

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
14:18-20

**18. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. 19. Yet a little while and the world sees me no more, but ye see me. Because I live, ye shall live also. 20. At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.**

18.--[*I will not leave you comfortless.*] The word we render "comfortless" means literally "orphans," and is so translated in the marginal reading of the English version. It beautifully describes the helpless, solitary, friendless state, by comparison, in which the disciples of Christ were left when He died and was withdrawn from their bodily eyes. "In that condition," says Jesus, "I will not leave you. You shall not always be orphans." It adds to the beauty of the expression to remember that He had already called them "little children." Hence, there was a special fitness in the word "orphans."

[*I will come to you.*] The verb here is in the present tense: "I do come." About the meaning of the sentence there is much difference of opinion. Even the Fathers, as Burgon says, "explain the words diversely." There is no more unanimity, we must remember, among the Fathers than among modern divines. The "consent of Catholic antiquity," about which many make so much ado, is more imaginary than real.

Some think, as Chrysostom, that the "coming" means only the reappearing of Christ after His resurrection from the grave on the third day.

Others think, as Hutcheson, that our Lord only means His coming by His Spirit, as a pledge of his presence.

Others think, as Augustine and Bede, that our Lord looks far forward to His second coming at the end of the world and speaks the words to the whole company of believers in every age: "I am coming again. I come quickly."

I decidedly prefer this last view. The first and second seem to me to cramp, narrow, and confine our Lord's promise. The last is in harmony with all His teaching. The second advent is the great hope of the Church. In the last chapter of the Bible, the Greek for "I come quickly" is precisely the same verb that is used here. (Rev. 22:20.)

In saying this I would not be mistaken. I admit fully that Jesus came to His Church after His ascension, invisibly, does come to His Church continually, is with His Church even to the end of the world. But I do not think this is the meaning of the text.

19.--[*Yet a little while...ye see me.*] Again the meaning of our Lord is somewhat obscure. I think He must mean, "Very shortly the wicked unbelieving world will no longer behold and gaze on Me, as I shall be withdrawn from it and ascend into heaven. But even then ye see Me and will continue seeing Me with the eyes of faith." I cannot think that the

present tense here, "Ye behold Me," can apply to the second advent. It must surely refer to the spiritual vision of Christ which believers would enjoy. The world could not prevent them seeing Him. The Greek word for "ye see" implies a fixed, steady, habitual gaze.

Bishop Hall says, "Ye by the eye of faith shall see and acknowledge Me."

[*Because I live, ye shall live also.*] This great deep saying of Christ seems to admit of a very wide and full signification: "Your spiritual life now and your eternal life hereafter are both secured by my life. The life of the Head guarantees the life of the members. I live, have life in myself, can never die, can never have my life destroyed by my enemies, and live on to all eternity. Therefore ye shall live also. Your life is secured for you and can never be destroyed. You have everlasting life now and shall have everlasting glory hereafter."

That word "I live" is a great full saying, and we cannot fathom it all. It does not merely mean "I shall rise from the dead." It is certainly far more than the future tense. It implies that Christ is "the Living One," the source and fountain of life. It is like "In Him was life," and "as the Father has life in Himself, even so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John 1:4, 5:26).

20.--[*On that day ye shall know, etc.*] Here again I believe (with Cyril and Augustine) that our Lord specially refers to the day of His own second advent. Then, and not till then, His disciples will have perfect knowledge. Now they see and know in part and through a glass darkly. Then they shall fully understand the mystical union between the Father and Son and between the Son and all His believing members.

To confine the "day," as Chrysostom does, to the resurrection of Christ from the dead seems to me to fall short of its full meaning.