

BIBLICAL CRITICISMS

AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF

EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS.

No. XV.] SATURDAY, APRIL, 24, 1824. [Price 2d.

Τα πάντα καὶ ἐν πανί Χριστός.—PAUL.

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

QUESTION

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, APRIL 19, 1824.

Rejoice evermore. 1 THESS. V. 16.

What does Paul mean by the above exhortation; since joy and peace are new covenant blessings, and fruits which are solely of the Holy Spirit's production?

SOLUTION.

THAT spiritual joy is a new covenant blessing, and the produce of the Holy Spirit in the *regenerated*, is too well attested in the scriptures and by experience, to be doubted by the children of God. But, O! how elevated the subject! how sublime, and divinely sweet the sensations of that graciously indulged soul; which, believing, rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory! which affectionately held fast in the arms of the precious Redeemer, exclaims, "In thy presence there is fulness of joy! My soul is ravished with thy charms; my cup runneth over with celestial pleasures; for thy banner over me is love! I partake of the luxuriant delicacies and goodness of thy house, prepared to feast those who are *redeemed* with thy own most precious blood!"

Indeed, the soaring heights of joy experienced by the soul animated with divine love, and elevated by faith in

Jesus, above the world and all worldly subjects, are so undefinable; so *divinely pure*; and so *rare* (at least with my tried and tempest-tossed soul) that the subject seems to me one of the most difficult, that has yet been proposed for my discussion. Ask me of the painful reverse; what walking in darkness means? and the subject is comparatively easy. Ask me concerning temptations, trials of soul from sin, earth, and hell, worldly indigency, poverty, penury; and amidst all, either wrestling with the Lord by faith for deliverance, or sitting in sullen silence, clothed in black unbelief, on the very margin of despondency! Ask of these, and you would have my immediate answer: as these have been familiarized to my tried soul, by experience, from my spiritual childhood to the present period of my evangelical existence! Ask me concerning *persecution*, and I should be completely at home on that theme; as, perhaps, no man, in this island has been more, or so much *persecuted* as myself! I speak not complainingly, for blessed be my God! I have been more than amply remunerated by the support of his Omnipotent arm, and the fulfilment of his sweet promise, "your enemies shall be found liars unto you, and you shall *tread* on their high places!"

But though the *sublimity* of the subject, seems, this evening, to leave me so far behind; and a sense of my inadequacy and insufficiency, almost stops my mouth with discouragement, I will, at least, make the attempt to answer the *Querist* respecting the exhortation, and endeavor to do my best, looking unto the Lord my God, for those gracious smiles which can instantaneously convert my darkness to light, and my mourning to songs of extreme joy! May he so bless us, that we may glory in him, and glorify the riches of his grace!

1. I will endeavor to define, so far as definable by me, the joy itself. I am happy the apostle has called it *unspeakable*; as, in that case, you can expect but little from me, on a subject too spiritual and heavenly for even an inspired penman fully to describe!

What is *joy*? It is the passion which animates the mind on obtaining the object of desire, or on being successful in the accomplishment of that event, which was deemed necessary to happiness: the mind exults in obtaining that

which gives (at least for the moment) satisfaction to its wishes, desires, or affections.

1. The world has its *joy*: its exultations, and various delights. For the immortal mind, through its astonishing capaciousness, is in the perpetual pursuit of happiness; but alas! without any real success, or solid *satisfaction*.— For *solid* happiness, and *perennial* joy, are only to be found on grace's ground, as they abound in the Lord Jesus. And no man will seek them, in him, till drawn with the cords of his invincible love!

In proportion to the objects pursued and obtained, will be the *joy*. Either low, grovelling and very temporary; or elevated, still soaring, permanent and ennobling to the mind. The former attaches itself to the world, the latter is the distinguishing blessing of divine grace, conferred on that soul which *rejoices* alone in Christ Jesus the Lord!

The pleasures, amusements, routs, balls, and *nocturnal* merriments of the world, answer, for the moment, the purposes of her votaries; but alas! even they themselves must rationally acknowledge, that they are but as a flash of vivid lightning in a dismally dark night! the mind is left unsatisfied, unblessed! still pursuing fresh objects of delight, and very unsuccessfully enquiring “*WHO will shew us any good?*” And as for the poor mortal frame, after a night of convivial festivity, alas! What is its state? *head-aches*, and various corporeal indispositions pervade it, while gloominess spreads the mind with her sable mantle, not to be shook off, till recourse is had to the same miserable source of momentary and *mentally* degrading vanities! the final close of which commonly is, a body emaciated with sickness, and a mind enervated, in all its noblest energies, till death hurries them away to a vast eternity!

2. The HYPOCRITE has his *joy*: but it endures only for a moment; (Job xx. 5.) Who, or what is an HYPOCRITE? and, as I have been frequently asked, Can a Christian professor be an hypocrite and not know it? Impossible. For the word HYPOCRITE literally means, a *dissembler*; one who feigns himself to be that, which he is conscious he is not in reality.

See the powerful use of the word *υποκριτης*, hypocrite, in Matt. xxiii. charged home upon the guilty consciences of the *scribes* and *pharisees*, by the Lord of glory himself!

