



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Saint Christopher

Francis Jenkins Olcott

Christopher was a Canaanite, and he was of a right great stature, twelve cubits in height, and had a terrible countenance. And it is said that as he served and dwelled with the King of Canaan, it came in his mind that he would seek the greatest prince that was in the world, and him would he serve and obey.

So he went forth and came to a right great king, whom fame said was the greatest of the world. And when the king saw him he received him into his service, and made him to dwell in his court.

Upon a time a minstrel sang before him a song in which he named oft the devil. And the king, who was a Christian, when he heard him name the devil, made anon the sign of the cross.

And when Christopher saw that he marveled, and asked what the sign might mean. And because the king would not say, he said: "If thou tell me not, I shall no longer dwell with thee."

And then the King told him, saying: "Alway when I hear the devil named make I this sign lest he grieve or annoy me."

Then said Christopher to him: "Fearest thou the devil? Then is the devil more mighty and greater than thou art. I am then deceived, for I had supposed that I had found the most mighty and the most greatest lord in all the world! Fare thee well, for I will now go seek the devil to be my lord and I his servant."

So Christopher departed from this king and hastened to seek the devil. And as he went by a great desert he saw a company of knights, and one of them, a knight cruel and horrible, came to him and demanded whither he went.

And Christopher answered: "I go to seek the devil for to be my master."

Then said the knight: "I am he that thou seekest."

And then Christopher was glad and bound himself to be the devil's servant, and took him for his master and lord.

Now, as they went along the way they found there a cross, erect and standing. And anon as the devil saw the cross he was afeared and fled. And when Christopher saw that he marveled and demanded why he was afeared, and why he fled away. And the devil would not tell him in no wise.

Then Christopher said to him: "If thou wilt not tell me, I shall anon depart from thee and shall serve thee no more."

Wherefore the devil was forced to tell him and said: "There was a man called Christ, which was hanged on the cross, and when I see his sign I am sore afraid and flee from it."

To whom Christopher said: "Then he is greater and more mightier than thou, since thou art afraid of his sign, and I see well that I have labored in vain, and have not founden the greatest lord of the world. I will serve thee no longer, but I will go seek Christ."

And when Christopher had long sought where he should find Christ, at last he came into a great desert, to a hermit that dwelt there. And he inquired of him where Christ was to be found.

Then answered the hermit: "The king whom thou desirest to serve, requireth that thou must often fast."

Christopher said: "Require of me some other thing and I shall do it, but fast I may not."

And the hermit said: "Thou must then wake and make many prayers."

And Christopher said: "I do not know how to pray, so this I may not do."

And the hermit said: "Seest thou yonder deep and wide river, in which many people have perished? Because thou art noble, and of high stature and strong of limb, so shalt thou live by the river and thou shalt bear over all people who pass that way. And this thing will be pleasing to our Lord Jesu Christ, whom thou desirest to serve, and I hope he shall show himself to thee."

Then said Christopher: "Certes, this service may I well do, and I promise Him to do it."

Then went Christopher to this river, and built himself there a hut. He carried a great pole in his hand, to support himself in the water, and bore over on his shoulders all manner of people to the other side. And there he abode, thus doing many days.

And on a time, as he slept in his hut, he heard the voice of a child which called him:—

"Christopher, Christopher, come out and bear me over."

Then he awoke and went out, but he found no man. And when he was again in his house he heard the same voice, crying:—

"Christopher, Christopher, come out and bear me over."

And he ran out and found nobody.

And the third time he was called and ran thither, and he found a Child by the brink of the river, which prayed him goodly to bear him over the water.

And then Christopher lifted up the Child on his shoulders, and took his staff, and entered into the river for to pass over. And the water of the river arose and swelled more and more; and the Child was heavy as lead, and always as Christopher went farther the water increased and grew more, and the Child more and more waxed heavy, insomuch that Christopher suffered great anguish and was afeared to be drowned.



And when he was escaped with great pain, and passed over the water, and set the Child aground, he said:—

"Child, thou hast put me in great peril. Thou weighest almost as I had all the world upon me. I might bear no greater burden."

And the Child answered: "Christopher, marvel thee nothing, for thou hast not only borne all the world upon thee, but thou hast borne Him that created and made all the world, upon thy shoulders. I am Jesu Christ the King whom thou servest. And that thou mayest know that I say the truth, set thy staff in the earth by thy house, and thou shalt see to-morn that it shall bear flowers and fruit."

And anon the Child vanished from his eyes.

And then Christopher set his staff in the earth, and when he arose on the morn, he found his staff bearing flowers, leaves, and dates.

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