

BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF
EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

XLVIII.] SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1824.

Τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.—PAUL.

Christ all and in all.—COL. III 11.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1824.

QUESTION.

Dear Sir,

I wish to acknowledge, with thankfulness to the Lord, that I have derived much instruction and consolation from your elucidations of critical portions of scripture, but as I am yet the subject of many doubts and fears, I most seriously propose the following question: Does that scripture exclude me from the family of God, written in Rom. xiv. 23. "He that DOUBTETH, is DAMNED if he eat: because he eateth not of faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin?"

J. E.

SOLUTION.

I HAVE never answered a question with more pleasure, than I now feel in attempting to answer this: genuine pleasure of soul emanating from an hope and confidence in the HOLY COMFORTER, that he will direct me to speak a word in season, to those who are weary; to point out to the way-bound traveller, the road to eternal happiness; to remove the stumbling blocks out of the way of God's people, and by rightly dividing the word of truth, detect, refute, and expose error, formality, and hypocrisy, on the one hand,

and on the other, not only feed the sheep, but the tender LAMBS of Christ's fold, with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, and become experimentally established in the faith of God's elect. The Lord has given a particular charge to his ministers, to feed the lambs, the little ones, the babes in Christ.

And I assure you, that I never feel more at home, than when I am sent to feed them; nor never more delighted with my work, than when influenced by grace, to point to him, who gathereth the lambs with his arm, who nourisheth them in his bosom, and GENTLY leads those that are with young."—When led to set forth his beauties and abilities, his death and his triumphs over all the church's enemies, his amazing love, tenderness, pity, compassion, and willingness to save; my soul is overcome with delight and "makes me like the chariots of Amminadib," (Sol. S. vi. 12.) with what swiftness she takes her flight on the strong pinions of faith up to her God, for wisdom and strength to advance in her blessed employ, and for tidings of great joy to the weak and timid, that they may behold and embrace the Lamb of God, in order to unite in the glorious song of stedfast assurance, "Unto him that hath loved us; and individually sing, I know that my Redemer liveth—I know whom I have believed—this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!"

That the real children of God are perplexed with fears and doubts, is well known to us, being confirmed by the scripture and experience: on which account, I am the more happy to embrace this opportunity of speaking a word of encouragement to those who are at an uncertainty concerning their interest in Christ, having been myself, formerly, in the same state of DOUBT and painful perplexity. I shall

FIRST, Take a scriptural view of their circumstances, amidst their DOUBTS and FEARS,

SECOND, Argue, that those doubts and fears are so many evidences of a good work begun in them. And then,

THIRD, Explain the scripture, which seems much to concern my enquiring friend.

I. Their circumstances of soul, which give rise to doubts.

1. Under the first work of the HOLY SPIRIT, in convinc-

ing them of sin. The commandment comes with its condemning power—sin revives, and becomes in the sinner's view, and in his wretched feelings, "exceeding sinful;" that which he thought to be unto life, he finds to be unto death, and is in him, a ministration of death and condemnation. He is ready to conclude that there is no salvation for him—for the hail has swept away his refuge of lies, and he has no hiding-place!

He has now such views of God's holiness and his own vileness, as never can be expressed. Storms of wrath seem to wet him to the skin, and his cry is,

"What shall I do, or whither flee,
T'escape the vengeance due to me."

This man DOUBTS of his salvation, and well he may, he has not merely a temporary flash of conviction, that takes a cognizance of outward transgression, but such a view of the desperate wickedness of his heart, that he would sink in the keenest despair, but for a persuasion that there is mercy with the Lord, that he may be sought after—Alas! he has sensations, such as the proud self-justiciary, never felt, nor the *high doctrinal pretender to the Essence of God!* never groaned under. Yet let me assure you from the scriptures, that this man possesses already the faith of God's elect! For his convictions are from the Holy Spirit, who *reproves* for sin; and his belief is singular to his distressing case. he believes, and is assured that if he should die in the state, which he feels himself to be in—*under the law*—he must inevitably perish—for "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse"—He also believes that he must be saved, if there is any salvation for him, by the sweet mercy of God in Jesus Christ! He has no doubt of these two important matters: neither can he get from a belief in them, his own feelings forbid it; they confirm the truth of them to an unquestionable certainty. But he most miserably DOUBTS of his interest in Christ, nor could all the ministers upon the earth, nor all the children of God persuade him out of his doubts, till God's time arrives for his liberation. He is God's prisoner, and when he shutteth up, there is no opening till the *Holy Spirit brings the glad tidings* into the soul, and applies the Redeemer's blood to the conscience!

