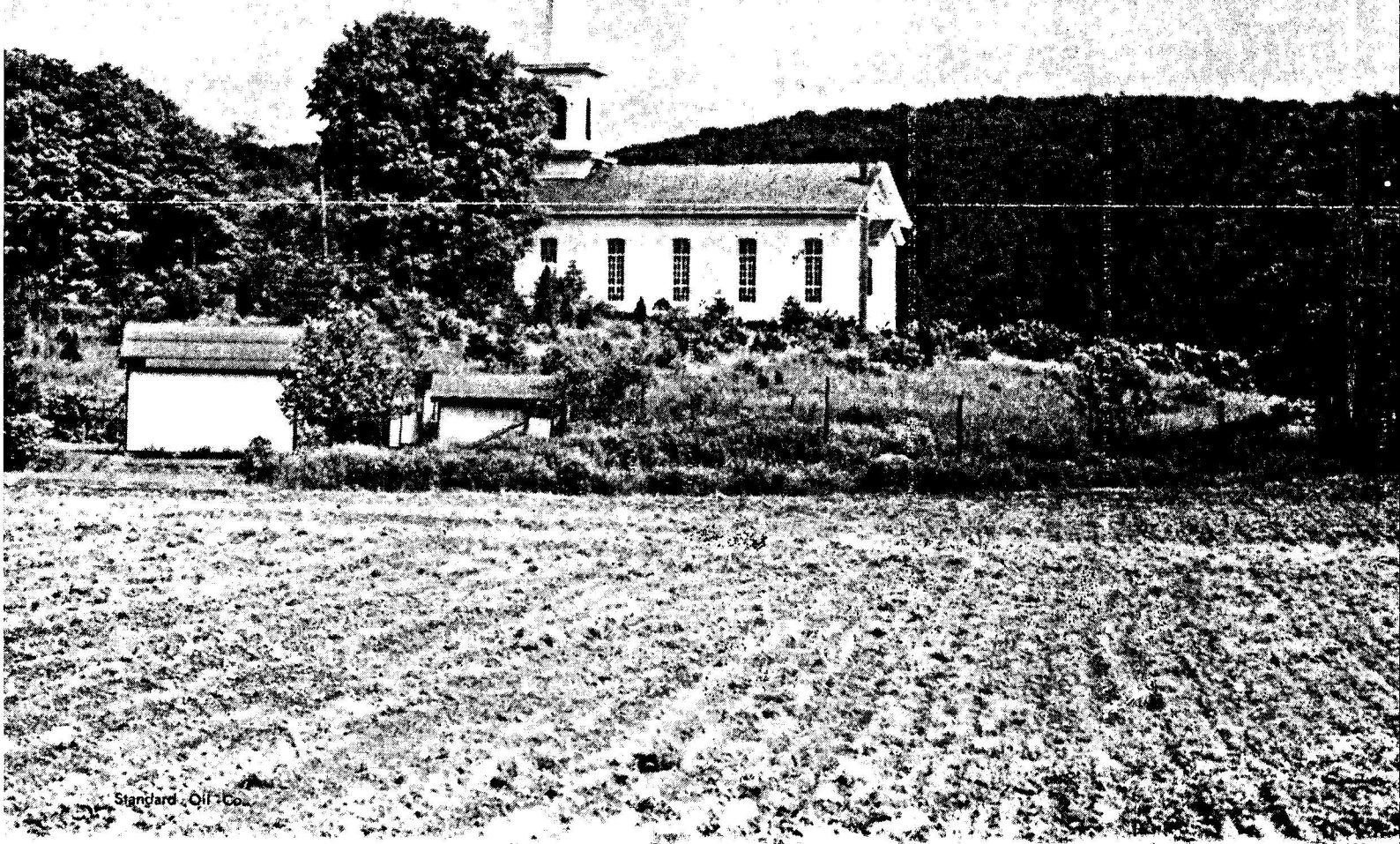
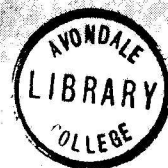


NOT FOR CIRCULATION

CHRISTIANITY MADE EASY



BY DESMOND FORD

IT HAS BEEN well said that the religion of many people is like a headache—they have no desire to lose their head, but it hurts them to keep it. This leads to the question—Is Christianity hard or easy? Or put another way—Is Christianity possible only to those who have a strong will, or can even moral weaklings “hold out” and “hold on”? A third way of asking the question is to inquire, “Does salvation depend mostly upon God’s doing or mine?”

