

THAT BLESSED HOPE

by Cecil Y. Biss

Biss's exposition of the 'blessed hope' of Christ's return, examining the biblical teaching on the second coming, the rapture, and the consummation of God's redemptive plan as the believer's greatest source of encouragement.

4 Chapters

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01 - The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

CHAPTER 1 THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST The Hope of His People

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven".

Acts 1:11

"Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come".

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 The first of these passages shows us that it was the desire of our Lord, when He left His disciples, that they should look forward with hope to His Personal Return; the second proves that the Apostle Paul, and by inference the other Apostles, in the instruction they gave to the Churches of their day—and through their writings to ourselves also—were in the habit of presenting the subject in the same way. They taught the people of God to look for their Lord's return from heaven, and to expect that His coming would be visible, personal, and real: as real, personal, and visible as His departure had been when He ascended from Mount Olivet and passed out of their sight into heaven. This great event of the future was set before the Church as its corporate hope, and it was also represented as the hope of each individual believer.

Connected with this truth are spiritual lessons of the deepest comfort and of the most practical character. Such teaching is found throughout the Epistles, and culminates in the closing words of Scripture, "Behold, I come quickly. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus". Unless we were to say, therefore, that the circumstances of the case had in some way materially altered, we should certainly conclude that the Personal Return of the Lord yet stands before us as our hope, and that this truth has the same relation to our consolation and sanctification as it had to that of the believers whom the Apostles personally instructed.

Now let us consider how we ourselves, and Christians generally, have been taught to regard these things. Can it be said of the various bodies into which the professing Church is divided, or of any large number of their individual members, that there is any real sense in which they are habitually instructed "to wait for the Son of God from heaven"? That the Lord will some day return is commonly believed: it is, indeed, still held as a foundation truth by many; but perhaps the words, "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge", would best express the attitude of their minds towards it. It is obvious that such an aspect of the matter is anything rather than that of hope. With others the thought of the personal Return of the Lord has been superseded by that of a spiritual and invisible Coming. Whatever may be their expectation, it is something wholly unlike the personal and visible appearing of their Lord from heaven. To others, again, accustomed as they have been to refer all passages of this class to the hour of death, the Coming of the Lord resolves itself into the thought of a dissolution of soul and body, and their hope is to realize the joy of heaven in a disembodied condition of existence—this expectation being, however, the exact reverse of that which Paul cherished for himself, as we see by his words, "Not for that we would be

unclothed, but clothed upon (i.e., with our house which is from heaven), that mortality might be swallowed up of life". But death is certainly not the Coming of the Lord for us: it is rather our going to be with Him where He is. In none, therefore, of these aspects (and in one or other of them it is generally regarded amongst Christians) can the Coming of the Lord be said to be viewed as the Believer's hope. Surely there is, then, a great contrast between the way in which this truth is presented in Scripture, and the experience of Christians regarding it. Let us inquire how such a divergence from Scriptural teaching has come about.

It seems unquestionable that it was the desire of our Lord, when He left His people in the world and went to the Father, that they should look onward with yearning desire to the time of His return; for in the 14th chapter of John we find Him saying, "If I go away I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also". This, be it observed, is a corporate, and not merely an individual hope, for the disciples to whom these words were addressed represent in that chapter, as elsewhere, the Church as a whole, according to the words, "them also which shall believe on Me through their word", This point is of great importance. No doubt a corporate hope is an individual hope, but the reverse is not necessarily true: the Coming of the Lord, however, as set forth in the promise just quoted, is The Hope of His Church

These words must refer, then, to an event which will come to all His people at once and together, and, as such, accord perfectly with the promise in Thessalonians: "The dead (saints) in Christ shall rise first: then we which 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words". The promise of the Lord, in the 14th of John, was, moreover, a promise to return in person, and to receive His waiting people to Himself not individually and at different times, but corporately and together: and His desire was that throughout the Church's history down to the end of the age, this should be realized as a comforting and sanctifying hope. Moreover, we can easily see that while death (the death of individual believers, I mean) would not satisfy the meaning of these words, nor fulfill the hope sanctioned by this promise, so neither would death nullify that hope. The hope that the Lord would come according to His promise; the hope that all His people, changed into the likeness of His glory, would be received unto Himself, and would dwell with Him for ever—this hope would not be frustrated by death; for those who were alive and remained unto the Coming of the Lord would not precede those who were asleep, but would be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. Let us realize at once, therefore, before entering further into the subject, that the passage in Thessalonians just quoted, shows that the saints who should fall asleep in Jesus before His return, were not to be deprived or disappointed of that for which they had hoped, but would enjoy its realization in resurrection; while by the surviving ones the hope of seeing their Lord without passing through death would be attained. These two classes into which the Church will be divided at the time of the Advent, appear to have been in the view of the Lord Jesus when He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (these are the saints who rise in the First Resurrection), "and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (these words describe those "who are alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord"). Compare John 11:25-26, with 1 Corinthians 15:51.

We have seen that the hope of the Lord's Return has been practically lost by His Church; and it may be profitable to inquire how this has come to pass. The reason is not hard to find. The Lord Jesus Himself, and His Apostles likewise, clearly taught that after His departure, and theirs, the

history of the Church would become one of corruption and of failure; that His truth would be leavened by the admixture of evil doctrine, and the membership of the Church corrupted by the secret sowing of "tares" among the "wheat": and that this has actually occurred. The History of Christendom in the past, and its present obvious aspect, amply prove. We have only to contemplate the divided condition of those who profess and call themselves Christians, and the many differences which prevail among them respecting all parts of Revealed Truth, to see how far the Church is from what it was when "all who believed were together, and abode steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship". The primitive aspect of many a holy doctrine has become changed, and amongst the many corruptions which have fallen like a blight upon the Church at large, worldliness is prominent. Christians by mingling with the world, imbibing its spirit, adopting its principals, sharing its amusements, have sunk to the level of its outlook; and instead of realizing the utter failure of their testimony, are boasting, as worldlings do, about a golden age in the future, when the world shall be renovated and assimilated to heaven by their own instrumentality. They forget that the Lord Himself has taught us that "as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man": and that until holy retribution has fallen upon iniquity, and the earth been swept with the besom of judgment, the Kingdom of Heaven cannot come, nor the Millennial Age of blessing dawn. Is it not declared on every side that the world is getting progressively better, and that this victory of good will culminate in complete triumph? But, on the contrary, is it not the solemn testimony of Scripture that the day of the Lord shall come upon an evil world and a corrupt Church, as the coming of a thief in the night; that "when they shall say peace and safety, sudden destruction shall come upon them"; and that before the wheat is gathered into the heavenly garner, the tares must be removed by an act of judgment out of its midst? [1] It is easy, therefore, to see that, in proportion as truth became corrupted, the Church's outlook into the future was changed, and its object of expectation became, not the Personal Return of its Lord from heaven, but its own triumph in the earth. In fact, the Church began to desire (to use the words of the Apostle) to "reign as kings before the time", and lost the pilgrim spirit to which alone the hope of the Lord's Coming is akin. Then the darkness deepened, and corruption abounded; so that when, in undeserved mercy, God, at the Reformation, rekindled the lamp of truth, the Reformers seem to have been able only to grapple with the corruptions by which the Gospel itself had been overlaid, while such truths as the character of this age and of its close, the Coming of the Lord, the future of Israel, and the separateness of the Church from the world, were not brought into view. Consequently, since then, even evangelical Christians, by whom the Gospel is truly perceived and valued, have, for the most part, been content to leave Prophetic Truth in the grave where it has so long lain buried; and the doctrine of the Lord's Personal Return is now either unheeded, or denied, by the majority of His people.

1. It has been shown that the Coming of the Lord is presented in Scripture as the Hope of His Church; and I am anxious we should see, in the first place, that it is essential to the realization of the hope connected with the Lord's Return, that His Coming will be a Personal One

"This same Jesus shall so come" "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven". It is impossible to evade the force of these words. Now what is hope? Is it not the combination of two elements, both of which are essential to its existence? Hope is not expectation merely, for my expectation may be of that which I dread. Neither is hope desire alone, for I may desire many things which I can never expect. But when these two principles unite, like a double-stranded rope, both elements

of which combine in every portion of its length, then we have HOPE. We desire that which we hope for, and we also expect it: our expectation is that which we desire. Our Lord has said, "Even so; I come quickly", and so we may expect His Coming because His truth and faithfulness make it certain: here is our expectation; but do we not also desire that which we expect? Is not the heart stimulated in its affections and yearnings by these blessed words? Is it not in response to them that we cry, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? Surely our desires should be towards the Person of our Lord, and He Himself the object of our affections? To see Him, to be with Him, and to be like Him—this is the crown of our hope. Now, take away the personal element from this hope and what remains? Would not the whole framework of its blessedness be destroyed? We seek not that which is the Lord's, but Himself. We desire, not that which He gives, but Himself, the Giver. We could not be content to dwell where He was not present.

"No place could make us happy Where Thou, O Lord, art not; To be for ever with Thee, By grace our happy lot."

See Matthew 13:49: "The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among (ek mesou, lit, out of the midst of) the just". The personal element, therefore, of the Lord's Return is necessary to its being realized as a hope. Faith in His word, and love towards His Person, combine in this hope. Thus it is that we wait for the Son of God from heaven. Not the Time but the Certainty

2. It will be well to show, in the next place, that the hope of the Lord's Coming is a hope whose essence, and whose power, whether to comfort or to sanctify, depend not upon the time of its realization, but upon the certainty of that realization. The attainment of an object of hope may be deferred, either with or without the knowledge of those who cherish that hope, without its practical effects upon them being neutralized; and this principal can be easily shown to be recognized alike in Scripture and our own experience of the affairs of life. Let us consider, however, in the first place, how the hope of the Lord's Coming is represented in Scripture in connection with the element of time.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. Every man that hath this hope founded upon Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure". Here is a passage which speaks of the Lord's Return and of the blessing which that Coming will bring to every member of His Church. We shall see Him in His glory; we shall be like Him; we shall be with Him—these are the elements of that comforting and sanctifying hope. Yet the passage says nothing regarding the time when its promises of blessing shall be realized, nor of the length of the intervening interval. "We know that when He shall appear", it says, but we are not told when; nor indeed is this necessary, for is it not the teaching of the passage that, from the holy fact that we shall then see and be like our Lord, springs the motive for our present purification of heart and life, apart from all question of time? To know that I shall one day—even though that day is not yet near—be with and like my Lord, is a mighty impulse to the soul in seeking practical conformity with Him now. A Little While

Again, look at Hebrews 10:37; "For yet a little while, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry"—words which were spoken to encourage the failing hearts of God's people in the midst of persecution and distress for Christ's sake. What is it that cheers and strengthens in this promise of the Lord's Return? Is it not the certainty, the unfailing certainty, that His Coming shall, in due

season, take place; that nothing shall prevent it; that this hope shall never disappoint the heart? But perhaps some may say, "No; the essence of this hope is found in the words "a little while", and if they to whom the promise was given had not believed that the Lord might have come in "a little while", that is, within their lifetime, the hope would have had no sustaining power for their souls". Now, is this so? By whom, let us ask, was this promise given? Was it not by the Lord Himself, who knew, though His people did not know, when His Return should take place? Could He, therefore, who knew that their whole lifetime as well as succeeding centuries, would elapse before the promise should be fulfilled, have spoken thus to mock their souls with a false hope? To say so would be blasphemy.

