

“BE NOT DECEIVED :”

There is nothing in the world so simple as God's Word —indeed, when we think it is God Himself who speaks, and that it is His mind and object to make us understand what He has to say to us, we see that it must be so, for He ever speaks plainly, simply, and straight to heart and conscience, not to mere mind and reason. What then is so important to seek to maintain, is simplicity in reading and studying His Word, His blessed Word. What people speak of as high truth, or deep truth, is really only apprehended and entered into by the simple soul who accepts God's Word in its simplicity, not by any effort of the mind or reason, but by taking it as His Word in dependence upon Himself. Simplicity and dependence are his security; the Holy Spirit, his power and his guide.

On the other hand, effort to understand, reasoning over, or reasoning out any part of His Word is ever the enemy's opportunity to introduce error and evil doctrine, to confuse and bewilder the simple, and to puff up and feed the pride of those who thus deal with His Word, instead of yielding themselves for the Word to deal with them. Thus, it is not so much ignorance of the Word, deplorable though that be, but seeking to draw out of the Word what really is not in it, that damages and leads away souls. All believers, I presume, would agree that herein lies the greatest danger, viz., a defining, or seeking to define, in a way that suits the mind of man, and his reasoning powers, what God has stated in a way that appeals to heart and conscience. Take, for instance, the great truth of Eternal Life; and nothing is plainer or more simple than this as set forth by God in His Word. And here let me say that what is of God is ever brief and to the point, not long and wordy.

Take the Epistle to the Romans, the argumentative book of the Bible, and even here the Holy Spirit goes straight to the point—there is no beating about the bush, so to speak. The truth of man's guilt and of his utter ruin is fully and plainly unfolded, and all in perfect keeping with the ground on which the Holy Ghost addresses man, viz., the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, "declared the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead"—all told out in such a way that man's conscience bears witness to its truth and reality, while his mind fails to grasp the bearing of it, and his pride leads him to resent such a full and plain exposure of his heart and of his ruin.

The object of the enemy is ever the defilement, wholesale defilement of the people of God—if he can effect this, by introducing evil, or producing neutrality as to it, his object is gained and the testimony is gone; whilst failing to achieve this he will seek to cause division, and sad though it be, it is the lesser evil of the two, for in the former nothing remains as a witness, while in the latter some at any rate, though it may be but a few, remain to bear witness, and they become the object of his concentrated wiles and attack. The loss of simplicity, and lack of reality in the things of God are his chief opportunity. Division, in the sense of separation from evil, is enjoined in Scripture, 2 Tim. ii. 21—or evil must at all times be gone on with. What is condemned is division, "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned," Rom. xvi., 17, while heresies are declared to be necessary "that the approved may become manifest among you"—heresies being schools or parties after a man's own opinion. The Christian being in possession, through grace, of God's thoughts, and the mind of Christ, has no need for, and indeed no right to his own opinions. His privilege, and his blessing is to follow God's thoughts and to have all his own thoughts and ways formed thereby. Exercise of conscience there will

always be where there is a work of God in the soul, but exercise of conscience is not opinion, though, alas! it is often pleaded as an excuse for it.

Where error has been taught, and even persisted in, in spite of entreaty and remonstrance, every one would readily and thankfully accept withdrawal of it, and confession that it was contrary to the truth as set forth in the Word of God. The value, however, of all retraction and confession is its thoroughness, and its hearty condemnation of what is erroneous. Where these are wanting, some may be led from personal feeling for the teacher, to accept what is said, though it leave the error untouched—sheltering themselves under the plea of “unfortunate expressions, but no unsound doctrine.” Fellowship, however, goes on other lines; 1 John i., 7, “In the light as He is in the light,” necessitates entire repudiation of what is not of Him, and not saying just as little as can be said, by way of so-called explanation, whilst maintaining that it is still “substantially the truth.” It is indeed an insult to God, to His Spirit, and to His poor, distressed, and bewildered people, to treat error in doctrine and evil statements regarding their Lord in this way.

I am fully aware that any who refuse such explanations, and who still decline to accept these notions are charged with personal feeling, and are said to be actuated by bad spirit towards the authors of them, but I would beg my reader to lose sight of persons, and to look at the things put forth as truth, and ask himself whether this is what he can accept as truth, for the glory of Christ, and for the blessing of his own soul, according to the Word.

But I will turn to what is in print that the reader may judge for himself. I refer to the letter of Dec. 6, 1889, signed F. E. R., and printed by our brother Oliphant on Dec. 24, and Mr. Raven's re-issue of the same, dated March 21, 1890. First, the letter is reprinted in full with the exception of the last paragraph, which he says “is omitted for the reason that

I believe some of the thoughts therein referred to have been withdrawn or modified." He does not tell us by whom; he merely says that some thoughts, which he called "not only erroneous but repulsive," being modified or withdrawn, he omits this paragraph. The reader will notice here the assumption that others have changed, but that Mr. Raven has been right all through, and that he is so still. I will give the paragraph just as it stood: "I have not written the above with the idea of "defending myself. I can leave that. At the same time, I "must say that such thoughts as are now current, limiting "divine righteousness to the believer being justified—and "therefore to Christ being raised—confining 'in Christ' to "a present position, so that it brings no light of eternal "purpose or future glory—separating, in the believer, "eternal life from the Holy Ghost—and talking about "Christ manifesting to the unbelieving world, eternal life "—the blessedness in which, as man, He was with the "Father—are to my mind not only erroneous, but "repulsive. That the light and character of the Life "shone out in Christ, I do not think any one ever thought "of disputing." The paragraph is omitted, not retracted, nor owned to be in any way erroneous. Yet it is this very paragraph that defines Eternal Life as "the blessedness in which, as man, He," Christ, "was with the Father." There is no judgment whatever of this evil statement. No modification or withdrawal by any one of any thought he speaks of there, could in the slightest degree justify his definition that eternal life is "the blessedness in which, as man, He was with the Father."