Wrote the inspired Apostle Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to *every one* that believeth.” “For there is no difference: . . . for the same Lord over *all* is rich unto *all* that call upon him.” Romans 1:16; 10:12.

The word *gospel* means “good news,” but Christianity would not be good news if those with handicaps through heredity and environment were thereby outside the pale of salvation. The Scriptures, however, promise that through the gospel “he that is feeble . . . shall be as David,” and of all who will ultimately be saved it will be written that they “out of weakness were made strong.”

In other words, our salvation depends more upon God than upon us, for the Bible is emphatic that all men, whatever their temperament or natural advantages, are powerless of themselves to live a righteous life. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Romans 8:7.

To encourage all who become aware of their weakness it is written that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, . . . the weak things of the world, . . . and base things of the world, and things which are despised.” 1 Corinthians 1:27, 28. He promises to thresh mountains of difficulty with human “worms.” Heaven is for “every one that believeth”—Great-heart or Little-faith.

These promises all sound very well, but what is the process whereby such promises are implemented and fulfilled? It is easy to see from Scripture that a man receives forgiveness and a new heart the moment he beholds the love of God for him and by consecration surrenders his all to Christ, simultaneously by faith taking all of Christ as his. This is well begun, but the job is

still only half done. As Spurgeon said:

“We want to be purified as well as pardoned. Justification without sanctification would not be salvation at all. It would call the leper clean and leave him to die of his disease; it would forgive the rebellious, and allow the rebel to remain an enemy to his king. It would remove the consequences but overlook the cause, and this would leave an endless and hopeless task for us. It would stop the stream for a time but leave an open fountain of defilement, which would sooner or later break forth with increased power. Remember that the Lord Jesus came to take away sin in three ways. He came to remove the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and at last the presence of sin.” Here, then, is the problem of the Christian life—how to become holy in order that one may lead a holy life.

NOTICE that Romans 1:16, in defining the gospel, says that “it is the power of *God*.” Says the psalmist also, “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.” Psalm 62:11. As in the natural world all power comes from the sun, so in the spiritual world all power comes from Heaven.

“When we walk abroad on a beautiful day, and survey a landscape lit up by the beams of summer sun, our eye catches a variety of colours lying on the surface of this landscape, perhaps the yellow of golden grain, the green of the pasture land, the silver gleam of a stream, the faint blue of distant hills, . . . but none of these colours reside in the landscape, they are not the properties of the material objects on which they rest. All colours are wrapped up in the sunlight, and apart from the sunlight no object has any colour. . . . As soon as light is withdrawn from the landscape, the colours fade from the robe of nature. . . . Now Christ is the sun of righteousness, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily. . . . When Christ is shining upon the heart, then His virtues are manifested there.”—E. M. Goulburn.

This is the secret of the Christian life, revealing to us how Christianity can indeed be made easy. *The power to live the Christian life is not a power generated from within us or by us; it is a power from without, even the power of Christ, freely given to everyone that by faith maintains a living union with Him.* Jesus, as the Son of man, confessed His own lack of personal power: “I can of

mine own self do nothing.” “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” John 5:30; 14:10.

As the Father lived in Christ and enabled Him to be victorious in every phase of His experience, so Christ promises to dwell in every believer, empowering him to live a righteous life. Christ declares, “Without me ye can do nothing,” but then encourages us by saying that we “can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth” us. Early this century Charles G. Trumbull, the famous editor of *The Sunday School Times*, had an experience which changed his whole subsequent ministry. He wrote up the story of this experience. It says in part:

“I realized for the first time that the many references in the New Testament to ‘Christ in you,’ ‘Christ our Life,’ ‘abiding in Christ,’ are literal, actual blessed facts, and not figures of speech. I had always known that Christ was my Saviour; but I had looked upon Him as an external Saviour, one who did a saving work for me from the outside, helping me in all that I needed, giving me power and strength and salvation.

“But now I knew something better than that. At last I realized that Jesus Christ was actually and literally within me; that He had constituted Himself my whole life (save only my resistance to Him), my body, mind, soul, and spirit, my very self. Was this not better than having Him as a Helper; to have Him, Jesus Christ, God the Son, as my own very life?

“It meant that I need never ask Him to help me, as if He were one and I another; but rather, simply He was to do His work, His will, in me and with me and through me. My body was His, my mind His, my will His, my spirit His, literally a part of Him; all He asked me to say was, ‘I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.’ And that is how I know for myself that there is a life that wins; that it is the life of Jesus Christ, and that it may be our life for the asking, if we let Him—in absolute unconditional surrender of ourselves to Him, our wills to His will, making Him the Master of our lives, as well as our Saviour—enter in, occupy us, overwhelm us with Himself, yes, fill us with Himself ‘unto all the fulness of God.’”—Cited by Andrew Murray, in *The Secret of the Faith Life*, pp. 70, 71.

