties by *nature*, for they were both shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, and as a sinner, the *believer* cannot say to any individual "Stand by thyself, I am more holy than you;—for in his flesh dwelleth no good thing. He cannot say, concerning himself, as a sinful man, "I thank God, I am not as other men," or, "I am not like that vile publican."

A humiliating sense of his natural depravity forbids him to be "righteous in his own eyes and despise others." Yet, there is a difference between him and the carnal world; but it is that difference which the Holy Spirit has made, without his assistance. That holy work in him, is God's own work, distinct from, and diametrically opposite to his corrupt nature: on which account, he is led humbly to acknowledge, and triumphantly to rejoice with the apostle, "*By the grace of God I am what I am?*"

2. Neither is there any difference between the *unbelief* of a believer, and that of the world in its *nature*. It is the same opposition to God, the same sinful rebellion against his holy word in both; yet they very materially *differ* in their operations. For the one is the unbelief of a sinner, who is regenerated, and blessed with the knowledge of the God of all grace; he has spiritual life to feel its hostility to the faith of his hidden man, and with shame and confusion of face, he confesses and laments it before God. It is in him the *disbelief of promises*, in which he is interested; a holding in doubt the *faithfulness* and *veracity of that covenant God*, who hath loved him with everlasting love! The other the unbelief of a man dead in sin, without hope, and without God in the world; who, rather than lament, glories in his denial of the truth: or if a professor, clothed in his own "filthy rags" of righteousness, his *unbelief* leads him to delight in a denial of the *doctrines of grace*, to which he feels a most implacable hatred, and which he opposes with all the enmity of the carnal mind to God, persuaded by "*the Father of lies*," that he is thereby doing God service! In an attempt at the delineation of both, I feel disposed to shew you from the sacred scriptures the *unbelief* of the world, before we come to notice that of the believer; as we shall then be led more regularly to see what we were before regeneration, and what we are now, by the grace of God, and in our present experience of the contention within our own hearts, between flesh and spirit; between *unbelief* and our most holy *faith*!

1. The *unbelief* of the carnal world. And suffer me to remark in the first place, that its operations spring from the most profound ignorance of God, and of the fallen state of man, which renders absolutely necessary to salvation, such

a mighty Saviour as we have found in the lovely, loving, and ever adorable Immanuel!

He is ignorant of the need of so great a salvation, consequently its publication is, to him, complete foolishness: a salvation by the blood and righteousness of the Son of God!—To eat his flesh, and drink his blood! To be born again! To see by faith, him who is invisible! To walk with God and commune with him on the earth, as a man with his friend! are so contrary to his boasted reason, that he cries out, How can these things be? And so incomprehensible and opposite to sense, that they are not only ridiculous, but *monstrous* in his estimation! Such is the confession of Paul, and the account he gives of his unbelief, before his conversion. “I verily thought within myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did in Jerusalem, &c.” (Acts xxvi. 9) But he says “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in *unbelief*.” (1 Tim. i. 13.)

Second This *unbelief*, where a pharisaic profession is zealously made, will always lead to a most bitter persecution of the truth and the people of God. For the truth of the gospel, which they can neither *believe* nor *receive*, lays the axe to the root of the tree of self-righteousness, human pride, and fleshly religion, and will naturally give them offence! They will retort upon the ministers of Christ in the tone of one of old, on another occasion, “ye have taken away my gods! what can ye do more?” Their enmity will lead them maliciously to misrepresent *the truth of God itself*, by blasphemously saying it leads to licentiousness! and they will load God’s *faithful* ministers (men perhaps they know not; men that have never seen nor heard) with the most foul calumnies and cruel accusations, fabricated by themselves, or by some of their fraternity, and disseminated purposely to keep God’s children from hearing the truth as it is in Jesus! Thus “the UNBELIEVING Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds, EVIL EFFECTED AGAINST THE BRETHREN.” (Acts xiv. 2.) Let this powerful scripture, so remarkably applicable to all UNBELIEVING professors, and so strikingly descriptive of their conduct, have due weight upon your minds.

