

“ I come quickly : hold fast what thou hast,  
that no one take thy crown.”

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In a paper entitled “ Eternal Life,” signed F. E. Raven, we have now, I presume, the writer’s thoughts distinctly and definitely put forth by him ; the errors he has fallen into are manifest enough, if we refer to the written Word—our unfailing and simple guide — and judge simply by it.

He begins with a “ doubt if the truth of Eternal Life in its connection with either Christians or Israel can be rightly understood without an apprehension of the general force with which the term is employed in Scripture, and of its modifications in connection with dispensations.” Now, here it is evident that Christ is not personally before him at all, but “ Eternal Life ” in its varied use in Scripture. “ Christians or Israel,” are spoken of as if both were on the same ground, and as if Eternal Life for the Christian was a matter of enquiry as to the Old Testament use of the term. Of course, if it is the discussion of the use of the words merely, none would object, but when he asserts that Christians can only know what their meaning is by apprehending “ the general force ” and “ modifications ” of the term, can we be surprised at his arriving at an erroneous result as to Christ ? What the Christian has is Eternal Life in Christ—Christ Himself being Eternal Life—“ The Eternal Life which was with the Father ”—wholly unrevealed until He came into this

world in the form of man, and made it manifest—  
He Himself being it.

It is said "To us the term" (Eternal Life) "in the  
"literal meaning of the words would convey little definite  
"idea, since we are conscious that every living soul has  
"an eternal existence with God or without God." It is  
evident that the use of the term here again has nothing  
whatever to do with Christ. It is made the basis for dis-  
cussing the use of the term in the Old Testament, in order  
that "we" may apprehend its "moral force," so he says.  
That is we, believers, are to search out the use of the words  
"Eternal Life" in the Old Testament, in order that  
we may apprehend the "moral force" of their use as to  
us. Now, for believers, Christ is Eternal Life, and Mr.  
Raven has asserted that he never had "the thought of  
separating eternal life from the Person of the Son of  
God, or of asserting that eternal life is, for a Christian, any  
other than Christ"; and yet he now proposes to discover  
the "moral force" of the term by Old Testament research  
as to its use. Will he say that we shall be helped by this  
means to apprehend the "moral force" of the term  
"Christ?" He cannot, he dare not; and does not this  
plainly show that for him Eternal Life is a thought wholly  
apart from Christ, in that enquiry?

Further it is said:—The words "Eternal Life" would  
convey little definite idea to us, because we are conscious  
of our own eternal existence. To mere mind and reason  
this might be the case, for reason leaves out God, but to  
the soul that is born of God, the consciousness of eternal  
existence would be no barrier to understanding what  
"Eternal Life" meant, for conscience connects all with  
God, and he would at once go beyond eternal existence,  
and connect the Eternal Life given him of God with God,  
and to him it would, to go no farther, convey the thought  
of God's presence, and of how this "Eternal Life" was  
his, and what it was in itself, as wholly beyond and  
outside the eternal existence of which he was already

conscious. With what an unbeliever's thoughts on the subject may be, we have nothing to do; the consciousness of an eternal existence without God, may be a subject for the metaphysical discussions of scientists—it is a strange thought to enter any believer's mind in relation to Eternal Life.

But let us turn to John x. 27, 28. Are we to believe that those of whom the Lord Jesus spoke as "My sheep," and "I give unto them Eternal Life" would not then and there go beyond consciousness of their own eternal existence? Had His words no more power, or sense, or reality in them than that? When the young man said to Him "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life"—had he no "definite idea" of anything but of his own eternal existence? This it is admitted he had—"every living soul has it"—but the young man knew he had not "Eternal Life," or he could not have asked the Lord how he was to get it. He never thought of connecting the two, for one he knew he had, the other he knew he had not. Otherwise, what sense would there have been, or need either, in his asking the Lord what he should do to inherit it—inherit eternal existence which he had already? It is mere reason—shallow scepticism, for Scripture plainly shows that Eternal Life is wholly apart from one's consciousness of one's own eternal existence, and has nothing whatever to do with it. If it were not distinct from it, there would be no seeking after it by any. The soul in earnest with God does not connect Eternal Life with existence, but with God. It is the craving of every soul in earnest with Him—a craving fully and eternally satisfied for every one who has Christ personally.

Eternal Life is not, to begin with, connected, in his mind, with Christ, but with our own existence. Is it not clear that Eternal Life and Christ are really two distinct thoughts in his mind?

