



## *a community called ...*

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# CHRIST IN US.

BY

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The best of all is, God is with us.—*Wesley.*

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## CHRIST IN US.

WE received recently two letters from persons living two thousand miles apart, and in each letter there were references to the same idea connected with Christian experience. One says : "I have only one more move to make, and that is to go where I can sleep until the resurrection. 'In God we live and move and have our being.' Christ is our Brother, and if true and faithful to the Son and the Father they are with us in this life, as well as in the life to come. That is the one grand, leading idea, without which life is a delusion and a snare, a myth and a cheat. This faith ennobles human life and is the mystery of

godliness. If we cannot have Christ with us just the same as our family and dearest friend, if we do not feel that he is nearer than a brother, then life and religion are incompatible, and the Bible a failure. I have perfect confidence in Christ and 'God with us.'"

The other letter says: "My own Christian experience is becoming more satisfactory. Christ is coming nearer to me as a personal presence, sometimes as tangible to the spiritual eye as any material object is to the material eye, and to me this is, I must confess, a revelation, longed for, but scarcely experienced. To me the Christ has been historical, distant too far away to lean upon when weary; now it is coming to me that it is our privilege to realize his very presence, not in shadowy indefiniteness, but as a glorious reality. If this be true, it will revolutionize my whole life and tell on my preaching. If Christ were present to our people they would be more ready to confess him and live for him, and we should be filled by a greater inspiration than the soldier who stands in the immediate

presence of the commander-in-chief. The center of our Christian life, of our theology, and of our preaching must be the immediateness of the Christ, clearly conscious to the soul. New light makes the old familiar forms of statement glow with a new meaning. How many Christian people, in fact, carry their burden because they do not feel the Burden Bearer to be near."

Both of these letters are private and personal. One is from a layman, the other from a minister. One clings by a personal faith to the reality of the presence of Christ, and the other has also come to the conclusion that the promises are fulfilled in us. The trouble and danger in many cases is that we make the promises void by giving them a figurative and unreal sense.

When Paul says (Gal. ii, 20), "Christ liveth in me," we think of some imaginary sort of living, as a remembrance rather than a reality. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. viii, 10. Where the

Spirit of Christ is, he is. When Jesus said, "I shall come again to you" (John xiv, 17, 18), he intended to speak with the utmost simplicity and certainty. "Christ in you" is simply a fact, and not a figure of speech. In the wonderful high-priestly prayer of Jesus in John xvii, he makes his promise so plain, and with such positiveness, that we wonder how any one can doubt.

He prays for his people that "they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." This oneness is personal union. "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." That idea of oneness and of real personal union runs through the prayer, as the last wish, promise, and thought of Jesus, uttered in the presence of the Father, and in view of the cross—"That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them."

The *ego* here is the personal, glorified, eternal *Logos*, who has redeemed us, and is now with the Father, but is also the King eternal,

immortal, and invisible. "In them" means apostles, disciples, and all who believe in Christ. "Lo, I am with you always" is a pledge of the presence of Jesus to his ministers and his people. He is with us not as a distant friend is with us—in love and holy friendship. It is not such a presence as that which love realizes sometimes toward its absent object. This "I in them" does not refer to any vision, or image, or effulgence; but it is a fact. We are not to excite ourselves into a state of sensuous and passionate longing by using endearing epithets, but we are to take, by a reasonable, just, certain faith, Christ's literal words. The fact that we are part of his family, or of his Church, and are thus brought into a sort of relationship, is not the idea of "I in them." It is not mere absorption into a community or a universe. It is the personal Christ actually, potentially, consciously with us and in us. As the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, so is Christ in us. He is our life, as the vine is the life of the branch. His life and our life

is one life. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "He that hath the Son hath life." He is all in all. "Ye are complete in him." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This is a real, personal, spiritual, mental, conscious vision.

"I in them" is a revelation, a manifestation of Jesus Christ in consciousness, so that "our life is hid with Christ in God." "I am the vine; ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." This personal, indwelling Christ causes the greatest possible fruitfulness, and is no mythical, imaginary conception, but a real, present, personal, divine, blessed, conscious fact. With all his people he would be glad to abide forever.

As the result of this indwelling we shall have the spirit of adoption, Rom. viii, 15, 16; we shall never be separated from Christ, Rom. viii, 35-39. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv, 57. This is the



foundation of the hope of a blissful resurrection. "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." When Jesus said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am," he expressed the absolute, unchangeable, imperative will. It is not a mere prayer, nor wish, nor desire, but an imperial testamentary act. The meaning is, "I will that they in whom I shall dwell on earth be with me where I am." The language is majestic all through this sacerdotal prayer and declaration of high intent, and it ends with the underlying fact of all true Christian experience, and the object of all victorious faith—the divinely-glorious postulate and promise, "I in them." Neither ministers nor laymen ought to stop short of this, nor to rest until they can say with Paul, "Christ liveth in me."