While I am thus speaking, some timid saint, perhaps, may be ready to say, "My doubts are but increased by your description of a law work upon the conscience: for I very much fear, I never had such convictions: and as the Holy Spirit certainly convinces of sin, I am not under his sacred tuition." To whom I wish tenderly and affectionately to reply, That we are not to prescribe limits for the Holy One of Israel: He is a sovereign, and performs his all-wise pleasure; within those who are taught of God as well as in the sovereign dispensations of his wonderful providence: Some of the people of God have providential trials in painful succession, through the whole course of their earthly pilgrimage, while others are attended with one perpetual series of success and prosperity: yet they are equally loved, equally safe, and shall be equally crowned with eternal life. Some have greater gifts, and others, greater enjoyments of the divine presence, than the celestial family in general, here they differ one from another, but it is written in the prophets, and repeated by Christ himself: "They shall be all taught of God." Their experience and faith are the same, but in depths of woe and sorrow, and in heights of joy and peace they widely differ. Thus regarding a law work; all are taught the holiness of God, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin; but not to the same degree of condemnation and slavish dread. And I cannot avoid taking this opportunity to correct a misconception of some of the *weaklings* of Christ on this subject.

When we speak of a law work on the conscience they suppose the very words of the law, some particular sentence, of the **TEN COMMANDMENTS**, is applied with power, and not having ever experienced such application of a **LEGAL** sentence, they conclude assuredly, that they never knew a law-work, prior to their believing in Jesus. My dear and precious friends, your erroneous conclusion, and consequent timidity constrain me to explain farther this great work of God, in making his people sensible of the condemning power of his law, sincerely hoping that the explanation will be blessed to the removing of your doubts and fears, respecting your effectual calling: and let it be particularly remarked, that it is not the very letter, but the spirit of the law, that arrests the conscience, and convinces the sinner of indwelling sin. For the law is not merely **MORAL**, as our

legalists call it, but spiritual, and takes cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And let me ask you, amidst all your timidity: have you not, on the ground of your vile, abominable, and frightful thoughts and iniquitous purposes, cried guilty before God? And with shame, and confusion of face, implored the divine mercy and pardon of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? And what was that but a thorough conviction of your sinful and polluted state, through a knowledge of the spirituality of the law, and the unsearchable holiness of God? Have you not been truly convinced, that by the deeds of the law, no flesh living can be justified, for by the law is only the knowledge of sin? And with the degree to which these convictions have been carried, you have nothing to do. Suffice it, that your legal and vain hopes are cut off, you know yourself a vile sinner, and that you must be saved from first to last, without an atom of your own performance, entirely by the complete atonement and spotless righteousness of the Son of God, in whom we are everlastingly complete. Fear not, but rest assured, that a truly humble and ruined sinner in himself, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, with penitence and love is a sinner born again.

2. The *doubling* soul is a *new-born babe*, that desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby, and bring forth fruit unto God. A new born babe can neither *walk*, nor *speak*, but it can struggle and cry, it has life to feel pain, and a voice by screams to express it. The babe in Christ, is pained to the heart with sin and anguish on account of it, struggles against it, and cries vehemently to God for deliverance from it, but is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. Hence his doubts and fears. "If it be so, why am I thus?" is his exclamation, O that I knew where I might find him! If you find my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love: yet I *doubt* whether I love him! Should I feel such a heart of stone and of steel, if I had real love to Christ. But hope revives again, and he sings with the excellent Newton,

" Yet I mourn, my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall,
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all?"

No poor sinner, you would not, neither does the apostle intend you, when he saith, "He that doubteth is damned," but a widely different character as, I shall soon prove from the word of God! Let not therefore, the proud and imperious professor, soaring on the wings of presumption, tell such a poor sinner, that his doubts will DAMN him, but let him rather honestly confess, that he never was in such a poor wretched sinner's case himself—that he never knew the plague of his own heart.

3. They are the lambs of Christ's fold, that are weak, tender, and exposed to cold and imminent dangers. The care of a pastor over these, should be constant and tender, for the discharge of his important post, in this case, perhaps, is above all others of his ministerial function, the most arduous and responsible. "We watch for souls, as those who must give an account." Over the tender lambs, he must watch with unceasing attention, and feed and nourish them with the sweet and encouraging exhortations of God's word, in order, under the divine blessing, to remove their distressing scruples of conscience, and in God's good time, to lead them into the green pastures of gospel liberty.

4. Those weaklings, who feel the weight and burden of doubts and fears, are most beautifully and accurately represented, by the striking figures of the *bruised reed* and the *smoking flax*. The one ready to break with weakness, and the other ready to be extinguished, or to go out like the wick of a candle, when the blaze is departed. *Bruised*—*broken in heart*, and beaten about with temptation, sin, and unbelief. Smoking—the flame of false hope, Arminian zeal, and universal charity, is extinguished; but there is a smoke which ascends upward to the heavens, proceeding from a spark diametrically opposite in its kind, the little internal and invisible spark of the love of God shed abroad in the heart! And the bruised reed, he (who hath begun the good work) will not break,—the smoking flax, he will not quench! It is his own begun work and he will maintain it to a miracle, till the soul is brought into the liberty of God's adopted sons.

5. They are prisoners shut up, in "a pit, in which there is no water;" but they are prisoners of hope: an hope of deliverance bears up their dejected spirits, and they sometimes are very cheerful, and feel and express a confidence

that they shall be delivered. At other times, in the darkness of their minds, and through the hardness of their hearts they are ready to conclude they shall never be delivered, and that the Lord will not be gracious unto them: but they cry unto him! "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee, deliver those who are appointed (or in their own estimation, given over) to death." The Lord hears graciously and in his own appointed time, delivers them. Then they sing the song of David, "HE—not myself, nor an angel, nor a minister, nor any other creature—HE alone of his own sovereign will, omnipotence, and wonderful grace *brought he up out of* the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and put a new song into my mouth, even of praise unto our God."

