

# THE WESLEYAN.

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"LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS."—HEBREWS X. 24.

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## DIVINITY.

[FOR THE WESLEYAN.]

### THE TREE OF LIFE.

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."—Gen. iii. 24.

When all things were prepared for the suitable reception of the being whom God designed to be his viceregent on earth, he again put forth the hand of his power—touched the slumbering clod—and instantly man quivered into life, and stood forth, bearing upon him the image and likeness of his Maker. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Such was the act of God in our creation—an act, in which omnipotence developed its energy to gratify the yearnings of infinite love. Before "the river of life," however, sent out this additional and beautiful stream, the adorable Trinity held a solemn council, and the result of the divine deliberations was, to form man: yea, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" and that his jurisdiction might harmonize with his exalted pedigree, it was decreed that he should have dominion over the earth, and over all that dwell therein. Gen. i. 26, 27.

Man was now supremely happy: a garden planted by the hand that "laid the foundation of the earth," and embellished by the skill that "garnished the heavens," was his dwelling-place—the unprohibited luxuries of paradise were his daily repast—the winds, perfumed with the odour which issues from the divine presence, breathed only to refresh him—the seas and rivers flowed peaceably, and as they sent forth their contributions to the ocean, they bathed his vast and magnificent plantations. A sun that had never been obscured by a cloud, poured a flood of light upon his happy days—during the night season, the moon shed a lustre which relieved the darkness, and made it agreeable—the stars, like burning lamps, were suspended from the lofty dome of his superb palace; the angels and archangels ministered unto him—and all the irrational tribes, acknowledging his delegated authority, evinced their subjection by unqualified obedience.

In addition to these immunities and honours, the Spirit of God lived in his being; the moral image of God was reflected in his soul; the love of God was shed abroad in his heart; and "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," lay stretched out before him. In a word—enriched by the blessing—exalted by the favour—ennobled by the patronage—and supplied by the munificence of Jehovah, Adam commenced his probation for heaven; and although he was amply provided with every thing essential to his uninterrupted and final perseverance, he yielded to the tempter; fell from his holy condition; forfeited all his advantages; entailed corruption, death, and hell, upon all his posterity; and was driven from the garden of Eden, a culprit, and an exile; and was sent into the wilderness to "till the ground," and "in the sweat of his face" earn a subsistence, until he should return unto the earth, out of which he was taken. "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

The cause of Adam's expulsion is stated in the 17th verse of this chapter. The Almighty made him a grant of all the trees in the garden but one: this was called "the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil;" and the fruit thereof was thus solemnly prohibited: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." He transgressed this law; was driven out of his delightful abode; and through his disobedience, the "tree of knowledge" became a cause of ignorance; and "THE TREE OF LIFE" a source of death. In Adam's banishment from Eden, we discover, 1. His unfitness for heaven, which Eden was a figure. 2. A manifestation of his Creator's displeasure. 3. A display of justice and mercy—one demanding condign satisfaction, and the other devising a mode by which that satisfaction might be rendered. "The angels which kept not their first estate," fell, self-tempted—self-polluted, and are left without a Redeemer; but for the children of men God found out a ransom. Heb. ii. 14, 15, 16.

After the Almighty had driven Adam out of Paradise, he placed Cherubim and a flaming sword, to guard "THE TREE OF LIFE." Two reasons are assigned for the name given to this indetected plant. 1. It is called "THE TREE OF LIFE," because it was the natural means which God provided for perpetuating human life; and 2. Because it was a sacramental pledge for the continual enjoyment of that life, upon man's perfect obedience.

1. This tree was placed in the midst of the garden.

The tabernacle was set up in the midst of the camp, that the light of the divine countenance might beam upon the whole congregation; the veil of the temple was rent in the midst, that both Jews and Gentiles might have access unto God by a new and a living way; in Heaven, the Lamb apparently slain, is "in the midst of the throne," that all "from every nation under heaven" may obtain "the joys of his salvation;" and "THE TREE OF LIFE" was planted in the midst of Eden for the universal diffusion of immortality throughout all generations.