With the exception of this paragraph, "the text," he says, "of the original letter remains unchanged." He then avows, "in the most distinct and emphatic way," that he "never had" in his mind "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." Be it so; we can now fairly take all he says about Eternal Life as applicable to Christ. I will

quote from his letter as it still stands :—“ Eternal life is given to us of God, and is in God’s Son—for us it is the heavenly relationship and blessedness in which, in the Son, man is now placed and lives before the Father, the death of Christ having come in as the end before God of man’s state in the flesh.” To this he now adds a note : “ This is not intended as a definition of eternal life but an endeavour to convey the thought that eternal life means for a Christian a wholly new order of things, which is in its nature outside the world and seen things—it belongs to another scene.” Admitting his note to convey his meaning, we are now told that “ Eternal life means for a Christian a wholly new order of things,” &c. We may fairly take his present avowal that he never had “ the thought of asserting that eternal life is, for a Christian, any other than Christ,” and fit it into this note, and see how it then stands. We thus have Christ “ means for a Christian a wholly new order of things, which is in its nature outside the world and seen things—it belongs to another scene.” The Person is displaced, indeed lost, and a ‘ new order of things ’ is substituted for Him. Let me ask, dear reader, can you afford to be thus deprived of the Person of your Lord—will you consent to give Him up in exchange for “ a wholly new order of things,” no matter how beautiful they may be ? And let me ask, Is this the Scriptural view of Him ? Scripture says “ If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation ; the old things have passed away ; behold, all things have become new : and all things are of the God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” “ Christ ” does not mean for the Christian, nor for anyone else, “ a wholly new order of things, in its nature outside the world.” Scripture tells us that for him who is in Christ, “ all things are of God,” and, when it speaks of things above, it says “ where Christ is.” The new creation for the Christian is Christ, he himself being of God in Him. Scripture never leaves Him out—as to this, Mr. Raven never really brings Him in. He gives us a theoretical and

purely imaginary Christ, that may suit those that have not His Person before them, but which is as unpractical, unscriptural, and false, as his notion of Eternal Life being a sphere of blessing. His present avowal 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" may be correct; his *words* distinctly did so, and those words are allowed to remain, with an explanatory note which only makes them worse, while the final paragraph of his letter is omitted with the insinuation that his opposers have come round to his view, and abandoned their "erroneous and repulsive" thoughts. "Charity hopeth all things," but it is never said, "Charity hopes falsehood is truth."

His assertion of "exercise of heart and sorrow before the Lord in regard to the strained and painful state of feeling existing amongst us;" and regret on his own part for "the measure in which it has been contributed to by obscure or defective expressions" of his "which have gone abroad, taken from letters to individuals, or reports of readings" is impudent contempt of fact, and the consciences of others. The "strained and painful state of feeling amongst us" comes solely from his teaching error as to the Person of Christ, and deluding souls into following him by verbal explanations. If he had any real exercise of heart and sorrow "before the Lord" in the matter, he would have repudiated the error pointed out to him, instead of excusing it as mere "obscure and defective expressions," but still "substantially the truth." And here I do not refer to "letters to individuals, or reports of readings," quotations from which he objects to; what we have before us has been already in print, and is now issued again by himself, and explained by him too, so that obscurity and defect of expression can here at least be no excuse. But sheltering himself behind "letters to individuals, or reports of readings," is only proof of want of openness, and of endeavour to hide up, instead of letting all come out in

the light of God's presence, and be fairly weighed and judged. Another has exposed the letters to our brother Bradstock, to which, I presume, allusion is made. I know of no others published—and these were carefully written, and repeated again and again the ground and line of his teaching, concluding with "I should be thankful if the Lord use this to set your mind at rest." Other letters (some I have read), worse than these, because going further, are extant, but being held by partizans are refused publicity for fear of causing division and separation from him—they thinking the evil and its defiling character better ignored and gone on with, than exposed and separated from. Privacy where the truth of God is in question, and the Person of our Lord assailed, is certainly not of God ; indeed, in such matters privacy is but another name for complicity with evil, and this God will judge, sooner or later. It is curious that whilst objecting to quotations from "letters to individuals," he should credit himself with "rendering explanation in patience, by letter," and yet, when letters are brought up, they are dismissed as having "obscure and defective expressions."

Besides, its being in "letters to individuals" or "reports of readings," has nothing to do with the matter ; the question is, does he hold or does he not hold the views he has expressed, and regarding which he says he has "since sought to make all the amends in his power," though reprinting them in the original text unchanged ? The question before us is, are we to accept them, and abandon what we have, or at least profess to have received as truth for our souls from the Word of God. It may be said, things are not so bad as this—right is meant, though the expressions are reprehensible and faulty. I give therefore at the end of this paper extracts, at length, from a letter from one of his followers, who has further stated that "the main issue of what eternal life is, is with Raven and not with those who oppose him. God is with him and not with his opponents." I give no names—my object being merely to show the fruit of

the evil at work amongst us. Many, all I trust, will be shocked at the thoughts contained in it, but as it has been widely circulated in MS. amongst us, it is well to have it in print that all may see it, and be clear, through grace, of both it and its spirit.

However, not to pursue his introduction further, we need merely notice that he maintains all he has taught as “substantially the truth, as to Christianity in its proper heavenly character, such as brought before us by those most highly esteemed,” and his “confidence that the Lord will care for the simple who desire God’s will, and assure their hearts as to what is or what is not of God.”