Such *unbelieving* religionists are not aware that by going about to establish their own righteousness and inhe-

rent holiness, they are engaged in the highest rebellion against that precious Christ they profess to love; whose emphatical name is, *The Lord our righteousness*, and whose glory Jehovah will not give to another. And that by back-biting his people, who are everlastingly precious in his sight, they are touching the very apple of God's eye! And that at the very moment they are whisperingly charging others with crime, they themselves are in the commission of one of the most wicked (because most injurious) shameful, and dastardly crimes upon the earth: the RUIN of the *character* and reputation of a man, which perhaps he never may recover! and for the loss of which they never could make restitution, were they, Judas-like, led to repent, through the torment of a guilty conscience! Back-biting and defamation of character (especially that of God's children) is the prevailing *crime* of the professors of the day; the shocking consideration of which leads me to make these free observations. And I sincerely pray, with submission to the Divine Will, that they may truly repent of this their *crying sin*, as in dust and ashes before God! And acknowledge it to be the awful effect of that *unbelief* of the truth, which, as a mighty flood, has deluged the whole world!

And O ye highly favored of our God! in whose ears the gospel sounds delightfully, beware of the insinuations of those *uncircumcised* backbiters; and as you possess the same corrupt nature, beware of the crime yourselves—though you would not studiously and maliciously do it, you are liable to be so far overcome, as to fall into the commission of it yourselves; To avoid which, keep not their company—sit not by them; lest that charge should be brought against you, recorded in the fiftieth Psalm, “when thou sawest a *thief* then thou consentedst with him, &c.” Be not ear-witnesses of a robbery, to such a shocking and destructive amount! a robbery not merely of *property*; for in that case, the person robbed might, under the blessing of Divine Providence, industriously obtain more; and the painful effect of the loss would cease; but a robbery of reputation, next to taking life itself, which when most violently stabbed is seldom recoverable, but miserably bleeds to death! Or, if you must continue a little time in their company, detect the thieves by the sa-

cred volume, and carry them scripturally before the tribunal of God. And for their conviction, state to them the Divine law: "*the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*" (Prov. xxvi. 22.) Such a person shall not dwell in the holy hill of Sion; for the man who dwells there "*backbiteth not with his tongue.*" (Psm. xv, 3.) Backbiters are numbered with the *reprobate*, whose awful characters are described by the apostle Paul: "*being filled,*" saith he, "*with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness: full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God! &c. knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are WORTHY of death,*" &c. (Rom. i. 29—32.) We have in this awful scripture their crime, apprehension, description, wretched state, conviction and death!

I shall make no apology for this seeming digression from the question, as I have gone into the subject of *backbiting*, to shew that it is one of the most cruel species of persecution, and the fruit and malicious effect of the *unbelief of the carnal world!*

3. *Their unbelief* is a most aggravating sin: which is still more enhanced in enormity, by their persecution of Christ, and his truth, and people. It is the activity of their unbelief in oppoising the gospel, which constitutes their principal crime: and for such *unbelief*, living and dying so, they will be damned—" *He that believeth not, shall be damned.*" (Mark xvi. 16.) Not for the nullity of faith in Christ, but for the *being* and *rebellion* of unbelief, which was introduced into the world by the devil, and now, naturally issues from the human heart, like streams from a fountain head! He is damned, not because he would not perform "his duty of faith," as some very erroneously tell us: for God never made the great covenant blessing of precious faith over to them that perish, according to the very plain assertion of Christ himself, to his disciples, "Unto you it is given to believe, but to them it is not given." Faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God: and the non elect believe not, Christ says, because they are not of his sheep. It would indeed, be a monstrous act of flagrant injustice in Jehovah, to damn a soul for not possessing that *gift* of grace which he did not provide for it; and which he never intended it should possess! But they are justly

condemned for *sin*, that dwells in them, and among the rest of their sins, one of the principal is *rebellious unbelief*! It is the rebellion of man against God that procures, and justly demands the damnation of an ungodly world, on the ground of the holy law, which they are under, which they have violated, and by which they will be judged: and herein shines the strict justice of Jehovah, as he demands no more of them than man was capable of performing, when he came out of the hands of his Great Creator, in a state of creature perfection. And here we see the exemption of the people of God from condemnation! they are not "under the law, but under grace," and redeemed from the curse of the law, by the gracious Redeemer, who fulfilled it for them, they are saved, to the honor of that law, and with eternal glory to justice as well as grace!