They study, from some vainly ambitious, or *sinister* motive, to patch up such a religion as will pass plausibly with the professing world, for sanctity and outward holiness: when *within* they are full of deceitfulness, malice and rancor against Christ, his truth and his people—full of hypocrisy, and all uncleanness! They may *rejoice* in the light of sparks of their own kindling, but their *joy* is but for a moment: for these things God will bring them into judgment!

3. The STONEY GROUND HEARERS received the word with *joy*: but when persecution arose for the word's sake, they were offended: and off they went. Their religion began at the wrong end: it began with *joy*. The true religion of a heaven-taught soul begins with *sorrow*, and terminates in unspeakable *joy*!

How many characters of this description have we seen in our little time: who are all love, all *joy*, all *zeal*. They flock round a *minister* (and even a minister of the gospel) and make such professions of happiness and blessedness!—never heard such a man before in their lives!—they are *all talk* and all *joy*—but soon, a little persecution, or trouble *arises*—they have set under *that man* long enough—the *novelty* ceases, and they are gone, in pursuit of *somebody*, or *something new*—and their departure is very much accelerated by an attempt *to touch their pockets*, in support of the best cause in the world, the cause of God himself! For which they have no love.

The human mind naturally thirsts for novelty, and *even truth itself* will do, while it is *novel*; but becoming daily more familiar to their *ears*, (for their *hearts* never felt it) they gradually depart, in quest of *something new*; and the very first *strange* doctrine will have their attention; but, that, also, in time, loses its *novelty*; and something else offering, they make another flight; for they love *strangers*, and after them they will go. Surely it calls but for a cursory glance at the religious community, to be convinced that this is a faithful description of a numerous host of Christian professors, in the metropolis of the British nation. They never knew *sin's plague*, nor its infallible *cure*, by the blood of the Lamb!

4. We come now to the solid, substantial, and sublime *joy* of those, whom the Lord *wounds* and makes *whole*; *kills*, and makes *alive*! Here is heart-searching work—the Lord

begins, and they cannot get from him. Their ears are nailed to the door-posts of his house, and they seek Christ *sorrowing*—they “sow in *tears*, but shall reap with joy.”

1. They have *weeping* and anguish of soul which will be succeeded by joy, (Psm. xxx. 5.) “*For his anger endures but for a moment* (that is, when divine *wrath* breaks into the conscience by the law) *in his favor is life*, (in the aboundings of his grace, in Christ, the resurrection and *life* of his sheep) *weeping may endure for a night*, (the night of darkness, doubts and fears,) *but joy cometh in the morning* :” the auspicious morning of deliverance, when the sun arises; when the beams of Christ’s power to save, the fulness of his atonement, and the glories of his righteousness dispel the darkness of doubt and uncertainty, and the prophesy is accomplished in the great office of Christ, to appoint unto them that mourn in Sion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, and the OIL OF JOY for mourning: (Isa. lxi. 4.) The *oil*, the softening, soothing, healing balm, of that thrice precious blood, which, the sinner knows, with an *especial* knowledge, CLEANSSES from all sin! O what humbling, yet exalting knowledge! O what ineffable joy! The poor, guilty, and self-condemned wretch is forgiven, is justified, is sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God! Blessed with salvation’s unequalled joys! filled with divine delights! “*Salvation* belongs to the Lord,” and yet it belongs to him; and he knows it: for salvation’s joys are all his own. (Psm. li. 12.) His thirsty soul is satisfied with the waters of eternal love and life: “for with *joy* he draws water out of the wells of salvation.” (Isa. xii. 3.) The Holy Spirit has given him the bucket of faith; for before he had nothing to draw with, and the *well* is deep; and he enters by that precious faith into the *deep* things of God. “Wells of salvation,” in the hot and sandy deserts, were sunk purposely for travellers, that they might not perish. What *joy* took place on their arrival at those *wells*! So the thirsty soul, when brought to Christ, “the fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” (Sol. Songs iv. 15.) It is the *joy* of great deliverance. (John xvi. 20.) “His sorrow is turned into joy;” believing, his own personal interest in Christ, he *rejoices* with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1 Pct. i 8.) “Re-

joicing in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. xii. 12)
 "For the words of the Lord are found, and he eateth them;
 he feasts upon the word of his grace, love, promise, and
 faithfulness—and they are unto him the *joy* and *rejoicing*
 of his heart." (Jer. xv. 16)

It is the *joy* of *harvest*; for he reaps the fruits of Christ's death, that corn of wheat, that fell into the earth and died; and brought forth much fruit. For, saith the dear Redeemer, parabolically, "Other men have laboured, and ye have entered into their labors." Christ has labored, and faith reaps the fruit of his suffering love, with a joy peculiar to itself. It is the exceedingly great joy of pardon and redemption by blood! when that pardon is spoken, and the blood applied. Sion's courts resound with the songs of ransomed sinners: "For the RANSOMED, (none but the RANSOMED) of the LORD, shall return, and come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain *joy* and *gladness*, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah xxxv. 10.)

It is the joy of conquest obtained by the Captain of their salvation, in their behalf and which they experience in their own soul's deliverance—a conquest over sin, earth, devils, and death himself! So that the fear of death is removed, through the extraction of his sting, by the conquering Redeemer!