6. They are seeking souls: weary and heavy laden they seek rest; thirsty they seek for water, but *can find none*—and their *tongues fail for thirst*—hence *fears* and doubts arise; and now some *pompous priest* may insult their feelings, and discourage them in their pursuits, by saying, "O, you must not *doubt*, or you will be *damned*." This is indeed, to add affliction to their bonds, and it also tells us plainly, that such a priest knows nothing of the pangs of a spiritual birth, nor that there is "a set time to favour Sion," in the deliverance and relief of their souls. But amidst all their distressing doubts, the Lord encourages them, "Seek, and ye shall find." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I, the God of Israel will not forsake them."

7. They are enquiring souls. They ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. They are travelling from Sinai to Sion: which was geographically some distance. But our men-made ministers, if they mention Sion at all, take them from Sinai, and put them, in their idea, into Sion at once, without any journey between the two. But the fact is, they are spiritually strangers to both mountains, never having been at either; and are totally inexperienced in the journey, taken only by those who are called of God, according to his purpose. Who are sometimes lost, and know not what turn to take, and blind guides will cry lo!

here, and lo! there, is the road; to the great discouragement of pilgrims: but they "go not after them." The sheep did not follow them," saith the Blessed Jesus: no, they are better taught, they enquire the way, and meet sometimes with some old traveller, who can describe to them the shining way, the high road to eternal life; and while he is describing it, they hear a voice behind them, saying this is the way, walk ye in it." They take encouragement, and go on ascending the beautiful eminence of cheerful hope, and see the city at a distance, and the land that is afar off. They shout for joy, yea, "they sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord." But anon, they descend into the valley of darkness and hardness of heart: and having lost sight of the city of Sion, DOUBTS arise, whether they shall ever arrive there: But some cheerful word of promise, comforts them; and they find that even "the valley of Achor is given as a door of hope and they sing there," the harmonious anthem of the prophet, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy, when I fall, I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." (Micah vii. 8.)

8. A person laden with doubts and fears, answering to the description already given, is stiled by Paul a *weak* brother. Saith the apostle, through thy knowledge, shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? (1 Cor. viii. 11.) Not perish, in an Arminian sense. Thank God, we know better, for *he* hath said, "and they shall never perish." Besides it is impossible for the knowledge of one believing brother to send another to eternal destruction! That would be a hard case indeed, but through thy *knowledge*, he is distressed, doubts and fears arise, and he perishes in his comforts and enjoyments, he stumbles at your liberties, and concludes, through his weakness, that he is not a child of God.

"Yet glory to Jesus! our Shepherd and friend,
The sheep of his pasture, his arm shall defend,
Their comforts may waver, their faith become dim,
Yet hell shall ne'er sever his people from him."

SION'S HARMONY, HYMN 46.

THE QUESTION

*being of such vital importance, was adjourned to
Next Monday Evening.*

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AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF

EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

XLIX.] SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1824.

Τα πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.—PAUL.

Christ all and in all.—COL. III 11.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1824.

QUESTION.

Does that scripture exclude me from the family of God, written in Rom. xiv. 23. "He that DOUBTETH, is DAMNED if he eat : because he eateth not of faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin?"

SOLUTION.

IN resuming this interesting and momentuous subject, my heart is up to my God, with warm desires and sincere prayer, that I may be instrumental in relieving the consciences of the weak and trembling, in the family of God, while I proceed to argue, *That the doubts and fears (already described) are evidences of a real work of grace in the soul.* I am aware that the very proposition will procure me opponents among those *who can believe when they please, and are always happy ; abounding in all the comforts of divine love ; if we may credit their account ; by such I shall be pronounced but " a teacher of babes."* Well, be it so, I am contented, if the babes are but nourished with the pure milk of the word, and grow up into Christ in all things.—Indeed, I had rather be the babe myself, with all his doubts, than the high-flying professor, who with all his doctrinal acquirements, is a stranger to the daily plague of his own

heart, and remains dead, in trespasses and sin. Yet, I am not about to persuade the doubting soul, to rest in those doubts, but to give such information of their source, or real causes, as may lead him to see clearly, that "the good work," is begun, and will be gloriously consummated by him, whose power is invincible in our regeneration, and who will crown that admirable work with eternal glory.

1. Doubts arise from that deep sense of sin, and view of God's holiness, which sink the sinner, at the foot of mercy, where he humbly confesses, "I am a sinful man O Lord!" "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He will frequently say, in his most solemn reflections, What an amazing disparity between the unsearchably Holy God, and such a wretchedly wicked and exceedingly sinful man as I am! and can I expect acceptance before his throne of grace, I who daily feel sin arising in me? Alas! my thoughts, wishes, and desires alarm me, and create such a distress of mind, and such a guilt of conscience, that I am ashamed to appear before the Lord in prayer: and when I do venture to call on his holy name, sometimes, even there, the iniquities of my nature arise to interrupt and plunge my soul in more trouble! Can I be a child of God? Is it possible, that this wretched heart of mine can be the dwelling of the Holy Spirit?