4. Their *unbelief* shall not frustrate the purpose of God in the salvation of his people, nor their persecutions prevent the spread of the everlasting gospel. "For what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? God forbid!" (Rom. iii. 3.) "God hath not at any time cast away his people, which he foreknew, but in all ages, the election hath obtained it (the blessing of faith) and the rest were blinded," (Rom. ix. 2—7) and so it shall be to the consummation of all terrestrial things. Of this great truth, Paul has most confidently said, that though Hymeneus, and Philetus had deserted the true faith, and had with their abominable errors, corrupted many more, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his!" (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Not all the errors, superstitions, oppositions, and persecutions in the world, can possibly frustrate the purposes of God in the salvation of the elect, nor hinder the gathering in of any of the redeemed to the *Divine Shiloh*, for "unto him shall the gathering of the people be," (Gen. xlix. 10.) made willing in the day of his power, (Psalm cx. 3.) they shall set down at his feet, *every one*, shall receive of his words. Deut. xxxiii. 3.) And when the wicked are turned into hell, with all nations that forget God, they shall possess life eternal!

II. We come now to the discussion of that part of the question, which concerns, the *unbelief* of a child of God, and shall consider,

First. His character: he is a believer, that is, he possesses genuine faith, which is a blessing provided for him in the ancient covenant of his Father, God: who blessed his people with all spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world (Eph. i. 3.) *Second.* It is confined to Jehovah's own family, and is on that account emphatically pronounced, "*The faith of God's elect.*" *Third* it is an invaluable gift, graciously conferred upon the soul without money, and without price. "By grace are ye saved, saith the apostle, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the *gift of God.* Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) *Fourth,* it is of the operation of the Holy Spirit; a vital and immortal principle, by which power is given to the believer to renounce, and go out of himself entirely, to Christ for a complete salvation; and to enter the Holiest of all through his precious blood of sprinkling, to hold communion with his God!—Power to walk, stand, fight, and conquer. Finally, it is that precious *faith* which delights in the worship and ordinances of God; and inspired the saved sinner with the strictest attention to the commanding voice of the Captain of our salvation. What he has *done* for his soul, excites his warmest gratitude; what he has *promised* has his unlimited confidence; and what he has *commanded*, his prompt and affectionate obedience. For such a one to indulge in UNBELIEF seems astonishing; and forms a subject of such magnitude, and of such deep interest to a believer, that an ADJOURNMENT of it

TO NEXT MONDAY EVENING,

Was proposed and carried.

The critical question of "A Young One in Zion," is received, and shall have due attention.

All Letters must come free of expence.

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BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF

EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

No. XXXV.] SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1824.

Τα πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.—PAUL.

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

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1824.

ADJOURNED QUESTION.

What is the difference between the unbelief of the regenerated child of God, and that of the world?

SOLUTION.

I almost regret the adjournment of the question to this evening, on account of the subject, to which I have long entertained a total dislike. *Unbelief*, that hateful opponent of precious, *precious* faith; unbelief too, of the worst kind, the wretched unbelief of an afflicted believer, forms my theme; my melancholy theme, and seems to meet me in all its frightful shapes, on the very threshold of the discussion, as if determined that I should not expose its aggravating turpitude and disgusting deformity. Were I about to expatiate on the beautiful charms and excellencies of heaven-descending faith, or on the still more beautiful charms of the heaven-descending Christ, and the glories of his bleeding love; or on any other celestial subject, calculated to warm my heart and yours, with rejoicing affection to him; which would elevate our immortal powers to the very heavens, methinks the anticipation of the employ, would inspire me with fresh vigor, and I should proceed with an eagerness peculiar to spiritual de-

light ! But alas ! to have nothing before me but dull melancholy *unbelief*, with all its perplexities and God-dishonoring operations, how discouraging ! I have had so much to do it, and have suffered so much by it, that the *very name* is disgusting to my soul ! *Unbelief* dwelling in the corrupt nature of a believer is allied with hell ; the monstrous murderer of Christian consolations, the daring rebel that calls Jehovah himself *unfaitâful!* and persuades us to rebellion, and the highest treasons against the King of kings ! And to delineate this monster is my engagement this evening ! A pretty engagement truly ! Why did the *Querist* impose on me such a very disagreeable task ! I apprehend he thought me competent to the engagement, judging that *unbelief* is my bosom friend : and on the ground of intimacy, I should be the better able to give a just and true account of its hateful conduct.