The ransomed-soul rejoices as one who has found inestimable treasure; or who has taken great spoil! entering most interestedly, into the unsearchable riches of grace, and with appropriating faith exclaiming, "My soul shall be *joyful* in the Lord, it shall rejoice in his salvation," (Psa. xxxv. 9.) for he hath loved me, and given himself for my ransom; he hath loved me, and given himself to me, as the strength of my heart, and my PORTION for ever!

This great work is ascribed entirely to the Holy Spirit. "For the fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, JOY &c." (Gal. v. 22.) "The kingdom of God—is righteousness, and PEACE and JOY in the Holy Ghost." joy, in the first instance, is said to succeed love. (Rom. xiv. 17.)

For love is revealed and felt, and the sinner rejoices in the great love wherewith he is loved, by a covenant God and Father. In the second instance, it is said to follow *peace*: for the peace of God in the conscience, which

passes all human understanding, is so delightful in its effects, that it must produce triumphant rejoicing in that sinner, who was *previously* involved in condemnation, perplexity, and mental darkness! he *rejoiceth* in Christ alone, and have no confidence in the flesh; he rejoiceth on the ground of that sweet encouragement which Jesus has given him, that his name is written in heaven!

2. The exhortation now claims our attention in answer to the *Querist*, *παυλοῦ χαίρειν* *semper gaudere*, always rejoice, or “rejoice evermore.”

1. It does not imply any power, whatever, in the Christian.

2. But we are to consider it, the language of encouragement. It informs us, dear believers, that we, however distressed, have no ground for despair or dejection; but on the glorious reverse, we have at all times, as firm a foundation for *rejoicing* as God himself could lay, in his covenant of everlasting love!

3. It has, unquestionably, the following delightful implications: if tempted of Satan, you may still rejoice, as it respects the foundation of our joy. For his temptations are suffered, eventually to mortify that malicious enemy, by your conquests over him; to try your faith, that it may shine more brilliantly, and to display the sympathy of our Great High Priest, in our succor amidst, and under, all our severest temptations!

When trials of any sort attend you, they are intended for your benefit, hence, “we glory in (or *amidst*) tribulation also:” not that tribulation is, in itself, *joyous*; but rather grievous; nevertheless, we glory in Christ, in the midst of it, looking forward to the blessed effects that it will produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness! Hence the exhortation of JAMES, “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;” or trials of *many colours*. (James i. 2.)

When corruptions rise up thick and powerful, you are not to despair; but rather *rejoice* that there is *yet* “a fountain filled with blood,” which has not lost its purifying validity.

Though you sit in *darkness*, and have no light, you are still encouraged to trust in the Lord, and stay upon your God: *rejoicing*, that “the Lord will be a light unto you,”

and that you "shall yet praise him for the light of his countenance" and call him the Lord your God. The Lord help us to say, in such trying circumstances—"YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, YET I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION!" Though he hides his face, rejoice that he rests in his love! though he seems to stand at a distance, in the time of trouble, rejoice in the "two immutable things by which it is impossible that God should lie."

His covenant of love, grace, redemption, and promises, confirmed by the inviolable oath of the ETERNAL THREE, is that substantial *foundation* of our God, which stands so everlastingly *sure*, that it cannot possibly *fail*, except Jehovah, who knows not the shadow of a turn, could deny himself, forfeit his oath, violate his promises, and cast off for ever, those whom he loves, in Jesus, with an unchanging and never-ceasing love! This, Dear Christians, is the *sure foundation* of our salvation, and forms an immovable basis for our *joy* and *rejoicing* at all times, while travelling through the thorny maze; and will be the subject of our celestial exultation in that world of felicity which fadeth not away!

And when death approaches, there is still substantial ground for *rejoicing*: for our Jesus has unstung death, and stript the grave of its retaining power; so that both soul and body shall be glorified with our Redeemer, for ever and for ever!

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

In what sense are Believer's the light of the world? and what is the conduct of that believer, who attends to the exhortation in Matt. v. 16.

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

QUESTION

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1824.

In what sense are Believers the light of the world? and what is the conduct of that believer, who attends to the exhortation in Matt. v. 16.

SOLUTION.

LIGHT, *that* inestimable blessing to the world, which has the sun for its source, is matter of most pleasing and engaging study with philosophers, and those, who with the penetrating eye of science, are rationally and profitably engaged in the inspection of his works, who causeth the *sun* to shine on the just and on the unjust: and who, when forming shapeless chaos to a beautiful world, with the sovereign word of his all-creative power, proclaimed; "Be LIGHT!" and light immediately sprang forth; that his creature, man, might behold his glorious works; and that every object in creation, might exhibit the unsearchable wisdom, and uncontrolable power of the Almighty Maker, who alone is the most admirable object of all worship, adoration, blessing, and praise! On natural *light* and *vision*, how much might be said for the instruction and edification of man. Indeed enough has been said and written on the subject, to excite the astonishment of the human mind, when led to inspect, with solemn meditation, these blissful productions of his infinite understanding!