Who “those most highly esteemed” may be, he does not say—it is after all a lower standard than the Word of God, and a failing one too. No doubt he makes use of phrases and expressions used by some of the Lord’s beloved servants, one especially, now with Him, but he attaches a meaning of his own to their expressions. I refer particularly to the refuge sought to be found in a paper by Mr. Darby, “A man in Christ,” for the use of the term “mixed condition,” applied to the believer now. Mr. Raven uses the term “mixed condition,” as meaning “a condition here, in which the existence of sin and the flesh are taken account of.”

I will quote from Mr. Darby’s paper: “We cannot doubt that such revelations as Paul received in the third heaven strengthened his own faith, made him understand that it was well worth sacrificing a miserable life, such as this world’s life is, for it, and gave him a consciousness of what he was contending for, a sense of the divine things he had to do with, which must have exercised an immense influence upon his career in this world. But it was not immediate power in conflict in the mixed state in which he found himself when he had to speak of ‘myself Paul.’ He had, and so have we, ‘to walk by faith, and not by sight.’ Some Christians are apt to confound these two things—special joy and abiding communion, and to suppose, because the first is not

“ always the case, the discontinuance of the latter is to be
 “ taken for granted and acquiesced in. This is a great
 “ mistake. Constant fellowship with God, and with the
 “ Lord Jesus is the only right state, the only one recog-
 “ nised in Scripture. We are to rejoice in the Lord
 “ always. This the flesh would seek to hinder, and Satan
 “ by the flesh. But if the flesh be not changed, how is this
 “ realized in practice? It is this which is taught us here.
 “ It is first the giving conscious nothingness and weakness
 “ in the flesh. This is not power, but it is the practical
 “ way to it. We are entitled, as to our standing before
 “ God, to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto
 “ God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and in practice to
 “ hold ourselves, as in this condition, not debtors to the
 “ flesh to live after the flesh; and sin shall not have
 “ dominion over us, for we are not under law, but under
 “ grace. But our chapter goes further than this: it shews
 “ us power so to walk. The flesh is then practically put
 “ down. The measure, as stated by the Apostle, is this—
 “ ‘ Always hearing about in the body of the dying of the
 “ Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be mani-
 “ fested in our body.’ His object was not to gain this life.
 “ Alive in Christ we have it. But he held every move-
 “ ment, thought and will of the flesh under the
 “ judgment of the Cross, and so the life of Jesus was left
 “ free.” I might quote a great deal more, indeed the
 whole paper, to show that Mr. Darby never speaks or
 thinks of Paul’s being in a mixed condition of sin and
 Christ, but that he speaks of him as being in Christ and
 yet in infirmity. Thus he could glory in his infirmities
 that the power of Christ might rest upon him—he
 could not glory in sins, with this object, but his infirmi-
 ties were Christ’s opportunities for manifesting His power
 and His grace.

Mr. Raven adds a note to his definition of “ mixed con-
 dition ” which now runs thus: “ a condition here, in
 which the existence of sin and the flesh are taken account
 of not in a judicial way, but in fact.” But let me ask, in

what way does God take account of sin and flesh, except judicially? Are we to be told that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, takes account of sin in us, as a tolerated thing, "in fact," and "not in a judicial way" as condemned and dealt with? That He will vindicate His own honour, we may be sure. But this notion is mere trifling with Him and His Word—really setting it at defiance. Mark, too, that this is the explanation of the "mixed condition" of the professed maintainer of "Christianity in its proper heavenly character." The fact is there is nothing heavenly, in any sense, in it at all—it is all earthly, and a plea for sin and the flesh being taken account of by God otherwise than judicially. Dear reader, will you be duped by this? Will you accept this as a trait of the character of your God—of Him who forsook His own Son on the Cross, when He was made sin for you? If we are told he does not refer to God's so taking notice of it, but to the believer's doing so, then we have the believer, on other ground than God's ground, and trifling with what cost his Saviour all that unutterable depth of woe on the Cross.

But let him define "mixed condition" as he pleases, what he asserts is that a believer, as such, is in a condition in which truths concerning him viewed as in Christ do not apply to him in an absolute way. This he now explains in a note as "That is, in such a way as to exclude every other thought about him." Now the truth as to the believer "viewed as in Christ" either applies to him absolutely, that is, in such a way as to exclude every other thought about him, or it does not apply to him at all. Mr. Raven's idea is that there is some other thought about the believer in the Lord Jesus, over and above, or outside and below that of him "viewed as in Christ"; what that thought is he does not specify—it is sufficient for him to assert it, in the teeth of Scripture, and, in spite of all that has been said, and shown from Scripture in refutation of it, to repeat it as "substantially the truth as to Christianity in its proper heavenly character," so he says. The truth

is that the believer is looked at by God as in Christ wholly and completely, and in no other way ; indeed, any other view of him could only be one of judgment.

