

AN OPEN LETTER

TO

MR. F. E. RAVEN.

—
No. 2. — “The Gospel.”

FOR two years I have closely watched the development of your doctrine. Together with much that, I frankly acknowledge, is helpful in the way of elucidating Scripture, there is much more that, I am deeply convinced, darkens the counsel of God with human words. I am amazed at the extraordinary power which the very contradictions and inconsistency of the teaching have won over so many minds; but I believe that the explanation is not far to seek. Like much of the “Holiness teaching” which is current to-day, your system—whilst speaking so much *about* “the first man being gone”—appeals very strongly to man’s spiritual pride and selfishness. Ostensibly, your teaching seems to make little of “Brethren,” yet actually it produces, and must produce, the opposite result—exalting “Brethren” to the pinnacle of the Temple, to think that “we” are the people, and to despise others. SELF becomes a centre, and “OUR fellowship” is made the circle for the

saints' affections, instead of the Church which is so dear to CHRIST. And while, again, you speak so plausibly—I had almost said, flatteringly—*about* the Gospel, and those who preach it, it is remarkable how *the whole drift of your teaching is against the Gospel, and is fatal to it.*

The very backbone of the Gospel (Rom. i. 16 and 17), has been struck at,—you have denied that it is any part of the Righteousness of God to raise CHRIST from the dead, and to set the believer with Him in glory.

The whole of that side of the Gospel which is connected with what is known amongst us as "Deliverance," has been mysticized and falsified by the most unscriptural teaching that "the first man is gone in the Cross," and that the Gospel merely gives us a *title* to die—that *we have to die* to sin, etc.,—instead of the grand, simple, absolute declaration of the Gospel, true of EVERY BELIEVER: "YE HAVE DIED, and your life is hid with CHRIST in God."

As to "Deliverance," of course I quite agree that it is *experimental*, that it does not stand in word or doctrine, but in THE POWER OF GOD. But, thank God, there are still some despised and black-balled ones

amongst us who can say, by His mighty grace, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is THE POWER OF GOD unto salvation to EVERY BELIEVER!"

As to "the first man being gone in the Cross," the confusion of your teaching is the result of confounding "the first man" and "the old man" on the one hand, and "our old man" and "our old nature" on the other. The contrast of the first and second man is brought out in 1 Cor. xv., where the subject of the chapter is THE RESURRECTION. Verse 47 tells us that "the first man is of the earth, earthy"—the first man was made *from* the earth and *for* the earth; the first-man state is a state *suitable for Earth*. It is only ended at death, or the coming of the LORD. Connected with "the first man" is the divine institution of marriage, recognised, surely, by God, distinctly, in His Word, and in connection with Christianity. It is, then, nonsense to say that God does not recognise "the first man." In the very breaking of the bread and drinking of the wine, when we show forth our dear LORD's death in His Own chosen, simple way, the fact that we are still in the first-man state is distinctly recognised. We shall not eat bread and drink wine in Heaven. Now, in contrast with "the first man," we are

told that "the second man is from Heaven;" the second man is *from* Heaven and *for* Heaven; the second-man state is a state *suitable for Heaven*, and we only enter upon it in resurrection, where "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven." In the present (first-man) state "we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven." The unscriptural teaching that the first man is gone, is really the revival, in a subtle form, of the ancient heresy that "the Resurrection is past already." (2 Tim. ii. 18.)

Then again, the contrast between "the first man" and "the old man" is most marked in Scripture. There is nothing whatever sinful, *per se*, about "the first man." It is simply man in the condition of flesh and blood (1 Cor. xv. 50), and the blessed LORD Himself, in matchless, infinite grace, stooped down from Heaven to earth and actually "took part in the same." The first man is *for* the earth, and sustained *from* the earth, and we do not put him off until the LORD comes to take us Home; but, as to "the old man," Eph. iv. 22 tells us that we *have* "put off the old man, *which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.*" Blessed be God, the Gospel for

simple faith is, that “our old man was crucified with CHRIST,” Rom. vi. 6. This is what God has effected in the Cross of CHRIST for EVERY BELIEVER.