David, whose mind was expanded with astral science, as well as with regenerating grace, seems lost in wonder, when contemplating the grandeur and beauty of that great source of light, the Luminary of the Day! Yet he does not, like the untutored heathen, make it the object of his worship: but ascribes its existence to that Invisible Power, by which it is supported, and continues to radiate and fructify the earth. "In them," saith he, speaking of the starry heavens, "hath he set a tabernacle for the SUN; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race!" Psalm xix. 4, 5. Nor is he silent on the formation of that admirable, and natural organ of vision, the eye: without which, the blessings of light must have remained for ever unknown to, and unenjoyed by the *animal* creation of God." He that planted the *ear* shall he not hear? He that formed the *EYE* shall he not see?" (Psalm xciv. 9.) is a most powerfully interrogatory appeal to the natural understanding of man, in defence of the omnipresence of God: as if he said, look at the formation of that *wonderful* organ, the *eye*, which is the light of the whole body, and then say, if you can, "ye brutish among men," that Jehovah does not see, that he does not inspect, most minutely, all human concerns! the human structure, the whole anatomy of the corporeal frame of man, as an admirably compact body, every member of which has, and performs most readily its appointed functions, fills us with astonishment; and leads us, individually, to exclaim, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" But the *eye*, that receptacle of light seems to me the most astonishing member of the whole grand machine. Here the mind of the studious ANATOMIST is absorbed in delightful wonder, and ardent endeavours still to comprehend more clearly its structure, its spherical convexity, by which it receives surrounding objects, and to form a judgment of its component parts. But to those very engaging examinations of the wonderful formation of man, and the still more wonderful wisdom and power of his Great Former, therein displayed, I must, now, leave the philosopher, and as led by a consideration of the Question, beg your attention to a yet more wonderful, and an infinitely more interesting and pleasing subject to believers in Jesus! Not only, "To point through nature, up to nature's God;" but to point through the glorious medium of

the sacred volume, as led by experience, to "the TRUE LIGHT," Christ Jesus our Lord: to "The SUN of RIGHTEOUSNESS;" "The Lord God who is a SUN and *shield*; who will give grace and glory!"

By *light*, scripturally, we are to consider, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, mental perception, by which, spiritual things, that are totally hidden from the wise and the prudent, are discerned by the *spiritual* man: and objects entirely out of *sight*, with the world, are beheld, by the believer, in all their celestial excellencies with unspeakable delight!

As light discovers objects which were before concealed by darkness, so the Lord shines into the hearts of his people to give them "The LIGHT of the knowledge, of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

1. CHRIST is "The TRUE LIGHT," (John i. 4.) in contradistinction to all *false* lights; and he is, especially, the light of the scriptures—the light of all the types, shadows, sacrifices, and ceremonies in the Mosaic economy of worship; as he is the grand substance, antitype, and end of them all. The light of all the prophecies and the TRUE *light of life* in the hearts of his people.

As the Eternal God, he is LIGHT, that is, WISDOM infinite, UNDERSTANDING boundless! He claims them as his own, to the exclusion of all creatures; "COUNSEL is mine, and SOUND WISDOM: I AM UNDERSTANDING: I HAVE STRENGTH!" (Prov. viii. 14.) His eye receives, and surveys at once, at all times, and eternally, every object in the vast, universe: "for our God is LIGHT, and in him is no darkness at all:" He is infinite in wisdom and understanding, to the total exclusion of the darkness of *ignorance*. That *ignorance* so shockingly imputed to him by the *Arminians*: that *he did not know* the objects of his love, nor who would be saved, from everlasting! Thus man ignorantly thinketh that Jehovah is altogether such an one as himself! (Psalm l.)

2. In his *light* his people see *light*. (Psalm xxvi. 9.) In the light of his gospel, his written and preached word, as he shines *in*, and the Holy Spirit shines upon the sacred pages, they behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And in the *light of his countenance* they experience a fulness of joy; for they have "the knowledge of salvation, by the forgiveness of their sins!"

3. This *knowledge* is given them more freely than beams or particles of LIGHT are emitted from the *sun* to the earth, which descend ninety-five millions of miles in a few seconds! Our comprehensions, in their most spiritual expansions, are incapable of extending to the astonishing *freeness* of saving grace in Christ. There cannot be a greater insult to God himself, than to presume to carry any thing by way of *purchase* or *recommendation* before his throne. He receives the poor sinner graciously: he *loves* him *freely*. But "If a man would give the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned." Every heaven-taught soul, sensible of lacking wisdom, will ask of God, who giveth to all men *liberally* and *upbraideth* not. Hence the prayer of the Psalmist: "Send forth thy light and thy truth." (Psalm xliii. 3.) It is graciously sent forth, and the secret sins of the sinner are set in the light of God's countenance, and are so *apparent*, that he is constrained to acknowledge, "in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." But "light makes manifest the power of Christ: the loving kindness of God our Saviour *appeareth*; and the soul rejoiceth that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. iii. 5.)

4. The comforts and abounding sweetness of salvation, are, in the beams of sacred light, so clearly manifested, and so delightfully put into the sinner's possession; that his soul is joyfully exulting in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made him free. The realization of Solomon's account, in Eccles. xi. 7. has rendered Immanuel unspeakably precious: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

The sun of righteousness shines with all the glory of God's attributes, harmonizing in his deliverance from law, and wrath, sin, and death. His radiant beams of pardoning grace and redeeming love, so sweetly warm his heart, that he gazes upon his loveliness with delight, and falls low at his feet, with adoring love, and spiritual worship.

5. God's people are children of light, they are brought out of darkness into marvellous light; in which they walk, to the honour and glory of their Father, who is in heaven.