But we may go on to his note upon "in Christ;" and I would ask the reader's careful attention to this note, and comparison of it by the Word. We have here the same strained and altered phraseology, as is found in the letter itself, the same bringing in of more than is to be found in the Word, and the same confusion of terms. First, he tells us that "in Ephesians the believer is seen in Christ, according to the sovereign purpose and counsels of God who has raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His right hand by the working of His mighty power." So far, well ; only that he omits to state that the believer is looked at as having been dead in trespasses and sins, and as alive now in Christ by the mighty power of God. In ch. I. Christ is looked at as dead, and raised from the dead by the mighty power of God—in order to give us to understand what the same power of God acting towards us who believe is, in quickening us when dead in trespasses and sins. It is said "Hath quickened us *with* Christ," not "*in* Christ," and it is important to bear this in mind, for it meets all this system of false teaching. Leave it out, and at once we have room for the speculations and theories of the human mind as to some other condition of the believer than dead in sins or under wrath and judgment, when not "viewed as in Christ." But he goes on to say "Hence, as 'in Christ,' the believer is looked at as quickened together with Him by the same power of God." Here again we have the same qualifying of Scripture, as in the case of Divine righteousness ; there he said "as 'in Christ' the believer is become God's righteousness," so here "as 'in Christ,' the believer is looked at as quickened," &c. It is making an arbitrary distinction to suit his system, it is qualifying Scripture, and going beyond it too, to say that "as 'in Christ,' the believer is looked at as quickened," &c., and is intended to infer that as not in

Christ he is looked at otherwise than dead and under wrath and judgment. What Scripture says is that prior to the working of Divine power in him, the believer was dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the spirit which now works in the children of disobedience, but now quickened by God *with* Christ, he is raised up *with* Him, and has been made to sit down in the heavenlies *in* Christ Jesus.

He goes on to say: "He is thus of a new order, "morally of a new creation, which is outside the present "creation or order of things in which he actually is, "though the character and beauty of it are to come out in "every sphere owned of God." At first sight, this looks well, but where is the Scripture for it? It is mere theory and fancy; he substitutes a new order and a morally new creation for Christ personally. This is the basis he lays for the notion that Eternal Life is a new sphere into which we get by exercise of faith, and by getting clear of the world. I am aware it is said he has given up this idea; indeed some of his adherents now say he says he never said it, but it is in print and has been repeated again and again. But let us turn to Scripture. The Christ raised from the dead, and at the Father's right hand in glory, is the same Christ that was Man here in this world of sin, and who here suffered, and died for us—the same Christ in whom we are through grace. "Of Him" (God) "are ye in Christ Jesus;" "We are His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus;" "Renewed into full knowledge after the image of Him that has created him." The contrast in Ephesians between the two states is this: We *were* dead in trespasses and sins; we *are* quickened by God with Him, and placed in Him before God Himself, in His own blessed and perfect acceptance as the Beloved. It is not that the beauty and character of a new order and morally new creation, are to come out in the Christian in every sphere owned of God, but that Christ is to be seen in him, in every connection and in every detail of life. Mr. Raven's notion is a mere

theory, defined and limited by feeling, imagination, and fancied experience, and not Christ personally at all. No doubt being "in Christ" we are born of God, but Scripture does not so put it. "Quickened together with Him" is not in regard to our being "in Christ," though most assuredly we are in Him, but in regard to our having been dead in trespasses and sins.

But he goes on to contrast Romans with Ephesians, saying: "In Romans the believer is, on the other hand, seen as alive on the earth. He is justified, has peace with God, the Holy Ghost is given to him, he is dead to sin, and to reckon himself so, and alive to God in Christ Jesus, and sin is not to reign in his mortal body to obey its lusts; he is dead to the law to be to Christ; not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, the righteousness of the law is to be fulfilled in him, and not a debtor to the flesh to fulfil flesh's lusts; has to deal with the groaning creation, though he has the firstfruits of the Spirit. It is the life of responsibility here, though carried out in divine power." This statement one would not object to, were it not followed by the assertion that, "Truths which view the Christian in one aspect cannot be used to weaken the force of the truth about him in another aspect." But this is just what Mr. Raven does; he uses the truth of "in Christ" in Romans to weaken the force of its use in Ephesians. He has two definitions as to "in Christ;" for him "in Christ" in Ephesians has one meaning, in Romans, "in Christ" has another, unless, indeed, he holds that "alive to God in Christ Jesus" does not mean "in Christ" at all. Now there is no doubt there are two distinct aspects of "in Christ," viz.: that in Ephesians and that in Romans, but it is the same Christ in whom the believer is in both Epistles, and in both aspects. And whether it be the aspect of Ephesians or that of Romans, the believer is really and absolutely "in Christ," and has no other position or standing before God, or indeed in the world. Mr. Raven concludes his note with "A Christian " is of God in Christ, a new creation, where old things have

“passed away and all things become new, in which is
 “neither male nor female; but the truth which describes
 “him in that aspect does not describe what he is in him-
 “self.” The reader will notice here the jumbling up of
 part of 1 Cor. i., 30, part of 2 Cor. v., 17, and part of Gal.
 iii., 28, as if the truths conveyed in each passage were
 identical. A simple reference to the three passages will
 suffice to show the difference. He does not tell us whether
 it is to be applied to the Ephesian or Roman aspect of
 “in Christ.” But what he seeks to base upon it is that
 although the truth which describes the Christian in that
 aspect, *i.e.*, as of God in Christ, it does not describe what
 he is in himself. Here we have again the error and evil
 of his whole system. For him, the Christian viewed as in
 Christ, is not what the Christian really is in himself.
 Scripture, thank God, is clear enough, and we need not
 turn in upon ourselves to find out what we are in ourselves,
 if we are content to take God’s Word simply as to it; and
 if we have made the least experience of what we are in
 ourselves we shall not turn in upon ourselves any more to
 find out. We may take the first three chapters of Romans
 to begin with, and, through the grace of God, find, each
 for himself, his place there as a child of Adam. We may
 turn to Rom. vii., 18, Gal. ii., 19, 20, and finally to
 1 Cor. i., 30, where, as admitted by Mr. Raven, the
 believer is distinctly stated to be of God in Christ Jesus,
 and this, not in the Ephesian aspect of “in Christ,” for
 he would hardly, I presume, admit the Corinthians to have
 been an Ephesian state, but in their state of going on
 really badly, with sin in their midst unjudged and
 unnoticed even. His theory is that the “being of God”
 does not describe what the believer *is* in himself. I admit
 that it does not describe what the believer *was*, but it is
 the plain statement by the Holy Ghost of what he is, and
 of how he is it. All that he is outside and beyond this is
 vile and evil, under the wrath and judgment of God, and
 he is through grace, through the finished work of Christ,
 privileged and enabled to count it as already judged and

