

**THE CHRIST IN
WHOM CHRISTIANS
BELIEVE**

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The Christ in Whom Christians Believe by Phillips Brooks

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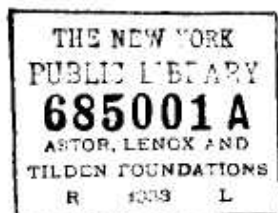
**The Christ in
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Christians Believe**

**By the Right Rev
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THE CHRIST IN WHOM CHRISTIANS BELIEVE.

I WANT to read to you again the words of Jesus in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of St. John: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The service of God is not self-restraint, but self-indulgence. That is the first truth of all religion. That is the truth which we found uttered in those words of Jesus when we were thinking of them the other day. That is

the truth to which we return as we come back again to think of those words and all that they mean and all that the speaker of them means to us and to our lives. When we remember that truth, when we recognize that no man is ever to be saved except by the fulfilment of his own nature, and not by the restraint of his nature, when we recognize that no man, no personal, individual man, is ever to be ransomed from his sins except by having opened to him a larger and fuller life into which he has entered, we seem to have displayed to us a large region, into which we are tempted to enter, and which is so rich and inviting to us that we immediately begin to ask ourselves if it is possible that there should be such a region. It is simply a great dream that we set before us. It is something that we imagine, something that comes out of the imaginations and anticipations of our own hearts, simply stimulated by the possibilities of the life in which we are living. It would be very much indeed, if it were only that. It would bear a certain testimony of itself, if it simply came out of the perpetual dissatisfaction of men's souls, even if there were no distinct manifestation of that life and no possibility of entering into it at once with our own personal consecration, with the resolution of our own wills. But if it were simply a dream, ultimately it must fade away

out of the thoughts of men. It is impossible that men should keep on, year after year, age after age, this simple dream of something which does not exist. It would be like those pictures which the poet has drawn, something which appeals to nothing in our human nature and stands only as a parable of something that is a great deal lower than itself. The poet pictures to us in his imagination those things which do not appeal to our life, because they find nothing to correspond to their high portraits, to show those transformations of nature into something that is entirely different and foreign to itself. If religion be simply the dream that some men hold it to be, if it simply be the cheating of man's soul with that which has no reality to correspond to it, then it will be no more than this. Is there any assurance that is given to us, that is before the soul of man, of some great new life which it is given for man to seek, without which it is given for no man to be satisfied? I do not know where any man could find that assurance absolutely and entirely, unless there had stood forth before us the person of Him who spoke these words and who manifested them in His life. And therefore it is that, having pictured to you the richness of the life which is open to every man, his own true life, the large freedom into which he may go if, giving up his

sins he enters into the fulness of the life of God, I cannot help now calling you to think about Him who gives, not merely by His words, but by the whole of His own person and life, that manifestation of the reality of the divine existence and tempts us to follow after Him. In other words, we come to-day to think of Christ, Christ who claims to be the master of the world, Christ from whom the revelation of that higher life has come, not in its first instance in the manifestation of the words which he spoke, for it had been the dream of human hearts through all the ages, but who made it so distinct and clear that ever since the time of Christ men have been able to cease to seek after it, men have never been able to give up the hope and dream that it was there. It is our Christ in whom we Christians believe. It is the Christ in whom a great many of you listening to me now claim to believe—I do myself—in whom many of you do believe, whom many of you have followed into that newer life. I would to God that I could so set Him before you to-day, could so make you feel his actual presence in the life which we are living, which we may be living, that there should be no question in any man of the power that is open before him to enter into the higher life and to fulfil his soul to God. What I want to do, in the few moments which I may speak to you this

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morning, is — laying aside all the theological conceptions regarding Him, laying aside everything that attaches to the complications and mysteries in which His nature has been involved in men's dreams of Him, laying aside everything which the churches are holding as the special doctrine of their especial creed — to go back to the very beginning and see if we can understand anything of what it is — this personal Christ, who lives here in the world and manifests the power of God and opens the possibility of every man. Surely it is good that we should know something about Him of whom we speak so much, that there should be some clear and directest conception of one whose name has been upon the lips of men for eighteen hundred years; and it is possible for us, in the simplest way, to understand how His power has come into the world and to see where it is possible that it should come and enrich our lives and make us different men. We go back, then, to the very beginning of the aspiration after God, which is in the heart of man everywhere. There has never been a race that has been without it. There has never been a generation that has not reached forward and thought there was a higher life, a fuller liberty, to which it could come. It has been in all the religions which have been not simply fears, but which have been the highest utterances of all the
