

# WRITINGS OF C H COATES

by C.H. Coates

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*A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by C.H. Coates, compiled for study and devotional reading.*

3 Chapters

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## Being "Washed" and Feet Washing

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Being "Washed" and Feet Washing This paper is an extract from a published address, entitled Loved unto the End.

Let us follow the instruction of the chapter a little further. Peter, looking upon the scene in a natural way, had first of all refused to allow the Lord to wash his feet; but on hearing that the washing was with a view to having part with Him, he exclaims with his usual fervency of spirit, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This gives occasion to the Lord to make the important statement of John 13:10, "He that is washed [bathed] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." It is evident that the figure used is that of a person who has bathed, and in walking from the bath has defiled his feet with the dust of the floor. He does not need to return to the bath; he only requires that his feet should be washed, to be "clean every whit."

Let us seek in the first place to understand what is meant by "he that is washed." It has sometimes been taken as the cleansing of the blood, but this has no warrant in the scripture. It is expressly cleansing by water, and where we find this in Scripture it seems to me to be a figure of passing into a wholly new order of things, and of being made suitable for it. The priests were washed in the day of their consecration. (Exodus 29:4.) It was a ceremony indicative of the fact that they were set apart for this special service; it was their introduction to a new order of life; and was expressive of the fact that they were introduced to it in a way that rendered them suitable for it. Scripture speaks of the "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5), where the thought is evidently that of introduction to a totally new order of things; and Paul says to the Corinthians, "Ye are washed" - enforcing thereby the fact that they had been brought out of everything that constituted their former life. Now, how had the disciples been "washed"? May we not learn something as to it from John 15:3? "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The word of Christ had wrought in power in their hearts, and they had been introduced by it to an entirely new order of things. No doubt the new birth is essential to this, and the "washing" involves the thought of the death of Christ, and is, so to speak, the application of His death as that which separates us from the world and from ourselves as in the flesh; but it evidently includes the knowledge of Christ by His word. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Christ had made Himself known, by His word, in the hearts of the disciples. His word expressed Himself, and the knowledge of Himself had freed their hearts from everything that was of the world. It was a great thing for a few fishermen to be found in complete superiority to all the political, social, and religious influences that were around them. They were delivered from the whole current of things and opinions that prevailed in the world. They were brought outside it all - morally purified from it all - by the knowledge of Christ. "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," are words which express the heart-feelings of the company thus "washed" and "clean." They had, if I may so say, the moral cleansing of a new Object. The knowledge of that blessed Person had delivered them from the thoughts of men, and from the motives and principles of the world. The "expulsive power" of the knowledge of Christ had displaced other things, and by the knowledge of Him they entered into an entirely new world. They were "washed."

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." The cleansing of the whole moral being, in the way of which I have spoken, is a divine operation that is never repeated, but there is continual need for the feet to be washed. It is the point of contact with this present scene which is the point of danger, and we cannot avoid this so long as we are in the world. The very thought of this may well move our affections deeply when we consider that it necessitates the untiring and devoted service of the One who loves "unto the end." It furnishes Him with opportunity to give continual expression to His love. But for this ministry of divine love our contact with the world, and our susceptibility to the influences of this present scene, would have the effect of permanently withdrawing our hearts from part with Christ in the circle of divine affections. Little do we know how the blessed Lord longs to have our hearts in company with Himself in that wondrous circle. May He be graciously pleased to draw us near to Himself, and give our hearts a deeper sense of His love! The question may be asked, "How does the Lord wash our feet?" I cannot say much about it, but it seems to me that the washing of the feet partakes of the same nature as the washing all over. It is of the same character, though with a more limited range according to the present need. I believe our feet are washed by a fresh presentation of Christ to our affections. He brings Himself and His love before our hearts, and thus He displaces the dust of the world. It is a distinct service - the special service of His love while we are in the world. If our hearts are really touched by this I am sure we shall count more upon the Lord for His service, and we shall look more to Him for it. No doubt this service of love is for all "His own," but we ought to be exercised as to whether we have been in a condition to get the good of it. One must be consciously of "His own," and have the world as a judged thing, before he can realize the good of this precious service of divine love. There must also be a response - a looking for the service. I am afraid we are often like Peter; we will not allow the Lord to wash our feet. We give Him no opportunity of doing so. Do we not often read the Word and pray without turning to the Lord for His present and personal ministry of love?