But now, lastly, the contrast between what Scripture calls “our old man” and what we call “our old nature,” is just as clearly defined in the Word of God, though you, following J. B. S. and others, uniformly confound them together. To put it in a nutshell, “*our old man*” is the man in the flesh, whilst “*our old nature*” is the flesh in the man!* The precious Gospel tells us that “our old man was crucified with CHRIST.” *As a sinner*, I have died with CHRIST. This is absolutely true of the believer; it is what God has effected in the Cross of CHRIST. *As a sinner*, I no longer live before God. “I have been crucified with

* Let the many different ways in which the term “flesh” is employed in Scripture be carefully noted—*e.g.*, to refer only to a few instances in one epistle:—

Rom. vi. 19 is simply the body, this mortal frame.

“ vii. 18 is clearly *not* the body, but the old carnal nature.

“ viii. 8, 9 is neither the body nor the old carnal nature, but the old condition of things in which we were as sinners before God.

“ iii. 20 is something again different; it is simply another word for “man,” whilst

“ i. 3 is clearly quite distinct from any one of the foregoing.

CHRIST" (Gal. ii. 20.)† In the death of CHRIST I have passed out of the old condition of things in which I was as a sinner before God. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you," Rom. viii. 9. This is absolutely true of the believer. "*Our old man*" is actually, and for ever, gone in the Cross, just as all our sins are actually and for ever gone; but, "*our old nature*" is actually still in us, though condemned. Consequently, the same sin may characterise me now as before. Alas! if it be so: for, if I sin now, it is a saint of God who sins. As a sinner, I absolutely do not exist, and never can again before God. But the old nature does exist in me, the same as ever, unchanged and unchangeable. If, therefore, the believer sins, it is not "a little bit of the old man showing himself"—to speak in that way is to deny what God has effected in the Cross of CHRIST, and to palliate the thought of the real character of sin—but it is, as associated with "*the new man,*" that he has

† This is the correct translation. Except as a kind of abstract statement, it is really nonsense to say, "I am crucified with CHRIST," for the simple reason that CHRIST is not crucified. If it is a question of present time, CHRIST is not dead,—He is alive for evermore! CHRIST is not crucified,—He is glorified! But, blessed fact, CHRIST has died, and the Gospel is that I, as a sinner, have died with Him! CHRIST has been crucified, and "I have been crucified with Christ!" The scene of this crucifixion is not in myself at all, but it was away upon Calvary. There is a present result, of course, effected by the Holy Spirit in the believer—viz., "the body of sin destroyed, &c." (Rom. vi. 6).

allowed the old nature to work, which makes it so deeply solemn. Whilst, then, the precious Gospel tells us that "Our old man was crucified with CHRIST," *i.e.*, what GOD has effected for us in the Cross, Gal. v. 24 tells us that "They that are CHRIST'S have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," *i.e.*, the ground which WE take up in regard to the sinful nature which is still in us. The power to take up this ground is, of course, the Holy Spirit, "received by the hearing of faith." (Rom. viii. 10-13.) When I put to my seal that God is true, by believing the Gospel of what He has effected for me in the Cross of CHRIST, then God also puts to His seal to the same precious Gospel, by giving me His Own blessed Spirit to be the power, in my soul, of the emancipating truth which I have believed. (Acts. v. 32; 2 Cor. i. 22; Gal. iii. 1-2; Eph. i. 13; etc.). Thus, "the body of sin" is destroyed (Rom. vi. 6), and from "the body of death" we are delivered (Rom. vii. 24); "the law of sin and death," which once controlled and characterised our mortal frame, is superseded in its dominion over us by "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. viii. 2); and this mortal body, in which I still live, instead of being a "body of sin," as in Rom. vi., or a "body of death," as in Rom. vii., becomes even now a vessel for the display of the very life of JESUS, and soon will be a "body of glory," as in Rom. viii., like unto my LORD'S! All is so divinely simple, for simple souls, and so infinitely precious, in "the Gospel of OUR Salvation."

By arbitrarily severing the sovereign work of God in the soul from the in-

strumentality which God, in His sovereignty, may be pleased to use, *e.g.*, His Own Word, you have entirely and utterly falsified our responsibility in regard to the unconverted. So that it is actually held, and publicly taught, and pressed amongst us now,—

(1.) That all the Evangelist does is to bring the light of the Gospel to *newborn* souls!

(2.) That souls are saved from Hell by the sovereign work of God in them, *which is always, and absolutely, apart from any instrumentality or human agency!*

(3.) That the salvation of the Gospel is not a salvation from Hell, but merely from the course of things here!

(4.) That weeping over perishing sinners and agonising for lost souls is all sentiment!

Your brother in CHRIST,

ARTHUR KLEIN.

Blyth, May 1899.

(Underscoring on p. 4 not in the original.)

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