It is not paying me a very handsome compliment ; but I am obliged to acknowledge the fact ; and at the same time avail myself of the opportunity of confessing, that I am disgusted with my companion, truly ashamed of myself for the encouragement I have given the rebel, and have hundreds of times endeavoured to shake him off, with a determination to have no more connexion with him ; but he is *in*, and I cannot get him *out* ; neither do I believe that I shall accomplish that very desirable object, till the day of my death ! Sometimes he lays dormant, and I rejoicingly conclude that he is altogether *dead*.—I walk then by faith, in green pastures with my gracious Lord, and so precious are his promises, so delightful his ways, and so tranquil my soul, that I am ready to conclude I shall go in uninterrupted peace all my days ! And indeed I am then almost disposed to call myself a *good creature* : but “ lest I should be exalted above measure”

“ My Jesus sends a trying hour
This lurking pride to quell ;
My *dead* foes rise with dreadful power,
And drag me near to hell.”

And I can assure you, that among them *unbelief* is one of thefore most, in alliance with the powers of darkness, to distress and harrass my dejected mind ! You need not then wonder at my dislike to my subject, and the reluctance I

have expressed to enter upon the discussion. And yet, why should I be reluctant! It may be for the relief of some poor discouraged *unbelieving* believer in the Lord Jesus, who is ready to say "My way is hidden from the Lord:" and surely no person possessing Christianity, is so tried with unbelief as myself! Encouraged with this hope of utility, I shall proceed to notice;

I. The *unbelief* of the *young* Christian, who is in spiritual travail, "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God:" whose address to heaven is, "*Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief.*" His unbelief widely differs from that of the world, for he does not disbelieve the authenticity of the scriptures, the doctrines of the gospel, nor the truth as it is in Jesus: concerning these, he can say, *Lord I believe!*

He cannot but believe these, on the ground of his own experience.

1. He knows the truth of the scriptures from deep convictions of sin. The Bible describes his sinful heart, the holy law has condemned him, and he is as sure that none but Christ can save him, as he is of his own natural existence!

2. The sovereign act of God, in the election and adoption of his own people; though once offensive to him, is that sublime truth which has his hearty assent and consent: and indeed, he is astonished that God should have made choice of *any*, when he seriously reflects on the desperate wickedness of the human heart! with which he is now pretty well acquainted.

3. He is assured that the blood of Jesus was not shed in vain: that those he redeemed shall be called, and that the blood of sprinkling is *applied*, by the Holy Spirit, with healing power, to the conscience of such a divinely called sinner, who then rejoices that he has redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the *forgiveness* of his sins, according to the riches of free and distinguishing grace! For this application and display of redemption's power, he waits: encouraged by the Eternal Jehovah himself, who has said, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say on the Lord." Psalm xxvii. 14.

But, though such a sinner, we are assured, is effectually

called, he is distressed, and prevented from embracing Christ for himself, though he loves him dearly, through the power of hateful UNBELIEF: which, as it regards his peculiar case, consists in the following particulars:

1. That real sense of indwelling sin which the Lord has given him, and which operates in him, in a thousand different ways, is taken the advantage of by the powers of darkness, who insinuate he is not a child of God, or he would be *saved from his sins*. (*And so he is by the blood of Jesus*) But that he would have pure thoughts, desires, wishes, and affections: instead of which he is told, that, to his own knowledge it is the awful reverse! How then can he put in claim to interest in Christ Jesus? *Unbelief* acquiesces with the Satanic accusation, and his conclusions are distressing!

2. *Unbelief*, in combination with the malicious accuser of the brethren, employs him in *searching for evidences* of regeneration, such as never existed in the heart of a believer! namely, the gradual eradication of sin, the sanctification of the flesh, a growing better every day, and finally, the total extinction of sin, except some few *remains* of it, which will be so weak as to be easily overcome. But he finds, alas! so completely the reverse within him, that *unbelief* persuades him he cannot be effectually called by grace.