Christ loves His own which are in the world, and He washes their feet. If we have part with Him we shall love His own, and we shall wash their feet. Those who taste the joys of that circle of divine affections cannot help longing that others should have their feet cleansed from the dust of the world that they might enjoy their true portion according to the thoughts of divine love. It is as our own feet are washed that we become instrumental in washing the feet of our brethren. If my feet are not washed my heart is more or less under the power and influence of things here, and if I speak of these things I put a little more dust on my brother's feet. But if my feet have been washed the love of Christ and of the Father are known in my heart - I am in the circle of divine affections - and I naturally speak of the things that are in that circle. If I am enabled to bring these things before my brother's heart. I wash his feet. It is not by telling him of his faults that I wash his feet. If he has sinned, or been overtaken in a fault, I must go to other scriptures to know how to treat him. This chapter does not suppose any actual sin or fault, though I am convinced that if our feet are not washed we are in the greatest danger of falling into sin; if the dust accumulates on our feet it will undoubtedly result in sin. We must know the thoughts of divine love to understand this precious service of Christ, and I shall be thankful if the Lord uses His word tonight to lead us a little more into those thoughts.

C. A. Coates.

## The Greatness of the Son

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### The Greatness of the Son

Hebrews 1:1-14. This epistle opens abruptly without introduction or prelude. The usual style of Paul's epistles (and I do not doubt his authorship of the book) is absent, and for a beautiful reason. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ," would have been out of place in an epistle in which Jesus Christ Himself is presented as the Apostle. The author of the book is out of sight; its subject is at once and gloriously prominent. The statement that God has spoken in the Person of the Son leads at once to a sevenfold declaration of the greatness of the Son. The past, the present, the future, creation, providence, redemption, the glory of God, and the sins of His people are all brought in, not because of what they are in themselves, but on account of His relation to them all. They all proclaim THE GREATNESS OF THE SON, and for that purpose are they introduced. The universe is mentioned, but it is to state that God has established the Son "Heir of all things." Thus, at the very outset, God's object in all the actings of His grace and power is set before us. We shall never understand the actings of God until we know His motive and His object. His motive is love - His own blessed nature; and His object is the glory of the Son. Nothing outside Himself could furnish a motive for God; He acts because of what He is. His own nature is His motive. And His Object is ever the Son, as we have it in the parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a marriage for His Son." (Matthew 22:2.) The universe itself would never have existed, but as the scene of the glory of the Son. All things were created "for Him." (Colossians 1:16.) He is thus presented to us as the blessed and worthy Object of all the actings of God.

We learn first that the Son is the Object of all the Father's counsels, and then we find that He is the Accomplisher of them all. And this even as to the very existence of the created universe. "By whom also He made the worlds." By the Son of the Father's love "were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all things have been created by Him, and for Him." (Colossians 1:16.) The universe exists by the creative power of the Son; it is through Him that it has its being. In becoming "Heir of all things" He will take possession of that which owes its very existence to Himself. It will all be put under His hand, and He will acquire the glory of it all in a public way. And this, let us remember, will be in Manhood. As Man He will be "Heir of all things." He will acquire in Manhood the glory of all that has been wrought in the power of His Person, even as to creation. He will be invested before the universe with the full glory of everything that He has accomplished. All will return to Him; not a ray of glory that rightly belongs to Him will be lost. He will be "Heir of all things." But if He created the universe, and is to inherit it, He created it and will inherit it in order to fill it with the glory of God. I apprehend that the expression, "the effulgence of His glory," refers to the place which the Son will take in the universe. He is going to be the Centre and Sun of a universe of bliss which He will fill with the glory of God. The glory of God will come into full and blessed display for the whole universe in the Person of the Son. The Son is also "the expression of His substance." In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, but it dwells in Him to be expressed. He is "the Word" - the expression of all that is in the divine mind - the full and