"When I pray or hear or read,
Sin is mix'd with all I do;
You that love the Lord indeed,
Tell me, is it thus with you?"

Let me ask, is such a complaint that of a worldling, a mere professor, a hypocrite, or any other, than a child of God in whose soul the Holy Spirit is at work? No: that he alone complains, in the bitterness of his soul, lamenting his sins, weakness, and carnality before God, is evident from the Holy Scriptures DAVID cries "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned;" JOB, "Behold I am vile." ISAIAH, after a view of the glories of the THREE HOLIES, "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, &c."

Then, as the child of God alone, has this feeling sense of his utter depravity by nature, attended with self-loathing and who from a view of Jehovah's immaculate purity, sinks

in the dust of humiliation before him, it follows unavoidably and conspicuously, that the doubts and fears arising therefrom, are peculiar to his circumstances, and evince the commencement of the work of grace in his soul : so true is the expression of HART,

“ A sinner is a sacred thing
The Holy Ghost has made him so”

And a sense of it fills him with dismay, and genders *doubts* of his own personal interest in God's love. JOHN has well described his case ; and shewn us that though he is not under the condemnation of the law, but blessed with a good hope through grace ; there is still a want of that confidence, which produces assurance and enlargement of soul by the love of God : “ If our heart (saith he) *condemn* us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. *Beloved*, if our heart *condemn us not*, then have we confidence toward God.” (1 John iii. 21.) This is a *self-condemnation*, singular to God's people ; it is “ the sentence of death in themselves, that they should not trust in themselves,” but afterward, be led with all their sins, *doubts*, and *fears*, to the precious Jesus, and loose them all in the great fountain of his atoning blood ! When their heart shall not condemn them, but the Holy Spirit, witnessing with their spirit, that they are the children of God, they shall cry Abba, Father : and lost in wonder, exclaim, “ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! But of their interest in this love, they doubt while in their *nonage* and will till the time *appointed* of the Father, arrives for their liberation. John has also delightfully described this by distinguishing between the *weak* and the *strong* in the church of God : to the one, he ascribes *fears*, to the other *assurance*, but pronounces them both in a safe state : 1 John iv. 16. “ There is no fear in love ! but perfect love casteth out fear :” because fear hath torment. He that *feareth* is not made perfect in love. He has not a full, clear, and distinct view of the fulness, freeness, and eternity of the love of God to his children. He is a child of God, equally as dear as the other, but is not yet *made perfect*, set at liberty by, and brought into the full enjoyment of the love of God to *his* soul. He does not doubt of God's love to his people, but cannot come to a conclusion respecting himself ; whether the Lord loves *him*, or not is the question, the daily

perplexing question with his soul. He cries, "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief." I believe that thou lovest thy people, O give me faith in it for myself, and make me perfectly satisfied that thou lovest me.

2. He cannot rest in a mere profession of Christianity: he knows and is assured, that not all the religious duties, and performances, nor all the doctrinal knowledge in the world can profit an immortal soul, without the *new birth*; and destitute of the Spirit of adoption, which he cannot give himself; for no man can quicken his own soul; *fears* and *doubts* arise, respecting the begun work within him: which clearly proves that those *fears* are peculiar to the babe in Christ, and are so many evidences, that the work is truly begun in his soul. Had not the children of God, *doubts*, Jehovah who cannot speak in vain, would not so frequently say, in his word, "*Fear not*:" for it would be superfluous, where no fear exists. *Fear not, worm Jacob, (not God—Jacob)* "Fear thou not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God," &c. "*Fear not, little flock, &c.*" O thou, of *little faith*, wherefore didst thou *doubt*"—All which, with a variety of other scriptures, that I might quote, make it unquestionably evident, that God's feeble children are subject to doubts and *fears*, which are confined to them, as so many tokens of regeneration.

3. They possess a discriminating knowledge of their *ignorance, weakness and unworthiness*. The new born babe knows not what a world it has entered—can see, but not comprehend the objects around it: is incapable of supporting itself: must be washed, dressed, carried, nursed, and after all, have the breast, for its nutriment, support, and quietude. What a figure of a dear child of God, involved in his doubts and fears, which arise from an increasing knowledge of himself, as sinful, ignorant, weak, and unworthy: and he can no more shake them off, or lay them aside, than he can create a new world. It is the Holy Spirit's work to cast out all fear, which he will effect at the appointed time, in the most accurate conformity to the DIVINE DECREES.