2. This extraordinary tree was also a type or emblem of the happiness provided for us in heaven. Rev. ii. 7; xxii. 2; xxii. 14.

3. To guard this renowned tree, the Lord stationed armed Cherubim in the eastern part of the garden.

These are an order of angels. The word is derived from the Hebrew; and signifies fullness of knowledge, or one that soars in contemplation. These celestial creatures are very often mentioned in the visions of the prophet Ezekiel, and figures made of gold, and styled "Cherubim," were placed on "the Ark of the Covenant;" the lid of which, called "the Mercy Seat," was overshadowed by their wings; and from between them the Lord promised to commune with his people. These angelic sentinels were armed with flaming swords, "which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." If the Cherubim, as many suppose, were emblematical representations of the eternal power and godhead of the Almighty; might not their sword of flame, (the form or similitude they assumed on this occasion,) folding back on itself, and, as it were, feeding on itself, be intended to shew that God himself would, for the sins of the world, make an atonement to God—thereby forming a plan of redemption, which, in the language of the Apostle, enabled him to "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 26.

4. This cherubic guard was appointed to keep the way of the tree of life.

The way of innocence—the way of the covenant of works—the way of perfect obedience. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" therefore, the only way which

now led to "THE TREE OF LIFE" was effectually closed. "Death passed upon all men;" henceforth, "by the deeds of the law" no flesh could be saved; and all that remained to the whole human race was "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

But Christ has opened a new way to "THE TREE OF LIFE." Heb. x. 19, 20. He has bruised the serpent's head; disarmed the Cherubim; removed the curse; and "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Finally, this way to "THE TREE OF LIFE," through our Lord Jesus Christ, is open to all, and all are invited to come into it. "The Spirit and the Bride say come"—the prophets and the apostles say "come"—the preachers of the gospel say "come;" and he who hath opened this way that the redeemed might walk there, confirmeth their invitations; and crieth out with a voice which soundeth like "the trumpet of Jubilee,"—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

AMICUS.

### BAPTISM.

In what form baptism was originally administered, has been deemed a subject worthy of serious dispute. Were the people dipped or sprinkled? for it is certain *Bapto* and *Baptiso* mean both. "They were all dipped," say some. Can any man suppose that it was possible for John to dip all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, and of all the country round about the Jordan? Were both men and women dipped? so, certainly both came to his baptism. This could never have comported either with safety or with decency. Were they dipped in their clothes? This would have endangered their lives, if they had not with them change of raiment: and as such a baptism as John's (however administered) was, in several respects, a new thing in Judea, it is not at all likely that the people would come thus provided. But suppose these were dipped, which I think it would be impossible to prove, does it follow, that in all regions of the world, men and women must be dipped, in order to be evangelically baptized? In the eastern countries, bathings were frequent, because of the heat of the climate, it being there so necessary to cleanliness and health; but could our climate, or a more northerly one, admit of this with safety, for at least three-fourths of the year? We may rest assured that it could not. And may we not presume, that if John had opened his commission in the north of Great Britain, for many months of the year, he would have dipped neither man nor woman, unless he could have procured a tepid bath? Those who are dipped or immersed in water, in the name of the Holy Trinity, I believe to be evangelically baptized: Those who are washed or sprinkled with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I believe to be equally so; and the repetition of such a baptism I believe to be profane. Others have a right to believe the contrary, if they see good. After all, it is the thing signified, and not the mode, which is the essential part of the sacrament.

Though "little children," they were capable of receiving Christ's blessing. If Christ embraced them, why should not his Church embrace them? Why not dedicate them to God by baptism?—whether that be performed by sprinkling, washing, or immersion; for we need not dispute about the mode: on this point let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind. I confess, it appears to me grossly heathenish and barbarous, to see pa-