blessed revelation of God. Until the incarnation God was unexpressed, and therefore unknown, for "no man hath seen God at any time"; but "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John 1:18.) God is in the light; everything that pertains to His nature and character is perfectly disclosed in the Person of the Son. The Son is also the Upholder of "all things by the word of His power." He maintains the universe which He has created. All the laws and principles of nature are maintained in action by the word of the Son's power. "All things subsist together by Him." (Colossians 1:17.) Men of science can tell us something of the vastness and beauty of the principles which operate in nature, and they freely confess that they can only traverse the outer fringe of the wonders of the universe. But how little do they think, in most cases, that everything subsists together by the Son. There is not a bit of creation that is not upheld by the word of His power. God would have us to ponder this - to consider it in all its magnitude - and thus to contemplate the Greatness of the Son.

It is this great and wondrous Person who has "made by Himself the purification of sins." Other scriptures bring the work of the cross before us as accomplished in weakness and humiliation, done, too, in matchless divine love; but here, in keeping with the context, it is the infinite greatness of that work which is brought before us. None but a divine Person could take up the question of sins, and of all that was due to the glory of God in respect of them. No creature, however exalted, could be equal to this stupendous work. None but the Son was competent for it, and by Himself He has accomplished it. He has glorified God - that is, He has brought the glory of God into full and everlasting display while making purification of sins, so that God can take up those who were sinners, and can bring them into infinite blessing, yea, into the knowledge of Himself in grace and love, according to His own counsels. And all this - and the universe of bliss in which it will be displayed for ever - based in righteousness upon that wondrous work wherein the Son has made "purification of sins."

Having accomplished all this according to the greatness of His Person, the Son has "set Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, taking a place by so much better than the angels, as He inherits a name more excellent than they." It is not here that God exalts Him, but in His own personal greatness; as the Son He takes the place that is due to Him at the right hand of the greatness on high. It was His rightful place as the Son; no other place was suited to His greatness. May God enable us to contemplate with adoring hearts the greatness of this blessed Person! In setting Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, the Son has manifestly taken a place much better than the angels. In the days of His flesh He was, as to manifestation, "made some little inferior to angels," and this humiliation of matchless grace had been the occasion of His rejection by His people. But the Holy Ghost presents Him now to the Hebrews in the place of manifested greatness at the right hand of the majesty on high. But, while thus presenting Him, the Spirit calls attention to the fact that He inherited "a name more excellent than they." And what this inherited name is we may learn from the citations of Scripture which follow. The moment the Son came into manhood He inherited as the "offspring of David" all the titles and honours of the Messiah. And amongst the dignities and glories of the Messiah, as presented in the Old Testament scriptures, was "a more excellent name" than could attach to any creature. Angels were well known to Hebrews as a higher order in creation than man. Psalms 148:1-14 gives us the whole scope of creation, with angels at the top and creeping things at the bottom; but the Son inherits a name of greater dignity than could attach to any creature.

"For to which of the angels said He ever, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee?" As born in time, the Messiah is addressed as Son of God. He may be rejected by "the kings of the earth . . . and the rulers" (see Psalms 2:1-12), but He is acknowledged by Jehovah as His Son.

"And again, I will be to Him for Father, and He shall be to Me for Son." Here He is seen as the true Solomon - the seed of David - the One who will set up God's house in its proper glory, and the throne of whose kingdom God will establish for ever. (1 Samuel 7:13-14.) And God says, "He shall be to Me for Son." Of no creature could this be said. How could any creature, however blessed, be to God all that is expressed in the name of SON? He alone who infinitely transcends all creatures could present to God in manhood that which called forth all the affections of the heart of God, and which was an adequate object for those affections, and He alone could give to God a response suited to those affections of which He was the blessed and worthy object. He alone could be to God "for Son."

