

IN CHRIST

A.J. Gordon

“of him are ye in Christ Jesus” (I Corinthians 1:30).

No words of Scripture, if we except these, “God manifest in the flesh,” hold within themselves a deeper mystery than this simple formula of the Christian life, “in Christ. . . .”

. . . Nothing is more striking than the breadth of the application which this principle of union with Christ has in the gospel. Christianity obliterates no natural relationships, destroys no human obligations, makes void no moral or spiritual laws. But it lifts all these up into a new sphere, and puts upon them this seal and signature of the gospel, “in Christ.” So that while all things continue as they were from the beginning, all, by their readjustment to this divine character and person, become virtually new. Life is still of God, but it has this new dependency “in Christ.” “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.” The obligation to labor remains unchanged, but a new motive and a new sanctity are given to it by its relation to Christ. “Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain ‘in the Lord.’”

The marriage relation is stamped with this new signet, “only in the Lord.” Filial obedience is exalted into direct connection with the Son of God. “Children, obey your parents ‘in the Lord.’” Daily life becomes a “good conversation ‘in Christ.’” Joy and sorrow, triumph and suffering are all ‘in Christ.’ Even truth, as though needing a fresh baptism, is viewed henceforth, “as it is in Jesus.” Death remains, but it is robbed of its sting and crowned with a beatitude, because ‘in Christ.’ “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

Thus Christ, in taking man up into himself, takes all that belongs to him. Instead of rending him away from his natural connections, he embraces all these with him in himself that he may sanctify them all. And not only is this true, but the opposite and far more wondrous fact, namely, that Christ, in raising man into union with himself, raises him into all that belongs to HIM, into his divine life, and into partnership with His divine work so that he dies in His death, rises in His resurrection, ascends in His ascension, is seated with Him in His session at the Father’s right hand, and lives in His eternal life. . . .

. . . Again, the union of the believer with his Lord is a reciprocal union. “You in me and I in you.” Through it, Christ both gives and takes—gives the Father’s life and blessedness, and takes the believer’s death and wretchedness. “All that Christ has,” says Luther, “now becomes the property of the believing soul; all that the soul has, becomes the property of Christ. Christ possesses every blessing and eternal salvation; they are

henceforth the property of the soul. The soul possesses every vice and sin; they are henceforth the property of Christ. . . .”

. . . Can anything be so blessed for the believer to realize, as this gracious interchange of life, and character, and works, between himself and his Lord? Oh, wondrous mystery! Christ became the “Son of man,” that we might become the “sons of God.” He took upon himself our human nature, that we might be made “partakers of the divine nature.” He was made sin for us, that we might be made “the righteousness of God in him. . . .”

. . . Never shall we attain a truly joyful Christian experience, therefore, till we learn that holy living is neither the realization of some ideal self, nor the imitation of some real saint. “For me to live is Christ.” Christian progress is a growing toward Christ by growing from him. And the Scripture exhortations to high attainment in the divine life seem to be based on this order. The believer is to have the “mind of Christ” within him, the “Spirit of Christ” animating him. His development is a “growing up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ. . . .” A true Christian walk is a reproducing in our lives of the righteousness which is already ours in Christ. . . .

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