condemned in His death, and he himself delivered from it through His death. Of this Mr. Raven has evidently neither sense nor knowledge. It is true he says the believer is dead to sin, and to reckon himself so, and alive to God in Christ Jesus, but the Christian, for him, is something else in himself. What the Christian is in Christ is for him a mere theory, an unreal something mentally to be studied, and left for the imagination to conceive according as each one feels himself to have progressed by faith and to have shaken himself free from the world—of the reality and the blessedness of being entirely set aside as to himself, and of being wholly, solely and unreservedly in Christ, he knows nothing, and thus can afford to fritter it away with such a definition as “A Christian is of God in Christ. . . . but the truth which describes him in that aspect does not describe what he is in himself;” as if, out of Christ, he could be otherwise than condemned.

The next note merely defines “as there” as meaning “as in Him.” No one had any doubt about this; but the question is why say “as” in Him—Scripture says “that we might become God’s righteousness in Him.” Mr. Raven says “as” in Him the believer is so, thus qualifying the meaning and extent of it. All these additions to and qualifications of Scripture are merely trifling with the Word, and show that he has made it a sort of study for the mind without any reality of it for soul, or conscience, or heart either.

We now come to his explanation of 2 Cor. v., 21. The assumption that the Apostle in Phil. iii., 9, meant what Mr. Raven means as to the believer becoming God’s righteousness when in a sinless state in glory with Christ, has already been pointed out as without foundation, and mere ignorance of the meaning and bearing of the two passages. But here he repeats it, and says that “2 Cor. v., 21, in its *full* scope, refers to the saints “becoming in Christ in glory the witness or expression of “God’s righteousness; because that righteousness was “displayed in setting him there.” He adds “The

“believer is made the righteousness of God ‘in Christ.’
 “It is,” he says, “in no sense a progressive thing in him,
 “nor dependent on his practical state or experience.” In
 other words the believer is it now, and will become it in
 glory; but we had better adhere to his own words, to
 prevent mistake, “The believer is made the righteousness
 of God in Christ.” “The saints become in Christ in
 glory the witness or expression of God’s righteousness.”
 Are the saints in Christ now or not? Will they be more
 in Christ then than now? He has before drawn a
 distinction between the Christian “in Christ,” and the
 Christian “in himself.” So here, he puts a future sense
 to the word “become,” in 2 Cor. v., 21, which
 shows he really gives it no present sense at all. The full
 fruition of Divine righteousness awaits manifestation no
 doubt, but the believer will not become God’s righteousness
 then in any further measure than he is it now. What
 2 Cor. v., 21, gives us is the wondrous fact of our
 being God’s righteousness in Christ, and the ground and
 reason of our being so; it says nothing about the
 “expression” of it, but that we are *it*. He trifles with
 and adds to Scripture just as he pleases. It is cause and
 effect, simply and plainly stated. That we “might
 become,” does not necessarily involve a future meaning, at
 some distant date. I might say “I wrote to him that he
 might know my mind”—“I made this coat that I might
 wear it”—“I sleep that I might be refreshed,” &c. But
 let me quote from Mr. Darby’s writings: “There are, so
 “to speak, two parts in God’s nature and character: His
 “righteousness, which judges everything; and His perfect
 “love. These are one for us in Christ, ours in Christ.
 “If indeed we realize what God is, both will have their
 “place: but the believer in Christ is the righteousness
 “which God, from His very nature, must have before Him
 “on His throne, if we are to be with Him and enjoy Him.
 “But the Christ, before whom we are in the judgment
 “seat, is our righteousness. He judges by the righteous-
 “ness which He is; but we are that righteousness, the

“righteousness of God in Him.” “Thus Paul (it is
 “conscience in view of that most solemn moment) possessed
 “the righteousness which he saw in the Judge, for that
 “which judged was his righteousness.” “But this view
 “of judgment and our complete manifestation in that day
 “has a present effect on the saint according to its own
 “nature. He realizes it by faith. He *is* manifested.
 “He does not fear being manifested. It will unfold all
 “God’s past ways towards him when he is in glory, but he
 “is manifested now to God; his conscience exercised in
 “the light. It has thus a present sanctifying power.”
 “The truth is, the judgment-seat is what most brings out
 “our assurance before God; for as He is, so are we in
 “this world; and it is when Christ shall appear in glory
 “we shall be *like Him*.”

It is all confusion to say we shall “become” it in that day, just as it is irreverent to speak of the “*full scope*” of God’s righteousness. Indeed, it only shows, as another has said, a lack of all sense of God’s righteousness. He may say “it is in no sense a progressive thing in him, nor dependent on his practical state or experience,” but he still maintains that it was what Paul was looking forward to having, and that though the believer is made it in Christ, he becomes it in Christ hereafter. One’s comfort indeed is that “the Lord will care for the simple who desire God’s will, or will assure their hearts as to what is or is not of God,” and that He will preserve them from all this unreality, and bewildering folly.

