

# BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF  
EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

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No. LI.] SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 1824.

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Τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.—PAUL.

Christ all and in all.—COL. III 11.

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LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1824.

## QUESTION CONTINUED.

*The intention of Christ, in LUKE XVI. 9 ?*

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### SOLUTION.

*TO beg I am ashamed.* A striking metaphor of their pride and self-righteous haughtiness. They could not even beg for mercy, nor ask for a continuation of his divine favours, but rather besought him that he would depart out of their coasts! It is the poor sinner, sensible of his spiritual indigency, and reduced to mental starvation, who seeks mercy and grace to help him, in time of need. He begs earnestly, seriously, feelingly, with a determination not to give up his suit: for his all is at stake! He begs not only for his bread and clothing, but also for his *life*: condemnation has entered his conscience; the sentence of *death* is passed upon him! Such a poor sinner, the Lord will pardon for ever, feed with the finest of the wheat, clothe in royal robes, and take into his own *pavilion*: placing him among his courtiers in Sion, that he may sing of the mercy of the Lord for ever. Agreeable to *Hannah's* beautiful account: "The Lord maketh *poor* and maketh *rich*; he bringeth *low*, and *lifteth up*." He raiseth up the

*poor* out of the dust, and lifteth up the BEGGAR from the dunghill; to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Sam. ii. 7.)

But the Jews who were *self-righteous*, disdained such begging and such beggars. Their language was something like this; What! we *beg*! "We were never in bondage to any man," nor under obligation to any man! "We have Abraham for our father!" We feast ourselves on our family religion, and wear the garments of our *own purity*!—So our *modern pharisees*; who, while they profess to know Christ and follow him, hate his *free* and *sovereign* grace; all their conversation is about the *bread of deceit*, and the *linsey woolsey* garment of their doings, their virtues, and their industry! They "eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel, and are called by the name of Christ, only to take away their reproach, in a Christian land:" as Newton has well expressed it:

"If doings prove rather too light,  
(A little they own, they may fail)  
They purpose to make up full weight,  
By casting his *name* in the scale."

The fact was, that the Jews were metaphorically too lazy to dig, and too proud to beg. But the sinner graciously taught, *digs* deeper every day, and discovers in his depraved nature, greater abominations: at the same time, that he digs into the mines of scripture, and discovers the *riches* and *treasures* of grace and love in Christ, *begging* that the Holy Spirit would make them his own, by a powerful application of them to his soul, that he may embrace them by an appropriating faith!

4. *I am resolved what to do, &c.* Here the steward comes to a resolution respecting his *future* circumstances, and devised means for his support. But they were totally blind to the threatened catastrophe, so soon to take place: gave no credit to the warning voice of their prophets, which they pretended to believe and venerate, but with all the malice and enmity of the human heart, blown up to a tempest, by the powers of hell, they persecuted, rejected, reviled the MESSIAH HIMSELF, and demanded his blood, crying "Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!"

5. That they may receive me into their houses. He was friendly to his lord's *debtors*; and though unjust to him,

is commended by his lord, for acting so *wisely* for himself: The Jews on the contrary, despised and persecuted the *Mammon of unrighteousness*, the Gentiles, to whom they would soon be glad to fly for refuge, as their own house would be left unto them desolate! Make yourselves friends saith Christ, of the Mammon of unrighteousness;—be friendly with the Gentiles, for you will need their friendship—that when ye FAIL, they may receive you. When your city is destroyed, which will be a failure indeed!—They may receive you into everlasting habitations. *Everlasting*, a figure of durability. That they may receive you into more durable habitations, than those you now occupy; the destruction of which approaches, and is even at the door!

So far, at least, the parable evidently concerned the Jews.

But I shall now proceed to treat it in a more glorious sense; as setting forth most clearly and beautifully, the Grand Entry of the Gospel of Christ, into the Gentile nations:

1. And let it be particularly noticed that the parable was more immediately addressed to the disciples, though in the hearing of the Jews. “*And he said also unto his disciples, there was a certain rich man,*” &c. “*And the Pharisees, also who heard all these things, &c.*” (ver. 1 and 14.)