What alternative conclusion then remains? Clearly this, that the words "a little while" are used not after the manner of men, who reckon time by days, and months and years, and to whom a century is more than a lifetime, but after His, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, and who ever teaches His people to view earthly things from a heavenly standpoint. When He says, "Surely I come quickly", is not the interval implied in that word "quickly" to be measured, not by the length of the period between the time it was spoken and the time when it shall be realized, but by the brevity of that interval when compared with the infinite eternity of blessing stretching out beyond? Thus measured, would it not be but as a point compared with boundless space? Surely it was by this standard that the Apostle reckoned when he said, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". His affliction would not have been "light" unless weighed in the balance of the sanctuary over against an "exceeding weight of glory", and its duration would not have been for "a moment" unless it had been contrasted with an eternity of bliss. The Element of Time is not Essential to the realization of the comforting and sanctifying power of the hope of the Lord's Return. This has been shown from Scripture: is it not also a principle which has a natural place in the ordinary experience of our lives? The power of hope may be great, all-pervading and all-transforming to the heart which entertains it and to the life which is lived under its influence, even though it be well known that the object of hope cannot be soon attained. Thus we read of Jacob that "he served seven years for Rachel" whom he so greatly loved, and "they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had for her" (Genesis 29:20). The prospect of union with the beloved one of his heart was the all-pervading motive which acted throughout the whole interval, and influenced him in every moment of his time, every part of his life, while he waited for her. So, likewise, the mariner who steers his vessel by the light which shines from his cottage window on the yet distant shore, thinks not of the extent of the dark waters that roll between him and the land, but fixes his hope upon the prospect of reunion with the loved ones in that far off home, the interval of time and space being forgotten in the prospect of that anticipated, though deferred, joy. It is the certainty of this hope which influences the whole of his intervening course. And let us never forget, in this connection, that God's people are, by faith, the children of eternity. They are taught to view the things around them, not as worldlings do to whom the present is everything, but as anticipatively realizing by faith the glorious verities of the future. "We walk by faith, not by sight", looking not at "the things that are seen and temporal, but at those which are unseen and eternal". Now this principle enters into the subject before us. The Scripture nowhere teaches that the Lord's Coming is a hope only to those who may expect to realize it in their lifetime. The character of our hope is eternal, not temporal: its realization awaits us not in time, but eternity. We are taught to look onwards as those who look out of time into eternity. It is the forgetting of this which has marred the true enjoyment, and perverted

the right use of this hope in many a Christian heart. Our Lord—His Word Accurate

3. Moreover, we should seek to realize that not alone is it needful for the right ordering of our own souls that these principles should be perceived, but that it is absolutely necessary if we would defend, not only this doctrine, but the truthfulness of the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, and even of our Lord Himself and His Holy Word, that we should rightly apprehend and represent this truth; for we live in days when the scoffers whose coming was predicted in Scripture, have come. Would that such scoffing were only heard outside that which calls itself the Church; but alas, it is not so. Modern Rationalism, clothed in the garb of criticism, is ever pointing to what it is pleased to call the mistakes of our Lord and His Apostles concerning this matter, and even professing Christians sometimes allow, or, at least, speak very lightly of its objections. When we inquire what the mistake is, we are told (I quote the words of a recent writer) [2] "that St. Paul expected to be alive when Christ came; that later in life the hope of surviving till the Lord came alternated in his mind with the expectation of death; and that it is better to recognize the obvious fact that Paul was mistaken as to the nearness of the Second Advent than to torture his words to secure their infallibility". The following are the words of a German critic: [3] "No unprejudiced man can deny that Jesus Christ has erred, if His discourses have been correctly reported by the Evangelists. That He taught His disciples He might return from heaven at any moment after His departure from the world, and would certainly come in clouds during the lifetime of the existing generation, and so led the early Church to look for His appearing in their day, is indisputable. History has falsified the expectation, and criticism is justified in repudiating the old ideas of the infallibility of Jesus, and of the literal inspiration of the Scripture". To the foregoing may be added the following extract from a well-known English author:

"Let us choose a case where the mistake is undeniably clear. Such a case we find in the confident expectation and assertion, on the part of the New Testament writers, of the approaching end of the world. Even this mistake people try to explain away; but it is so palpable that no words can cloud our perception of it. 'The time is short'. 'The Lord is at hand'. 'The end of all things is at hand.' [4] 'Little children, it is the final time.' 'The Lord's Coming is at hand.' 'Behold, the Judge standeth at the door.' Nothing can really obscure the evidence furnished by such sayings as these. When Paul told the Thessalonians that they and he, at the approaching coming of Christ, should have their turn after, not before, the faithful dead: 'For the Lord Himself shall descend . . . in the air'—when he said this, St. Paul was purely simply mistaken in his notions of what was to happen. This is as clear as anything can be." [5]

If, then, we were to assert that our Lord and His Apostles taught the Church that His Coming might take place at any moment after He had left the world, we should be unable rightly to resist such objections. But if we examine the evidence upon which these charges are founded, we can readily trace two cardinal mistakes. The first is a misinterpretation of the Lord's predictions in the prophecy of Matthew 24:1-51, by which His words concerning the future judgments upon the nation, and the future tribulation in the land of Israel which is to be "immediately" succeeded by His Return in glory, are applied only to the past destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This error is due to the general loss of prophetic light in the Church of God, and the view so commonly held that there is no national future for Israel, but that God has cast away His people. Conjoined with this there usually is a mistaken interpretation of the words, "this generation shall not pass away until all these things have been fulfilled", regarding which it is only necessary to say that as the things

mentioned include "the Coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven", which certainly has not yet taken place, it is impossible to suppose that the word "generation" could have been intended by our Lord in the restricted sense of the race of men then living, and that it must be taken, as often elsewhere in Scripture, in a moral sense, exemplified by the phrases, "a righteous generation", "the generation of thy people", etc. Thus taken the expression is exactly true, for Israel is still a generation abiding in the same spiritually blinded state as when the words were first spoken. [6] The second error consists in overlooking the fact that the word "we" is, in many places, used by the Apostles when addressing The Church in a Corporate sense with reference to past or future events in the history of the Church as a body, and not with a limited application to the actual persons living when they spoke or wrote. Take, as an example, the words of the 4th chapter of Galatians: "For we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world". No intelligent reader could suppose that in using the word "we" the Apostle referred only to the Galatian Christians to whom he wrote, for these, as Gentiles, had never been dispensationally under the law; and, moreover, the expression, "when we were children", would have had no intelligible significance if applied to them. Nothing, however, is easier to see than that the Apostle is speaking corporately of the whole family of faith as one body, and that he refers to its corporate history in past dispensations, comparing it to that of a young man before he has attained his majority, and contrasting the experience of God's people in past ages with that which, with fuller light, they were now privileged to enjoy. The same principle explains this expression as used in the 4th chapter of 1st Thessalonians, "Then WE which are alive and remain". It is impossible to suppose that the Apostle meant here that he himself should be on the earth at the Coming of the Lord. How could this possibly be so, seeing that he had, by inspiration, predicted events which would require a long period—more than a lifetime—for their fulfillment, as, for example, when he told the elders of the Church at Ephesus that "after his departure (by which he meant his death) grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock"; and when he warned Timothy that "in the latter times many should depart from the faith"; not to speak of the fact that in the 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians he describes the gradual development of the final Apostasy, and then says, speaking of the Day of the Lord, "for that day shall not come, except there come the Apostasy first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, whom the Lord shall destroy" at His Coming? In the face of evidence like this, it is surely both foolish and irreverent to speak of the Apostle as expecting the Return of the Lord from moment to moment. How could he have done so while he was teaching that it would not take place until after the occurrence of certain predicted, but as yet unfulfilled events, and when he himself was expecting martyrdom to close his labors? The hope, therefore, to which the Apostles directed the minds of the saints whom they personally taught to which they direct our minds in the Inspired Scriptures they wrote, is not the hope that the Lord may come at any moment, or that He may come soon, or that He may come within our lifetime. Its moral power as a hope does not depend upon any of these conditions.

Before closing, let us return to the Scriptures which we took as texts, and apply to their interpretation the principles which we have considered. We can now see in what sense the Apostle Paul taught the Thessalonian saints to turn to God from idols, and to "wait for", that is to anticipate, the Return of their Lord from heaven. The mighty work of the Spirit of God had dispelled the heathen darkness and hopelessness of their lives, and opened to their view a future world of holiness, bliss and glory. If they were taught to look back to Christ as their Deliverer from the wrath to come, they were also taught to look forward, out of the midst of the circumstances of time into

the glorious prospect of eternity, for His Return, who would bring to them all fulness of grace and glory. By the prospect of that glorious meeting—a prospect not affected by the question of when they should see their Lord, but dependent for its power upon the glorious certainty that in a coming day of glory they should meet Him without fail—their hearts were weaned from all earthly idols, and all worldly lusts, and taught to live in yearning desire for the happy moment when, for them, time should close and eternity open, and when to be with their Lord and serve Him in glory would be the consummation of all they had hoped and waited for. Thus, too, can we apprehend more exactly, and feel more deeply, the blessed significance of the words, "Every man that hath this hope founded upon Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure". Again let me say, it is not when the Lord will come, but the blissful fact that in due season He will come, that makes His Coming a hope to our souls. It is only an evil servant who could say, "My Lord delayeth His Coming"; a true heart lives every day in the bright anticipation, in the holy expectation, of that glorious day. The prospect of His Advent becomes the hope of our souls. Does sorrow press us? We may say, "till Jesus comes". Do we stand mourning by a grave-side? We may say, "till Jesus comes". Are we persecuted, distressed, pressed beyond measure by the difficulties that surround our path? It is our privilege to look upwards and onwards and to say, "till Jesus comes". Does the world seek to charm our hearts and to detain our affections from our Lord? It is our privilege to anticipate, in the power of faith, the bright moment of His Coming, the infinite joy of that meeting, and to let this hope work within our souls, purifying us even as He is pure. To represent the hope of the Lord's Coming as being no hope unless capable of momentary, of early realization, is to give it very much a human character, to put it very much upon a level with the hopes we connect with the things of time. To view it as a hope realized only by the power of faith—a faith which brings eternity into the midst of time—is to grasp it as a heavenly hope; a hope not only heavenly in its character, but heavenly as to the power by which alone it can be realized in the soul. This is taught in the words, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost", for a heavenly hope can be realized only by the heavenly power of the Holy Ghost—the only power, indeed, by which we can in any respect think, feel, or act aright as to the things of God (see Gal. v. 25).

