

No. 1

Christian

REVOLUTION

By
Howard Guinness

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*"These that have turned the
world upside down are come
hither also."*

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CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION

He was a revolutionary. We met for the first time over the dinner table in a Madrid hotel. It was February 1933, I remember, and the Capital much colder than I had expected. It was my first visit to Spain and I was now beginning to realize that the central plateau made the climate there very similar to that of my own country, and was wearing my warmest clothes as a result.

The story he had to tell was so gripping that I can vividly recall its power over me even before my English friend who was acting as interpreter gave me its meaning. I knew possibly three words of Spanish at the time. He spoke with every inch of his body in the

manner so typical of the Southern European and Oriental, and the gist of his story I give you now.

During the revolution of 1932 when the King and the State Religion had been turned out and a Republic with religious tolerance declared, he had been the secretary of a student organisation in the University of Madrid known as the Federation of University Students. This organisation, which corresponded to "The Union" of the British Universities, was as much behind the revolution as any other organisation in the land, and my friend found himself in constant street fighting in which he led the students and the mob in their attacks on the king's soldiers. On one occasion the soldiers fired a volley over their heads to frighten them into flight, but, thinking it was only blank cartridges, they had charged with high scorn. The next volley left its train of wounded,

dead and dying, and the mob in full retreat; but he escaped unscathed and remained so right through the war although always in the thick of the conflict leading his men to victory more often than defeat, motley crowd though they were. He was the most outstanding personality in the University without a doubt.

His attitude to everything was determined by his revolutionary outlook and thus it was that he entered upon some lively discussions about religion with the girl to whom he was engaged to be married. She was a nominal Christian and tried to persuade him to start and say his prayers; he was an agnostic and tried to persuade her to throw over her religious notions and become modern. What was the use of God any way? he argued. Religion simply throttled the common people with superstition and ignorance, and the clean fresh air of

education and intellectual liberty was denied them. God, he supposed, must be something like the religion which represented Him, and that was an end of it! One day when they were arguing in their friendly way in the Grandmother's home she turned to them somewhat irritably and told them to go and argue elsewhere.

"If you want to discuss religion," she had said, "go outside; and if you really want something to argue about here's a book on religion; take this and read it."

"What's this?" they had questioned full of curiosity, for they did not suspect their Grandmother of possessing anything on *religion*!

"Oh, that's the Bible," she had replied indifferently, "the book of the Christian religion," and had moved away to close the conversation.

So it came about that they commenced to read the Bible together for an hour each day in the park. Instead of argument came conviction for before long the Christ of the New Testament stepped out of its pages, no longer just a character in history but the Lord of life and the Master of destiny. They found their consciences challenged and their souls arraigned before the spotless purity of His life and the majestic selflessness of His sacrifice. They had ceased to scrutinize Him; He was now scrutinizing them. Nor was it merely as a Jew of the first century that He was doing this; it was as the Son of God and *their contemporary*.

"I had been living a pretty fast life, even as Madrid counts a fast life," he said, "but had always compared myself with my fellowmen and felt I was no worse than most. I had no moral standard worth talking about and

indulged my instincts and passions to my hearts content ; but so did they. When however I came to compare myself with Jesus Christ I saw my inner life as it really was, for the first time, and knew myself a common sinner very much in need of God's mercy."

He went to see a Christian gentleman in the city, and asked him to tell him more about the Christianity of the Bible. He did so with the result that he discarded his agnosticism ; or rather it discarded him for they were no longer compatible. He had now found a faith which fascinated his mind and compelled its submission because centred in the most revolutionary, the most perfect and the most misunderstood personality of all history—God come down to earth, unrecognised, maligned, misinterpreted, rejected, crucified ! But despite his great change in outlook his old life continued

to assert itself and he was torn between his new faith and his old passions, finding no peace. Before he was happy in his ignorance, now he was miserable in his enlightenment. It had merely awakened his conscience which now stood up to condemn him ; he longed to be free and live up to his new ideals but found himself a slave. Was this Christianity ?

While talking to his Christian friend one day he discovered his mistake. He had become Christian in outlook but not yet at heart. Christ was still standing outside the door of his life waiting for the surrender of his will which would fling wide the door and let Him in. He had not yet received the Saviour into the inmost recesses of his soul. It was true ; he saw it in a flash. His life was still full of self-will and he was planning and running his life while using Christ as an adviser from time to time. His

will was still his own. And so it was that he knelt down and abandoned himself to the mercy of God and the love of the Saviour. The change was almost electrical. The peace of sins forgiven became his, while as for the old evil habits, they simply dropped clean out of his life leaving him free indeed. Moral and spiritual revolution had started with the result that a unified personality emerged no longer in conflict with itself. What a contradiction his life had been before; a patriot and republican trying to set his Country free while himself a complete slave! Now he had found inner freedom and release and had the secret of all time to pass on to his fellow countrymen. Nor was he slow in starting to do this, for I found him one day during my stay in Madrid making his way towards the University with a large bundle of New Testaments under his arm.