On page 3, we have the note that “Eternal life is given
 “to us of God, and is in God’s Son—for us it is the
 “heavenly relationship and blessedness in which, in the
 “Son, man is now placed and lives before the Father, the
 “death of Christ having come in as the end before God of
 “man’s state in the flesh,” “is not intended as a definition
 “of eternal life but an endeavour to convey the thought
 “that eternal life means for a Christian a wholly new order
 “of things, which is in its nature outside the world
 “and seen things—it belongs to another scene.” Nothing

is really altered by this note. It is the same old root evil of all his error and fancy. Eternal life is now said to mean for a Christian a wholly new order of things. Why "for a Christian?" For a Christian, Christ is the Eternal Life—a Divine and Blessed Person—not a mere new order of things, either wholly or partially. From not being really before God in his soul as to either, he has confounded Eternal Life and new creation, and would make Christ new creation "a wholly new order of things," etc. This is but a repetition of his former theory, and gross irreverence as to the Person of the Lord.

Further he still maintains that "He that has the Son has the life;" "the testimony he has received concerning the Son is, by the Spirit, the power of life in the believer, he having been born of God to receive it." To receive what? The testimony or the life? Where does Scripture say "the testimony is the power of life in the believer?" He adds in a note that "it is by the Son that the believer "lives, he is in Him that is true, that is, in His Son Jesus "Christ, who is the true God and eternal life." But according to his definition that eternal life means a new order of things, we must read it as "In His Son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and a wholly new order of things," etc.

But there is another note on this page that I would beg the reader's earnest attention to. He says "The believer still has part in seen things here (which the Son has not)," he adds in a note "Though in the days of His flesh He had." That is, that the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh had part in seen things here which He now has not, but which part the believer has. "It has no part in eternal life, though it may be greatly influenced by it." Let me ask anyone with the least heart for our Lord: Was there anything in which our Lord had part here on earth in the days of His flesh, that had no part in eternal life, or which for Him was influenced by it? It is a subtle insinuation as to the Lord Jesus, as if the part He had in things here in the days of His flesh is that which

the believer now has, but which He no longer has. The believer has to reckon himself dead, to walk in connection with things here, as dead and risen. What would you think of such a thought being attached to our blessed Lord? Will "errors of interpretation or questionable expressions" satisfy your soul as to this? I am aware some of this school say, "The Lord sitting by Sychar's well was weary, and eternal life is never weary"—it is all of the same character. Scripture says: "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," &c. He who was this, entered into circumstances of fatigue, hunger, and thirst voluntarily on His part in grace and love to us.

The questions and answers that appeared at the end of the original letter, and which were printed with Mr. Raven's permission, are now omitted, without a word of regret or explanation of any kind. Yet in them it was stated that "To talk of a person having eternal life without the Spirit is absurd," and that being made God's righteousness in Christ is "the Christian is in Christ and Christ in Him," an "abstract" thing as "sin and flesh are still in the believer," and that "eternal life is a comprehensive expression that takes in all"—all what?

Since writing the above some letters, of which I give extracts, have come into my hands. The originals are before me, and the italics are his.

Greenwich 24-2-90.

.....

"The teaching amongst us seems to be on two lines—the one would apply every statement of the Christian calling in an absolute dogmatic way to the believer as here—the other while recognising that the believer is filling out the remains of his life in the flesh through grace would shew that the true calling relationships and blessings of the Christian belong to the scene and sphere where Christ now is, wholly disconnected from human life down here. I confess I am through grace on the latter line."

Sd. F. E. RAVEN.

Greenwich 6-3-90.

.....

“ ‘A man in Christ’ was caught up into the third
 “ heaven—*Paul* in the body walked here—but he walked,
 “ as should every Christian, in the power of the Spirit,
 “ according to the character of new creation, as dead to
 “ sin the law and the world. Again, the cross gives you
 “ *title* to be a heavenly man—(to enter into the holiest)—
 “ but it is the quickening power of Christ that makes you
 “ it—as is the heavenly such are they that are heavenly—
 “ but from your present condition of existence you cannot
 “ eliminate the element of responsibility, and Scripture
 “ deals with this (see Rom. vi.)—while there is no such
 “ thing as responsibility ‘in Christ.’ It is a new creation,
 “ where old things have passed away, and all things have
 “ become new, and all things are of God.”

Sd. F. E. RAVEN.

To this the brother replied :

12 April, '90.

“ Nothing has more deeply pained and troubled me,
 I think, than this question of Christian responsibility,
 which seems to be uppermost just now. I am convinced
 it is false—not so gross perhaps as it is insidious and
 subtle. But if the root is corrupt, the fruit will be also.
 Mr. Darby has written ‘The whole question of our
 responsibility as living in the life of man before God, is
 settled by Christ’s judicially bearing the consequences
 before God, and by the death of the life in which we
 stood as sinners. The nature, being, sins, guilt, existence
 in which he was responsible before Him, are, as regards
 the believer, gone before God.’ ‘My responsibility then
 is not as a man in the first Adam, but as a Christian in
 the Second. On the first ground I am wholly lost
 already; it is vain to talk of responsibility, unless to
 convince of sin. On the second, because I am saved, and
 a child of God in the family, I am become responsible for

walking as such, like the example of the Firstborn of many brethren.' 'Christian responsibility is the responsibility of being a Christian, that is of walking because we are in Christ, as Christ walked, through Christ dwelling in us.' You tell me 'there is no such thing as responsibility in Christ.' It certainly is not in Adam for the Christian. Again, 'Communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of the Divine life, can only have place so far as the flesh is practically held—as we have the title to hold it—for dead, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body.'"

* * *

Greenwich 14-4-90.

.....

"I do not think the tone of your letter either courteous or becoming—false, insidious, subtle, corrupt, are hardly terms suitable to apply to the thoughts of a brother with whom you remain professedly in fellowship. The real difficulty lies in your apparent inability to distinguish between what is true "in Christ" looked at in its own proper character as new creation, after God—and what is true of a Christian who, though in Christ, has to walk in the flesh down here. Mr. Darby's remarks apply to the latter—my observation, that there is no such thing as responsibility in Christ, to the former."