ENDNOTES:

[1] See Matthew 13:49: "The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among (ek mesou, lit, out of the midst of) the just."

[2] The Rev. J. Denney, B. D.: *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (The Expositor's Bible), p. 174.

[3] Prof. Schwartzkopf: *Could Jesus err?* pref. 1, p. 12. Giessen, 1896.

[4] It must be remembered that "at hand" (Php 4:5) may be taken as pointing to the Lord's presence with His people, as One to whom they may appeal for protection, guidance, or help. The Greek does not at all require that we should understand the words as meaning "the Lord is soon coming". "The end of all things is at hand" (lit., "hath drawn nigh") (1 Peter 4:7) is an expression which can be better understood when it is remembered that New Testament revelation had brought out more clearly the character of the age, and of the circumstances which would mark its course and its close, and taught the practical bearing of these facts on the believer's walk. We ourselves use similar expressions in everyday life, such as "the end now comes into view", etc., meaning thereby that something which has occurred, or which has been communicated to us

respecting the results and issue of events now in progress, gives us valuable help in deciding upon the path we shall take in the midst of present circumstances.

[5] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 142, 5th Edition. Matthew Arnold.

[6] *Genea* (the word translated "generation") "often (means) 'race', or 'family of people', 'progenies' Such is possibly its meaning here and in Matthew 23:35-36, where the whole people are addressed" (Webster and Wilkinson, *Greek Testament*, in loco). A friend has kindly pointed out that in Homer (*Iliad* v. 265) the word is used to denote a "breed" or "stock" of horses.

02 - Watchful Expectancy of the Lord's Return - Its Nature and Effects

CHAPTER 2 WATCHFUL EXPECTANCY OF THE LORD'S RETURN—ITS NATURE AND EFFECTS An Exposition of Luke 12:35-48

SOME of the instruction given by our Lord to His disciples while He was with them upon earth, may be regarded as limited to themselves and the immediate circumstances under which it was given. The greater portion, however, was addressed to them as the representatives of those "who should believe on Him through their word"; and, as such, it should appeal to us with as much force and directness as though the words had been spoken in our hearing by the Lord. Indeed, in not a few places we can readily perceive that the full significance of His teaching went beyond the comprehension of those to whom it was first given, and could not be completely understood until illuminated by the fuller light of later revelation. Without pausing to notice other examples, we need only consider the section which forms the text, in which our Lord spoke of the experience through which the Church was to pass during the interval between His going to the Father and His Return in glory; for the Apostles seem to have had more difficulty in understanding the character and duration of this interval than almost any other point. It was for this reason that the Lord, as we are told in the 19th of Luke, "added and spake a parable, because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear", commencing with these words, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return"; and as it obviously requires a long time to go to and return from a "far country", we might have thought that there should have been no misconception with regard to His absence being a long one. How great their difficulty was, however, is clearly seen by the fact that the last question they asked the Lord before His Ascension was this, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" They could not realize that a long interval must elapse before the Lord who was leaving them would return, and that during that interval much tribulation awaited His Church in the world; and doubtless it was not until fuller light was given, through the teaching of the Spirit after Pentecost, that their minds were open to grasp this. The present text is, then, an example of instruction which neither was, nor perhaps could have been, fully understood when spoken—instruction, which was intended specially for the Church in its later generations. This is clearly shown by the words of a parallel passage, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" by which we see that it was the wish of the Lord not only to place their hearts in a position of watchful expectancy towards His Return, but that He also desired the same character of expectancy to be found in each generation of His people up to the time of His Second Advent. The moral bearing of the anticipation of His Return, and the effect it was to produce upon the hearts and lives of believers, were to be the same throughout: all were to wait for their Lord from heaven with watchfulness as well as with expectancy, looking forward to His Return, and living under the power of that hope.

Let us now examine the text in detail. The train of thought it contains is not introduced abruptly, but grows out of the earlier matter of the discourse, especially the portion commencing with the 15th

verse. The picture of the Rich Worldling, whose heart was set upon the acquisition of earthly goods, seems to be introduced to teach that the believer's treasure is not here, and that we should seek, not wealth and prosperity in this life, as the nations of the world do, but rather the interests of that coming Kingdom which it is the Father's good pleasure to give to His people. This gave occasion for the words of the 35th verse, "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord". This also it is which gives us the key, at the very threshold of the subject, as to what is meant by watchful expectancy of the Lord's Coming. Only if the hearts of His people were kept from the ensnaring influence of worldly things, and fully occupied with the interests of His Kingdom, could they be likened to men watching for their Lord's Return. But all His professed servants would not be alike as to this, There would be some who would not be as faithful and wise stewards, watching over their Lord's interests during His absence, and thus always ready to render account to Him at His Return, but who would say in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming; I may please myself; eat and drink with the drunken, and live only for the present"; and it is to such that the description applies, "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him". There is shown here, then, an essential difference between these two classes of persons, the Good Servants and the Evil Servants. The Good Servant watches over his Lord's interests during His absence; and in this consists his watchfulness: the Evil Servant cares not for his Lord's interests but only for his own pleasure and advantage; and in this consists his unwatchfulness. The first acts as though his Lord might return at any moment; the second, as though his Lord were to be absent for a long time. The essence of the teaching is here, Then, special attention must be devoted to verse 39, for these words, which are spoken to all, are clearly only intended for some; seeing that the thief comes not to those who are watching, but to those who are not watching for his approach: accordingly, the Lord's Return is never likened in Scripture to the coming of a thief with regard to His true and faithful people, who look for His appearing (see Hebrews 9:28), but only to those who do not expect Him. The words of the 41st verse show that Peter realized this difference, though he did not fully understand the matter; and the Lord's reply (verse 42) is given in such a way as to make this meaning plain, though He does not answer the question of Peter directly. We can easily see that those to whom the warning of the 40th verse applies ("Be ye, therefore, ready also", and, "When ye think not") are not Good Servants, but Evil Servants, who say in their hearts, "Our Lord delayeth His coming". It is not to the Good Servants, who are expecting His Return, that the Lord will come "at a day and hour when they think not", but only to the Evil Servants, who look not for Him. In this lies the great and solemn importance of the words of the 40th verse; "be ye, therefore, ready also". The exhortation seems to be intended, not for the good and watchful servants, but for the unwatchful ones; and they are shown that they have need to be prepared for the Advent, even as the others who are already prepared, and are awaiting it in watchful expectancy. See verses 40 and 46, and compare 1 Thessalonians 5:1-14. In considering this subject, it is needful to point out that there are two great facts, neither of which was, nor could be, clearly grasped by the minds of the Apostles at the time the Lord spoke these words, but which have become developed in the subsequent history of the Church, and on which the teaching of the text turns. These are, first, that false profession would be introduced by the Evil One as a means of counter-working and neutralizing the testimony of the Church; and, second, that the Church itself, when thus corrupted, would become an unfaithful witness to her absent Lord. Both these facts underline the teaching of our section, and without a recognition of them an intelligent exposition of it would be impossible.

We could not understand to whom the figure of the Evil Servant applied, nor what was meant by his "smiting his fellow servants and eating and drinking with the drunken", unless we recognized in Scripture, and from the facts around us, what false profession has wrought in the Church, and how it has ruined her testimony. The fact of False Profession

There are few things of deeper importance to the right understanding and application of Scripture than a recognition of the fact of false profession. It has been, and still is, the will of God, mysterious though this be, to permit the Enemy to introduce into the Church evil persons, clad in the garment of an untrue profession of the Name of Christ. The parable of the Wheat and Tares in Matthew 13:1-58, with the explanation the Lord Himself gives of its meaning in that chapter, shows this. The Lord, as the Sower, sowed good seed ("the good seed are the children of the Kingdom") in "the field which is the world:" the Enemy, unable to prevent this sowing, came secretly by night and sowed tares over the wheat, and these tares are described as "the children of the Wicked One". The wheat and the tares grow together side by side till the harvest, and so closely resemble one another that none can unerringly distinguish them except the Lord Himself. We cannot too carefully observe that the tares are not presented as emblems of any and every kind of wicked person: they represent wicked persons, but only such as wear the garment of false profession, for the Kingdom of Heaven is the symbol, in Matthew 13:1-58, not of the world, but of the Professing Church on earth. And does not the history of Christendom prove the truth of these predictions? Even before the Apostles died evil persons were found seeking to mingle with it on every side. The Epistles contain many references to such persons, and many cautions against them. It is of the deepest importance to see that the Scriptures recognize this fact (though recognition, be it noted, is not approval), and that the peculiar character of wickedness signified by the words "false profession" is distinguished by the Word of God from other forms of wickedness. In many cases the evil of false profession lies in this, that they who falsely "profess and call themselves Christians" do so for their own purpose and for their own advantage. They unite themselves with the Lord's household, not that they may care for His interests, but that they may serve their own. Hence, the text before us recognizes such as Evil Servants—servants indeed, but evil servants—servants connected with the Lord's household for a time, but destined to be everlastingly separated from it, and to have "their portion with the unbelievers" (verse 46). And what has been the character of False Professing Christianity throughout this dispensation? Has it not corresponded to the figure of the Evil Servant? The religion of Christ has been made, by those who have falsely professed it, a stepping-stone to their own advantage; to place and power, wealth and honour in the world: and, as is natural, such persons having ever been worldly in their spirit, have also been worldly in their associations and pleasures. To use the figurative words of the parable, they have "eaten and drunk with the drunken", and been ready to "smite their fellow servants" whose ways were a rebuke to them. Moreover, as a worldly spirit is the exact opposite of a heavenly one, the prospect of the Lord's return and the hope of those heavenly blessings which will then be brought in all fulness to His people, have had no place in their hearts. How could this be? These are they "whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things". They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ, while professing to be its friends. Their worldliness of life and carnality of spirit, are the exact opposite of that watchful expectancy of the Lord's Return portrayed in this parable. The unwatchfulness of the false Professor consists in his alliance with earthly interests and earthly pleasures; and, conversely, the watchfulness of the true Christian consists in his separateness from these things, and his pilgrim-like waiting for the glory of

