

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."—Acts xi. 26.

**W**HEN a coin has been long in use, and its impression has become effaced, it is not easy to recall what it was like when it came forth new from the mint. We may also say that *words* in this respect are very much like coins; usage wears them and often entirely changes their meaning. Something like this has happened to the word "Christian," though the change in the meaning of the *word* is due to a very different idea of the *fact*, a different view of what it means to be a Christian." In the early days of Christianity it was difficult to be a Christian, but nowadays many people think it quite an easy and simple matter. In those days it meant very much to be a Christian, for it was a real test of life and character, but to some people in the present day it means practically nothing. For this reason it may be well to enquire into the real idea and meaning of being a Christian.

The origin of the word "Christian" is full of interest. It was given in one of the greatest cities of the world—Antioch in Syria, a meeting-place

of all the nations by reason of its commerce and learning. One special interest of the word is that it combines Jewish thought with Greek and Latin language, and thus, like the inscription on the cross, bears witness to the universality of Christianity as a religion for the whole world. The idea of "Christ" (Messiah) is Jewish; the substantive "Christ" (*Χριστός*) is Greek, and the adjectival termination "ian" (-ianus) is Latin. The followers of Jesus were called "Nazarenes" and "Gallileans" by their Jewish fellow-countrymen, but this new name was intended to introduce and mark the difference between Jews and Gentiles on the one hand and those who, whether from Jews or Gentiles, were followers of Jesus Christ.

What then does it mean? Let us try and recover the marks of the coin. What is it to be a Christian? It is evident that in some way or other a Christian is one who is related to Christ. The relationship is twofold. A Christian is one who is

#### UNITED TO CHRIST

The term "Christian" evidently points to the Person of Christ, and to those who are associated with Him as His followers. It implies and involves union and close association with Christ.

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There is a *Union of Life*. The life of Christ becomes the life of His followers; they are "born again" (John iii. 3), and are made "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). Christ lives in them (Gal. ii. 20), and they are ever growing up into Him Who is their life (Eph. iv. 15).

There is also a *Union of Love*. Christians love Christ, because He first loved them (1 John iv. 19). This love shows itself in loyalty. They respond to His call and realise that they are not their own but His. It is this intimate union and close relation of Christ and Christians that explains the well-known phrase, "Christianity is Christ." His Person is the Object of our worship; His sacrifice is the basis of our trust; His life is the standard of our example; His truth is the light of our conduct; His glory is the motive of our endeavours; His coming is the hope of our soul. Christ *for* us is our atonement; Christ *in* us is our power; Christ *under* us is our foundation; Christ *around* us is our protection; Christ *over* us is our Master; Christ *beside* us is our pattern; Christ *before* us is our hope.

And this union of life and love is effected and maintained by Faith. Trust is the link of connection with Christ. It is the eye of the soul that looks to Him; it is the hand of the soul that takes Him; it is the ear of the soul that listens to Him; it is the mouth of the soul that appropriates Him.

**Faith receives Christ; Faith rests on Christ; Faith realizes Christ; Faith rejoices in Christ.**

From this follows the next and complementary aspect of what is a Christian. He is one who is

**ANointed BY CHRIST**

The word "Christ" means "The Anointed One," and is the equivalent of the Jewish term "Messiah." In the Old Testament the anointing oil was the symbol of the appointment of Prophet, Priest, and King. This anointing oil was the type of the Holy Spirit with which Christ was anointed (Acts x. 38) and with which the Christian is anointed in Christ (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). To be a Christian, then, means to receive the Spirit of Christ, and to be filled with His Grace and Power.

The Christian is *anointed for Purity*. The Holy Spirit cleanses the heart from defilement and clears the mind from darkness. The soul is thus kept pure by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.

The Christian is *anointed for Power*. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Power; He gives the believer power with God in prayer and intercession. He also endues with power in relation to man, enabling the believer to show sympathy with man and do service for God. The anointing with the Holy Ghost is thus the essential feature and neces-

sary equipment of the true Christian life. To be a Christian of necessity means to be an anointed one, and it is only when this is realised that the true Christian life is lived.

The combination of these two elements must ever be kept in view—Union and Unction. The Christian is one who is united to Christ and anointed by Him. There is a great tendency to separate these two facts, and to rest the idea of the Christian life only on the former aspect, and to be content with our union with Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John i. 29), He is also the One Who baptizes with the Holy Ghost (John i. 33). The reason why there is so little power in many a professed Christian life is that there is no true conception of the need and power of the Holy Spirit as an essential part of genuine Christianity. When we look at the New Testament we can see that in the Apostolic Church every Christian was not only united to Christ by faith, but was also an active, aggressive worker, fully consecrated and endued with power from on high. Nothing short of this, nothing less than this, nothing other than this, is the meaning of the word "Christian" or of the reality expressed by that term.

The supreme question, then, for every reader is, "Am I a Christian?" Have I accepted Christ

as my Saviour? Have I accepted the Holy Ghost as my Sanctifier? Do I know the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory both of His mercy and of His power? What God hath joined together let no man put asunder, and a Christian must ever mean one who is "in Christ" for salvation and satisfaction, and in whom Christ dwells for sanctification and service.

How may each one become a Christian? How may this true relationship to Christ become ours? There are four steps: (a) Personal trust in Christ as my Saviour; (b) Personal surrender to Him as my Lord; (c) Personal experience of the Holy Spirit through faith; (d) Personal service for Christ as my Master.

"Then who this day will, rejoicing, say  
With a grateful heart and free,  
Thou King Divine, my life shall be Thine,  
Consecrate all to Thee?"