"And again, when He brings in the firstborn into the habitable world, He says, And let all God's angels worship Him." When God introduces the Son to this world in glory He calls upon the most exalted creatures to pay Him homage. Great as may be the dignity and strength of these mighty beings, they are but creatures. "As to the angels, He says, Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." He has made them what they are in His creative wisdom and power. But as to the Son, He uses very different language, "Thy throne, O God, is to the age of the age." The Son is saluted in His own proper and personal greatness. He is above all creatures, and He is the One to whom the universal homage of all God's intelligent creatures is due, and to whom it will yet be rendered. One feels instinctively that such a scripture as this calls for holy contemplation and adoration rather than for exposition.

"Thy throne, O God, is to the age of the age, and a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hast hated lawlessness; therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with oil of gladness above Thy companions." Not until the Son takes it will the kingdom be established; but when He takes it "a King shall reign in righteousness." His kingdom is characterised, as it has been well said, by the perfect discrimination between good and evil the absolute appreciation of the one and the absolute rejection of the other. Everything will be put right for God and administered for God's pleasure by One competent to do it. The Son alone could bring into manhood everything that was suitable to God, and establish it all in the gracious power of His kingdom. And how unspeakably precious it is to know that He who can be thus addressed by God has "companions." The One who loves righteousness and hates lawlessness has a company who derive from Him morally, a company of those kindred to Himself, because deriving from Himself in new creation according to that wonderful verse in the next chapter, "For both He that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." And it is blessed to note that what here characterises the Son and those brought into association with Him is "the oil of gladness." It conveys to me the thought that not only has there been the perfect discrimination between good and evil, but that good has triumphed over evil, and has found a way of glorifying itself in removing evil and all its effects, so that the Son can bring into the very place where sin was the blessed knowledge of God and of all that is suitable to God. And not only this, but there can be a sanctified company brought into association with Him outside all the desolation and sorrow of the sphere of sin - brought where there is nothing to intrude upon divine joy. If the whole question of sin is removed out of the way, and the glory of God is fully

expressed in the way this has been done, there is nothing to hinder those, who are in the knowledge and good of this stupendous fact, from entering with joy of heart into all the blessedness of good as it is found in God Himself. And it is to form us for the appreciation of all this, and to lead us into it, that the Holy Ghost has been given. In His own proper character He is "the oil of gladness."

"And Thou in the beginning, Lord, hast founded the earth, and works of Thy hands are the heavens. They shall perish, but Thou continuest still; and they all shall grow old as a garment, and as a covering shalt Thou roll them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." It would be difficult to find any scripture which gives more striking testimony to the greatness of the Son than the one which is here presented to us. For if we turn to the psalm from which it is quoted we shall find that these words are Jehovah's answer to the prayer of the afflicted Christ in the day of His trouble. He had said in an earlier verse of the psalm, "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass"; and He had turned to Jehovah to say, "But Thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever, and Thy remembrance unto all generations." (Psalms 102:11-12.) But when, further on, He goes on to say, "He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened My days. I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days," Jehovah answers Him in the words quoted in Hebrews 2:1-18 - words which set Him before our adoring hearts as the Man that is Jehovah's fellow. Yes, the Holy Sufferer of Gethsemane is addressed by Jehovah in that hour of solitude and sorrow as the Creator, and as the abiding and unchanging One. Though found in the condition and circumstances of creature man, and brought - in view of His cutting off and having nothing as Messiah here, and of all that was involved in drinking the cup of God's holy judgment upon sin - into an exceeding sorrow which can never be fathomed, and but very feebly apprehended by creature hearts, the Spirit of God does not allow us to dissociate from that unparalleled scene the divine greatness of the Holy One who bowed there in that agony of prayer. Well may we wonder and adore as we contemplate "the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever," thus stooping in the humiliation of matchless grace to bring the testimony of divine love into the very place of sin and death.