the coming Kingdom. The Corruption of the Professing Church

Let us now glance at the corruption of the Church. This may be said to have begun when "the Children of the Wicked One" were admitted among the Children of Light, for if the mingling of darkness with light be allowed, it invariably leads to the prevalence of the darkness. Good may be dragged down to the level of evil, but evil can never rise to the level of good: hence, the reproach, "What communion hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" The adulteration of the Church's fellowship with the servants of Satan clothed in the garments of light led, therefore, to the adulteration of Christian Truth with the doctrines and principles of Satan. Even in the Apostle Paul's day there were many, he said (and he obviously refers to persons making a Christian profession), who "adulterated the Word of God" for their own purposes. The history of the Professing Church has been, throughout its course, the sorrowful witness of such adulteration and its results. It can be seen, for example, in the writing of the ancient Fathers, who often differ from one another, and from the Inspired Scriptures of God. [1] It is so at the present hour amongst the divided ranks of all sections of the Professing Church. There is no truth which is not denied by some, if not by many; and even amongst those of whom it may be believed that their profession is genuine, and their souls enlightened with the pure radiance of the Gospel, there are yet numberless differences of greater or less gravity concerning many portions of Revealed Truth. Adulteration has led to corruption everywhere; and the corruption of doctrine has resulted, as it necessarily must, in unholiness, and fellowship with the world. If to be linked with worldly men in their pleasures and pursuits is a "shame" to the children of God, then it may be truly, though sorrowfully said, that there are many who "glory in their shame, who mind earthly things"; for it is now widely, almost universally accepted, that Christians should not be separated from the world, as the Apostles taught the Church of their day to be, but that they should aim to be allied with it in business and pleasure, in politics and social alliances, seeking not to accentuate, but rather to obliterate as far as possible the essential distinction of light and darkness. But what is the inevitable consequence? Do not the worldling and the infidel heap scorn upon the very name of Christian? Does not Science proudly question every fundamental truth concerning God and His Word? Are not scoffers asking whether Christianity, so-called, is not a failure? And who are those who stand forth as deniers of many of the foundation-principals of Revealed Truth; of the Inspiration and Authority of the Word of God; of the truth of its holy doctrines, and of its prophetic predictions—are not these, often, professed leaders and teachers of the various sections of the so-called Church? Iniquity has indeed abounded, and the love of many has grown cold. As we look upon this picture we can easily realize, if our consciences are alive to the eternal distinction between truth and falsehood, holiness and sin, the significance of the prophetic words of our Lord in the text. The "Evil Servants" are many; they are "eating and drinking" in association with a Christ-rejecting, pleasure-loving world; and when the "Good Servants raise their voices in testimony against such ungodliness, and send forth the solemn warning, "The Coming of the Lord draweth nigh", they are scorned and smitten by none more than by persons who professedly bear the Christian name!

True Expectancy of the Lord's Return In view of what has now been said, let us consider what is represented in the text as true expectancy of the Lord's Return, and its opposite. Our Lord's teaching sets before us, in parabolic form, two classes of servants; the Good and the Evil; the Faithful and the Unfaithful. The faithful servants are those who are watchful, guarding and

promoting their Master's interests in the world; the Evil Servants are those who neglect these interests, and use the advantages which accrue to them from their connection with His household, for their own pleasure and profit. The Good Servants are described as living lives regulated by watchful expectancy of their Lord's Return; the Evil Servants are represented as those to whom that Return furnishes no motives for the present regulation of their spirit and conduct. The parable does not tell us that the Lord had told His servants when He would return—that is not its object—this instruction is furnished in other portions of Scripture. What the parable represents is, that the Good Servants, who are living and laboring every day as though their Lord's Return were imminent, are those who furnish an example of what the true expectancy of hope is, for to them it would make no difference if their absent Lord came at morn, at noon, or night: they are always ready. But the Evil Servant is always unready. He has practically forgotten the fact that his Master will return: this has ceased to be an influence in his life. His attention is taken up with his own pleasure and advantage, and he is living as though the present were to continue for ever. It is those who need the warning, "be ye also ready". The good servants are ready. They live as those who are prepared each day for their Lord's Return: the words of merciful admonition, "be ye also ready", have special regard, therefore, to those who are not ready; that is, to the Evil Servants. Great care should be taken to distinguish this, for upon it turns the whole teaching of the parable; and it is owing to its not having been discerned, that the mistake has been fallen into by many, of supposing the object of the passage is to teach us to expect the Lord's Return at any moment of any day of our lives. Now the parable furnishes us with no information respecting those predicted events which must occur before the Lord's Return can take place. It is not common in parables to find more than one truth made prominent; and what the one truth is which this parable makes prominent has already been shown. The other teaching is found elsewhere. It would be unreasonable, therefore, and unintelligent, to suppose that this parable deals with all questions relating to the Lord's Return, when its teaching is obviously intended to emphasize only one, namely in what true expectancy consists.

Warning for the Unready And now let us give attention to a point of great interest and moral value in connection with Peter's enquiry, recorded in the 41st verse, and the Lord's reply. In response to this question, "Speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" the Lord might undoubtedly have replied, if it had so pleased Him, that the warnings of the parable were intended only for the unready, that is, for the Evil Servants of His future household. Why did He not do so? Why did He choose to put His reply into parabolic form, leaving it to be determined by inference to whom it referred? Can we doubt that it was because He desired to excite in His disciples' hearts that working of conscience, that exercise of self-examination, which would lead each to discern to which of these two classes of servants he belonged? The Lord could have said whom He meant, but it is profitable for us that He has left the reply to be given by the conscience of each. So, too, was it, when, at the Last Supper, He said to His disciples, "One of you shall betray Me". The Lord could easily have said that one was Judas. Why, then, did He speak in general terms—in words which troubled the hearts of all His true disciples, and caused them to "look one upon another, doubting of whom He spake?" Can we stand in doubt of the reason? It was well for them that each heart should test itself with the question, "Do I so little love my Lord as to be capable of betraying Him?" So is it in our text. It is for each of us to ask himself, "Am I ready, or am I not ready? Am I waiting, or am I not waiting, for My Lord's Return?" and then to answer this question by searching the Scripture with an awakened heart and an exercised conscience, each inquiring whether he, as

a good servant, is living only for his Master's glory and the promotion of His interests; whether he is living each hour under the Master's eye, and in the light of that coming day of glory when He shall return; or whether, as an evil servant, he is leading a life of self-seeking and self-gratification, and saying in his heart, as no good servant would say, "My Lord delayeth His Coming, and so I may live as I please". The moral bearing of intervening events upon the Hope of the Lord's Coming And now let me add a word or two upon a point which is not indeed included in the parabolic instruction of our text, but which can with advantage be studied along with its teaching—I mean the moral bearing of intervening events upon the Hope of the Lord's Coming. Is it true that the hope of the Lord's Coming is so presented in Scripture by our Lord and His Apostles, that its power upon heart and life would be invalidated if the occurrence of any event were to be expected first? Did our Lord, or did His Apostles, at any time teach that the hope of His Coming could only hear rightly upon the heart if nothing were expected to occur previously, and, in fact, that His Coming could be a hope only to those who expected it as an imminent event which might occur on any day, or at any hour of their lives? There are many who think so; and they commonly refer to this passage in support of their views. Now it has been pointed out that this parable does not, like some other Scriptures (for example, the 24th chapter of Matthew, at the close of which there is a parable exceedingly similar, indeed directly identical, with that of our text), speak of events, the fulfillment of which was to precede the Return of the Lord. This is not, however, because there are no such events, nor because the Scripture does not distinctly predict their occurrence, but because it was not the object of the Lord in this parable to deal with that aspect of the subject. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, various events are predicted whose fulfillment must precede the Return of the Lord, such as the Gospel being preached for a witness among all nations; the standing of the Abomination of Desolation in the Holy Place; a Tribulation of unequalled severity; and then we are told that "immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . shall the sign of the Son of Man be seen, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory". Furthermore, in that chapter, the occurrence of these events is likened to the putting forth of its leaves by the fig-tree, whose budding shows that summer is nigh; and the instruction is given—"When ye, therefore, see these things begin to come to pass, know that it (that is, the Lord's Coming) is nigh, even at the doors". And then follows the parable of the faithful and evil servants, which corresponds so exactly with that of our text, that we cannot but believe it is the same, although related in a different connection. From this we see that the prediction of events, whose fulfillment is to precede the Lord's Coming, does not destroy, or even impair, the moral bearing of the hope connected with that Coming. That hope depends for its power, not upon its imminence nor upon even the nearness of its realization, but upon its character and certainty; and the prospect also, which it presents of the glorious realities of the future which shall then be brought to us. The essence of our hope consists in this, that when the Lord shall come and receive us to Himself, we shall be like Him, and we shall be with Him for ever. "Every man that hath this hope founded upon Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure". Faith, love, and the patience of hope bring the light of that coming day of glory into the midst of the gloom and the conflicts of the present; and as we realize "the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ", apart from any question of time or date, our hearts are strengthened and sanctified in the midst of surrounding sorrow and evil.

But, alas, there are those who say: "If you look for intervening events you are not looking for the Lord. If you expect that Antichrist shall first come, and the Apostasy shall first take place, you are

'waiting for Antichrist', not Christ; expecting the Apostasy, not the glory". Some who have held this view have even said, though surely with an equal want of thoughtfulness and Christian charity, that to teach that the Coming of the Lord cannot take place until after the fulfillment of intervening events, is to say, like the Evil Servant, "My Lord delayeth His Coming". But is this so? To expect a thing is by no means the same as to hope for it, for hope necessarily is the combination of the elements of desire and expectation. It is a very simple thing to say that we should, according to the teaching of the Word of God, expect that Antichrist shall come and the Apostasy be developed before the Return of the Lord, but we certainly do not desire these things. We may expect Antichrist, but we do not desire his coming! It is the Coming of our Lord to which our hearts look onward with that combination of desire and expectation which constitutes soul-comforting, soul-sanctifying hope. "We wait for the Son of God from heaven", not by expecting that He may return at any moment, or any day, or even at any near date; but in the exercise of a hope which, when strengthened by the Spirit of God, so brings the joy of that coming Day of Glory with holy power into our souls, as to lift us out of the present and bring us anticipatively to that glorious future, thus exercising an all-transforming influence upon our lives. In conclusion, let me remind you of the closing words of Scripture. Our Lord and Bridegroom has said "Surely I come quickly". May our hearts have grace, intelligently, affectionately, and reverently to respond "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus". May our souls so abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost, as to be able daily to leap over the dark interval that lies between us and that coming Day of Glory and may that hope be so realized by faith, that we may be like one of whom it is written, that "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible". May faith in our souls be the "confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"; and may it work out that "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" which shall both comfort and sanctify us in every hour of our waiting days.