2. *The certain rich man.* Christ Jesus, our Lord, with all the unsearchable riches of his grace, and love and precious blood, in our eternal salvation! O the unfathomable mines, the invaluable treasures of his wisdom, love, and power!

3. It was his prerogative to put out one *steward*, and to elect and employ another: and this he has done in casting off the Jews, and electing the apostles first, and since, as many spiritual men, as he has seen good to qualify and send forth to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, as *stewards* of his household. Let a man so account of us, saith Paul, as of the ministers of Christ, and *stewards* of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in *stewards*, that a man be found faithful.” (1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.) And let it be remembered, that they are Christ’s *stewards*: no man has any business to intrude into his *household*, except he is employed by our Lord himself. Not all the masters of

*colleges and schools* can possibly qualify a man to be Christ's *steward*: "How can they preach, except they be sent:" Sent, not from a school of human learning merely, but sent of God: called graciously, and qualified with a knowledge of the truth, and courage to defend it, with love to Christ, and a warm zeal for his glory: and added to this a good natural understanding: with a mediocrity of talent, so as to speak far above contempt! For every thing *low and vulgar* from the pulpit, however applauded by the gaping crowd, renders the man contemptible in the eyes of persons of sound sense, who cannot but consider him as injuring that cause which he professes to espouse!

Grace will teach a steward of Christ, to *watch for souls*, as one who must give an account of his *stewardship* to his Lord. And to his own master alone is he accountable.— "For what hast thou to do with another man's servant?"— is a question which ought to stop the mouth of that vaunting dictation, which is sometimes exercised, by even believers in Christ. But a "word to the wise is enough."

In making the above observation on *colleges and schools*, I hope I shall not be misunderstood. I do not mean to insinuate that those valuable seminaries of erudition, never produced eminent ministers of the gospel! No: I have known to the contrary: and when grace occupies the heart of a man, eminent for learning, he will be still more eminent for humility, while the *ignorant and illiterate* man, who is not sent of God, will suppose himself a wiser than seven men who can render a reason," and defend the truth of God argumentatively. And indeed, we have sometimes to lament, that this spirit of *ignorant pride* (alas! *proud of their own ignorance!*) will lead even good men, that are stewards of the mysteries of God to despise human learning! If this paper should fall into the hands of such ministers, I hope they will receive this as a hint of affection; and I also beg leave to ask them a plain question: But for men of letters, raised up of God, purposely to translate, should we now have the pleasure of reading the word of God in our own language? Rather than despise learning, bless God for qualifying such men, for that work which he had ordained for them, from all eternity, knowing that a good natural understanding, and an inclination to improve it by diligent study, are equally as much the gifts of God as the bless-

ings of his salvation. And O that we may ever be inclined to bless and praise him, for "every good gift, and every perfect gift." "Covet earnestly, the best gifts, but yet I show you a more excellent way," saith the great apostle, to the Gentiles. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ, the *way* of salvation: an experimental acquaintance with him in his atoning blood, and *justifying* righteousness in the heart and conscience, is the grand, leading, and indispensably necessary qualification, for the *stewardship* of the house of our Lord; without which, the most profound learning, penetrating sagacity, powerful eloquence, and fascinating elegance of diction, unite to form, but "sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal," which can never profit the people of God.

" Judge by no man's parts, nor merit,  
But behold the gospel plan,  
Jesus sends the Holy Spirit,  
And the Spirit sends the man."—HART.