4. The apostle says, that some real believers, are through fear of death, all their life-time subject to bondage. They have such an impression of the solemnity of the body's dissolution, and the vastness of eternity, that their minds are exercised with an almost perpetual timidity, on reflection

of the awful change! Not subject to the bondage of the law, nor to the bondage of corruption; but to that of the *fear* of death: what exit shall I make from this, into an eternal state? How will it be with me, in the floods of Jordan? What will be the transition experienced, in that unspeakably serious hour, by my deathless soul? These are the interrogatives, that so very frequently employ the mind of a weak and feeble child of God! And all through a most solemnizing view of the solemnity of death, and the great importance of entering into an eternal state.—Such a poor sinner is taught, to estimate the incalculable worth of an immortal soul! The necessity of the *new-birth* and of salvation, by the blood and righteousness of the Son of God! *Doubts* and fears will arise from such deep and momentous reflections: Such doubts and fears as never pervaded the mind of a mere professor; and to such a truly serious Christian, I am ready to say, Fear not, the sting of death is extracted, and the power of the grave destroyed, in behalf of such heaven-taught souls, by the death and sufferings, resurrection and ascension of the Great Surety and covenant Head of his redeemed church: the Lord help you, poor doubting soul, to look to him, and cheerfully sing Paul's anthem, "O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory?"

5. *Doubts and fears* arise frequently from what are commonly denominated *inconsistencies*. How conscientiously observant of every thing that constitute the regenerated Christian's character, is a sinner called by divine grace! Let my heart, my lips, my life, my walk, and my conversation, be devoted to Christ, his cause, and the comfort of his little flock, is his ardent and fervent prayer to the Lord. O grace divine, rule in me! O sacred love of God, let me live, under thy government! O let every power and faculty of my soul, expand with celestial pleasure, in the service and most blessed interest of him who lived and died for sinners, are his most solemn ejaculations and holy aspirations of soul! But alas! the dark, gloomy, and hard-hearted reverse, is his painful experience! on which melancholy consideration, he exclaims, "O wretched man, that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" —Who am I? Or what am I, thus wandering from the Lord? Is this love to the Saviour? Are these the feelings of one born from above? O these carnal passions, that

sometimes, will, in opposition to all watchfulness and prayer, break out to my wounding, and to my hurt! Can the Lord love such a wretch, as I now feel myself to be? Hence arise fears and doubts, which plunge the *tried soul*, in a vortex of mental woe, truly indescribable! But let me here observe, that these mental tossings to and fro, these solemn aspirations, under the oppression of indwelling sin; these perpetual changes; all unite to prove a work of grace in the soul; a real hatred to sin and genuine love to Christ: sin is his hell, and the enjoyment of Christ, his heaven upon earth. But David says, of unregenerated professors, "They know no changes, and therefore, they fear not God!" They are contented, if they can but carry their cup tolerably upright in the eyes of men, and make a fair show in the flesh. But the child of God, regardless of men and their opinions, is not satisfied with, nor can he possibly be reconciled to the iniquities of his heart; the holy new man maintains war with his evil thoughts and desires: and I am firmly persuaded, that an evil thought, gives him more pain, than was ever felt by all the Pharisees upon the earth, put them altogether, on account of the worst practical transgression! Yet this man, forsooth, must be called an Antinomian, and indeed so he is: if to hate the rising of inbred sin, and to cry to God against it, constitute *Antinomianism*: we are then willing to acknowledge that he is what they call an Antinomian, to all intents and purposes!

6. Whatever may way-lay him, whoever opposes him, and however tossed to and fro, and not comforted, we are assured that

"The feeble saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

The Lord will bring forth judgment unto victory; support his feeble child; strengthen his weak hands, and confirm his feeble knees; and eventually make him more than conqueror, through Christ who hath loved him!

As an old author observes, The *snail*, slow as was its progress, arrived safe in the ark! And we may add, was equally as secure, and as well preserved as the fleet horse, the swift greyhound, or the bounding roe-buck! The weakling in faith, is not so happy, but equally as safe, and as dear to Christ, as those who are strong in faith; tho' certainly, the latter give the more glory to God. Yet both

shall safely arrive in glory, and share equal felicity, uniting in the same song of triumph and glory to God and the Lamb; singing that grand and everlasting *Hallelujah*, in an infinite variety of sounds, and in the most harmonious music continually new, and for ever increasing, with additional and rapturous delights.

7. Let no man, then, despise, and discourage those who are weak in faith, and laden with doubts and fears: those little ones who believe in Jesus. But let it be remembered, that they are the apple of his eye, the invaluable jewels of his soul, and the purchase of his most precious blood! I am now, in the *third place*, to give a short explanation of the text, on which the question is founded. And let it be remarked,

1. That it is not said, He who doubteth is damned; but if *he eat*, he is damned, or rather is *condemned*; which is a widely different character, to the doubting young Christian already described; he is a mere professor, who eateth, "not discerning the Lord's body;" has no knowledge of Christ, no *faith* in his atonement, but eateth ceremoniously and ignorantly, as thousands do in our day: who have no faith in Christ, but are in a state of sin and unregeneracy: unrenewed in the image of their minds.

2. They are *condemned* by their own conduct, for this people, saith the Lord, draweth near unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips; but their *hearts are far from me*. For, with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness: but these having no *faith*, commit evil; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. According to Solomon's exhortation; "Keep thy foot, when thou goest into the house of the Lord, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not, that they do evil."