With regard to what is said as to the Old Testament giving "glimpses of resurrection and heavenly hopes,"

but that "as to the judgment and penalty of sin, it did not go beyond death, *i.e.*, the cutting off of man's life here;" surely such passages as Eccles. xii. 14, Pss. cxxxix, especially verse 8, *et seq.* lv. 15, ix. 17, xvi. 10, 11, xlix. 14, 15, etc., cxvi. 3-8, Is. v. 14, Ezek. xxxi. 16, etc., xxxii. 27, etc., show that "the judgment and penalty of sin" went "beyond death, *i.e.*, the cutting off of man's life here." Indeed as to the sacrifices, are we to be told that death, mere physical death here, was the extent to which they pointed, to which anyone in Old Testament times could go as to the "judgment and penalty of sin?" That with God's earthly people, under His direct government, death was the judgment or wages of sin in cutting off from earthly blessing, no one would deny, but to say that "the judgment and penalty of sin" did not, in its scope then, "go beyond death; *i.e.* the cutting off of man's life here," is to deny God's Word, and all sense in them of God's judgment hereafter. Moreover if it went no further, all from Adam downwards, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, and the Prophets suffered death "the judgment and penalty of sin," and were on the same ground as Cain, Achan, Ahab, and the wicked generally. That there was a clinging to life down here, as in the case of Hezekiah, which is cited, is true enough, heavenly hopes and joys, and full blessing and pardon not being entered upon, as the finished work of Christ was not and could not be before the soul, but Scripture says distinctly "as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law," while of Gentiles it is said the work of the law is written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. I ask, did the law give no sense of some "judgment and penalty of sin" beyond "the cutting off of man's life here?" Did "dying in his sins" not "go beyond death?" Has Ps. xxxii. no meaning beyond life down here, and the avoidance of more physical death? The passage quoted from Daniel xii., "and many of them that sleep in the dust of death shall awake, some to ever-

lasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," he tells cannot be contested as referring to anything but "a life of continued blessing here on earth." Are those then who awake "to shame and everlasting contempt" to do so here on earth? Was there no hell and eternal torment for the wicked in Old Testament days? Had saints then no sense or knowledge of this? Was the mere "cutting off of man's life here" the reason that "death was thus dreaded by saints?" Mr. Raven says so, but no one who reads his Bible will agree with him.

But he goes on to say that "in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) though connected by the Lord with the coming age, the testimony as to it" (Eternal Life) "does not generally go, in its scope, beyond life and blessing in this world." He explains that he uses the word "generally," because he finds "Matt. xix. 29, and parallel passages" somewhat of a hindrance to his theory, though, he says, the Lord there spoke "not only according to what had been predicated in the Old Testament, but according to His own perfect knowledge of the fulness of the words." But what about such passages as "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal;" "Fear Him who after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell;" "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And did Abraham's bosom, in Luke xvi, and the rich man in torment, not go "in its scope beyond life and blessing," or the reverse, "in this world?"

But leaving this part of the paper, which Scripture so fully refutes, we next find "Eternal Life is to be known "and enjoyed in Him in the glorious scene into which "He has entered as Man, in the virtue and power of "redemption." Now this, more than ever, makes it clear that the writer does not look upon Christ as Eternal Life, or upon Eternal Life as Christ, at all; it is something to be enjoyed in Him, not Himself; he says He is it, but when he comes to speak his mind about it, he speaks of

Eternal Life as something to be enjoyed in Christ—it is not Christ Himself, but something “known and enjoyed in Him.” This explains really his meaning of the words “Eternal Life is in the Son.” So, further on, he says, “It was ever an integral part of the Person of the Eternal Son.” Some may, perchance, take this as a great and sound admission, covering the whole question at issue; but a little thought will show it is quite the reverse. We could not speak of a man being an integral part of himself. A man is either himself or he is not. We could not speak of the sun as an integral part of the sun: So as to our Lord—He is that Eternal Life which was with the Father, or He is not it; to say it is an integral part of His Person is to deny Himself really as being it. We are then told that Eternal Life was “such as could be connected with manhood and be imparted to men”—the “integral part of the Person of the Eternal Son . . . which “could be connected with manhood and be imparted to men!” So that it is not Christ Himself that we have as Life, but an integral part of Himself; I do not think Scripture ever says Christ is “imparted” to us. And this in the teeth of such Scriptures as Gal. ii. 20, Rom. viii. 10, Col. iii. 4, and “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” to say nothing of numberless other passages to the same effect. All this is mere dissecting His Person. If Eternal Life is only an integral part of Himself, we really have not Christ Himself at all as our life, but only something that is an integral part of Himself. I am aware of what follows on the same page as to our worshipping “Him as One in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” but it is merely stating a truth of another character regarding Himself, in order to gloss over the deadly denial of His Eternal Personality as Eternal Life. Besides Col. ii. 9, is not connected with our worship of Him, but with our being complete in Him. It is another instance of the loose way in which the writer quotes Scripture in order to support his new theory.