3. *Mammon of unrighteousness.* The *Gentiles*, so called, for being entirely devoted to this world: for the word *μαμμωνᾶ*, *Mammona*, *Mammon*, signifying *riches* or *money* is expressive of their devotedness to this life; and that they were totally ignorant of God: for *money* implies, every thing that this world contains, as it commands all things; and is justly denominated the "Mammon of unrighteousness;" as the "love of it is the root of all evil." The *Gentiles*, to whom the apostles were sent, were unrighteous in a two-fold degree,

First, In that they had no revelation of the true God, and eternal life; and,

Secondly, As they were wholly given up to idolatry, and to the lusts of their own hearts! They were "stout-hearted and far from righteousness," but to them, through the apostolic ministry, God brought near his *righteousness*: and published among them his salvation. And O how beautifully the parable applies to the Glorious Entry of the gospel among them, and illustrates the *abundance* of that grace, which they received, when the Lord in his justice, cast off the Jewish nation, and in his infinite mercy, *granted* unto the *Gentiles*, repentance unto life.

1. The *unjust steward* gave them his *master's* property, or prevented them from paying that which was due. So

we proclaim the *free gift* of our Master's property;—  
 “we, saith the apostle, preach not *ourselves*, but Christ Jesus, the Lord. Unto me, who am less than the least, of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable *riches* of Christ. We, as if he had said, tell you that there is nothing to pay for our Lord, graciously and frankly forgives the *whole* of the DEBT.

2. He reduced their accounts but in part, the ministers of grace, proclaim the payment of the whole, most justly, to the very last mite, by the complete atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The one debtor was to bring oil to his creditor: typical of the holy anointing oil used by the Jews in their sacrifices: but the poor Gentiles had no such sacrifices to make: rivers of oil, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, are already the Lord's, and consequently were they offered in sacrifice, could not atone for *one sin*. But glory to his free grace, instead of our carrying oil to him, we have an unction from the Holy One: and smell the savor of his good ointments; for his name is as ointment poured forth.

4. The other debtor was to bring *wheat*: but on the contrary, we poor Gentiles, receive the finest of the wheat from our Lord, and live luxuriously on the bread which came down from heaven: we live on the riches of grace in a crucified Christ, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed. The gospel sounds with the sweetly inviting voice of grace unmeritedly glorious and unspeakably *free*. “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him come and buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.”

5. *That when ye fail*. First, when *rejected* by the Jews, like your persecuted and despised Master:—when they shall put you out of their synagogues; and say all manner of evil against you, for the name sake of Christ.

Second, when violent opposition and bloody persecution shall scatter you among the Gentile nations, in the remotest regions of the earth, ye may find succour, an affectionate reception, and all necessary support; and not only a temporal support, a natural supply of all your indigent circumstances, may call for, but that ye may be received as the

ambassadors of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God spiritually, into *everlasting* habitations. Those habitations in the last place, call for our very particular attention as the most critical part of our subject.

1. Their earthly houses cannot be intended, for

“ ——The Great Globe itself,  
With all which it inherits shall dissolve,  
And like the baseless fabric of a vision,  
Leave not a wreck behind.”

2. Nor the mansions of eternal glory: for they were prepared for the blessed of our Covenant God and Father before the foundation of the world. And are his free gift, entirely at his own disposal. “The wages of sin is death, but the *gift of God* is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

3. But it is evident to me, because truly scriptural, that in a glorious gospel sense, we are to understand that affectionate reception, which the apostles met with from the Gentiles, when they not only received them into their *houses*, but into their *hearts*! as their brethren in Christ, with whom they should dwell for ever! The apostles published and preached *everlasting* pardon, *everlasting* love, *everlasting* righteousness, and *everlasting* life; and on the ground of these *everlasting* things, they received them as their dearest relatives, with whom they were in an everlasting union in Christ, their covenant head. And this is demonstrably confirmed, by the language of *Paul to Philemon*, which calls for your particular notice: He says, concerning Onesimus, “*For perhaps, he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst RECEIVE HIM FOR EVER. Not now, as a servant, but above a servant, a brother, dearly beloved.*” (Philemon 15.) And Christ himself saith, “The servant abideth not in the house FOR EVER; but the son abideth FOR EVER.” They received them into their hearts, which were made by the Holy Spirit “the *everlasting habitations*” of Christ. And thus they sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, while here, anticipating with delight, peculiar to *spiritual* union and communion, the happy, the unspeakably happy time when they should *FOR EVER* dwell together with the LORD!

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY DEC. 27, 1824.