3. His incorrect and unscriptural views of the *application of the blood of Christ to his conscience*, expecting that which he will never find, nor feel! Forming an idea of an application of the very blood shed on calvary to his *bodily* or *fleshly* heart! On these three especial grounds *unbelief* acts, to the keeping of poor sinners from Christ, who loves *freely* and receives *graciously*! From a recollection of my own sufferings, when in such circumstances, and through an ardent affection for such babes in Christ, I shall attempt to assail, descriptively at least, these efforts of *unbelief* which entangle with the yoke of bondage, the precious souls in whom the Lord has begun his good work of grace: and respecting the *First*, suffer me to observe that *unbelief* objects to your salvation on *the very ground* of a most substantial evidence of your *effectual calling*! So true is it, that gamsaying *unbelief* calls light darkness and darkness light; bitter sweet and sweet bitter!

Your *unworthiness* an *objection!* 'Tis a sense of *unworthiness* and exceeding sinfulness, that renders you *fit* for Christ,

“ All the *fitness* he requireth is to feel your need of him,
This he gives you, 'tis the Spirit's rising beam !”

“ Who told thee that thou wast naked ?” Who opened your eyes to a view of your natural depravity ? By what power was your heart made to ach, and your conscience to bleed, on account of indwelling sin ? How came you to feel an internal hatred to sin, and a loathing of yourself before God ?

This was not nature's work, for nature possesses nothing but sin ! and sin will never oppose itself ! It could not be the devil's work, for “ Satan is not divided against himself :” but it is evidently the Spirit's work, who alone can give an hatred to sin, and incline the heart, with an indignation against, and an holy renunciation of self, to seek Christ, and insatiately thirst for a knowledge of interest in him. And as for the *Second*, the evidences you have been seeking are never to be *obtained*. For the word of the Lord universally declares that the *flesh* (that is your corrupt nature) contains no good thing, but on the contrary, is hostile to the holy work of God in your soul (Romans vii. 18. Gal. v. 17) and that to grow in grace is to *increase* in the knowledge of Christ : which sweet savory knowledge will teach you to *abhor* yourself and to esteem your best religious performances, and your own most holy things, as dross, loss and dung for that excellency of the knowledge of Christ, in *whose grace* you are exhorted to be strong ; for in him, and in him alone, the Lord Jehovah, is everlasting strength ! (2 Pet. iii. 18. Job xlii. 5, 6. Phil. iii. 8. 2 Tim. ii. 1. Isaiah xxvi. 4.) The Lord, the blessed Spirit help you to renounce your own righteousness with the same holy indignation and zeal as you would resist the devil : and may he teach you to see that every self-righteous effort of yours is a turning from the glorious *righteousness of Christ*, and a feeble and vain attempt to make that heart better which God has pronounced deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and which he has moreover said can never be brought into subjection to his law. (Jer. xvii. 9. Romans viii. 7.) O may the Lord teach you to see clearly that his work *within* a sinner is in direct *opposition* to *carnal*

nature, that fountain of iniquity, which will not, cannot be conformable to the divine will! And the *Third*, the *application* of Christ's blood to the conscience you have conceived of most erroneously, if you expect a something to be performed upon your *fleshly* heart. It is altogether a spiritual operation of the Holy Spirit in your immortal *spirit*. It must be therefore an *immaterial* and *spiritual* revelation, or application of Christ with such power, suitability, sweetness and preciousness, as no human language can ever describe! Yet I will attempt for your instruction and comfort, to give such a description of it as God has recorded in his word, and which I can testify the truth of from my own experience. The poor sinner is after numerous legal efforts, obliged to give up all for lost without Christ: "he *falls* down and there is none to help." (Ps. cvii. 12.) "He is cast out in the open field to the loathing of his person." (Ezekiel xvi. 5.) But it is a time of love, the day of Christ's power to save to the uttermost, who is *revealed* in him the hope of glory. He is led to the fountain of his blood, and has eyes of faith given him to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of his faith; he ceases from his own works and enters into rest, agreeable to the exhortation of Christ: Come unto me and I will give you rest. Salvation by grace is displayed, the banner of Christ is unfurled in his victory over all the sinner's enemies, and that banner, with the glorious streamers of his complete acquittal from all charge, and with his exemption from all condemnation, is love, bleeding love! So full so free is grace in his pardon, *and so* suitable is a dying Christ to his circumstances, that he ventures on him, embraces him with confidence as his own Saviour, and cries "My Lord and my God!" Perfect love casteth out all fear, the spirit of bondage is taken away, and he receives the spirit of adoption to cry abba, Father! He has beauty given him, even the beauty of the Lord, in exchange for the ashes of repentance and bitterness, and the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness, and believing he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Such a one is a believer rejoicing in a knowledge of his interest in Christ: we shall therefore consider now,

II. The unbelief of a believer in Christ, who knows that he is washed in his precious blood and saved with an everlasting salvation.