Let us note well that Christ does not want to be our helper but our life. Not

*not waiting but living in
strong contact*

heaven someday, but Christ right now is the Christian message. It has been well said that the principle of Christianity is the principle of an exchanged life. Our great need is not a striving for more faith but a continued looking toward Christ, the faithful One who is now our life.

There is the legend of a man whose garden produced nothing but weeds. At last he met with a strange flower of singular strength. He sowed a handful of this seed in his overgrown garden and left it to work. The results exceeded all expectations: the flowers not only germinated and sprang up in profusion, but they exterminated every weed. As he looked over his garden, nothing could be seen but the flowers of that rare plant.

The story illustrates well the nature of victorious Christian living. Christ in us expels sin. The best way to get rid of the darkness is to let in the light. Thus the Apostle John affirms, "Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." 1 John 3:9. In other words, whoever has received into his life the eternal Seed, Christ Jesus, thereby hates sin and can no longer make that his habit.

OUR PRESENT theme was the subject of Christ's last sermon. On the eve of His death He told His sorrowing disciples the secret of a holy life, a life that could rise above inherent weakness and outward trial. Christ explained to His disciples how He would come again to them through the person of the third member of the Godhead and thus dwell within them forever. Notice His words on that occasion: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; . . . he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John 14:15-23.

The age in which we live is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. As surely as Christ was on earth between Beth-

lehem and Calvary, so now the Holy Spirit is present here as His successor with each of us. Because of His humanity Jesus could not be in every place personally, but after His ascension the Holy Spirit was poured forth upon all His disciples, becoming to them as the personal presence of Christ in the soul. As the atmosphere surrounding the earth transmutes the rays of the sun into heat, color, and light, thus directly bringing the sun into contact with life here, so the Holy Spirit is the medium whereby life and truth are communicated to us from the Christ seated on the right hand of God. Apart from the Spirit it would be possible to know only *about* Christ; but through the work of the Comforter He becomes a reality dwelling in the heart, empowering us to do all His will.

The essence of the good news of Christianity is that those who believe in Christ have a God who is near at hand for all emergencies—a Christ available for everything. Note two parallel texts in the New Testament: (1) "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:13. (2) "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Matthew 7:11.

It is apparent from these texts that to receive the Holy Spirit is the same as receiving all good things. The Holy Spirit in us is the pledge of receiving all things necessary for life and godliness. This is the great significance of Pentecost when the third member of the Godhead had His Bethlehem, taking up His abode in humanity, even the humanity of all believers in Christ. God has not left us alone. We are not to fight in our own puny strength. Christ is with us through His Spirit, ever with us, for all things.

The Christian is not only in Christ, but Christ is in him through the Spirit. Remember that the Greek word for comforter literally means "one alongside to help." Centuries ago the sleepy little town of Newmarket in England became the temporary residence of King Charles I. Overnight the town was transformed; life and activity sprang up. The king had come. Thus it is in the Christian life. When the King comes in, everything is different. *"Christ received is holiness begun,*

Christ cherished is holiness advancing. Christ counted upon as never absent is holiness complete."

In essence, then, the believer's problem is how to ever have Christ within by the Holy Spirit. Scripture gives us the answer in Colossians 2:6, where it declares, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Our Christian life began when we received Christ by surrender and faith. The Christian life until its close is a *maintenance* of this initial attitude of surrendering all to Christ and receiving all from Christ. An old hymn by J. H. Sammis sets forth the secret simply:

