

CHRIST DWELLING WITHIN.

The Scriptures make a great deal of having Christ in us if we are Christians. Christ himself speaks of abiding in his people and of his life as flowing through them, as the life of the vine flows through its branches. The figure of the body is used, believers being members of Christ's body and deriving all their life from him. The idea of a building, of a temple, with the Divine Spirit as indwelling guest, is also employed to represent the Christian's relation to his Lord. Then St. Paul says, without figure, "Christ liveth in me," and speaks of being filled with the Spirit, filled with all the fullness of God as a possible and most desirable attainment of Christian experience. From the many forms in which this truth is represented in the Scriptures it is evident that the ideal Christian life is one that is thoroughly pervaded, saturated, so to speak, with the life and Spirit of Christ. Far more must be implied than mere divine influence over us, such influence as a friend exerts over a friend, a teacher over a pupil, or even a mother over a child. To become a Christian is to have a new spiritual life enter the soul, as when a seed with its living germ is planted in the dead soil; to grow as a Christian is to have this new life increase in strength and energy, making daily conquests over the old nature, extending itself and expelling the evil by the force of its own good, and ultimately bringing the affections, feelings, desires, and all the activities, even the thoughts of the heart into subjection to Christ.

There is a great difference between having Christ outside and having Christ in us. If he is only outside, we may listen for his words and try to obey his voice, following where he leads; and we may gaze upon his loveliness and seek to copy it in our lives; but our following and obeying will be under the impulse of duty only, with no inward constraint, and our striving after the divine likeness will be like the carving of a figure in cold marble, rather than the growing up of a life from within by its own vital force and energy into fulness of power and beauty.

Only as we get Christ into our hearts and let him dwell within us by his Spirit, shall we reach the true ideal of Christian life and experience. Then shall we do right, not by written rule, but by the

promptings of our own regenerated nature, the Christ dwelling in us. Then shall our dull lives be transfigured by the light that shines in our hearts and slowly changes all the earthliness to heavenliness. Then shall the features of the divine image come out, little by little, as the new life within forces itself through the dull crust of the old nature, until at length the full beauty of Christ shines where once oily sin's marred visage was seen.

Christ within makes an inner joy that all the darkness of earth's trial cannot quench. There are great diversities of experience in sorrow. Some, when this world's lights are quenched, are left in utter gloom, like a house without lamp or candle or flickering firelight, when the sun goes down. Others in similar darkness stand radiant in the deep shadows. They have bright light within themselves. Christ dwells in them and the beams from his blessed life turn night into day. There is an ancient picture of the Christ-child in the stable, which will illustrate this experience. The child lies upon the straw, the mother is bending over him, the wondering shepherds are near, and in the background are the cattle. It is night and there is only one feeble lantern in the place. But from the infant child streams a radiance which lights up all the rude scene. So it is in the sorrow-darkened heart when Christ truly dwell within. The light streaming from him who is the light of the world, in whom is no darkness, illumines all the gloom of grief.

Indeed, when Christ dwells in the heart sorrow becomes a blessing, because it reveals joys and beauties which in common earthly light could not have been seen. We should never see the glory of the stars were there no night with its darkness; and if life were one unbroken glare of human joy the divine comforts would not be revealed to us. Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." We could never be comforted of God if we never mourned, and this is such a privilege and joy that it is well worth while to have the sorrow that we may receive the comfort.

When Christ is within, the chamber of sorrow is a place of divine revelation. It is like the cloud that crowned the summit of the holy mountain into which Moses climbed and by which he was hidden so long from the eyes of the people. Darkness was all about him, but while he was