6. They have the light of God's word and Spirit, the light of truth, the light of life; and the promise of an

abundant entrance into that world which needeth not the light of the sun ; for the Lamb is the light thereof, who shines resplendently in his own glory, before saints and angels to eternity !

But the unbelieving world is wrapped in thick *darkness* ; which they love rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They have no desire after the *light* of the knowledge of the glory of God, which so enamouringly shines in the face of Jesus ! They sit in the shadow of death, on the borders of eternity, in their sins, and in their blood, ignorant of their real state ! Unalarmed on the precipice of everlasting ruin !

2. Although man is naturally destitute of all *spiritual* light, and has no knowledge of Christ, he possesses the *light of nature* ; which consists of a *conscience accusing* of the commission of immoralities, and gross sins, or *excusing* on the ground of outwardly moral rectitude, and self-applauding congruity of demeanor. Hence the *self-justifying Arminianism* of so many religionists, and the fair show made in the flesh, of external piety, and pretensions to fleshly perfection !

3. The Jews, in the day of Christ's humiliation, had " a *light with them*," which was afterward taken away, (John xii. 35, 36.) " Then Jesus said unto them: yet a little while is the light with you," &c. They had *then*, what they possessed for many centuries, as a peculiar people, the *light* of God's word and ordinances, and to this was added, Christ the true light ; " who came unto his own people, that received him not:" but rejected, persecuted, and treated him with the greatest ignominy : till, at last, they imbrued their murderous hands in his innocent blood ! Hence his exhortation in this scripture, was not given that they might be regenerated, but that they might be condemned on the ground of their own vile and persecuting conduct ! " *That ye may be the children of the light*"—he evidently did not intend that they might become the children of God : if so, he would have taught them *spiritually* ! for the promise is, all thy children shall be taught of the Lord—but by children here, we understand children of Israel, the inhabitants and natives of Jerusalem, whom he would have gathered together, as a nation, and continued to them their privileges ; together with the *light* of the gospel—but *they would not*—their sin was, then, not

in *rejecting* regenerating grace, which was never offered to them, but in outwardly *persecuting*, Christ and his glorious gospel. This, therefore, is spoken unto them to bring home upon their consciences the horrid guilt of their abominations—for grace was neither offered, nor provided for them; to whom Christ plainly said, “Ye believe not, because ye are not *of my sheep!*”

4. But in the Question, the persons denominated the light of the world, were primarily the disciples of Christ, and apostles, who were qualified, commissioned, and sent forth by Christ himself, to *enlighten* more especially, the Gentile nations, sometimes called the *world*, in contra-distinction to the Jewish nation.

According to the bold, solemn, yet glorious declaration of Paul and Barnabas, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles! For so hath the Lord commanded, I have set thee to be a *light* to the GENTILES, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ENDS of the EARTH.” (Acts xiii. 46, 47.) So John Baptist, was “*a burning and a shining light*,” in his day: and Paul was sent unto the Gentiles, “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,” &c. And thus all God’s sent servants are *lights*, shining forth with the gospel-beams of gracious truth, as they experimentally preach and proclaim the saving power and lovely glories of the Lamb of God! And even private members of the living churches of Christ, are also *lights* in the world, and have all in some way or other, their usefulness in the cause and interest of God. Hence the description of them in Phil. ii. 15.—“That ye may be blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye *shine as lights in the world.*”

Thus the apostles were the light of the Gentile world, and ministers in all ages down to the present day, have been successively, and will be to the end of time, as *stars*, though of different magnitudes, shining among the various constellations (or churches) of the ransomed of the Lord!

We come now to the exhortation: “*let your light shine*,” &c. This exhortation is of the greatest importance to me, as its discussion will give me an opportunity of freely stating my sentiments on practical Christianity; and thereby

of rebutting the various mis-representations of my ministry which have been industriously circulated through almost the whole kingdom, by the envenomed tongues of envy, *Arminianism*, and bitter enmity to the truth of God. And *first* suffer me to observe that something immeasurably more than the *light of dry morality*, must be here intended. For they shall, seeing your good works, glorify your Father, who is in heaven: whereas for the seemingly excellent morality of a character without the gospel of Christ, the world would be more inclined to give glory to the man than to the Lord.

2. Fasting and praying to be seen of men, cannot be the intention of Christ in the exhortation; as it would be completely contradictory of his own language in Matt. vi. "when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites—and when ye fast, ye shall not be as the hypocrites," &c. The children of God are divinely privileged with *private prayer*; and if they venture near a throne of grace in unity with his people, the Holy Spirit enables them to pray "with the Spirit and with understanding also;" and then they lose sight of the creature in the charms, beauties, and preciousness of Him who receives their prayers, and renders them prevailing through his never-failing intercession. Yet even in social prayer there is a danger attending the child of God: for should he have an enlarged opportunity in addressing the Lord, the enemy will if possible, so operate upon the pride of his old man, that he is tempted to take the praise and glory of his well-doing entirely to himself!

3. Nor is it a bare attention to the public worship of God; and a walking externally in religious ordinances. A religious education will frequently lead, by the natural influence of habit, the children to adopt the sentiments of their parents, and to attend regularly at the same place of worship, where, from their earliest youth, they were wont to attend; and who by an amiably moral conduct may thus, obtain "*the praises of men.*" But all this falls short of the *shining light*, for which "men will glorify your FATHER, who is in heaven." All this falls short of the *light, life, and power of Christ* in the heart and conscience. "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such, saith the Holy Spirit, turn away."