He then quotes from the Bible Treasury for 1867, I will here give the whole of the sentence parallel with the version he gives of it.

He says :—“Eternal Life has been spoken of as consisting in the ‘out-of-the-world heavenly condition of relationship and being,’ in which the Lord was here alone in the world.”

The original gives :—“He, Christ, was alone in His Person that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was alone such in the world. Hence the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, the Son of man who is in heaven (who else was there, or even had ascended ?). He was this alone. He came, Eternal Life into this world, but was alone in the out-of-the-world heavenly condition of relationship and being in which Eternal Life consists : which was before the world, not only in God, but in counsel for us, given us in Christ, manifested in Him alone in the world, and now, consequent on His being lifted up and gone out of it into the heavenly place of which He brought word, that into which we are introduced in Him.”

I have given this quotation at length, in order to show how the sentence has been perverted. The original speaks of Christ as Eternal Life here below in that condition; Mr. Raven says that condition itself is Eternal Life. Any one can see the difference between the two, and what is involved. He says—“This condition has its full display and perfection in the Son as the risen glorious man out of death, in which, as Son of man, He had glorified God.” He says Eternal Life has been spoken of as this condition—he now says this condition, or Eternal Life has its full display and perfection in the Son as the risen, glorious man out of death. This is blasphemous, for it is making out that Eternal Life had not its full display

and perfection in the blessed Son when in this world as Man. And this is not an isolated statement; he repeats on the next page; "Eternal Life has its full and perfect expression according to the counsels of God in Him as the risen glorified Man with the Father." "It is as the risen glorified Man He is said to be the true God and Eternal Life." Said by whom? Certainly not by Scripture. Scripture says, He, the Son, was that Eternal Life which was with the Father—He was that fully and perfectly before He became Man—as Man, here below, He was its full display and perfection in Himself—He came, Eternal Life, into this world, and it was in this world that He fully and perfectly manifested what He ever was before the foundation of the world, that Eternal Life that was with the Father—in the out-of-the-world heavenly condition of relationship and being truly—but He was as much the true God and Eternal Life when in lowly wondrous grace He lay as the Babe in the Manger, as He was before He took upon Him the form of man, or as He is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

He cites, "He is the true God and Eternal Life," and then slips in the "disciples also saw and handled the Lord in His risen condition," as if 1 John i. 1, and v. 20, refer to our Lord only as risen. I will quote the whole verse, and the reader can then see for himself the use made of it: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and Eternal Life." Scripture both in letter, and in Spirit, maintains that our blessed Lord was, as Man here on earth, that Eternal Life which was with the Father, that He was from the very moment of His coming into this world to His going out of this world back to the Father, the full and perfect expression of the Eternal Life, wholly, absolutely, and completely—He Himself being it, alone in His own Person. Mr. Raven's theory as to this is, whilst



admitting Christ *is* Eternal Life (not that He *was* ever it but that it “ever was an integral part of His Person,”) that Eternal Life is the life which the Lord led here upon earth, completed as to earth at the Cross, and consummated in “its full and perfect expression as the risen glorified Man with the Father.” For him Eternal Life is not what the Lord was, and *ever* was, but what the Lord did in His life down here, and for him it is now consummated in glory. And this is why he condemns as a “monstrosity” the assertion that “the Lord never ceased to be the exhibition of Eternal Life from the Babe in the manger to the Throne of the Father.” He says it is what Christ is now as risen and glorified, Scripture says it is what He ever was with the Father from all eternity, manifested as Man down here, heard, seen, looked upon, and handled of men, from the beginning, that is much before the Cross at any rate.

I have said enough to point out the evil and heretical character of this paper, though there is more that could be shown to be unscriptural. But one statement needs especial notice ; he says, speaking of Eternal Life, “it is a life in which the believer realises by faith the new and heavenly being which he is in Christ for God,” “in which he grows, and in which he will be perfected in glory.” Here indeed is self-occupation, and self-satisfaction too—the real root of all this new and evil system of doctrine, as far from Scripture, as far from Christ, and as far from the light, as the East is from the West. That we do realise, through grace, what we are in Christ is true, thank God, and we can bless Him for it, but it is through an ungrieved Spirit, and apprehending through Him what Christ is to God, and what He has made Him to be to us. It is not that through Him we are occupied with or realise our own growth, or prospect of perfection, but that through Him we are occupied with Christ, and with Him alone, and the prospect of perfection is that of being in glory with Him, like Him, and for His glory.