Finally we read, "But to which of the angels said He ever, Sit at My right hand, until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet?" Here we come to the point which, it seems to me, the Spirit has had in view all through the chapter. In verse 3 it was said that He "set Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, taking a place by so much better than the angels, as He inherits a name more excellent than they." The place He has taken, according to His own greatness as Son, corresponds with the place in which He is set by God as Messiah. As to the first, He takes a place above all creatures; as to the second, He inherits the excelling name and honours of the Messiah. And that particular feature of Messiah's glory which belongs to the present time is that He is called to sit at God's right hand until God shall put His enemies as the footstool of His feet. That is, Messiah's greatness and glory are in mystery, not in manifestation. It was much for the Hebrew believer, with all his previous history and education, to apprehend this, for it meant a clean break with the earth and all that was reputable and religious here. It meant the bringing home to their hearts, and not less to our own, of the tremendous fact that the One in whom God has spoken - the One who has told all that can be told of God - has been rejected in a way that has left a final breach between God and the whole course of things which obtains here. He sits at God's right hand until victorious and all-subduing judgment shall place His foes as footstool of His feet. The

greatness of the One who has been rejected leaves the world without excuse, and accentuates its guilt to a degree which no human words could adequately express. Hence the intense solemnity of the inquiry, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" And hence, too, the solemn nature of the warnings which occur again and again in this epistle as to the fearful consequence of apostasy. All turns upon the greatness of the One in whom God has spoken. As it has been justly said, none can speak after the Son, and woe be to those who neglect or turn away from that which He speaks. But to press the solemnity of this was not my present object, but rather to bring before your hearts the greatness of the Son as that which gives character to Christianity. The whole system of blessing, if I may be allowed to speak of it thus, takes character from the Son. It is to emphasise this that we have such a marvellous unfolding of His personal greatness and glory as this chapter affords. Who could measure the greatness of a system of blessing inaugurated by the Son? The more we contemplate His greatness the more our hearts must be impressed by the blessedness of what is spoken in such a Person. If the SON speaks it must be to make known the Father's name and nature - to declare the Father's grace and love as unfolded in His own counsels of blessing - and all this revealed according to the measure of the SON, if indeed we may be permitted to speak of measure where all is infinite. The prophets were "holy men of God," and they "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; but they could not be adequate to the revelation of infinite grace and love - in short, of the Father. THE SON alone was adequate to this, and He has declared the Father. The whole revelation in the light of which God has set His saints takes its character and its measure from the fact that it has come out in the SON.

And, on the other hand, the Son has taken a place in which He has become the Object of divine affections and counsels in manhood. It is to a Man that God has said, "Thou art My Son"; it is of a Man that God has said, "He shall be to Me for Son." In becoming thus the Object of divine affections in manhood the Son has taken a place in which He can be the "firstborn among many brethren." On the ground of His death, and in virtue of new creation, He can have a sanctified company of brethren "all of one" with Himself - His "companions" in the blessedness and joy of the Father's presence. Thus He not only gives character to the revelation on the one hand, but on the other He gives character to the whole company of those who are in the light of the revelation. It is a company of "many SONS." The relationship to which all are called is that which is set forth in Him. So that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing Thy praises." He takes His place with His saints, identifying them with Himself, and with His own praise to God. In short, He puts them in the place and blessing of SONS. Soon we shall be in the Father's house as sons like Him, and with Him for His eternal glory, who has after such a fashion brought us home to the Father, and for the eternal satisfaction of the Father's heart. And even here God would have our hearts to enter into something of the blessedness of this. He would have us to apprehend that we are called to the blessing of sonship - to know that we are loved as the Son is loved, according to those wonderful words, "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." We have the Holy Ghost in this special and distinctive character as the "Spirit of sonship." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galatians 4:6.) In short, the whole system of blessing to which we are called by infinite grace takes its character from the SON. Of what vast importance is it, then, that we should have Him before our hearts in all His greatness, so that our hearts may have a true measure of the greatness and

blessedness of the revelation of God on the one hand, and, on the other, that we may know the character of the blessing to which we are called, so as to enter into it and respond to the love that has called us into it, that thus we may be to the Father's pleasure and to the glory and satisfaction of the Son. C. A. Coates.

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