
RAVENISM

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RAVENISM is a system of error which has developed from the teachings of F. E. Raven. This error is now held and taught by disciples of Raven. Some, who evidently hold and teach the Raven false doctrines would, no doubt, disavow that they are Raven's disciples. Scripture assures us that by their fruits we shall know them. Unfortunately these disciples are not confined to the Raven fellowship (so called). Some are within our gates. They have come in by the avenue of what is now considered a questionable recognition of fellowship dating from 1909. For this reason, mainly, we are concerned with Ravenism.

Ravenism differs from Russelism, Seventh-Day Adventism, Christian Science and other popular systems of error, in that it is the product of a prominent and highly esteemed leader among Brethren (so called) and is the direct outcome of his teachings. To make any appeal to this class of Christians it is evident that the system must possess a high degree of apparent spirituality, present the "truth" in the characteristic "Brethren" style of ministry and proceed from a person of supposed competency in the Scriptures. The average assembly among "Brethren" would make short work of the grosser forms of error, such as those above mentioned, were they to spring up in their midst. However much

the "Brethren" have failed in the practical application of the truth which the Lord has graciously revealed among them, in the main they have been fundamentally sound doctrinally and have kept the word of the Lord with "a little strength." What a masterpiece of deception, therefore, must that system be which could gain any allowance or acceptance among such a class of Christians. Alas! to their shame, "while men slept" the enemy came and sowed tares among them.

For these simple reasons we should expect to find in Ravenism an exceedingly subtle form of error which would be capable of deceiving to a profound degree. Furthermore we should expect the personality of the human author to be attractive, refined, cultivated and lofty; but self-complacent, self-prominent, self-authoritative; and in expression evasive, obscure, ambiguous; his word giving the impression of finality, and considering discussion with objectors a condescension. In pursuing the writings of Raven, one is struck with the repeated use of the personal pronoun. Such expressions as the following constantly occur: "I conclude;" "I could almost say;" "I have thought;" "I see;" "I have to say;" "I affirm;" "I proceed to show;" "I have indicated;" "I may observe;" "I judge;" "I think;" "I find;" "I do not like;" "I am sure;" "I said;" "I suppose;" "I regard it;" "I had maintained;" "I doubt not." Scripture is quoted and referred to; but the doctrine and assertions are Raven's, as likewise the as-

sumption of a superiority which would seem to constitute him the appointed mouthpiece of Scripture itself. In effect the Word of God is overshadowed by his personality, and practically becomes secondary to his teachings and interpretations.

The denial of the true humanity of Christ is the essence of Ravenism. The true humanity of Christ is absolutely essential to Christianity. To deny His true humanity is a no less weighty matter than to deny His Deity. Dare any one assert that such a denial is not fundamental error? O foolish brethren, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Are you willing to deny the Name of Him Who is holy, Who is true, for the sake of a false peace among brethren? Know you not that you are partakers of the evil when you stand idly by, insisting on peace, at the expense of righteousness? Will you plead that we should hold our peace, on the holy subject of the Lord's Person? Is it righteous to keep silence and do nothing, where our Christian fellowship links us with unholy, injurious and shocking doctrine concerning the Person of Christ? Will you misapply Scripture itself to justify such a course? Will that Scripture justify or judge? It is quoted that "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." True, in the deep and holy mystery of His Person, "no man knoweth the Son." But we DO KNOW what God has been pleased to reveal to us concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, unless we have failed to study our

Bibles in His holy presence. We are not seeking to explain the mystery of His Person. Woe to him who attempts to do it. But, if you were asked, "Do you believe in the Deity of Christ" would you answer, "No man knoweth the Son?" And again if you were asked "Do you believe in the true humanity of Christ" would you answer in like manner? Shame and pity upon us if we have to use (or misuse) such a scripture to excuse our unwillingness to face a simple and clean-cut fundamental issue which the Word of God settles for us on almost every page from cover to cover.

In 1889 Mr. Raven stated in his paper "The Person of the Christ" as follows:

"He lays down His life (human condition) to take it again."

"He gives His flesh for the life of the world."

"We have thus a divine Person presented."

"The truth of a divine Person assuming human condition."

"The assertion of the second (the union in Him of God and Man) is derogatory and dishonouring to the Son."

"The second error maintains that the truth of Christ's Person consists in the union in Him of God and Man."

In Mr. Raven's thoughts the expression God and Man, One Person; the union in Him of God and Man,

“Involves a thought very derogatory to the truth of the Son, that in becoming Man a change has taken place as to His Person—He is IN PERSON something which He was not before.”

Similar statements, denying the true humanity of Christ, are found in the Quemerford Notes, 1895, and volume 19, pages 92-94;

Christ “is not Man in the sense that He is God . . . In Person He is God, in condition He is Man.”

“The same Person abides, though the condition be changed.”

“Every Scripture which definitely refers to the incarnation speaks of it as the assumption by Christ of a form or condition.”

“One Who is in Person divine . . . took on Him a form and condition.”

However obscure and ambiguous Raven's expressions are, it is perfectly clear from the trend of thought in the above quoted statements, that the Man in Raven's mind is not the real Man of the Scriptures.

But the error in question involves more than the denial of the real humanity of Christ. It strikes at the atonement and levels the whole structure of Christian truth, to say nothing of the other serious errors taught by Raven. What kind of an atonement is this

that Raven would have us believe, in place of the atonement of the Scriptures? Raven's atonement consists in our Lord laying down a "human condition." Scripture teaches that He gave HIMSELF for us and for our sins. He gave HIMSELF a ransom for all. He gave His LIFE a ransom for many. The Good Shepherd gave His LIFE for the sheep. He died a sacrificial death on the cross and bore the judgment of God on our behalf. He separated His human spirit and soul from His human body. He laid down His LIFE and died an atoning death on the cross. The Man of Raven's doctrine is a mere **CONDITION**. He is nothing; He does not exist; He never did exist. Ravenism therefore robs us of our Saviour, and destroys the gospel. Is it any wonder that Ravenism has paralyzed gospel effort wherever its influence has spread? It has well been referred to as "an ever recurring blight."

Raven denied the truth of the union of God and Man in one Person. He stated "We have thus a **DIVINE** Person presented;" "the truth of a **DIVINE** Person assuming human **CONDITION**." There is no real personal humanity in this. Raven taught that the union in our Lord of God and Man involves "that in becoming Man a change has taken place as to His Person," maintaining against this that "the Person never changes." But Raven did not show that the union in Him of God and Man changes His Person; he merely stated it; and without doubt many have been fooled by this clever stroke.

Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today and forever,"—He is the same Person, unchanged and unchangeable. Psalm 102.27.

History has proven that Ravenism exerts a singular and lasting influence on the soul that has caught its infection. Its defiling properties are astounding. Ravenism is a formidable but subtle foe, and the only safeguard is to meet it with a firm resistance, in self-judgment and submission to God; and the taking of a stand of separation from those who, either directly or indirectly, have association with it.

May the Lord hastily deliver His saints from the snare of Ravenism.

April, 1929.

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