ENDNOTES:

[1] "We have seen, in surveying the writings of the Fathers of the first three centuries, that they were not, in general, judicious or accurate students of Scripture; that most of them have given interpretations of important Scriptural statements which no man now receives; that many of them have erred and have contradicted themselves and each other, in stating doctrines, etc."—Cunningham's "Historical Theology". Vol. 1, p. 175.

03 - The True Believer Acknowledged and the False Professor Disowned at the Coming of the Lord

CHAPTER 3 THE TRUE BELIEVER ACKNOWLEDGED and the False Professor Disowned at the Coming of the Lord

"And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His Coming."

1 John 2:28

We have only to read this passage to realize its great impressiveness and importance. Its words are most blessed, yet full of holy awe. Like many other portions of Scripture, it mingles the future with the present, and brings the solemnities of the Day of the Lord into the closest relation with our present circumstances—teaching us, while yet the children of Time, to live as those for whom in spirit, Eternity is already begun. May God help us to realize its sacred lessons!

Let our first effort be to gather, as accurately as possible, the meaning of the words, and, to this end, let me point out two alterations in the translation which are of great importance. The first is the substitution of the word "if" for "when", [1] * in the clause "that if He shall appear": and the evidence that this is the true reading is very strong. At a first glance the alteration may seem to make sense somewhat difficult; but this is not actually the case. As the reference is to our Lord's Return in glory, the meaning expressed by the word "when" is naturally included, but the argument appears to stand thus: "Abide in Him, that, even if He appear, we may have confidence"—that is to say, that even if the supremest test of our union with Himself be applied to the facts of the case (for when He shall appear all His true people shall be instantaneously changed into His likeness), it may but prove, in each instance, the blessed reality of that union. The second amended translation is "away from him" [2] instead of "before Him". The preposition apo, used in the original, implies removal, or separation, and excludes the idea of mere rebuke or disapproval, which might be inferred from the words "ashamed before Him". It is necessary, therefore, that the words should be translated somewhat as follows: "that ye may have confidence, and not be put away in shame from Him at His Coming". The importance of both these points will appear more clearly further on.

"Little Children"

We should observe that the exhortation and warning of the passage is addressed to all those to whom it speaks. But, let us ask, who are those addressed in the words "little children? [3] These are not the men of the world, but they who are of God in the world; not the children of the human family, but the children of God distinguished from the rest of the human family. The relationship pointed to is not that which man naturally bears to God as Creator, whose offspring in that sense, all men are, but the new spiritual relationship of redemption and regeneration in Christ, according to the words of John in his Gospel (John 1:12), "But as many as received Him, to them gave He title (exousia) to become the sons of God, even to them which believed on His Name; which were

born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". The text however, clearly distinguishes two classes amongst those addressed. There are those who "abide in Christ", and who will have confidence before Him in the day of His Coming; but is not another class also contemplated—those who do not abide in Christ—whose awful destiny is to be put away in shame from Him at His Coming? Thus, as is often the case in Scripture, solemn words of exhortation and warning are addressed to all, although they are applicable in strictness only to some. This is an important principle, and it may be well to glance at another example of it found in the 6th chapter of Hebrews, where the Apostle, after having addressed a solemn warning to the converted Hebrews collectively, regarding the apostasy of some of their number, immediately adds, referring to those to whom his warning would not apply because of their steadfastness, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak". We see, therefore, that it is in accordance with the habit of Scripture to address words of warning to persons collectively, and without distinction, which are, nevertheless, only intended for some of those addressed, in order that the conscience of each may make a personal application of them; and, in the case of those whose profession is unreal, that this fact may be shown by their neglect of the warning; as is alas, generally the case.

Children: True or False

1. This train of thought shows us in the first place, the great importance of observing, both in this passage and the Epistle at large, the recognition given to false profession as a solemn fact. Even while the Apostle wrote, and still more since then, but perhaps never so abundantly as in our own day, Satan was introducing his own servants disguised in the garment of a false profession, with the design of placing them in external relationship with the children of God: and the Epistle recognizes this state of things. It is hardly needful to point out that by the word "recognize", approval is not implied, but only an intimation that God, in His inscrutable wisdom, would permit the Enemy to sow tares among the wheat; that is, to unite the Children of the Wicked One with the Children of the Kingdom in ostensible relationship to the Lord Jesus as the Head of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth; and, that Scripture records these facts. The Epistle of John has for one of its leading characteristics this, that it looks at the family of God as in the world—as seen in human relationships and human circumstances—viewed, therefore, as comprising in its visible ranks persons who, though they profess to belong to Christ, and to recognize Him as Lord, do in this make a false profession, seeing that their souls are not quickened with heavenly life, and that they belong, in reality, to the world which lieth in the Wicked One. It is recognition of the admixture of such persons with the true children of God which gives a special character to this Epistle, more so, perhaps, than it does to any other portion of Scripture; and the discernment of this furnishes the key for the interpretation of many parts of the Epistle which would otherwise present great difficulties. This important fact is brought out in the following passages, among others.

1 John 1:6. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie". Here the essence of false profession is pointed out and described. True Christians say that they have fellowship with God, and they do truly possess it, as those who walk in the light and are cleansed from all sin; but mere professors, while making the same profession, do so falsely, for they still walk in the darkness of unregeneracy, and abide in the defilement of sin.

1 John 2:4. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar". The obedient life is the true test of the profession of the lips. The passage implies that there were those who would profess to know God, but who would not walk after His commandments, thereby giving evidence that their profession was false.

1 John 2:11. Still more striking are the words found here: "He that hateth his brother is in darkness". This is, surely, the natural darkness of the unregenerate state, for the preceding verse sets forth love as a feature of those who walk in the light of life, and of whose nature love to the brethren is a vital and essential principle.

1 John 2:19. clearly describes the falsity of the profession of some who were for a while associated with and undistinguished from the true children of God, but in whose cases time had brought about a separation.

1 John 3:10. The Church is here warned not to be deceived by false profession, and is instructed that the display of righteousness and love was to be the practical test of the profession of each person. "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the Devil"—that is, those children of the Devil who pretend to be the children of God.

Love of the Brethren

1 John 4:20. Nothing can be clearer than the force of the statement, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar". These words do not, because they cannot, describe a true Christian. We say they cannot, for in another place we read, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death", and such language cannot describe a truly quickened soul. How important, too, to notice that the word "brother" in this text does not import a true spiritual relationship discerned by the Eye of God, who sees all things as they really are, but an ostensible relationship—the relationship of profession made before men—which it is sometimes difficult for us to discern aright. This passage also furnishes a good example of what was meant by the statement already made, that the Word of God recognizes (though recognition is not approval) the fact of false profession. That it does so is clear in that the word "brother" is used of the false professor because professors themselves so use it; not because the Holy Spirit would signify by it a true spiritual relationship acknowledged by God.

Much more might be said under this head, but sufficient has been adduced for the present. The point however, is one of much moment. In the study of our text it is necessary to discern that it is one of a class of passages very characteristic of John's Epistle; passages whose object is to point out the union existing in the visible Church between false professors and the true children of God, and to indicate those features by which they may now be distinguished; also to emphasize the fact that in the day of the Lord's coming, when all things shall be put to the test, an unerring and final separation shall be made between the children of God and the children of the Wicked One who have for a time sought to identify themselves with the true people of God.

Abiding in Christ

2. In the second place, let us carefully study the expression "abide in Him", for the right understanding of this phrase is essential to the interpretation of the text. To use the words of another, "It signifies not only the "abiding patiently" (i.e., moral perseverance) but vitally and

mystically. It is the compression of John 15:1-5 into a single word, and implies spiritual immanence, inter-penetration of life and spirit". Let me beg you to note this, for it is deeply important. The words "abide in Him" express nothing less than the vital, permanent union of the believer with his Lord. "Abide" (like the two other words, "remain" and "continue", which frequently occur as alternative translations of the same Greek word) has for its essential idea that of permanent continuance in a fixed relationship, as opposed to a connection that is only temporary and transitory. It implies, therefore, in the text, the supremely important fact that those who abide in their Lord have a true vital union with Him, which, because it is vital, can never be severed; which, because it is real, though invisible now, will be made visibly real in the day when they are glorified with their Lord. We can easily perceive how vivid and significant is the contrast between those who have this abiding relation to their Lord, and those who "say"-yet say falsely, alas!—that there is a link of union between Him and themselves, but whose solemn destiny is, in that day of glory, to be separated in shame from Him for ever.

It is of the greatest importance that we should discern the true meaning of this word "abide", because of the efforts frequently made to interpret it, not of the Christian's standing, but of his experience; not of the actual union of his soul to Christ, but of his realization of that union in his thoughts and feelings. This is, surely, a serious mistake. It is indeed, a blessed thing to realize that we are one with Christ; but let us remember that the believer is equally one with his Lord at times when he may not realize it as he does at others. Peter, for instance, could hardly have realized his union with his Lord when he denied Him with oaths and cursing; but, nevertheless, that union remained unchanged. The Enemy did not prevail to break the link of life between him and Christ: the prayer of the Great Advocate preserved it inviolate. So great may be the contrast between fact and experience, although of course, experience is always happiest when it realizes the Divine facts of blessing! The Meaning of "Abide" This is a matter of such great importance that it may be well to examine some other passages of this Epistle in which the word "abide" occurs, and which will be found to confirm the interpretation just given.

1 John 3:15. "No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Here we see the force of "abiding" as signifying essential vitality of union. 1 John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought also himself to walk even as He walked", which clearly means, he that professeth that he is in Christ by vital union, will give practical proof of it; for where life is, the fruits of life, in greater or less measure, are certain to appear. 1 John 3:14, "He that loveth not his brother (i.e., his brother by profession) abideth in death". Here the fixed permanent condition of the unregenerate soul is expressed by "abideth"; not a transitory experience of the mind. 1 John 3:24, "Hereby we know that He abideth in us". Again, the word expresses the vital and unchanging relation of the indwelling Lord to His people. In all these passages, therefore (and time alone forbids comment upon others), the word "abide" imports an essential and permanent relation, and not merely the maintenance by faith and watchfulness of a certain character of experience within the believer's soul.