F. E. RAVEN.

Comment on the boasted "patience" of his explanations is needless. What is important is the further downward step, and departure from truth of the reiterated assertion of "no responsibility in Christ," and the disconnection of Christianity wholly from human life. The folly and unreality of it will strike all; but it is only

another proof that Mr. Raven has no sense whatever of Christian responsibility, nor of the meaning of the term "in Christ" at all—he has defined it all away until nothing remains. I quote a word from the Synopsis: "We are dead then, and our life is hid with Christ in God. "We have members on earth—no recognised life; and we "have to put to death all these members of the old man." "Putting to death is an act of power in that which is "good—the new man." This, according to Mr. Raven, would be putting to death that to which alone, for him, responsibility attaches, and nothing is left.

But the truth is the responsibility of the first man is set aside wholly at the Cross—gone in Christ's grave; Mr. Raven would resuscitate this, and put the believer back again under it, and thus again under wrath and condemnation. According to him, the believer is *abstractedly* "in Christ," *really* under condemnation and wrath, in sin and responsible as there. His denial of responsibility "in Christ," and insisting on its still attaching to the flesh, is not only destructive of the Christian position, but is a denial of the finished work of Christ on the Cross, and of the liberty and blessing in which it places the believer.

The following is the letter referred to on page 7, the italics are the writer's:—

"As to London it seems very serious indeed, but this "time the subject matter is clear and defined, not like the "Reading business; and if —— separate, the ground of "their action will be plain enough. I am a poor judge in "these things, but it looks to me very like the old ground of " 'the sufferings of Christ' over again. Christ had rela- "tionships with the Father from eternity, other than those "He assumed with man; these relationships were con- "sistent and unchanging, while also 'the Eternal life "that was with the Father was manifested to us,' and "that in 'the Word made flesh.' His Messianic rela- "tionships with *men* were not that Eternal life, though

“ the Eternal life was manifested in Him who was also the
 “ Christ. But I do not think that Scripture ever says
 “ that Christ was the eternal life, save in 1 John, v., 20,
 “ but there it is in *His Son*—and Eternal life is without
 “ the article, which makes it characteristic, and not definite.
 “ And in Rom. vi., 20, it is ‘in Christ Jesus our Lord.’
 “ But though in a general way, we say ‘Christ was the
 “ Eternal life,’ yet I think it is significant that Scripture
 “ never uses, as far as I remember, such an expression.
 “ ‘Eternal life’ is, as far as I understand it, the capacity of
 “ knowing and enjoying God in the relationship in which
 “ the Son ever stood to Him. Therefore it is for us through
 “ redemption, and in power of the Spirit putting us with
 “ Jesus in the same life and relationship in which He ever
 “ was, and is, with the Father. Now the relationship is
 “ for Him uncreated and unchanging, and above and
 “ beyond any other relationship He may assume with
 “ man through incarnation, in which latter relationship
 “ He can be born and suffer and die. That is He was
 “ eternally in relationship with the Father, which was
 “ unaffected by any relationship which he assumed by
 “ incarnation: and though as incarnate He could express
 “ to His own this relationship, and thus manifest the
 “ Father to them, still *all* He did, as incarnate, was not
 “ the expression of this relationship, but the fulfilment of
 “ other relationships, *e.g.*, messianic, or otherwise human
 “ relationships, outside of the range of this abiding,
 “ unchangeable, eternal relationship with the Father.
 “ Thus, when ‘He grew in wisdom and stature and in
 “ favour with God and man,’ who would intelligently
 “ affirm *that* of eternal life? How could eternal life grow
 “ in the favour of God? Again He was subject to His
 “ earthly parents. How could eternal life with the
 “ Father in full divine unbroken communion be expressed
 “ by obedience to those who were wholly ignorant of it,
 “ and who *rebuked* Him because He was engaged in His
 “ Father’s business, of which they knew nothing? That
 “ He was rightly and beautifully obedient to them in

“another sphere and relationship is true, but proves, it
 “seems to me, that it was a wholly different sphere from
 “that of eternal life, and therefore could not be the
 “expression of it. The opposite idea seems to me
 “the confusion between the ineffable mystery of His
 “own Person or ‘being,’ and the human relationship
 “He was pleased to assume. It is quite evident He
 “had a life in which He never died. He commended His
 “spirit into His Father’s hands. He said to the thief,
 “‘To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise’—while it
 “is equally true that He also died. The same is true of
 “us all in one sense. Men are dead while at the same
 “time, ‘all live to God.’ But He was born into the life
 “to which He died, a thing true of Him as of any other
 “man, while above and beyond that, there was in Him that
 “Eternal life, which was with the Father, which Scripture
 “never speaks of as ‘born’ at all. It is said in John i. :
 “‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God,’ and
 “‘the Word *became* flesh.’ That it did so at the time of
 “His *birth*, which is recorded elsewhere, as also the
 “manner of it, is true, but Scripture is wiser than man.
 “And the word ‘born’ is not predicated of it in John i,
 “1. He is there ‘the only begotten of the Father,’ not
 “born of a woman, nor so ‘begettable.’ The life, in
 “which He was ‘born,’ was the expression of entirely
 “different relationships. To confound them is to confound
 “things divine and human—things heavenly and things
 “earthly—things Christian and things Jewish—things
 “spiritual and things carnal. In His manhood He fulfilled
 “all the lower relationships, but that was not the expres-
 “sion of the higher relationship. All He could possibly
 “be to man could not express what He was to God. This
 “He might express to man and bring man into; that is,
 “into His own relationship with the Father by the Spirit—
 “but then it was what He was Himself to God the Father
 “He so expressed, and not what He was to man. A
 “babe in the manger could in no wise express what He
 “was as ‘the only begotten’ with the Father, one with Him