QUESTION,

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

SOLUTION.

THE motive of the querist in proposing the question, or in selecting this portion of God's holy word for our meditation this evening, must be known to himself, far beyond what any other person can possibly devise: but if he is present, I must honestly inform him, that I entertain a suspicion, that he has been, at least, *partly* guided by *curiosity*, which sometimes, too predominantly, governs the minds, even of the children of God! Notwithstanding, as he has not expressed any desire to be wise above that which is written, but rather to be informed in that which is written in the scriptures, I shall indulge him with my views of the subject, with a hope that the Lord will overrule that curiosity, for his furtherance in a knowledge of the glorious gospel, and in the increasing edification of that part of his blood-bought church, who may now hear with spiritual understanding, and to those, who in the course of Divine Providence, may afterward read, that which I am now about to advance.

In the *Barashith* of Moses, or book of Genesis, we are indulged with the most succinct, yet amazingly comprehensive, pleasing, and convincing History of the Creation: An history so replete with numerous and wonderful facts, all confirmed by objects visible to mankind, and so circumstantially and minutely delineated, that if the Deist would give himself time, impartially to read it, and seriously reflect on what he reads, surely, he must blush at his own infidelity, and acknowledge his ignorance of, and attention, hitherto, to the Sacred Volume of God! It is the province of the Bible alone, to state this admirable history. God would not suffer profane historians to interfere with a subject so sublimely glorious. Besides, who so proper to descant upon his own works, and inform us of their origin and formation as the GREAT WORKMAN himself? hence Jehovah employed a penman, who wrote un-



der his sacred dictation, to detail *circumstances* which have a confirmation by the most ocular demonstration—by things daily *visible* to us; which we can no more rationally deny, than we could our own existence! And such a confirmation of the authenticity of the *book of Genesis*, is by an admirable analogy with the other *sacred Books*, an undeniable establishment of the Bible's Sacred Authority.

In the passage before us, we have a description of the beautiful garden, planted for our first parents, as their felicitous residence, during their natural and spotless purity. But this garden was emblematical of the garden of grace, the church of the living God, planted with trees of his own spiritual creation and cultivation, and among which, he should walk on the earth, with a pleasure peculiar to the Eternal God himself! As he has declared to his church, I will dwell among you and walk among you: And, O how delightful is it, when we hear the voice of our Beloved, saying, “I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse.”

1. Eden was a garden of the Lord's *own planting*: “And God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herbs yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, and it was so.” (chap. i. 11.) Grass, herbs, and trees, ornamenting so elegantly the face of nature, and contributing so bountifully to the support of his creatures, form a most noble part of the beautiful whole of “These his lowest works,” and not only demonstrate his wisdom, and power, but also show the beneficence and goodness of our wonderful Creator while the heavens above, declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy works! But he planted a garden transcendently beautiful for his creature, man. “And the Lord God planted a garden, eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed.” (chap. ii. 8.) Thus, in a super-eminent sense, he has planted his church in the earth; blessed it with superior fruits, and clothed it in distinguishing beauties: that while the world at large, partake of his providential favours, the spiritual people of God, who are a garden enclosed, feast on the fruits of his bleeding love.

2. It is emblematical in its very *name*, of the Church of God; *Eden*, which signifies *pleasure*. In the natural Eden God had a pleasure in his *naturally* pure and perfect crea-

ture man; and Adam enjoyed, not only the pleasure of walking in the most *beautiful* spot, that ever the earth knew, but the immeasurably greater pleasure of holding communion with his Creator: for he had no sin to prevent it. He needed no Mediator between God and his soul, for no redemption was necessary for him, who was not in bondage; no pardon was necessary for him, who had not transgressed.

His state was indeed glorious, but how much more so, the state and situation of those, who dwell in the church of God's pleasure, where Christ the tree of life is planted, whose fruit of bleeding love is so sweet to their taste, and from whose right hand, pleasure flows for evermore!