But, it may be said (and it is well to realize the objection) if this be the case, what is the force of the command, "little children, abide in Him?" We reply, its significance is shown by the fact that those who are addressed are persons all of whom, by profession, ostensibly belong to Christ; and it has been already pointed out that the Scripture, when addressing bodies of professed believers, habitually uses expressions which do not actually apply to all, though they be spoken to all; the intention being, that the conscience shall make application of the words in the case of each

individual. A paraphrased translation may perhaps show this more clearly: "And now, little children, see to it, every one of you, each for himself, that there exists a true, vital, spiritual union between each of you and your Lord. Let your union with Him be not merely an ostensible union, a professed union, but that real vital union which depends upon the possession of a common life. See to it that you are living branches of the living Vine, and that the life of the parent stem is flowing into each branch. For there will, alas, be found in the Day of Glory, lifeless branches exhibiting a pretended union with the Vine—branches which have never borne fruit, [4] in whom there has never flowed the life of the Vine; and the destiny of these is to be separated from the Vine, and cast as brands into the burning. See to it, then, in every case, that you are 'in Christ' by a vital abiding, a living permanent union, and not by the temporary and seeming oneness of a false profession which the light of the Day of Glory will show to have been only a hollow pretence". And has not The Professing Church generally shown its need of this warning? Has not its claim been that, by means of those ordinances which it pretends to have the sole title to administer, men can be brought into relationship with God? Has it not taught that by baptism, administered by its authority, persons can be made members of Christ and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven? Has it not taught that they, and they only, who are within its visible fold, and under the protection of its sacraments, are gathered within the circle of safety? Has it not, in a word, taught what is the equivalent of the doctrine that to be in the church is to be in Christ? Moreover, has it been willing to submit itself to the test of the Scripture, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous: he that committeth sin is of the devil?" The whole history of Christendom supplies an emphatic affirmation of these charges. Catholic teaching, whether Roman, Greek, or Anglican (and the influence of such teaching is often very great, even over the minds of those who would refuse to call themselves "Catholic") has always been ready to approve the profession of its members, and to lead them to believe that, by being thus brought into the Church, and under the shelter of its ordinances, they are made the children of the kingdom; and this, even though they may be worldly, nay, even openly sinful: though it hesitates not to describe as outside the pale of salvation, or at least as objects only of "the uncovenanted mercies of God", those who refuse to belong to its fold. Hence then, the point and pertinency of the teaching of our text in every age of the Church's history, and in none more than our own day. "Little children, abide in Him"; see to it that there is not merely the ostensible link of profession; not merely a connection with the visible Church; not merely conformity with its sacramental appointments; not merely the profession of the name of Christ as Lord and Saviour; but true vital union with Him, such as they only possess in whom has been produced sincere conviction of sin, unfeigned faith in the Son of God, and that New Birth which is wrought alone by the sovereign power of the Spirit of God apart from all external ordinances, and evidenced by holiness of character and life. They only who are born, not of the flesh (natural birth), nor by the will of man (as would be the case in sacramental regeneration, if there were such a thing), but of the Spirit of God, are the children of God (see John 1:13). These alone are they who "abide in Him", and shall have confidence before Him at His Coming. The others, even though their names may have been enrolled among the membership of the Church on earth, though they may have deceived others (and perhaps themselves) as to the reality of their profession, have never been "abiders" in Christ, and will be "put away in shame from Him at His Coming".

Let us glance at one or two parallel passages which speak of this solemn truth—the Separation of Nominal Professors from the True Church, at the Advent of the Lord. Many might be considered,

but we will examine only two. First, see Luke 13:24-28. When we consider this passage we can readily discern its essential similarity to our text. The admonition, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate", is addressed to all, but its application clearly is only to those who are out of the way that leadeth unto life; that is, to those who, though they think themselves safe, have never known such earnest reality as is implied in the word "strive". And this exhortation, "strive to enter in", is like those words of our text, "abide in Him". It is intended to call each soul to a consideration and realization of its true standing before God, so that, if there has never yet been a real entrance into that Kingdom, the fact may be recognized now in all earnestness and solemnity. Yet, notice the statement is not that there are those who strive to enter in now and yet are not able—for a strait gate is not a closed gate—but that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able "when once the Master of the house hath risen up and hath shut to the door!" How exact is the correspondence of this with our text! They who are shut out when the true people of God enter in, they who stand without and knock for entrance when it is too late, these are they who are "put away in shame from the Lord at His coming". And that these are persons who have professed to know the Lord, and to be in association with Him, is shown, first of all, by their use of the title "Lord", which implies the claim of relationship to Him, and next by the statement, "we have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets"—words which exactly describe that kind of association which professing religion pretends to have with the Lord. But note His words, "I know you not. Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity". Their profession is asserted to be untrue, because its fruit had been unholiness. The Book of Life

Let us glance also at Revelation 3:5. These words have often caused difficulty and concern to faithful hearts; but probably that difficulty would not have arisen if they had been viewed in the light of our text and similar passages. I have not time now to comment fully upon all parts of their teaching, but will merely point out that the promise, "I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life", appears to be intended to direct our attention to the difference between the judgment of that which professes to be the Church on earth, within whose fold the tares grow amongst the wheat, and the unerring judgment of the Lord. The Church has written many a name in its "Church Roll", by receiving and acknowledging the false profession of persons whose works show them to be the children of the Wicked One; but in the day of the Lord's appearing, these names shall be blotted out. They were never written in "the Lamb's book of life". Every true Christian is an Overcomer of the world", for in him there dwells the principle of faith; "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". Every false professor, however, is not an "overcomer", but rather one overcome by the world. The world is his master, and Satan his Prince; and his works declare it. "The world lieth in the Wicked One". The Day of His Coming

4. And now let us briefly notice what is the only true ground of confidence in that terrible Day of which the text speaks. If we seek to realize the awful solemnities of that hour, and contemplate what it would be to witness them, we might well cry "Who shall abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?" "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven"; "the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and in the glory of the Father and of His holy angels". This glory, the glory of Him who "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see", shall appear suddenly in the heavens and before the sight of men. Mortal eyes cannot look upon it without perishing, for it is the glory of Him who has said, "no man can see My face and live". But here we are met by the clearest instruction, and most complete comfort. "We shall all be

changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye; at the last trump", and again, as in this Epistle, "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"; and if we see Him AS HE IS, this must imply that mortality shall first have been swallowed up of life; for to gaze upon that glory would otherwise be impossible. The confidence therefore, of the believer before his Lord at His coming consists in this, that he shall then be instantaneously changed, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye", into the likeness of the glory of His Lord, "who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His Body of glory"; and in that moment of change all mortal feelings shall cease to be. Fear will become impossible, and shame equally so, for fear and shame are allied with sin, and the transfigured and glorified saint can share only such feelings as are consistent with a sinless immortality. The distinction, therefore, between confidence and shame is just the difference between them who are glorified, and those others to whom the appearing of the Lord is not the hour of glorious change, but of shameful exposure. To such He comes as a "thief", to take away from them the disguise of a false profession. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15). How terrible the anguish of the hour when the heart of the false professor is for the first time fully revealed to himself, and its essential and eternal condition revealed to others! How overwhelming the thought of such an exposure, of such unspeakable shame, of such inconceivable bitterness! How awful the words, "Depart from Me: I never knew you!" Do not they most solemnly enforce the language of the text, "to be put away in shame from Him at His Coming?" The Marriage Supper

I will draw this discourse to a close by giving a short exposition of a passage of great interest and yet of some difficulty, which will, I think, both illustrate our text, and be itself illustrated by the teaching of our text. I refer to the parable of the Kingdom of heaven, in the 22nd chapter of Matthew. The Kingdom of heaven is likened there to a marriage supper which a king made for his son. Now it is evident that this marriage supper is a figure of the Lord's reception, in the day of glory, of all those who have, by grace, become the guests of His hospitality—of those, I mean, whose hearts have been opened by grace to receive the Gospel-call, and for whom the "farm" and the "merchandise", and all the attractions of the world, have not proved of superior power. The first guests bidden to this feast were the Jews, for it was not until after the rejection of the Gospel by Israel, nationally, that the messengers said "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles". Israel was then rejected and scattered through the earth, as seems to be indicated by the words, "the king destroyed those murderers and burned up their city". The call of the Gentiles follows. No longer in "the city" was the invitation of the Gospel proclaimed but in the highways and hedges of the whole earth; and all who ostensibly respond to that call, both bad and good, were gathered in as guests to the wedding. Now, is not this precisely the history of the results of the preaching of the Gospel? A multitude of persons has assembled professedly at its call, and they expect to be made heirs of glory; the multitude, therefore, who gather to the wedding is the emblem, not of the world, but of the Professing Church! All those who come are either truly prepared for that marriage supper by the work of Divine grace in their souls, or else their only claim to it is the robe of a false profession. "But when the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment". He was arrayed in a garment of his own choosing, and not in the wedding garment which alone could be approved by the King. Too late is the error discovered. Bound hand and foot he is cast into "the outer darkness", where

"there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". This is what will happen at the Return of the Lord in glory. Everyone who has truly received the message of the Gospel will be found ready for that appearing, clad in a garment, not of false profession, but of that fitness which God Himself bestows through the work of His Son, upon those who are to be guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. To the Church "it is given that she should be arrayed in fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints". The Instantaneous Change of the saints into the likeness of the glory of their Lord, evidences the reality of their faith, the truthfulness of their profession; and so it is written "Blessed are they who are called unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb". But now the awful moment has come, when the garment of a false profession will, for each who has worn it, prove "narrower than he can wrap himself therein". The lamp of mere profession flickers and goes out. To such the Coming of the Lord is indeed as that of "a thief", for He comes to take away their garment of profession. They walk naked, and all see their shame. He denies their names, though they have (falsely) professed His, before His Father and His holy angels. They are bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness.

Thus this momentous subject closes. Its language conveys unspeakable comfort to those who are truly in Christ, and mercifully warns, with words of awful solemnity, those whose profession is unreal. Blessed, indeed, are the thoughts it brings to all who are abiding in Christ, whose faith is heartfelt and sincere, bidding them know that the day of their Lord's glory shall be the day of their glory, that they shall have confidence before Him at His Coming, and "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads" enter into His eternal rest. But there are also those, alas, to whom that day will be the last day of a false profession; and when, stripped of all disguises, they shall stand before their Lord the unholy pretenders that they ever were, and then be driven in shame from His presence forever! May God grant each one of us His grace to enable us to search heart and life under His holy eye, that we may rejoice with trembling; remembering that while "the word of the Lord is right, rejoicing the heart, and the commandment of the Lord pure, enlightening the eyes", we have need ever to say, "Moreover, by these things is thy servant warned".

ENDNOTES:

[1] Alford's comment is: "The ean (if) differs from hotan (when) in marking, not time, but reality only". (Greek Test, in loc.).

[2] The Revised Version puts "from Him" in the margin; but even this translation does not sufficiently mark the force of the preposition apo "away from". Compare Matthew 25:41, "Depart from (apo) me, ye cursed".