“ from before all worlds in undefined fulness and infinite
 “ perfection of unclouded communion. A babe has not
 “ such communion. That such a thought should enter an
 “ intelligent Christian’s mind seems strange in the extreme.
 “ Now if Christ was not able to enter into relationship
 “ and sympathy with Israel, in the place where *they were*
 “ suffering governmentally from the hand of God,
 “ independently of his own eternal relationship with the
 “ Father, in which He did not suffer, and could not suffer
 “ at His hands, we have lost all the preciousness of His
 “ sufferings, as depicted in the Psalms, and we have lost
 “ His Eternal Sonship. That He was, is the Eternal Son,
 “ Jehovah Himself, the ‘I am’ whom we find in the
 “ Psalms ‘lifted up’ and ‘cast down,’ ‘withered like
 “ grass’ and humbled to the lowest point, even unto death,
 “ is the stronghold of faith, the refuge of the suffering
 “ people of God, the assurance of their deliverance and
 “ glory; but that shows plainly that these sufferings and
 “ this humiliation are not the expression of that glorious
 “ power which He will manifest by and bye on their
 “ behalf—that in fact this one range of relationships is
 “ distinct from, and in no way expressed by the other,
 “ although He is the same Person who is found in them
 “ both. That all He did and was in one set of relation-
 “ ships was in divine harmony with all He was in the other.
 “ is surely true, but to say that what He did in the lower
 “ life was the expression of all He was in the upper is
 “ surely to reduce the upper to the level of the lower,
 “ while His great desire for us is to bring us to the upper,
 “ John xvii., 24—a thing which as regards the sphere of
 “ display is *impossible here below*—and, if what I say is
 “ true (in the main with perhaps more in detail) Christian
 “ men will do well to consider ere they divide, seeing that
 “ Christianity is involved in the division.”

The blasphemy of this letter is only equalled by its
 audacious dictating as to what God could do, and what
 He could not do, what He could beget and what He could
 not beget. It is the outcome of mind and reason—mere

mind reasoning in its own finite and infidel capacity upon what is beyond it and infinite. I need not point out the two Christs made out in it, one who could die and one who could not, one who could be begotten and one who was not begettable, but I would remark that if our Lord died merely in "a life of relationship with men," He never died to God at all, and no Atonement whatever was made.

Many, I am sure, will feel with me that it is not a mere matter of Brethren, but of Christianity amongst Brethren, if these views are permitted amongst us. I have seen letters, in the same strain, alas! by others, too surely showing how the evil spreads.

I cannot, dare not, dear reader, leave you with this poison alone before you. I will give a quotation from the Synopsis, speaking of "the life of Jesus on earth:" "God shines through His position in the human body; "for He was necessarily God in the act itself of His "humiliation; and none but God could have undertaken "and been found in it; yet He was always and entirely "and perfectly obedient and dependent on God. That "which revealed itself in His existence on earth was the "expression of that which was accomplished in the "eternal abode, in His own nature. That is to say (and "of this Ps. xl. speaks), that which He declares, and that "which He was here below, are the same thing; the one "in reality in heaven, the other bodily on earth. That "which He was here below was but the expression, the "living, real, bodily manifestation of what is contained in "those divine communications which have been revealed "to us, and which were the reality of the position that "He assumed."

I add a quotation from a warning letter by beloved Mr. Darby:—

"Our precious Saviour was Man, as truly as I am, as "regards the simple abstract idea of humanity but without "sin, miraculously born by divine power, and more than "this, He was 'God manifest in flesh.'

"Now having said so much, I entreat you with all my

“ heartnot to try to define, and to discuss the Person of
 “ our precious Saviour. You will lose the savour of Christ
 “ in your thoughts, and you will get in its place only the
 “ barrenness of the human mind in the things of Christ,
 “ and in the affections which belong to them. It is a
 “ labyrinth for man, because he works from his own
 “ resources. It is as if one were to dissect the body of
 “ one’s friend, instead of delighting in his affections and his
 “ character. In the Church, it is one of the worst signs I
 “ have met with. It is very sad to get into this way ; very
 “ sad that this should be shewn in such a light before the
 “ Church of God and before the world. I would add that
 “ so deep is my conviction of man’s incapacity in this
 “ matter, and that it is outside the teaching of the Spirit
 “ to wish to define the manner of the union of divinity
 “ and humanity in Jesus, that I am quite ready to suppose
 “ that even while desiring to avoid it, I may have fallen
 “ into it, and thus may have spoken in a mistaken way in
 “ something which I have said to you.

“ That He was truly Man, Son of Man, dependent on
 “ God as such, and without sin in that condition of depen-
 “ dence—truly God in all His ineffable perfection—this I
 “ hold, I trust, dearer than life. To define everything is
 “ what I do not presume to do. ‘ No man knoweth the
 “ Son, but the Father.’ If I find anything which weakens
 “ one or the other of these truths, or which dishonours
 “ Him who is their subject, I shall oppose it with all my
 “ might, as God may call me to do so.

“ May God grant you to believe all which the Word
 “ teaches with regard to Him, Jesus. It is our food and
 “ sustenance to understand all which the Spirit has given
 “ us to understand, and not to seek to define that which
 “ God does not call upon us to define, but to adore on the
 “ one hand, and to feed upon the other, and to live in
 “ every way according to the grace of the Holy Spirit.”

May, 1890.

P. A. H.

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