But whatever may have been thought and said heretofore, it is now clear that Eternal Life, according to Mr. Raven is an advance on early Christianity, and is matter of attainment and growth—"It is," he says, "a life in which the believer grows from the babe to the man, and in which he will be perfected in glory." That souls may have defective views of Eternal Life in regard to themselves, is not to be wondered at; but he really makes it out to be a matter of attainment with our Lord too. He says "But now Eternal Life has its full and perfect expression in Him as the risen glorified Man with the Father . . . . We thus see with John the two great thoughts, a new and heavenly Man and a new sphere for man." (The capitals are his). I have referred to this before, but return to it again, as it is important to see the real matter at issue, and this is only done by seeing how it affects our Lord. If Eternal Life has its full and perfect expression in Him as the risen glorified Man, it is evident that all that He was as Man here on earth was something short of it, and that He only became or attained to the full expression of it through death, and resurrection, and being glorified. Eternal Life is now said to be "a new and heavenly Man!" Christ our Lord a new Man! And this as Eternal Life, risen and therefore perfect in expression! And a new sphere for man! There can be no mistake here as to what is meant. Eternal Life ever *was* an integral part of the Person of the Son—He, as the new and heavenly Man *is* it fully and perfectly. So that it was never fully displayed here on earth at all, nor heard, nor seen, nor handled at all, for "It is as the risen glorified Man He is said to be the true God and Eternal Life"! A more thorough contradiction of Scripture could not be.

Here again we have a flat denial that He ever was the Eternal Life: The bare idea of His attaining to or becoming it, in its full and perfect expression in any way, is the denial of His Person as ever being it. It matters not what re-

ferences may be made to His Godhead glory and Deity. Here is the denial of Himself as ever the Eternal Life, and it is simple blasphemy. Mr. Raven appeals to Mr. Darby for support of his theories, but Mr. Darby ever taught that John's ministry was the manifestation of Eternal Life, the Divine nature, God Himself in a Man down here, whilst Paul's ministry was that the Man who had glorified God down here had gone back into the presence of God on high, and was glorified there. Mr. Raven reverses all this, and assuming (for it is mere assumption) that when John says "This is the true God and Eternal Life," he is speaking of Christ as the risen glorified Man, he weaves out his theory and destroys the whole truth, and, what is more, introduces a blasphemous notion in regard to our Lord. Christ ever was, is, and will be for all eternity, Eternal Life, no matter where He may be, whether with the Father before the world was, or Man here in this world, or on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and as to the expression of it, He could not but be what He ever was, the full and perfect expression of it in every place. It is blasphemy to say or insinuate otherwise.

But touching this question of Eternal Life, I will now give extracts from two letters which state the matter more simply than usual with Mr. Raven. The first extract is from a letter of one of his followers, and the second is from his reply.

Extract No. 1—"I shall feel obliged if you will kindly  
 "send me a word or two as to the enclosed question as to  
 "Eternal Life, and as to whether you maintain now, as I  
 "think you did at Witney, that neither the little children,  
 "nor the young men had Eternal Life, because they  
 "could be tempted by the world; and whether you would  
 "say now that Eternal Life was not a principle of living."

Remark on this letter is needless, save as pointing out that the impression left on the writer's mind by Mr. Raven's teaching at the Witney meeting two years ago

was, that the babes and young men had not Eternal Life, the reason being that "they could be tempted by the world!"

Extract No. 2—"What I thought, and I think "maintained at Witney was that, though the fathers "had not received anything from God that the babes "had not received, yet that no one could, as to "his Christianity, go beyond the testimony he had "received, and hence there might be Christians who, "in this sense, had not Eternal Life. The early Christians "had forgiveness of sins, and the Spirit, and were waiting "for the kingdom. The truth of Eternal Life came out "with Paul's testimony. As to the other point, I should "still hesitate to say that Eternal Life is presented as a "principle of living, and for the reason that for us Eternal "Life means a new man, and not simply a new vitality. "Hence it is 'He that has the Son has life,' and 'He "that eateth me shall live by me.' I think Eternal Life "describes generally the blessing in which we are placed "before the Father. The principle of living is Christ "assimilated, and effective in us by the power of the "Spirit, so that we are formed in the new man.