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

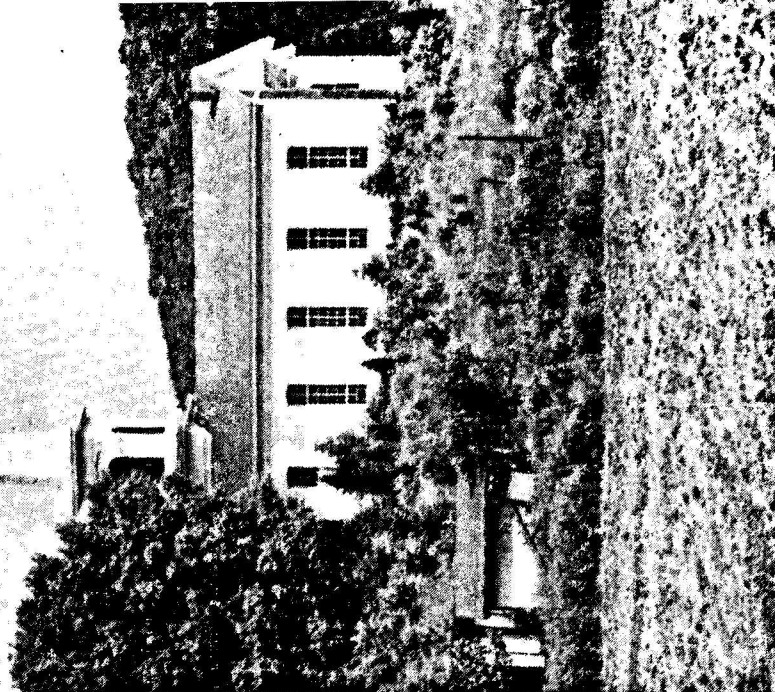
FAITH and obedience are the wings that raise the believer heavenward. True Christian experience—happy, prosperous, fruitful Christian experience—is dependent upon an understanding of the right relationship between these two. Theology over the centuries has fought many a battle in this area, but the church of God through the ages has ever maintained not only the necessity of both elements but also the vital importance of their true sequence. Faith in Christ must be the fountain of all good works, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23.) But it also remains true that the Holy Spirit is given only "to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32.) Obedience is the evidence of faith—and the only evidence heaven ratifies.

This secret of holy living is illustrated well in the Book of Exodus. Here we read that the Lord called Moses up into the mountain to commune with Him. Moses saw not only the glory of the Lord but also a vision of the tabernacle God required him to construct.

The Book of Exodus closes with the description of the building of that tabernacle, and in the last two chapters the expression "as the Lord commanded," or a similar one, occurs nearly twenty times. For example, we read that "according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them."

Continued

CHRISTIANITY MADE EASY



TRUTH FOR THESE TIMES-4
By Desmond Ford

"Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he." Then it is that we read, "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (See Exodus 39 and 40.) Every believer in Christ is intended by God to be a temple of the Holy Ghost, and when we plan our character, building in every detail *as the Lord has commanded, then* His glory will fill us.

We need to remember that all God's commands are promises, and that the power to fulfill the commandment lies in the command as surely as the oak is in the acorn. When Abraham had manifested his willingness to surrender even Isaac, then he was blessed most richly. And it is our Isaac that God wants. When we have renounced our idols, such as love of money or praise, the life of indolence free from responsibility, or amusements that wean the heart from God, then He will pour out such a blessing "that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3:10.)

The person who knowingly indulges in some practice forbidden by the Word of God, or who neglects a positive duty, cannot hope for the infilling of the presence of Christ. Said our Master, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord,

and do not the things which I say?" Luke 6:46. Either "Christ is Lord of all or He is not Lord at all," for it is ever true that "God either matters tremendously, or He doesn't matter at all."

At this point it is well to note that Christianity is a daily affair like all important matters. We are to be born again daily, we are to crucify the old life daily, we are to trust daily, and we are to obey daily. But as faith is ever prior to obedience, our primary duty each day is to seek the infilling of the Spirit by drinking deeply of the words of our Lord. It is interesting to note that in two parallel passages of Scripture the same effects are attributed to being filled with the Word as to being filled with the Spirit. In Ephesians 5:18, 19 we read, "*Be filled with the Spirit*; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Then in Colossians 3:16, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly* in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

As we receive Christ Jesus the Living Word by receiving His Written Word, so we maintain our relationship with Him in the same way. The Holy

Spirit does not inspire a vacuum but a Word-filled believer. Thus our primary concern every morning should be to seek God's strength afresh before venturing into the day of toil.

On one occasion when the disciples were crossing a lake without Jesus, they were overtaken by a storm. For hours they rowed fruitlessly. When they were ready to despair, they discerned Jesus Himself walking on the sea toward the ship. The record says, "Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." John 6:21.

Too many of us are battling with life's storms on our own; we toil in rowing and arrive nowhere. What we need is to receive Jesus on board. Then we will be immediately at our destination, even the destination of a life that is filled with joy and fruitfulness because it is filled with Him who is the Thought of all thought and the Strength of all strength.

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One of the most meaningful questions ever put to Jesus Christ was, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6:68. Yes; where can we go for help but to our Creator? Truly there is no hope in the counsels of man. Despite flashes of brilliance, even the wisest of men fail to provide the ultimate answers to life. Only God has these. He says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Rest, joy, dynamic, satisfaction, hope—all these are yours in Christ. Our free Bible course will make all this very plain. Simply send in the coupon at the left. There is no obligation.