

**Demonstration of Errors in the New Teaching
as affording opportunity for presenting the Truth.**

16. THE CHRISTIAN'S DISTINCTIVE HOPE DESTROYED.

The intention was to also expose the total loss of all that constitutes true *membership*, only it became superfluous in face of the fact as shown in the preceding Paper, that the very conception of what a "body" is according to the Scriptural figure, had *gone* for the author of this System, and hence the "members" that compose it (such as a "hand" or a "foot") could not but go with it. Nothing now remains in this Teaching but the vague kind of members like members of a partnership, a society, or a company. Thus the membership in God's Word has been slipped away from, which is expressed in the language of the Spirit as "members of Christ," *i.e.*, in relation to the *Head*, as "members of His body," *i.e.*, in relation to the *body* as such, and as "members one of another," *i.e.*, in relation to *each other*, and the members cannot be one without being all three, because, for the Mystic *Man*—Christ and the Church—there must be Head, body and members, forming a *spiritual* whole, as real as that of the human body, only not material, nay, as often pointed out, Spirit is more real than flesh though not material. It has, alas! dropped out not only in doctrine but in practice, for, important as membership in its true sense used to be regarded in connection with those seeking fellowship, it is either never spoken of in that relation, or, if mentioned at all, only to be ridiculed.

The Proper Hope of the Christian

is, however, what specially claims our attention for the present. You cannot, of course, expect any apprehension of the *corporate* hope of the *church*, as the body and bride of Christ, for nothing truly corporate is held now. But even the *individual* hope has vanished in this System, something of a totally different nature is substituted for it, and its legitimate effect, on the affections and their Object, destroyed. This, certainly, is not *new truth*; it is not even *new error*. Thrice before, at least, has a similar thing been attempted, but each time it was successfully resisted and efficiently exposed as of the enemy. How B.W.N. was met is well enough known. Later there was the refutation of G.J.W., and then of T.M. A few quotations from what was said in vindication of the truth at that time may be equally profitable now:—

"Whatever may be the Divine reasons for referring us to the Lord's appearing as a time of blessing or in connection with our responsibility (and Scripture does both) it is perfectly certain that it is not meant that we shall not be *with* Christ when He appears, nor that we shall be personally on earth as others are, so that He will appear to us and to the earth at the same time. This we know to be false doctrine, because the Word tells us we shall then appear, or be manifested, along with Him. But we learn more of the teaching of those who would persuade us of it. The aim of that teaching, its direct and necessary tendency is to destroy our distinctive relationship with Christ, and to connect us with the world, reducing us to the lowest

possible level of *hope*, which can be true of one not actually lost. Our proper heavenly connection with Christ is lost. This aim is accompanied by so obvious a loss of spiritual intelligence, such an obliteration of the positive teaching of Christ and the Holy Ghost, that it becomes at once evident to those not under its influence what its source is."

"The church's joining Christ has nothing to do with Christ's appearing or coming to earth. Her place is elsewhere. She sits in Him already in heavenly places. She has to be brought there as to bodily presence. Christ could not remain with His disciples here, and tells them 'I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also.' The thing she has to expect for herself, then, is not, though sure of that, Christ's appearing, but her being taken up where He is. And so, by the Apostle, 'We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' We go up to meet Christ in the air. Nothing clearer, then, than that we are to go up to meet Him, and not to await His coming to earth." "He who awaits Christ's appearing as to the time in which he is to go up to be with Him, has denied the proper hope and the proper relationship of the church with Christ. On this point there can be no compromise. Ignorance of privilege is one thing (it is our lot, all of us, in one shape or other), the denial of it another. When once we have seen that we are to appear *with* Christ, and that, consequently, our hope of Christ's coming *for* us, is not properly His appearing, all our habits of thought, and our spiritual affections, are changed. Our proper hope is not even the glory in which we appear with Him, wonderful as that is, but this, 'I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.' The Christian's hope is not a prophetic subject at all. It is the promise that Christ will come and receive him to Himself." So much for the second endeavour to bring in this error and its complete discomfiture.

As for the third attempt by T.M. that the error, which was then so conclusively refuted, should, after the publication of such an unanswerable reply as "Is the coming of Christ for His saints the proper hope of the church?" re-appear at the present time is as solemn as it is remarkable. An extract or two, to show how the evil was faced and disallowed, will further elucidate and confirm the truth. T.M. had said: "Not only are we to serve the Lord till the appearing, but the appearing itself is our blessed hope." The distinct and unequivocal answer to this was: "It is clearly and distinctly revealed that, when Christ appears, we shall appear with Him in glory; and, therefore, it is simply impossible that we should be on the earth *till* His appearing, and, 'at that time,' because we appear with Him from heaven at that time."

"I will quote some passages which give plainly the distinctive hope of the saint. John xiv. 2-3, John xvii. 24, 1 Thes. iv. 17. Now, all these show that the proper hope of the Christian is not Christ's appearing—is not even glory as displayed in the world, not to be at the right hand or the left hand in the kingdom, glorious, and undeserved as it may be—but to be with Christ Himself. That is not the appearing. It is another kind of hope, a hope of another nature altogether. It is

to be with Himself for ever, and in the Father's house. The obliterating of the distinction of going thus up to be for ever with the Lord falsifies morally the nature of the church's hope. The presenting to Himself, the receiving to Himself that where He is we may be, the being for ever with the Lord, is swamped in the appearing in glory. The proper hope, the special joy, what is the essence of Christ's coming for the saint who knows what the saint's place is, is wholly, totally, absent from the tract.