I shall now proceed, to give a short description of the TREE OF LIFE, and survey it in all its component parts:—the root, the trunk or stem, the branches, the leaves, the fruit, and their properties, and virtues, all demand our attention, and are particularly worthy of our examination.

1. That the tree is a striking emblem of Christ, we need not doubt for a moment, being told so by the Holy Spirit, in Rev. ii. 7. “To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the *Paradise of God.*” We overcome all our enemies, entirely through the blood of the Lamb, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed: the only *life-giving* food is Christ Jesus our Lord, who is the resurrection and the life, and in whom whosoever liveth and believeth, *shall never die.*

That the natural tree of life bore fruit, which possessed very animating and invigorating qualities, we will not dispute; and on account of which, no doubt, it was denominated the tree of life, as our commentators have informed us: but that it has a direct reference to Christ, and in that case was intended of the Lord, as a sweet and delightful emblem of the life-giving Savior, is so evident by corresponding passages of God's word, as to become unquestionable. He says, concerning himself, “I am as a green fir tree, from me is your fruit found.” And by the mouth of David, “I am like a green olive-tree, in the house of God.” (Psalm lii. 8.) and here, the tree of *life.* For there is neither spiritual nor eternal life, but that which is found in him, and flows from him: the book in which the names of God's elect are written, is “The Lamb's book of *life,*” the

pure river of water of life, proceeds out of the throne of *God and the Lamb*, and Paul says, positively, that our life is hidden with Christ in God: that when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also, appear with him in glory. For, saith the blessed Redeemer, in one of the most charming promises, that ever proceeded from his gracious lips, "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*" Rejoice then, O ye believers in Jesus, that your *living* depends, entirely on Christ's living. If our enemies can destroy Christ, then indeed, they must destroy us! But that is an absolute impossibility! Then our salvation is as certain and secure, as his throne, and our life as infallible as the life of Christ.

2. The tree of life stood in the *MIDST* of the garden. So Christ is the Lamb, *amidst* the throne above: "*amidst the golden candlesticks*" below; (his redeemed churches) in the *midst* of his people, to protect, defend, and deliver them: according to Zephaniah: the Lord thy God, in the *midst* of thee is mighty," &c. (Zeph. iii. 17.) and however small the number who assemble to worship him, in spirit and in truth, he has said, "*There am I in the midst of them.*" Who then would forsake the assembling of themselves together, to enjoy such company? To enjoy the presence, and what is more, the very affectionate and soul-ravishing smiles of the friend of sinners, who laid down his life, and shed his blood for our salvation? Christ is in the midst, in the centre of his church, as the *sun* in the *solar system*, shedding all around, the bright beams of his love on us, who are *opaque*, not in *body* only, but much more in our immortal souls, and to him the *sun of righteousness*, who has arisen upon us, with healing in his beams, we are indebted for every particle of spiritual light, and every spark of spiritual life, with which our immortal spirits are illumined and animated! He is *amidst* his church, as a father amidst his children, to feed and protect them; to teach and smile upon them, as the children that bear his own gracious image.

But here, they are, a garden enclosed, and he amidst them, *the tree of life*: We must now become spiritual *botanists*, and having surveyed with pleasure, the beauties, and smelt the sweet odors of a variety of plants, in our walks through Eden, the spot of pleasure, the garden of the Lord, we now come to the *plant of renown*, the tree we prefer to all others: and shall examine,

1. The **ROOT**, which is the reservoir of all vegetative life: as this season of our year, (*winter*), though all foliage disappears, and trees, plants, shrubs, and flowers, (excepting *evergreens*) wear the appearance of everlasting death, those vernal beauties, which we expect in a few months to decorate them so beautifully—to ornament them in an almost endless variety of green and gay, are now all in the root, concealed from human view: not a leaf will appear then, that does not now *radically* exist. The root contains the whole, in all their peculiar formations; which will then by the force of solar attraction and influence, ascend through the stem in all their intended ramifications to the extremities of the numerous branches. So Christ, the *tree of life*: who is the root as well as the offspring of David, contains all the *sap*, the fulness of divine blessings, and all the fulness of God. The wisdom, love, power, and boundless grace, which were concealed from men and angels; laid in the root of his Divinity from all eternity. He calleth things, that are not, as though they were. He seeth the end from the beginning. With him, the Eternal God, there is neither *past*, nor *future*; his tense, is always the present, and as WATTS has well expressed it;