[3] In the first Epistle of St. John two Greek words occur which are both translated "little children" without distinction, by the Authorised and Revised Versions. The first of these is teknion, a child by birth-relationship; the second, paidion, a child in respect of age. The first, which is obviously the more inclusive term, occurs seven times in the Epistle. It describes Christians as children in birth-relationship with God, and includes, therefore, believers of all ages and all degrees of spiritual maturity. This is clearly seen in 1 John 2:12, where the phrase "little children" includes all those persons who are distinguished in the two following verses as "fathers, young men, and little children". The other term, paidion, occurs only twice, 1 John 2:13, 1 John 2:18, in the first of which verses it obviously means believers recently converted—children in spiritual age and experience. This being so, it might be better to translate teknion by dear children, and paidion by little children.

It is beautiful to notice, as has been pointed out by another, that the language of the Apostle is really the echo of his Lord's "Children" (tekna), Mark 10:24; "little children" (rather "dear children") (tekna), John 13:33, "children" (paidia), John 21:5.

[4] Compare John 15:2, "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit' 'lit., every non fruit-bearing branch.

04 - The Body of Humiliation and the Body of Glory

CHAPTER 4 THE BODY OF HUMILIATION and the Body of Glory

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Php 3:20-21 In approaching the study of this passage let us notice first, the remarkable fact that it contemplates the believer's salvation and future glory from the side of the body rather than from that of the spirit. By this it is not meant that the body and the spirit are brought under redemption and into glory in any different sense, but only that the text speaks specially of the salvation of the body; in this respect, resembling a small class of passages which deal with this aspect of the subject, as contrasted with a larger class which speak of the salvation of the soul, or of salvation generally and without indicating any special aspect of its application. Man's being consists of body and soul; or, to speak more accurately, of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23); and although it is not so easy to comprehend the distinction between soul and spirit as that between body and soul, yet, seeing that man in all the constituent parts of his nature has been ruined by sin, we can, at any rate, understand that all parts of that nature shall, likewise, be redeemed and glorified in Christ. The salvation of the believer is a complete salvation of the entire being with which God has endowed him. Immortal life and glory are God's gifts, not only to the spirit, but also to the body of each of the redeemed in Christ Jesus.

Examination of the Text The importance of the text is even greater than we may perceive at first. Let us begin by closely examining the language employed, so that we may be sure of discerning its exact force and contextual significance. And first, it should be noticed that the word "conversation" may be translated "native city", [1] for one prominent object of the verse, apparently, is to contrast believers, as citizens of the Heavenly City, whose polity, privileges, and principles are heavenly, with the worldlings previously mentioned, "who mind earthly things". Then the word "is" may be preferably rendered "subsists" for the Greek here signifies existence in a specified and fixed character of being—as in chap. 2:6, of the Lord Jesus—unaffected by the mutations of earthly circumstances. Again it should be observed that the words "from whence" do not grammatically refer to the heavens, but to the City which is implied in the word politeuma just used, which includes the idea of a city, or state, to which, as its citizens, we belong; and out of that city in the heavens we expect the Saviour to come forth: the fact that the word rendered "whence" (literally, "from which") is in the singular, whilst "heavens" is in the plural, makes this translation "out of which (city)" necessary. The word translated "look for", would be better rendered "await", for it combines the ideas of expectation and desire, and lifts the soul over intervening circumstances onwards to the realization of all its hopes at the return in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The next point is, that as there is no definite article before the word "Saviour" in the Greek, the translation should be made by the words "as Saviour"—"we expect, as Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ". In the next verse, it is a point of great interest that the word "change" (metaschematisei) is

not one which expresses an alteration of essential being, but simply one of outward form; being connected with that used in the second chapter of this Epistle, where the Son of God, before His incarnation, is described as subsisting in the form (morphe) of God, but, at His incarnation, as "found in fashion (schema) as a man;" the former term expressing His eternal, and the latter His earthly relations. Our text tells us that the outward aspect (schema) of our bodies is to be altered, for they may be regarded as being, in virtue of regeneration, in that spiritual form (morphe) which is to endure for ever; and this change is to assimilate them to the permanent form (morphe) of the Lord's "Body of glory". The translation "our vile bodies" is greatly to be regretted, for the word "vile", which is here employed in its old sense, derived from the Latin, of "cheap", or "of trifling value", is used in modern English only in the sense of evil, an idea which is not at all suggested by the Greek. The better translation would be "our body of humiliation", a phrase which at once recalls the fact that the Lord's own Body was, in the days of His flesh, a "body of humiliation" also, though now it is a "body of glory", consequent upon the change which passed upon it at His ascension into the Heavens. And lastly, the word "subdued" at the close, is of great significance, and must not be taken as though it were intended to teach us merely that the Lord's power can effect all things. It clearly means more than that. It points to the fact that this transformation of the bodies of the Redeemed into the likeness of their Lord's Body of glory, is the final triumph of His redemption-work over that power of death which as the penalty of sin, came upon man's being; for "the last enemy that shall be subdued is death", and the last victory of our Redeeming Lord is won over the power of death in the bodies of His people, by their transformation into His immortal and glorious likeness. To bring out these several points, the whole passage may be paraphrased thus: "For our native city essentially subsists in the heavens, and from it we are expecting the Lord Jesus Christ, in the character of Saviour; who shall change in its outward fashion our body of humiliation, that it may be made in its abiding form like unto His body of glory, according to the power whereby He is able to bring all things, without exception, into subjection to Himself".

Although the subject is too large to be adequately treated in a single discourse, its leading thoughts may be examined under the three following heads:

1. The manner in which Scripture speaks of the body in its relation to the soul.
2. The body in those aspects which connect it with the significance of the phrase "our body of humiliation".
3. The body in that altered future aspect which it will present when constituted a "body of glory".

1. The Body in its relation to the Soul When God created man, He "formed him out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul". These terms obviously described physical and spiritual being respectively: but when we are told that God created man "in His own image", we must, of necessity, suppose that the meaning of the words is to be restricted to the spirit of man, for in no sense can God's being be material. "God is a Spirit". The change referred to in the text, which is to take place in the Day of Glory, is a change the character of which can only be understood when viewed in the light of 1 Corinthians 15:44 (R. V.), "If (i.e., as surely as) there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body". In our "natural body" we are like the first man Adam, who was "of the earth earthy"; in our "spiritual body" we shall be like "the second Man, the Lord from heaven", who is heavenly, "as if we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; and this change will be a change from a

condition which is mortal and corruptible to one which shall be immortal and glorious. The New Covenant affects our whole Man

We need to distinguish clearly, therefore, what it is which is given to us in the new creation, discerning that the new creation is indeed a NEW CREATION, and not merely the restoration of the old. "If any man be in Christ, there is (i.e., has taken place) a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, new things have come into being" [2] (2 Corinthians 5:17), that is, there has taken place in the case of each believer, a veritable work of new creation. The body of man is an essential constituent of his being. It is not the mere garment of the soul, designed for a time to enfold a spiritual being which shall afterwards exist without it, like the chrysalis-sheath within which the butterfly is formed in perfectness and beauty, or as the envelope which is worthless when the enclosed letter is unfolded. The body is the complement of the soul, the instrument of the spirit; and that it is so is proved by the resurrection of the body, and corroborated by the words of the Apostle, "not for that I would be unclothed, but clothed upon with my house which is from heaven". It is to be feared, however, that the minds of many Christians are guided more by the words of poets about laying aside "this mortal coil" and the like, than by the teaching of Scripture. The words of the Apostle just quoted prove that it is not liberation from the body that we should desire, but rather that the body and spirit might be perfected in their united being, thus rendering us capable of perfect communion with God. How strange it is that mystic spiritualizing evolved from human fancy and not reconcilable with the Scriptures, exalting the spirit to the disparagement of the body, should be as common among many professing Christians as the opposite idea is in the minds of Agnostics and Skeptics, who give matter the pre-eminence, and cannot conceive the moral qualities of man to be anything more than properties of his material nature. But if the body is the instrument of the spirit it—the means by which the spirit can fulfil its purposes and designs—let us remember that the body can also hinder the spirit, as is shown in those most solemn and mysterious words of the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak". How touchingly, how suggestively, do these words reveal the intimate connection between matter and spirit—the body and soul of man! These work together; they were destined to work together: that they do not always work harmoniously together in us, as indeed they ever did in our Lord, is a part of the misery induced by sin. Sad is it when the arm, paralyzed, is unable to respond to the dictates of the will; but sadder still when the arm moves to do evil at the dictates of a sinful will. We see by this, how foolish, as well as how evil, was that doctrine, so common in days gone by, and not perhaps entirely extinct even now—an idea which more or less influences some of those who "spiritualize" (as it is called) the statements of Scripture—that matter is evil, and that it is in the material body the secret of human sin lies! No; it is not the body that is evil—evil impulses come from the corrupt will—it is "the mind of the flesh" which is enmity against God! True, the powers of the body have been perverted and misused by the sinfulness of the will; but the blessed destiny of the body is that it shall yet be, when itself glorified and united to the glorified spirit, the medium through which that glorified spirit shall enjoy full communion with God, and perfectly fulfil His service.

2. Let us now consider some of the statements of scripture regarding those aspects of our corporeal being which are expressed by the words "our Body of Humiliation".

Although, as we have seen, there is no ground in Scripture for believing that the unfallen humanity of Adam was like that of the Lord Jesus in glory, yet it is abundantly clear that it was in many

respects different from ours. Human nature before the Fall was not subject to death, to pain, to weariness, or to want: all these are consequences of sin. The sweat of the brow to Adam, and the pains of child-bearing to Eve, were amongst the first bodily penalties of the Fall; and soon by our first parents, as by us since, must have been realized the physical effects of the mental anguish sin had brought into the world. Disappointment over the rebellious Cain, and sorrow over the murdered Abel, together with the ten thousand elements of that vanity and vexation of spirit which are the lot of our sinful race, must quickly have begun to leave their traces upon both their inward being and their outward aspect. The stooping form, the care-lined face, the sorrowful look, the tearful eye, must, ere long, have become manifest in men, as evidences of the misery that sin had wrought. Humanity, as it came from the Hand of God, though not glorious, as has been already shown, must have been beautiful, noble, perfect in all respects and to a degree which we can now but little realize. There are many hints in Scripture that human nature in primeval days was far more excellent, both physically and mentally, than it is now. Possibly the stature of man was above the present average; probably comeliness of form was much more general and perfect than now, for "the daughters of men were fair"; and the far greater duration of human life witnesses to the superior strength and vitality which the human constitution must have possessed. Blighted by sin, as man was even then, both in body and in soul, he must yet have been far more beautiful and perfect than is the case now. But the righteous sentence of "humiliation" had gone forth, and "the body of humiliation" soon began to show, and has ever since progressively developed, the deteriorating consequences of those sufferings, mental and physical, which are the result of sin. Every disappointment that racks our minds, and every pain that afflicts our bodies, tells us how far our mental and physical constitution is removed from its paradisiacal condition; that is, how deeply the body in its humiliation is groaning under the results of sin. The Redemption of the Body