4. Neither does it consist in subscribing to this and that

charitable institution. The actuating motive of which is, very frequently, nothing more than either to be commended by men, and have their names enrolled in the list of the Benevolent, and laid before the world; or, under the influence of their natural self-righteousness or ARMINIANISM, with an hope of purchasing the favour of God, and obtaining a mansion in the skies! I am far from concluding, that these are the influential motives of all those who subscribe to charitable institutions: for there are those whose natural sympathy and compassion constrain them, most generously to subscribe for the relief and alleviation of the sorrows and sufferings of the poor, independent of all other motives and considerations. Such persons are most worthy, because the most USEFUL members of society:—whose compassionate benevolence we cannot sufficiently commend. But how frequently are they imposed on by hypocrites! and alas! how often are their well-intended subscriptions misapplied!

To such friends of the poor and afflicted, I would take the liberty of whispering a word of advice; Give your money, immediately with your own hand, to the needy objects of your charity: look around you, and you may always find persons who *really want* your kind assistance, and who, perhaps, have not courage to apply to a *charitable institution*: or who, on application, might meet with a denial, through want of recommendation. Give immediately with your own hand, and then you will be certain that your bounty is not misapplied. May the advice of Christ be very influential, “*Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.*”

I certainly ought to apologize for this digression, which I have made, with an attempt to shew, that all hospitality, excellent and highly commendable as it is, in its kindest, and most extended exertions, amounts not in itself, to the *shining light*, and *good works*, now under our consideration.

The importance of the QUESTION, and the lateness of the hour, rendered it absolutely necessary to ADJOURN the latter Part of the
QUESTION TO NEXT MONDAY EVENING,
What is the conduct of that believer who attends to the exhortation in MATT. V. 16.

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Τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.—PAUL.

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

AN ADJOURNED QUESTION.

LIMEHOUSE, MONDAY, MAY 3, 1824.

What is the conduct of that believer who attends to the exhortation in MATT. v. 16.

SOLUTION.

THE *shining light* and the *good works* of the disciples and followers of Christ again call for our particular attention; and as a subject of *enquiry*, increases in interest in proportion to that anxious wish which we feel to distinguish them from all other denominated *good works*, as so many *external* evidences that genuine Christianity governs the soul; and by which the children of God, even in the eyes of men, bring glory to their FATHER who is in heaven!

The conduct, the general demeanour of the real Christian, as laid down in the New Testament, and to which he is exhorted in the words on which the question is founded, engages my own mind with more than usual interest. I feel a particular anxiety, a warm desire, an ardent wish, which I hope will be accomplished, to state so clearly, scripturally, and decisively the Great subject before us, as to satisfy every one who will allow the undeviating truth of the Bible; and to defend the church of the living God, against that foul calumny, so ungenerously poured out upon her by those, who, perhaps, have never taken into consideration, the LAWS by which real believers are governed; but have, under the influence of strong prejudice, taken up the old cry of ANTINOMIAN—"affirming, that we say, let us do evil, that good may come"—thus injuring, and

holding up as infamous, some of the *best men* on the face of the earth!

Before we come to the "*good works*" themselves, we must take into consideration the motives, the principles of soul, by which the Christian is agreeably influenced, in his conduct toward God and toward man,

No person in the world does, or can, act without motives, stimulating principles of mind, productive of corporeal performances. The body is the agent of the immortal soul, that most willingly obeys her dictates, and so far as capable, carries into *action* the suggestions of thought.

Man has a capacious and thinking mind, which wishes, desires, and plans the *practical* performance of his will. From the most illiterate rustic in his clay hut, to the greatest monarch in his royal palace, between whom, there are almost incalculable classes of mankind, the whole of the human species act under the dictation of mental design. The *worst* as well as the *best* of men, have their motives for their diversity of conduct in life; and could, if they were so disposed, render some reason for their pursuits and exertions to accomplish, what? a pre-concerted and intended end. *Action* gives language to mental devices, and proclaims the operations of the soul.

The conduct of every professor of Christianity is, then, but an exhibition of the colour, or state, and predominating bias of the soul. The pharisee, the formalist, the hypocrite, and every merely nominal professor, as well as the possessors of vital godliness, perform their various religious exercises, from the different motives or principles that govern the heart; and as the heart dictates, the various members of the body, according to their peculiar functions, yield the most voluntary obedience.

Here then we are led to a survey of the actuating principles of soul in the real believer, which powerfully prevent practical vices, and produce that conversation, which becomes the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The soul is regenerated; the love of God has taken the government of its immortal powers, and the Christian obeys Christ, because he loves him. He cannot but obey, for "The love of Christ constrains him." It would be his greatest grief, the very misery of the soul, to be out of the actual service of his Royal Master!