It has often been said by a sinner in spiritual travail "Were I assured of my part in the Redeemer's blood, I think nothing could distress me, persecutions and various tribulations might attend me, but the enjoyment of Divine forgiveness would be so unspeakably sweet, that I could endure them all patiently and cheerfully for the sake of the Lord Jesus." So a young soldier, spending his bounty money, fights valiantly by anticipation, and victoriously takes the field without wounds or fatigue; but alas! how differently he finds it when brought into action. And the child of God when first set at liberty, enjoying his first love, expects to go on his way rejoicing to the end of his pilgrimage. But his judgement goes before his experience. The Lord trieth the righteous, and though previous to the arrival of his troubles he could say, My mountains stand firm and I shall never be moved, when God hideth his face his soul is troubled. David could say by triumphant faith, and in the enjoyment of his Lord, I am not afraid of ten thousand of them who have set themselves against me round about:" but this very same man, when Saul seemed successful against him, in a fit of unbelief alarmedly exclaimed '*I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul!*' The Lord in trying the righteous man, seems determined to convince him that the strong believer is as much dependent on the power of God for his guidance and protection, as the most feeble babe in Christ. And by which they learn, that faith is always the gift of God. It is the Spirit who gives it, and as a sovereign, will suspend his gracious influence whenever it seems good in his sight. Thus *unbelief* prevails, for a season, against those, who have been the most triumphant in faith. Which appears,

1. In outward, providential trials and afflictions.—The Lord is pleased, at the same time, very frequently to withdraw the gracious light of his affectionate countenance, and his heart fails him, his courage dies away. Instead of calling upon God in prayer, he cries, with unbelieving Jacob, "All these things are against me!"

2. In persecution, when unjust defamation and cruel calumny, with an high tide roll over him, and his once professed friends desert him, his *unbelief* operates like that of Elijah, and his language is, even to God himself, "I am left alone, and they seek my life."

3. When the violent assaults of hell, consisting in accu-

sations of internal viciosities, assail the soul, *faith* experiences a temporary shock, and the complaining language of unbelief, is, "If it be so, that I am a child of God, why am I thus?" But it is even then, the privilege of the believer "to enquire of the Lord."

4. In the fatal hour of deprivation, when God fulfils his gracious promise, "Their idols I will utterly abolish." O the rebellion of the heart! Jonah-like, the christian concludes; "It is better for me to die than to live." God himself is arraigned at the bar of his *unbelief*, which calls in question, the tender mercies and loving kindness of the Lord!

Dear Christian, suffer me to ask you, "Is this your kindness to your friend? that friend which sticketh closer than a brother!"

"What vile rebellious creatures we,
And God, as strangely kind!"

I am sure we are bound to make the honest and humble confession of the prophet. "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassion fails not." He has done nothing but love us, and display that love, in ten thousand admirable and beautiful forms; and we have done nothing but rebel against him!

Yet blessed be his name, we can distinguish our unbelief from that of the world, as we are, when in our right mind, led to confess it before him, and adore his astonishing, free, and never-ceasing grace, that "though we believe not, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself." Our unbelief, dishonours God, and plagues and distresses us; but amidst it all he rests in his love, remembereth his covenant, and will finally deliver us from this powerful enemy raising us to those seats of glory, where *unbelief* cannot enter, but where *faith* will terminate in sight, and mortality be swallowed up of eternal life!

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

To the Author of Biblical Criticisms.

SIR,—Has not the Devil a way of deceiving souls by impressing them with sensations, in which he attempts to imitate the experience of the children of God? If so, what are those infernal deceptions?

A YOUNG ONE IN SION.