"What are you doing?" I asked him in undisguised amazement, "You are not going to distribute those in the University, are you?"

"Why not?" he replied, "this is the most wonderful Book in the world!"

It is the most revolutionary too.

It is the story of a militant man leading his followers to the overthrow of a dynasty corrupt and evil—the rule of self and sin in the affairs of men.

We need spiritual Revolution to-day. In every other sphere—economic, social, political—it is a day of change, drastic change. We are living at a time when an old order is dying and a new is of necessity taking its place; we are in the birth throes of a New Age. Facing us is an opportunity for spreading Christian Revolution, an opportunity which by its very nature is passing and demands immediate action. In some parts of the

world we must act now or never. The Mass Movement areas of India are an example of this. They also provide a strong reason for believing that God intends to equip His Church adequately to meet the urgent need of the day by bringing to us the revival for which some have prayed for so long. Would He present this opportunity to His people merely to tantalise them by the realisation that they were unfit and unready for such a task? The thought cannot be entertained for a moment. And yet the fact remains that the Church as it is to-day is totally inadequate for the task of World Evangelisation unless its rank and file awakens to its glorious privilege and solemn responsibility of carrying the gospel to every creature. Only thus will the completion of the Churches' task and the coming of her Lord be hastened.

This Spiritual awakening must first come to Youth for it is they who have

the spirit of daring and adventure. They must act and act at once. The fire of the love of Christ must burn within their hearts; it is the only power able to compel such action. *But youth is not yet on fire!* Scarcely a fraction of it is; not even the majority of those who form the active membership of the Church. Only the smallest handful make up the spiritual revolutionaries who prefer to burn out rather than rust out. A lot is being done; there is much talk, many Conferences, and a galaxy of books, all of which profusion may tend only to confuse the minds of many and fail to warm their hearts. It is still too rare to meet the man or woman who sets you on fire. There is too much smoke.

In Australia, a House Party was in progress and the last evening still saw one student resisting the love of the Saviour. So concerned were his friends for him that they prayed through until

3 a.m. the next morning. They were wrestling for a soul for whom Christ had died. What was tiredness to them at such a moment? Nothing! Besides Christ renewed their strength. That student did not come to Christ then, nor do I remember whether he did in the weeks immediately following. But that prayer will be answered; we will certainly meet him in heaven. That night of prayer reminds me of a paragraph from Millins life of General Smuts. During the German East African Campaign of 1916 some felt that he pushed his soldiers too hard and heedlessly sacrificed them (although they did not think so, and he never asked them to do anything he did not share with them). Here is his illuminating comment on the situation, "*Tired! Thirsty! There is no such thing when the success of a big operation trembles in the balance!*". We must recapture this spirit in our

offensive to-day, for Christ our glorious Commander never asks us to attempt any hazard which He will not share with us Himself.

If widespread revolution is to come there must be more faithfulness in prayer in our ranks for then and then only will our witness be transformed into something irresistible and convincing. That means a deeper life of surrender than we have practised up till now; a life that is absolutely abandoned to do His will whatever the cost; a life that is faithful where no one else can see; a life lived unto God and not unto man. We must be among those who are "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."* Are we willing?

If Christians were on fire for Christ, moreover, their witness would be more spontaneous. In a College in the

* Heb. 6: 12.

Punjab, N. India, the Christian students found new life during the winter of 1934-35. A mission was being held and through it some of the members discovered the meaning of New Birth and others the fulness of the Holy Spirit. One Mohammedan Convert, who was on the point of reverting to his old faith because he found no fellowship among the Christians, wrote to his family reaffirming his faith in Christ and refusing the bribes they were offering him. The fire of Christ's love had burst into flame in many a heart. Afterwards I heard from some of them by letter that they had subsequently organised themselves into two Evangelistic Teams and spent all their spare time in the villages near by preaching the Gospel. Only those who know how intent the normal Indian student is to do well in examinations, and how little time he can spare for anything else but work, will appreciate

the utter miracle of what had happened. Those on fire for Christ *must* pass on the glad news of salvation, and it is the 'must' of a great consuming desire. "The love of Christ constraineth us".* Which motive governs our Christian work, duty or love?

In Trinity College, Dublin, during a weeks' Mission a first year student was born again. He had attempted to change his life a few months before but it had ended in failure. He had tried to follow Christ but had discovered he had not the strength to do so. Now however he had *found* Christ or rather had been found by Him; but it was only after several days of seeking Him with all his heart. Faith was his problem for he had no certainty of Christ's presence in his heart and did not think that he could be sure unless he felt Him there. One night he accepted Him by faith and

* ii Cor 5. 14.

believed His promise, "I will come in",* although his feelings registered no immediate change. The result was that very soon he was filled with the joy of His Salvation. He found too that witnessing for Christ was the bubbling up of an eternal spring within. He *had* to tell people, and he had so obviously found something vital that people were compelled to listen. If he is prepared to go on trusting and obeying Christ absolutely he will go on living this overflowing life of victory and joy as the early disciples did of whom we read, "they were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." † ("were filled", Gk: imperfect tense, kept on being filled).