This grand stimulus—divine love; this spiritually actuating principle is confined entirely to a new creature in

Christ Jesus ; Christ has his heart ; his whole heart ; all his affections center in him ; and all his best desires, wishes, and pursuits, have Christ Jesus for their most desirable and adorable object ; from the most noble, exalted, and Christ-glorifying motives, he obeys that law which goeth forth from Sion, while the mere professor, at *Mount Sinai*, yet ignorant of the spirituality of the law of ten-commands, attempts to merit eternal life by his legal obedience ! Certainly, he maintains "*good works*," not from the Christian's motives—but from self-love ; and with an hope of obtaining the divine favor ; and escaping the wrath to come by the duties of his own hands ! He obeys to serve *himself*, for he thinks that he shall thereby *save himself*. But the child of God is saved *already*, and he knows it : and it is that sweet savory knowledge of salvation, that makes him all life and activity in the spiritual service of his God ! for he "serves not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit." He obeys from motives of love and delight. He walks privately with his God. He walks in Christ by faith, and enjoys fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit !

Now, respecting the exhortation—let us first take particular notice, that they are such *good works* as will lead men to glorify our Father, who is in heaven ! For your *moral*ity they would be led, as we have already noticed, to glorify *you* rather than the Lord ; consequently, works more eminently glorious must be intended.

1. The exhortation is primarily given to the disciples, and afterwards, to all who are engaged to speak, and act publicly in the Church of God. The gift of tongues, on the day of Pentecost, shone, as a *miracle*, with such a surprising lustre, that men were constrained to glorify our Father, and exclaimed with astonishment, "We do hear them speak in our tongues, the wonderful works of God : " so marvellously shone their extraordinary light, before men of almost every nation and language, who were constrained to ascribe the power unto God. Though "others (hardened in their sins) mocking said, these men are full of new wine." (Acts ii. 12, 13.) And thus when the ministers of Christ, who since have preached the gospel in demonstration of the Spirit and with power, have been successful, those blessed under their word, have been led to lay aside their free-will notions, to cast their idols to the moles and to the bats, and thankfully acknowledge that the gospel is the **POWER** of

GOD unto salvation, and that their faith standeth not in the wisdom of man, but in the manifold **POWER OF GOD!** For all public characters employed by the Lord himself, in his cause, are as “*a city set on a hill, which cannot be hidden*”

2. But we will now consider the words as an exhortation to all believers under the gospel dispensation, whether public or private characters, and shew from the New Testament, what ought to be their walk and conversation in this world.

1. Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts. In this, divine grace *appears*, and they ascribe it entirely unto grace. “For the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men.” *Grace* has done that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh—*grace* therefore is magnified and God glorified, in “Teaching us that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” (Tit. ii. 11, 12.) Living soberly, does not merely consist in shunning disgraceful inebriety: that every man will do, who values his own health, strength, and reputation; but it consists in a steady and constant perseverance in the ways of the Lord; watching unto prayer! and to live godly, is to walk with God, to commune with him, to trust him, and to live a life of faith in his dear Son. This is to ascribe all the glory to God. And to live righteously, is to make mention of Christ’s righteousness, and of his only, with righteousness and uprightness of soul, walking in his ordinances and delightful ways. “They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” (Rom. viii. 1.) as new creatures. “For as many as walk after **THIS RULE**, peace be on them, and mercy.” (Gal. vi. 16.)

2. They walk humbly with their God. Divested of all free-will boasting, and fleshly pride; they humble themselves before God, and acknowledge their total and continual dependence on his care, keeping, and guidance; according to the exhortation, (Phil. ii. 5.) “Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus—who made himself of no reputation,” &c. He has not a word to say of his own goodness, duties, nor diligence; all he is, and possesses, he ascribes to wonderfully free, electing, and distinguishing grace.

3. He avoids all malicious defamation, and backbiting, as detestable and *murderous* practices: for sin-subduing grace teaches the soul a glorious adherence to the beautiful

delineation of the Christian character, in 1 Pet. ii. 1. "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings!" I must acknowledge, that this is a portrait we very rarely have the pleasure of seeing in the religious community; but its scarcity does not make it the less genuine. It is what Christians ought to be, and what they will be under the influence of the Holy Spirit! And that to the glory of God, even our Father.

4. The positive command of Christ, our lawgiver, as recorded in Matt. v. 39—42. imperiously calls for the practical attention of all his humble followers: "I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT YE RESIST NOT EVIL, &c." (read the whole of the passage, and let it have more than common notice.)—The *evil* or (trouble) which we are here called upon to endure with non-resistance, is the injustice which we meet with from men, instead of exercising revenge, and what we might suppose, a justifiable retaliation, we are exhorted to let our light shine before men, that they may see the good works of *kindness*, for *unkindness*, and good for the *evil* sustained; for so hath the Holy Spirit explained this glorious commandment of the King of Sion: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, (that is, betrayed into angry passion and revenge) but overcome evil with good." (Rom. xii. 20. Prov. xxv. 22.) How glorious is this command! and when grace influences the heart to *will* and to *do*, how easy, and how delightful the practice! Even your enemies will, in this case, be "overcome with the good," and constrained to acknowledge the amiable effects of that grace, which alone can counteract and subdue our hateful and revengeful passions.

5. Another of the most delightful, and all-wise commands of our Jesus, the king of saints, calls loudly for our daily and particular regard: and which, may the grace of God teach us to observe, with the strictest obedience: "PUT ON AS THE ELECT OF GOD, HOLY, AND BELOVED, BOWELS OF MERCIES, KINDNESS, HUMBLENESS OF MIND, MEEKNESS, LONG-SUFFERING: FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER; IF ANY MAN HAS A QUARREL AGAINST ANY; EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO DO YE." (Col. iii. 12, 13.) This most excellent part of "a believer's rule of conduct," ought to be written in cha-

acters of gold, as broad as the river Thames : or rather, O Eternal Spirit ! engrave it deeply on our hearts, and help us, as often as occasion offers, to carry it into the most extensive and delightful practice : for O how sweet it is to enjoy thy gracious forgiveness ! and under thy softening influence, how sweet it is to forgive !