As regards the dealings and ways of God in *government*, the day, the appearing of Christ, is the great and solemn epoch set before us, and then we shall appear in glory each in the place assigned him with Him. Hence, this is set before us as the great public announcement to all. But God has something for the affections and heart of those who love the Lord, which is (not the display of glory but) being with Him in the common and individual joy of His presence, with Him in the Father's house. This is not the appearing, nor can it be. Many minds may be ignorant as to a Jewish remnant and the like, nor is it in itself any reproach, but to use passages (which require that knowledge) to obscure the highest and best hopes of the soul is the enemy's work. T.M. denies the proper hope of the church in this tract. I am conscious this may seem hard, but there is a time to be silent and a time to speak. Evil is not ashamed and truth ought not to be. I believe it is a time to speak. I have nothing to do with the intention of Mr. M., but with the teaching of his tracts."

Thank God, these several efforts of the adversary to deprive the Christian of his distinctive hope were promptly dealt with and frustrated, while the error was fully exposed from Scripture and the truth maintained. Whatever shape the error took, whether the *denial* of the rapture before the appearing and putting the church through the tribulation; the making *both* mean the *same* thing, or the *blotting* out all distinction between the coming of the Lord *for* His saints, and His afterwards appearing *with* them, the common result was: (1) to make the *appearing* "our blessed hope" instead of the Lord's own promise of the *coming* of Himself to receive us to Himself; and (2) to alter the immediate object of expectation from Christ to *anti-Christ*, for the appearing, or the day, cannot come till the "man of sin be revealed," and this would necessarily have to be looked for first.

But, notwithstanding all this faithful resistance and triumphant rejection of the evil each time it showed itself, and which might have been written for the present moment, not for B.W.N., G.J.W., or T.M., but for F.E.R. was it reserved to re-introduce that old and oft-refuted error in the *most subtle* form in which it had ever yet appeared. The same wolf assuredly, but this time in the clothing of the sheep. Satan knew it was useless to try the bald *denial* of the rapture at this time of day. It had been too clearly proved from Scripture, and too much light had been shed on the subject for that to gain a hearing. He, therefore, changed his tactics, to suit the occasion and to effect his purpose with a better result this time in another way. Having carefully selected his instrument, he employed F.E.R. as his tool, who, so far from, like some, *denying* the rapture, or, like others, making the rapture and the appearing the *same*, pretended to fully *admit* it, as well as the *distinction* between the two. The consequence was, that saints

off their guard fell an easy prey to this most insidious and seductive wile of the tempter, which, while *professedly* assenting to the Lord's coming for us, and the catching of us up to meet Him in the air, nevertheless *actually* so overshadowed the rapture by the appearing that it became swallowed up in the latter, and was, in other words, simply tantamount to denying the rapture altogether, while seeming to accept it. I say *seeming*, because no one, who *really* believed in the rapture of the saints *before* the appearing, unless it had become nullified in his mind, could possibly make the *appearing* the hope. Yet this is what F.E.R. did and openly declared as unmistakably as any of his predecessors. Space forbids more than a single quotation from his published writings, but it will be sufficient to prove what we affirm:—

"My point, therefore, is to bring before you the truth of *display* as the *hope* of the Christian. But when I speak of the coming of the Lord, you must not misunderstand what I mean. I am not referring to the rapture, but to the coming of Christ in glory: He comes to establish the kingdom." (F.E.R., Vol. I. The Service of Grace. Display, p. 81).

If this was of Satan when taught before and demonstrated to be so, it is quite as much of Satan now, nay more so, since the wiliness and deceptiveness with which it is this time distinguished, so much the more manifest it to be the work of the deceiver. Observe how the rapture is admitted, yet disclaimed to be the hope of the Christian, and the appearing or the "coming of Christ in glory," the "truth of display," emphatically stated to be the hope, just the same error as previously, only more cunningly introduced, and hence more dangerous than ever.

The appearing is something common to Christians, Jews, and the world. You may call it the hope of the Jews and the earth if you will, but it is certainly not the proper hope of the Christian, who will be with the Lord long before then. The day of vengeance cannot come till the objects of vengeance are there. Anti-Christ has to come on the scene. Is that the hope of the Christian? Nay, verily. Jews and the world have no part in his hope, which is special and peculiar, viz., the Morning Star before the day, a blessed heavenly hope prior to the appearing. At a reading on John xiv, "I will come again and receive you unto myself" was denied by F.E.R. to be the rapture, and, in another place, "The Spirit and the bride say Come" was declared to be the appearing.

But, perhaps the most astonishing feature of all has been the readiness with which the baited hook was swallowed. The error itself is not new, but old, with a false face. Nevertheless, the manner in which it has been received is altogether new, yea, unprecedented. Hitherto, as often as it cropped up, it was decidedly refused as evil. But now, sad to say, that which had always been unhesitatingly exposed, disowned, and rejected as of Satan, as false doctrine and error, has positively been welcomed as new light from God and blessed truth! A strange delusion surely, yet those under its influence seem totally unaware of the deception practised on them, and are apparently quite content to remain ensnared, though one here and there is found unable to stand it, and purges himself from it.

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