3. But the doubting soul, described, has a most precious discernment of the Lord's body; amidst all his discouragements, fears, and misgivings of heart, the doctrines of the gospel, in all their preciousness, riches, and harmony, are well known to him, and sound delightfully in his ears: and especially the atonement: he does, indeed, discern the Lord's body; and the sacrifice of his soul! Tho he frequently doubts his interest in him. O how sweet, how encouraging, when he is indulged with a view of Calvary's cross! There he petitions for the assurance of his part in the Redeemer's blood; there he worships and

adores; there he addresses the Lord of life and glory, in such strains as these,

“ Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!”

4. Blessed and undoubting assurance of interest in Christ, seems not to be the privilege of all the children of God, continually: yet there are delightful seasons with the weakest: when the gospel sounds so charmingly, prayer is so powerful, the promises so sweet, the word of the Lord so opened, the sinner's heart so melted down at the feet of Christ, that he cannot help saying, most confidently, “My Lord, and my God.” Though afterward,

“Doubts and fears, and darkness rise,
And hide the promise from his eyes.”

So David, “I am not afraid of ten thousand of them, who have set themselves against me, round about:” but soon, he cries: “I shall one day perish by the hand of SAUL.”—
“My mountain stands firm, and I shall never be moved: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.”

5. Let us conclude, by observing, that sin, Satan, and unbelief will assail the strong, as well as the weak, and then if the Lord withdraw his presence, he finds his imbecility as distressing, and as great, as that of the weakest believer in Jesus. Therefore, instead of boasting over the weaker branches of the family, “Let him, who thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.”

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

By explaining the following texts of scripture in your valuable weekly publication, you will much oblige,

AN ENQUIRER AFTER TRUTH.

GEN. II. 9. “The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

LUKE XIX. 9. “And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”

BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF

EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

L] SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1824.

Τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πανί Χριστός.—PAUL.

Christ all and in all.—COL. III 11.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1824.

QUESTION.

The intention of Christ, in LUKE XVI. 9 ?

SOLUTION.

THE beautiful and divinely luminous parables, of the Glorious Messiah, were spoken and written, not merely to teach us a little dry morality, and enforce such precepts as he saw necessary for the regulation and government of our conduct, while upon the earth; but to teach us a more glorious theme; to point us to the fountain of Jehovah's eternal love; that we may mount up on faith's strong pinions, soaring away from earth, and all terrestrial things, in our hearts and affections, and taste *true* pleasures; joys intrinsically excellent, because everlasting; delights, untarnished by sublunary concerns, because flowing purely from the throne of God and the Lamb!

In every parable, are gloriously and wonderfully displayed, the wisdom of our Redeemer, in refuting, confounding, and detecting the base hypocrisy of his enemies; his power in the salvation of his people; and his tender love and care over them, till he shall bring them all safe to *everlasting* habitations above!

Then the parable before us, must also have the same important, and unspeakably sweet contents. Yes, it is divinely replete with his wisdom, power, love, affectionate purposes, and abounding grace, towards and concerning us, *poor Gentiles*, who once were not a people: but are now—be astonished O ye heavens! and ye saints rejoice!—*are now* the people of the living God! Saved by blood divine, put among the children, and have received the spirit of adoption, to cry Abba, Father!

And I am persuaded that not an individual in this respectable assembly, possessing the least spiritual understanding, will be so irrational, as to conclude, that so many verses as this parable contains, should occupy a space in the *New Testament*, that unparalleled volume of divine light and love, for no other purpose than to teach us benevolence to the poor, on account of which, we shall be admitted, and welcomed by *them*, to everlasting habitations! (*Vide Brown in loco.*)

That benevolence to the poor, is excellent, I not only admit, but would through every means in my power, promote, encourage, and urge as incumbent on those, who are intrusted with worldly property: but yet I must insist upon it, that a benevolence, immeasurably superior in extent, and infinitely more glorious in its distributions, is so conspicuously exhibited in this parable, as to eclipse totally all the glories of the most tender and extensive human benevolence in the world.

This astonishing parable calls our attention to the benevolence of heaven towards us, of the *Gentile* race! The benevolence, pity, compassion, love, and every exquisitely tender sympathy of the friend of sinners, in visiting us with the power, the sweetness, and the joys of salvation, by his sovereign grace, and bleeding love!

The verse selected by my friend for discussion, is certainly involved in some particular intricacies, and has puzzled our commentators and expositors; at least those of them, that have come under my notice; who, something like *Paul's* tumultuous congregation, "Some have said one thing and some another," and no doubt, every one to the best of his judgment: and "*I also, as I am requested, shall shew you my opinion.*" I have been, blessed be the Holy Spirit, led to the Grand Source of all divine intelligence, for in-

struction upon the subject, and may he who opened the scriptures to his disciples, till their hearts *burned within them*, visit us with the same *opening*, and the same *celestial fire*, that we may understand this scripture, and feel the celestial flame of affection, blazing in our hearts, to the Great Teacher and Redeemer of Israel.