6. To let your light shine before men, you must be led by the Spirit of all truth, "TO WALK IN THE TRUTH." "I rejoice greatly, (saith John) that I found of thy children, walking in TRUTH, as we have received a COMMANDMENT from the FATHER." (2 John i. 4.) And this is not only a command of the Divine Legislator, but a blessing he confers upon them, which they enjoy as an inestimable privilege. For they know the TRUTH, and the truth shall make them free from error ; and from the love of every species of error, false doctrine, and anti christian worship ! Let your light then, dear Christian, shine before men, by zealously opposing error, whatever it may cost you ; and as warmly contending for "The faith of God's elect," even amidst flames of persecution, ignominy, and reproach !

7. Let your light so shine, &c. by leaning on Christ, without any confidence in the flesh. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his SON, JESUS CHRIST, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." (1 John iii. 23.) This commandment is not given to the world, as the *duty-faith men* ignorantly tell us ; but to the indulged inhabitants of Sion ; to the king's own subjects of grace, and not to *aliens*—not to those who are "hateful, and hating one another ;" but to the us, who are taught and commanded "to love one another." 'Tis our Lord's command, that we *believe* on the name of his Son Jesus Christ : that is, we have his authority for it ; we may wholly venture on Jesus for a complete salvation, and rejoice alone in him, without any fleshly confidence : we cannot honour our covenant Father, more than to trust the merits of his Son ; for it is his will, "That all men should honor the SON EVEN AS THEY HONOR THE FATHER !"

8. Hear the command of Sion's King on another most important ground : "Let your conversation, be without COVETOUSNESS, and be content with such things as ye have." A believer, born into the world with a covetous disposition, will doubtless, still retain it, among the other viciosities of his corrupt nature ; but let this be no excuse for an hatefully *covetous professor*, since grace reigning in

the *inner man*, conquers the evil: for we know that covetousness is idolatry; and no *idolator* hath eternal life abiding in him. To this great and indispensable command, God has graciously annexed one of the sweetest promises in his whole book, for the encouragement of his poor people, who cry to him for their "*daily bread*:"—"be content with such things as ye have, for HE hath said, "I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE NOR FORSAKE THEE!" (Heb. xiii. 5.)

9. Another imperious, but alas! disregarded command, of him who has called us by divine love, to make him our treasure, is recorded in Matt. vi. 19. "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.*" How this excludes from the family of God, the COVETOUS HOARDERS OF MONEY! It does not imply that a man is not to provide for himself, his wife, and his family: for, "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel!" (1 Tim. v. 8.) But it is a strict injunction on the people of God, not to *covet* riches, nor set their affections on things upon the earth; according to the gracious exhortation: "Trust not in oppression and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase set not your heart upon them." (Psalm lxii. 10.) OPPRESSION and ROBBERY are often channels thro' which property flows into the coffers of the *covetous*; but let them attend to the language of James and tremble: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten; your gold and silver are cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire! Behold the *hire* of your laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you *kept back by fraud*, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (James v. 1—4.)

10. "*Do all things without MURMURINGS and DISPUTINGS*: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Phil. ii. 13, 14.) Do all things in the church, and in the world, with contentment, placidity, and gentleness; avoiding "*vain ganglings*," which are a disgrace to the cause of Christianity, and wounding to the people of God.

11. Take up your cross and follow Christ, through evil report and good report. Attend to the despised doctrines

and ordinances of God, as those who are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Confess him before men; remembering the words of the Lord, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." (Mark viii. 38.)

12. *Walk in love.* Above all these things, put on charity, τὴν ἀγάπην LOVE, which is the bond of perfectness; as it binds us to the performance of all other things, and constrains us to execute them with Christian delight! "A new commandment I give unto you, saith the precious Jesus, that ye love one another." "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." But "we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," and let us love not in word only, but also in *deed*; serving one another in love.

So shall men be constrained, when they behold our unanimity and brotherly affection, to glorify our heavenly Father, exclaiming with the heathens of old "See how these Christians love!" "Love also your enemies, and pray for those who hate you, and despitefully use you." So shall men, men of God especially, glorify your Father, who is in heaven! as saith the apostle, "And they glorified God in me." (Gal. i. 24.)

These are some of the most material and important laws of Christ, the substance of which are written upon the hearts, and as the glorious result exhibited in the conduct, of the subjects of the king of glory; who serve not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of Spirit: Who are exalted, as high above the condemning law of Moses (to adopt the sentiment of MARTIN LUTHER) as the heavens are above the earth. Who walk in the high way, cast up for the ransomed of the Lord; leaning on his arm, and reclining on his bosom of tenderest love, who redeemed them, from all iniquity, and who is the end of the law, for righteousness in their eternal justification!

QUESTION FOR NEXT MONDAY EVENING.

What is that spirituality of worship, insisted on by Christ himself, in John iv. 22. and how is salvation of the Jews?