One passage of Scripture lays especial stress upon that aspect of salvation which relates to the physical degradation of man through sin. "Ourselves, also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit" (which means, surely, that the Holy Spirit indwelling the people of God is the firstfruits of their future glory), "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body". It will be noticed how this passage emphasizes the bondage of corruption in its relation to the physical nature of man, telling us that "the adoption", that is, the admission of God's children to that coming state of glory, their entrance into which will place them in enjoyment of the full privileges of sonship, is to be coincident with "the redemption of the body"; for the hour which will terminate the subjection of man's natural being to the physical, mental, and moral consequences of sin, will transform the body as well as the soul into the glorious likeness of our risen and ascended Lord. The expression in the context, "the manifestation of the sons of God", refers to the hour of their manifestation in glory, the passage being parallel to the beautiful words of 1 John 3:1-24—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it is not yet manifested what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is". But this future likeness of the believer to his Lord in body as well as in spirit—our "body of humiliation" being destined to be fashioned like unto His body of glory—is the counterpart of another truth, namely, that the Lord Jesus at His Incarnation took a "body of humiliation", "prepared" by God (Hebrews 10:5), wherein He wrought out for us, in life and death, that redemption, the completion of which was the great Sacrifice of Calvary, in order that we might be associated with Him in glory for ever. We are told, in the 2nd of Hebrews, that "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren", in order that He might become their High Priest,

and make reconciliation for their sins; and in the same chapter, there are some other words, the meaning of which is absolutely precise as to this point: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same". The Lord Jesus, then, assumed humanity, humanity as now seen in man, yet without sin. God sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). Let us be perfectly clear, however, that in no sense of the word was there sin in Him. Sin is a moral, not a material evil. It is not, as has been already pointed out, in the corporeal nature of man, but in his perverted will, that evil exists. The fact that the Lord Jesus assumed humanity, not in its paradisiacal aspect, as seen in Adam before the Fall, but a humanity like that of the brethren whom he came to redeem, and to whom He was made like in all things, except sin, is a very important truth. How affecting it is to think that the physical nature which our blessed Lord assumed in His grace and compassion towards us, was like unto our own! It was truly human, for it needed nourishment and was sustained thereby: it was liable to fatigue for He was weary when He sat by the Samaritan well and slept upon a pillow in the boat: it was capable of exhaustion, for it failed to uphold the burden of His heavy cross on the way from the city to Golgotha: it was not beautiful to look upon, for the words of the Scripture are, "His face was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men", "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him": and, it was weak, for "He was crucified through weakness". All these considerations prove the essential similarity, in all sinless respects, of our Lord's humanity to our own; all show that His body in the days of His flesh was a "body of humiliation" like unto our own, in all points except sin: all these things show us how infinite and how real were His grace and compassion towards His people, the objects of His love, whose place He came to take, in order that they might share His glory in the New Creation.

3. Let us consider, in the third place, those aspects of our corporeal being which are expressed by the phrase "the Body of Glory".

We have seen that "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory", includes for all His people the redemption of the body as well as of the soul. Salvation does not consist in the glorification of the spirit apart from the body, but in the union and equal change into glory (whatever that term in its fullness may import) of the body and the spirit, as together forming the totality of our being. But this truth has practical aspects also, and is found sometimes in connections where we might hardly have expected it. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13), and the verse next to that just quoted states that "God has both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by His own power"; so that these bodies, which are the members of Christ now by an invisible union, shall, when changed into His likeness in glory, become His actual possession, and constitute, it may be said with perfect reverence, a part of His mystical body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, so, also, is Christ". But in order that our thoughts concerning the change of our body into the likeness of the body of our Lord's glory may be clear and complete, let us consider what Scripture reveals to us regarding the change through which the holy body of our Lord passed when He left this earth and ascended into glory; for the change from physical into spiritual being in His case, is the pledge and pattern of our own. The consideration of this portion of the subject must be divided into two parts, for we shall need to inquire what was the nature of the body of our Lord, first, between His resurrection and His ascension, and, secondly, after His

ascension into glory.

Many Christians have indefinite, and, it must be feared, even erroneous thoughts, concerning the nature of our Lord's body during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension. There is a widespread idea that the body of our Lord, after His resurrection, was no longer the material body which He possessed before His death, but a body of resurrection glory, not physical in its qualities, but spiritual. It has been supposed that because our Lord was pleased, by an act of His almighty power, to come invisible into the midst of His disciples, or to vanish suddenly out of their sight, as recorded in the last chapter of Luke, His body must have been at that time immaterial and spiritual. But, apart from the consideration that these miraculous acts were not different in character from others which He had performed previously to His death, such as, for example, when He walked upon the water or appeared transfigured upon the mount, the very chapter just quoted itself contains the strongest possible assertion that our Lord's body was still (i.e., after His resurrection) in the same condition of being as before His death. "He showed them His hands and His feet", and furnished a yet further proof of His body being still physical, by eating a piece of broiled fish and an honeycomb in their presence, saying "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:36-43). Since, then, our Lord's body at this time was declared by Himself NOT to be "spirit", there cannot be the slightest doubt that it had not yet become "the body of glory"; and the presence in it of the scars of the wounds in His hands and His side, which He was careful to show them, that by these they might identify His personality, proves that it was still His "body of humiliation". We cannot doubt that, whatever His bodily appearance was before His death—as, for example, His stature, the fashion of His countenance, His form, and any other marks of physical personality—these were present in His body after His resurrection and until His ascension, just as they had been before. If, then, His face were the same as it was before His death, it must still have been a face "marred more than any man"; and similarly all the other characteristics of that holy body must still have declared it to be His "body of humiliation". It was, indeed, as yet unglorified.

The Body of Glory

But, in turning to the consideration of His "body of glory", it may be remarked at once, that there is one passage which, even if it stood alone, is sufficient to show us that the change from humiliation to glory took place not at the resurrection, but at the time He left this earth and ascended to the Father. This text is 1 Timothy 3:16, the last words of which, "believed on in the world, received up IN glory", place in contrast the period of His sojourn on earth and His ascension into heaven. Let us observe that the translation should be "in glory", as in the Revised Version, and not "into glory", as in the Authorized Version; for the alteration is both necessary and important. The Greek preposition *en* employed here, conveys the primary and natural idea, similarly to the English preposition *in*, of a person or thing being in a certain state. If the object of this verse had been to teach us that our Lord was received up into the place of glory, another preposition (*eis*, meaning "into") would surely have been employed; whereas the use here of the preposition *in* clearly marks the fact that it is not the place of glory which is meant, but the state of glory in which He entered as He ascended from the earth into the heavens. It was then that His "body of humiliation" became changed into the "body of glory"; and this is probably why the cloud "received Him out of their sight", mercifully intervening between the feebleness of human vision and that glory which no man can look upon and live. Accordingly, on the only other occasions on which it is recorded that any of His people saw Him again, as John in Patmos, and Saul upon the way to Damascus, the Lord was

no longer seen in a body of weakness and humiliation, but in splendor transcending human sight—a glory which caused Paul to fall blind and prostrate before Him, and which laid even John at His feet "as one that was dead". No longer could His people look upon Him as in the days of His flesh; no longer could John lean his head upon His bosom: they now needed to say "If we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more"; that is, no longer in that character; for although the body of the Lord Jesus was still the same as to identity, it was now glorified, and, as such, beyond the power of human sense to gaze upon and comprehend. Doubtless this is why, in the description given in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, the glory of Christ, as seen by the eyes of John, is described by symbols, which are of moral significance—that is to say, they set a picture before the mind, not a picture of mere physical characteristics presented to the eye, for heavenly glory cannot be discerned by human sense: the only estimate we can form of it is in its moral features.

Conformed to His Body of Glory

And, let us remember, it is to the likeness of this "body of glory" that it is the blessed destiny of all His people to be conformed. This was once a mystery inconceivable by the heart of man; but it is a mystery no longer because it has been revealed. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed". This change, the change of body as well as soul and spirit into the likeness of the glory of their Lord, awaits all His redeemed. None of them has as yet participated in the glory of the New Creation. Only "Christ, the firstfruits", has as yet entered into that glory; "they who are Christ's"—and the language implies that "they who are Christ's" without exception are meant—will enter into it "at His coming", some changed, without seeing death, namely, they "who are alive and remain" unto the coming of the Lord; some, whose bodies shall be raised from the dust and glorified in His likeness. Thus, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear (i.e., be manifested) with Him in glory". The hour of the manifestation of His glory will be the hour of "the manifestation of the sons of God"; the moment of His coming, the moment in which all His own, whether sleeping in death, or waiting alive for His coming, shall be instantaneously changed into the beauty and glory of the likeness of their Lord!

We shall be like Him

Let me close by inviting you to remember that this glorious change into His image is our hope! "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be; but we know that when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". The moment that His glory breaks upon our sight will be the moment of our own change, in body, soul, and spirit, into a glorious being like unto His: indeed, without this we could not look upon Him. That vision of unearthly glory mortal eyes could never behold. Hence the words, "for we shall see Him as He is", carry in themselves the witness and evidence of our own previous change. And then, next to this "change" comes the Translation of the Glorified Church! "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall be caught up together with them"—all having been, as we have seen, instantaneously glorified at the moment of the Lord's appearing—"into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord". The fact then, of the Lord's coming, but not the date of it—this is our hope: to be fashioned

from the humiliation of our fallen being into the likeness of His glory—this is our destiny. This is our hope—and what a hope it is! It is not only the beatific vision of the glory of God manifested in His Son; not only the hope of dwelling for ever with Him, for ever near Him; but a hope which has for its essence the fact that we shall be like Him whom we love, that we shall be like Him whose beauty and whose glory we shall behold and admire throughout a changeless eternity of bliss! Well saith the Scripture, "He that hath this hope built upon Him purifieth himself even as He is pure". If this hope be ours, let us see that we manifest in our spirit and our walk here below the moral likeness of that glory, the holiness that shall make us like our Lord before the eyes of men, purifying ourselves even as He is pure, [3] while we await that moment of unspeakable felicity when He shall "change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself".

ENDNOTES:

[1] I think the translation, "native city", is warranted by the occurrence of the word *kuparchei*, which implies the connection of believers with the Heavenly City as their natal home.

[2] There is strong MS. authority for the omission of the words "all things". They are omitted by the four Editors, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Alford.

[3] See Matt. S 45. "That ye may become (*genesthe*, i.e., become in practically developed likeness) the sons of your Father who is in heaven." The disciples addressed, being the sons of God, were taught to prove this by so living as to resemble their Father. See also Eph. S I. "Be ye therefore imitators (*mimetai*) of God, as dear children."

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