

## **THE CHRIST LIFE.**

The expression has been made to me by a returned missionary, that in China and Japan they are getting to find the difference between Christians and the friends of Jesus. For a time they were deceived by the name Christian. Every sailor and foreign resident in these parts called himself a Christian, as distinguished from heathens. And so as the natives found many of these men so outrivaling heathen corruption, they became disgusted. They said if these drinking, blasphemous sailors and grasping merchants are Christians, we do not want Christianity. He told me that they were calling true Christians "Jesus' people," and all the others were merely Christians. They meant that these were Christ's friends, and had his resemblance in person and character. This is the distinction I would bring before you – nominal Christianity and the Christ-life. There is all the difference between them that there is between a system of truth and a living person; all the difference there is between ideas and living, loving hearts. Christian is a name used by many, committed to certain principles. But the Christ-life is a living thing, and a divine thing.

The first thought that comes up in connection with Christ is the thought of personality. The things we value in history are not the records of events, the geographical and historical information; but what they reveal of the men and women that have lived. That which makes a country great is not its lofty mountains and beautiful plains, its magnificent scenery and Eden-like climate; for many of the fairest scenes of earth may claim all this, and yet they are waste and desolate for want of men. That which makes a country great is glorious men and women, far more than things or events, resources or incomparable advantages. That is what we cherish in our annals, – not our art, poetry, traditions and memories, but our heroes. And, if we come down to the nearer realm of our own life, what do we value most? Not our houses and lands, our commerce and wealth, nor our earthly advantages. You

would give everything on earth for one frail little life that others would not give a farthing for. There is more to you in one human heart, than in all the world. Your treasures are in your friends, those that have become in some sense your own. [R1095 : page 6]

Personality, then, is the dearest and most precious thing in the world. And if this be so in secular and historical things, how easy it is to rise to the thought of personality in God. I am so glad He is revealed to us as a person and [R1096 : page 6] not a doctrine – a living being that we can touch somehow with the susceptibility of our spirit, that we can take in the arms of trust and love, that we can know in the depths of our consciousness, a good, and glorious, and divine reality, even more than any other individual. The other day in Minneapolis, a dear friend just recovering from that terrible snare of Christian Science, who had been under its power until her heart and spirit had been almost drawn away from Christ, "How strange," she said, "that I never thought; they taught me that Christ was a principle. I have been trying to love a principle. I might as well try to love a grapevine on my wall as to love a principle." And with gladness and joy she added, "O, it is a person, he is my blessed Saviour." Read the story of his life, and back of the events shines out most vividly the man Himself; alone the character so beautiful; alone that crystallization of all that was wise, and gentle and lovely, the living One, whom our consciousness can grasp and gather out of the story. Even infidelity has been compelled to say that the most remarkable thing in the Bible is the Christ, – the hardest to explain away.

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