The intention of this parable, literally, when spoken, (like the greater part of the admirable parables of the Messiah) was to expose and reprobate, the ungrateful, unbelieving, rebellious, and God provoking conduct of the Jews : and to reprove them for their ignorance, supineness, and inattention to their own interest ; and their abominable treatment of Christ ; and the *poor Gentiles*, whom they despised, and denominated devils ! In considering the subject, as briefly as its *extensiveness* and *importance* will admit, with an heart lifted up to the Lord for his guidance, we will attend to the whole of the parable, as it will reflect much light on the selected verse.

1. *A certain rich man.* The Lord, in the immensity of the riches of his goodness, conferred upon Ancient Israel, *nationally*, his distinguishing favour, and the more abundant *riches* of his sovereign grace on his *elect* people among them, who were effectually called of God to look through the types and shadows of their ceremonious worship to the great antitype, the slain Lamb of God, the all-atoning sacrifice for sin ! But as a nation, inconsiderate of their discriminating blessings, they despised the riches of his goodness, turned from the only true God to idols, persecuted his prophets, and profaned his worship and ordinances, with which they were intrusted ; and thus, as an *unjust* steward, "*wasted their master's goods.*" Which leads us clearly to discern,

2. In the character of the STEWARD, metaphorically, the whole *Jewish nation* ; and more especially their *priests*, *levites*, and *ecclesiastical rulers*, who had corrupted the word of the Lord, changed his ordinances, and carnalized his worship. Our blessed Lord, speaks this parable for their conviction, and to confirm and establish the justice of God, in casting them off as a nation ; in taking his gospel from them, and giving it to a people, even to the *Gentiles*, who should bring forth the fruits thereof, to the praise of the riches of his surprising grace !

A *steward* was a person in whom his Lord reposed the greatest confidence, entrusting him with the management of his household affairs. The Greek word οἰκοφύλαξ, a steward, is from the heme οἶκος, an house: implying one who has the management of an house, and who is expected above all other persons to be *honest, just, upright, faithful, and true* to his master. In proportion to the greatness and importance of his trust would be the enormity of his injustice and unfaithfulness! The perfidy of such a man would excite the just indignation of the whole world, and imperiously call for the most condign, disgraceful, and afflicting punishment. Such was the heinous conduct of the ungrateful, unjust, unthankful, and rebellious *Jews*. They alone, above all the families of the earth were intrusted with the *stewardship of God's house*; as David taught them to sing, "he has not dealt so with all people, praise ye the Lord!" And oh! while I survey retrospectively their distinguishing favors, I cannot forbear taking the opportunity to call on Britons for a serious consideration of *equal, nay of greater* privileges conferred upon them! What nation in Europe has been so distinguishingly indulged with the gospel of Christ as Great Britain? Would it be possible for the united voice of her millions of inhabitants to utter sufficient praise? Would it be possible for her tens of thousands of *clerks and accountants*, could they write perpetually for hundreds of years, to calculate and make out to the last item, the total sum of the blessings Jehovah has so profusely poured down (I had almost said *lavished*) upon us! But alas! where is our gratitude and thanksgiving as an highly indulged nation? true, we are called a *religious* people, and we have a numerous body of professors: But do they not generally despise the *riches of sovereign, electing, and almighty* grace, calling it *antinomianism*, and "turning it into licentiousness," by saying that it leads to sin! preferring thereto the papistical doctrines of *free-will, creature-merit, and fleshly* sanctification! Instead of the almighty power of Christ to save; sinners are told that salvation rests and must be effected by the puny arm of their own *diligence*: instead of the perfect and everlasting righteousness of Christ, which is the righteousness of God, the righteousness of the creature is proclaimed as that in which he must be justified! And poor sinners, totally

dead in trespasses and sins, instead of being faithfully told their wretched and depraved state,—“that no man can quicken his own soul”—“that it is the SPIRIT who quickeneth”—are invited, *exhorted*, and *persuaded* to come to Christ—no: not to Christ neither as *ruined*, for salvation, but to *purify* themselves and then come under his government—that *faith* and *repentance*, instead of being the *gifts* of God, to his elect, and the *work of the Holy Spirit in their souls*, are mere moral duties, which may be performed by all men, with the greatest facility! Thus they rob the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost of the glory of their eternal love, sovereign authority, almighty power, and distinguishing, invincible, never-failing, and unspeakably free grace, in the irrefractable salvation of the *blood-washed* elect of God! And added to this, have substituted the forms and traditions of men, for the pure and simple ordinances and doctrines of Christ!

And for preaching these doctrines, in opposition to sovereign grace, our priests are enriched with their hundreds per annum!

Such were the crimes of the Jewish nation, represented as a STEWARD, *who wasted his Master's goods*: hear the awful charge brought home to them, by the mouth of the prophet Malachi; “Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.” (Mal. iii. 8.) And, O ye inhabitants of Great Britain, I most solemnly call upon you to **take** this charge as brought against us! O may the Lord convince us of the abuse of our *national* privileges: of our unfaithfulness, carelessness, unconcern, and unthankfulness, that we may *nationally* repent, as in dust and ashes. Blessed be the Lord, there are a few names yet, in Great Britain, who have not defiled their garments, with the filthy doctrines and ordinances of Antichrist: may their supplications be heard, in behalf of the country, that we may not as *unjust stewards* be put out of our stewardship—that the glorious gospel of the blessed God may not be taken from us!