Sd. F. E. R., *July 16, 90.*"

Now I ask any child of God to weigh what is said here in the light of the Word of God. What was understood to be said at Witney is not denied, but repeated in another form—babes and fathers are said to have received equally from God, but at once a distinction is made, and "his Christianity," *i.e.* the individual Christianity of each one is spoken of, just as if there were different grades, and forms, and standards of Christianity, each one going up to his own standard according to "the testimony he has received"—the testimony varying, and thus producing a different result in each. Where is any such thought to be found in Scripture? A varying testimony and a varying

standard in Christianity! And this is his ground for saying that "there might be Christians who had not Eternal Life." As an example he cites the "early Christians who had forgiveness of sins, and the Spirit, and were waiting for the Kingdom. The truth of Eternal Life came out with Paul's testimony"—*i.e.* afterwards. Now the early Christians, whether looking for the kingdom, or heaven, had Eternal Life, or they were not Christians at all. "He that hath the Son hath life;" (Mr. Raven quotes only thus far, let us read the remainder) "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." So that according to his theory the early Christians had "forgiveness of sins, and the Spirit," but not the Son, because he insinuates they had not Eternal Life. Let us turn to Scripture, "Verily verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life." "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"—was "that day" only having forgiveness and the Spirit, or are we to be told "that day" began with Paul's testimony, and not before. It is admitted they had the Spirit, and to what did He testify? Was "He shall guide you into all truth," "He shall glorify me for "He shall take of mine and show it unto you," a dead letter until Paul's testimony began? Had Acts ii. 33, no then present reality in it? Was not that Scripture Christ ascended and glorified, and sending from "the Father" too, as Son; the promise of the Holy Ghost? And again Acts iii. 13, "Hath glorified His Servant Jesus;" and Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted by His right hand . . . . and we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost." Had not the early Christians the Son? If not they could not be Christians at all, and of course had not life. If they had the Son, which is undoubtedly true, they had life, Eternal Life in Him—He was their life, just as much as He is ours. Paul's testimony did not alter the state of believers as to

life or Eternal Life. God might and did raise him up to bring out wonderful and blessed truths regarding our Lord and His Church which is His Body, and the standing of the believer before God, etc., but his testimony did not make one atom of difference as to the possession by the believer of Eternal Life in Christ. Moreover, Paul's testimony as to Eternal Life is rather how the believer gets it, not what it is in itself; John's testimony is as to what Eternal Life is in itself. And mark too that the early Christians referred to would include all the Apostles as well. Are we to believe that they had not Eternal Life till Paul came? Had they till then, the Son but not the Life? Or had they neither? How then had they forgiveness, or the Spirit, and for whose kingdom were they looking? Had John not Eternal Life until Paul's testimony came? It is all part of the same system of error, that tries to make out progress where there was none, and development in revelation, in order to make room for man's thoughts instead of God's.

But there is still more. Eternal Life is now said to be "the blessing in which we are placed before the Father"—the old error is here repeated though the writer says elsewhere he never had "the thought of separating Eternal Life from the Person of the Son of God, or of asserting that Eternal Life is, for a Christian, other than Christ." Here Eternal Life, or admittedly Christ, is now again defined as "the blessing in which we are placed before the Father"—merely another form of calling it a sphere. But I pass this by; here is what follows—worse indeed than all that has gone before. "The principle of living is Christ assimilated" Christ, the Christ of God, the Holy and the True, the Blessed One, assimilated to the believer! Assimilated to what? To himself? And this the principle of living! The believer has life, but in order to live Christ must be assimilated! And then Christ is "effective in Him by the power of the Spirit, so that he is formed in the new man!" We may ask in

vain for Scripture for this blasphemy concerning the blessed Son of God—His Anointed. What is this that so thinks, and so speaks of our Lord as assimilated, or *converted into a substance of his own nature* by the believer; what but infidel reason? We have had many irreverent statements, alas! made as to our Lord, in all this sad controversy and trial amongst us, but nothing has been said, so grossly irreverent as this. It is not so much that it has been said, deliberately written as a definition of the principle of life, but that such a thought should have found a place in the heart and mind of any child of God, and yet not fill him with horror. And this assimilation of Christ is said to be the work of the Spirit in us!

May He preserve us, dear reader, in simplicity as to Himself, and above all in reverence for His Person, and in subjection to His blessed Word that speaks of our being like Him when we see Him in glory, and that never could tolerate for a moment such a thought as His assimilation to ourselves down here whether by the Spirit, or by our own effort; 2 Cor. iv. 10; Phil. iii. 10.

I would close with one word of warning: "Touch not the unclean"—let no explanation, no mere withdrawal satisfy you—your Lord is blasphemed, your Lord's name is dishonoured, and if you are His, you are bound to judge, and refuse, and stand apart from it for His sake—it is the only way in which you can show your fidelity to Him down here; 2 Timothy ii. 21, is the only way to be fit for His service. Alas for those who fail to discern the evil!

P. A. H.

*August, 1890.*