“ His age is one ETERNAL NOW ”

The salvation, and all the admirable decorations of his church in the robes of salvation put upon her in a time-state, and in which she shall shine brighter than the sun, for ever, all existed from everlasting in the Eternal mind. The atonement of Christ, and all the graces of the Blessed Spirit, were prepared for the elect of God, and shall be in the exactly appointed time, conferred upon every individual, for whom they were prepared. There can be no chance work with our God. *Faith* and *repentance*, were prepared for his elect, before the foundation of the world; and they shall obtain them, while the *rest* are blinded: Not because, one party is better than the other, by nature; for the elect shall sing to all eternity; “ Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

2. The *stem*, or the *trunk* of the *tree*, is that stout and substantial part, through which, all the sap ascends, to enliven, clothe, and fructify the branches.

In the stem of the *tree of life*, we have a sweet view of the human nature of our adorable Immanuel, God with us! God in human flesh! That wonder of angels! and the

Hope of Israel! It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell; who was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; and the Spirit was without measure poured out upon him. All the innumerable, extensive, and everlasting blessings of the covenant, flow through "the man, God's fellow." He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places! To know him, therefore, is *eternal life*, which is indeed the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord!

3. *The branches.* In the first place, we must consider the children of God, the branches of the *tree of life*: agreeable to Christ's own assertion; "*I am the vine; and ye are the branches.*" In him, by an everlasting love-union. One with him, even in the *winter of our unregeneracy*, but deriving the sap of *life, grace, and vigorous faith*, from him, in the spring of our regeneration. In the *second* place. The *fruits* of his love. The redemption of our persons, and the atonement of our sins, by his most precious blood. And all the innumerable blessings of the Holy Spirit in his gracious work in our souls: all which flow freely from the *root* of his Divinity, through the stem of his humanity, to the children of God in all ages.

4. *The leaves.* The beautiful and virtuous leaves are for the *healing* of the nations. (Rev. xxii 2.) And this *healing* is effected in a most peculiar way: only by looking stedfastly upon them; for our Immanuel says, "*Look unto me and be ye saved.*" The serpent-bitten Israelites were so *healed*: they looked at the brazen serpent, and lived. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever looketh unto him, shall not perish, but have *eternal life*. Thus the vernal foliage delights our eyes, after howling storms and wintry snows. Spring's more gentle atmosphere, produces a vegetative resurrection; so Christ, with the evergreen smiles of his love, effects a spiritual resurrection in the soul.

5. *The fruits.* This tree of life is said in the passage above quoted to bear (Rev. xxii. 2.) Twelve manner of fruits, or καρπες δωδεκα, *twelve fruits*: for, *manner of*, are words supplied by our translators. And by these *twelve*, we might understand the *apostles*, as the fruits of Christ, *the tree of life*, deriving life from him, and sent forth by him with his everlasting gospel, for the healing of the nations: but I would rather understand them as the twelve eminent and

glorious acts of the Eternal Trinity in our salvation: the Father in his *four-fold* work: *loving, electing, adopting, and blessing* his people, with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. The Eternal Word, in his *four-fold* work of *taking their nature, redeeming* their persons, *atoning* for their sins, and *justifying* them in his own spotless righteousness. And the four-fold work of the Holy Spirit, in their *regeneration, sanctification, consolation, and perseverance*. For all the twelve, grow on Christ the tree of life, inasmuch as the blessings of the Father are all in him, and whatever the Holy Spirit performs, is done in the name, and for the sake of Christ.

The Christian varies in his feelings and enjoyments, like the annual seasons: but blessed be the Lord, he has always fruit from the glorious tree of life. There is not a month throughout the year, however sultry in heat, or severe in cold, but he is supplied with fruit according to his pressing necessities! For my God, saith the apostle, shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory, through the Lord Jesus Christ. We will now just take a glance at the mutable seasons of the spiritual year.