3. *The same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. Who were his accusers?* Not his conscience, for that was rendered too callous, by a perpetuity of *nefarious* practices. So the consciences of the self-important

and self righteous Jews, at the coming of Christ, were obdurate and immovable ; steel-hardened against the Lord, and against his Apointed. But their accusers were the prophets, whom they had mal-treated, persecuted and slain. Who accused them,

FIRST. In their complaining prayers : as saith Paul in his epistle to the Romans, (chap. xi. 2.) “ Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias ? How he maketh intercession to God *against Israel*, saying, Lord they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thy altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life.” Thus in our day, and in our nation, the prayers of Christ’s persecuted ministers powerfully ascend before the divine throne, against the hypocritically professing Israel, nor shall they accuse in vain. For shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them.” (Luke xviii. 7.)

Second. Their blood, under the altar, cried as the blood of martyrs now cries, “ How long O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them, that dwell on the earth ?” The persecuted and slain of God’s people, are forgotten by their enemies, but the records on high will be opened. God himself, will see recorded, the sufferings of his children : for he putteth their tears in his bottle of remembrance ; are they not all written in his book ? Neglected as they have been by HISTORIANS, who in the praises of warlike heroes are extravagantly prolix, their very ashes are watched over by the Eternal God, and the voice of their innocent blood still sounds prevailingly in the ears of the Lord of hosts ! Careless as the world has been of the persecuted and slain redeemed, the Lord has them in everlasting remembrance : and though their sufferings and destruction have, and ever will be, the triumph of their enemies, yet “ precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” and the cry of their blood will at length prevail in the destruction of Antichrist, as that of the prophets did, in the destruction of Jerusalem !

4. *And he called him, &c.* At the coming of the Lord Jesus in the flesh : who came unto his own with accusations and reproof ! Declaring that they shall be put out of their *stewardship*— That Jerusalem shall be destroyed and her inhabitants—some massacred—some perishing by pes-

tilence and famine, and others scattered as fugitives among the nations of the earth, should no more be a people, till the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in. Hear his lamentation over that once beautiful, flourishing, and populous city; which was the very city of God! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate, and I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Here is indeed, a charge of wasting the master's goods, in killing and stoning the prophets! And the riches of his goodness, to that favorite people. How often would I (a positive proof of Christ's divinity) have gathered thy children together: would have united and blessed thine inhabitants: would have continued unto thee every national benefit. Not as the Arminians ignorantly say, he would have saved their souls, but they resisted his grace, and frustrated his affectionate purpose! No, here is not one word about eternal salvation. A child, who can read the verse, would distinguish between the acts of saving their souls, and gathering the children, the inhabitants of Jerusalem together. He would have kept them together as a nation, but they stoned the prophets, and at last crucified the Son of God!

5. "*Thou mayest be no longer steward.*" The STEWARDSHIP, shall be taken from the Jews, God is about to break up house-keeping with them! to give them up to all the hardness of their reprobate minds! and that for hundreds of years! But recollect, their iniquities loudly called for it! we see in the unparalleled sufferings of the Jews not only the *vengeance*, but also the inflexible *justice* of our God!

The gospel was taken from them—they had not been faithful in the *least*, in the shadowy dispensation of worship, and therefore, are not to be trusted with the *true riches*, the dispensation of the glorious gospel of Christ. He put them out of the stewardship, and made choice of other *οικονομοι*, other stewards, namely, the apostles, and sent them far hence, unto the Gentiles.

Thus far, the parable applies, most accurately to the

Jews, and now follows the reproof and reprobation of their abominable and God-provoking conduct.

1. The parable shews, that the wisdom of an unjust steward, far exceeded the wisdom of that nation, with all their religious advantages and boasted understanding.—
“And the Lord commended the steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world, are in their generation, wiser than the children of light.” The children of *light* are the Jews, with the light of God’s word and ordinances, and yet are exceeded in wisdom, by a Gentile *steward*; one of the children of this world! How degrading was this to the Jews! And it teaches how far they were sunk in ignorance of God, and of their own wretched circumstances! Even in the time of Isaiah, the Lord thus complains of them: *“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”* (Isaiah i. 3.)

2. The wonderful difference between them and the steward. He was *alarmed* at being put out of his stewardship, saw the consequence, and began to think of making some provision for himself: *What shall I do?* said he, *for my Lord taketh from me the stewardship.* But the Jewish nation totally blind to their real circumstances, continued stubbornly to persecute, and with a national antipathy, rejected the Messiah and his apostles. They put the word of God from them, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life!

3. *I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.* They were so hardened in their iniquities, that they could not dig, or break up the stony ground of their impenitent hearts. God had justly given them up to a reprobate mind! *National* repentance was denied them. *I cannot dig*, also figuratively and strikingly expresses that state of carelessness, supineness, apathy and indolence, into which they were sunk.

To be concluded in our next, which must be a double number.

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

“The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”—GEN. 11. 9.