1. *The Spring.* In that trying winter of darkness and condemnation, when the storm of hail swept away the refuge of lies, that he had no covering, no shelter, no hiding place, he expected he should perish. But the atmosphere became more temperate, by tender mercy, and the sun or righteousness arose with healing in his beams: the winter was passed, the rain was over and gone: and all the varied charms of the spring of divine forgiveness, enlivened and filled his soul with unspeakable joy. The tree of life in the midst of the garden: the precious Christ in the midst of his people, invited him to draw near his bleeding cross, and he derived life from his death and sufferings. In his pardon and justification, he had life and peace. And in prayer, praise, worship, and adoration, enjoyed communion with God! O what vivacity, what life, what pleasure, he experienced! The love of Christ was all his song. It was a time of love, and it was his first love: No season, is so sweet, so delightful, as spring: nor is there any season so pleasurable to the regenerated soul, as the *first love*.

2. *Summer.* When he has more mature fruit, but he has

also sultry days. The sun of persecution, temptation and trial with vertical rays shines upon him: and he is black as the tents of *Kedar* with indwelling sin, and blackened in his character by vile and religious calumniators. Still from Christ his fruit is found. He sits down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to his taste.— Christ proves to him a shadow from the heat,

3. *Autumn*. Days are shorter; he has less enjoyment of the light of God's countenance: but autumnal fruits are exceedingly sweet. He lives now on election, adoption, and the everlasting love of God in Christ.

4. *Winter*. Short and dark days. The light of the gospel shines, but he enjoys little of the sweet savor of it: he has lost, according to his feelings, that unction from the Holy One that once attended the word of God to his soul: and O what dismal, stormy, cold nights! Nights lengthened out with darkness of mind, hardness of heart; and trials and temptations of every kind: but the tree of life yields him fruit for his support; he lives upon the everlasting covenant, the promises and the two immutable things by which it is impossible that God should lie.

We will now just notice, the flaming sword, and the cherubim which were placed to guard the tree of life: "So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, a cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. iii 24)

1. The flaming sword is divine justice, burning with wrath against sinners; who cannot approach that TREE, nor possess *life*, till justice is satisfied by the atonement of Christ. It turned all ways. East, west, north, and south, to shew that wrath is gone out into every quarter of the globe, against sin and sinners. And that till there is a display of this flaming sword, made in the conscience of a sinner, he cannot come to Christ, the tree of life.

2. The *cherubim*, like those on each side the mercy-seat, looking to the same object, were typical of the two Testaments, both pointing to the same object, Christ— The one looked forward to his coming, and the other looks back to him, who came and died for us. Or as the word *cherubim*, means angels, and the angels of the churches are messengers of grace, they gloriously typified

those who should preach deliverance from the flaming sword of justice, and salvation by Christ the tree of everlasting life.

We will now conclude, with a few remarks on the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This tree certainly might naturally produce fruit, that would have such an effect, as to communicate knowledge, but we are to consider,

1. That it was a yielding to the tempter, in violation of the divine command, that put them in possession of knowledge, to discern between good and evil.

2. It was their ambition, to be as gods, as the Alehim, which was the first temptation and the first sin, and

“Pride still is aiming at the bless'd abodes,  
Men would be angels—angels would be gods.”

The fact was, the serpent preached to them the *Essence scheme*. Said he, “*Ye shall be as Gods;*” Ye shall possess the Divine Essence. *Pride* entered their hearts, and down they fell, from the top of earthly bliss, dead in respases and sin!

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QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

To the Author of Biblical Criticisms.

REVD. SIR,

*HAVING read with some degree of satisfaction your very able remarks on various difficult portions of the word of God, and derived much spiritual consolation therefrom, I shall be very much obliged by your attention to the following: “For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has made me free from the law of sin and death.”—Rom. viii. 2.*

Clapham, Dec. 14, 1824.

R. W.