Some students in Queensland got the vision of witnessing for Christ with greater boldness and arranged a reception for freshmen at which they themselves spoke on, "What Christ means

* Rev. 3: 20

† Acts. 13: 52

to me." Sixty came in answer to the specially printed invitation and four speakers witnessed to the power of Christ in daily life to save and keep. They found that this impressed the freshmen far more than a 'big' speaker from outside. But these men were convincing because they were on fire. Christ to them was everything. They possessed Him and were possessed by Him. They were not eloquent in oratory but they were eloquent in reality, which was what counted.

Youth on fire for Christ? Would that it were! Then something sacrificial would be done about the scandal of the Unfinished Task. After 1900 years of Christianity 800 millions have never so much as heard the Name of Jesus! The trouble is that modern men and women are choosing self-indulgence instead of self-renunciation, comfort instead of crucifixion, careers instead of Christ.

How long, O Lord? Thank God, the fires of sacrifice have not died out but they have grown too few. Even persecution would be welcomed would it but fan them into a mighty blaze. O God, make us anything but lukewarm! One student I know misses lunch once a week in order to give the money thus saved to Foreign Missions. Grand! In the path of self-denial and discipline who will follow the One who said, "if any man will come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me"? Another refused to become engaged to be married to the girl he loved because she was pledged to the Foreign Mission field and he was uncertain about his own future. He could not ask her to marry him with the risk of keeping her back from the place to which she felt called. Their own personal desires must come second to the Lord's work. And if this love was indeed of the Lord He

would bring them together in His own good time, and give them both the confidence that it was His will that they should go forward. Bravo! Where are the other soldiers of the Cross who are willing gladly to sacrifice the solace of another's love and if necessary even the joys of home and marriage, if only by so doing the work of the Kingdom go forward, more of those in darkness see the light, and the Coming of the King be hastened? The two of whom I have spoken finally married in China and one year later were done to death by Communists, martyred at dawn on a lonely hill outside an inland city.

They climbed the steep ascent to heaven

Thro' sorrow, toil, and pain,
Oh, unto us may grace be given

To follow in their train.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life".*

* Rev. 2:10

We need a baptism of fire ! the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is no true 'fire' unless it comes from Him ; and there is much false 'fire'—fleshly enthusiasm and feverish human activity—which only hinders the work of God. He does not ask that we should work for Him but that He should be allowed to work through us. There is all the difference in the world between the two. In the one I plan and then ask His blessing on it ; in the other He plans and lets me into the secret of his glorious purpose. The one ends in futility and disappointment ; the other in power, progress and joy. In the one I slave to work worthily for Him and constantly feel the barrenness of a busy life ; in the other I let Him flow through me in all His glorious power and rest in the assurance that Christ at work cannot fail. The one is a life of endeavour, always being keyed up to do something greater ;

the other a life of faith always looking to Jesus to reveal the next step and then give the power to take it. One is smoke ; the other flame.

Let me here quote an Oxford student who tells of the change in his life immediately following his first conscious acceptance of Christ as Saviour and of the experiences which followed.—

“ For some months after the surrender of my life to Christ He carried me like a lamb on His shoulder. It was the most astonishing time. The change was enormous, and boys at school were quick to notice it the next term. The taste for sin was gone. The devil was dead ! But the tale that follows is unfortunately all too common. Sin came again into my life and I began that up and down experience which is the most miserable of all lives. My times for prayer although pretty regular were dead. Sometimes life would be going grandly, but

even if it were not I would always manage to keep up appearances. *That was where the trouble lay*, I had begun to live my life in order to show other people what a keen Christian I was. At other times I despaired of everything. The world attracted me, and I looked back over the Red Sea longing for the life of Egypt again. What a wilderness!

But gradually the Lord led me back into the narrow path. That I was slow to follow does not now matter; He got me there. But He had to break me down in the process. I do not think I shall ever forget the misery of a night on my knees, only a month or two ago, when the full realisation came to me of how I had utterly failed to shine for God. I had no "oil in my lamp", * my stewardship had not been carried out; my talent had lain buried and useless;

* Matt. 25.

I had not been used as a free channel through which God could flow to others. I cannot describe how hopeless and miserable these pictures of myself made me feel, but God had not yet finished breaking me down. He showed me that I was a traitor to Him, that I had betrayed Him for less than thirty pieces of silver, that I was a Judas. But in undying love, he showed me too a vision of the Cross. He showed me that I had been a "carnal" Christian, seeking my own glory, and disappointed when I was not congratulated on some good or helpful talk I had given. God wanted that old self to be hanged like Judas, put away by the Cross of Christ. He showed me also what it meant to reckon myself "dead to sin but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord". † At my conversion I had passed through the Red

† Rom. 6:11.

Sea. On that night—the 21st of May this year—I passed through Jordan's streams to a land of freedom, victory and joy.

Gradually during the days which followed the peace of God stole back into my heart and I began to rest in Him, realising increasingly the marvel of His ever loving one like me!

Jesus, I am resting, resting,
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.

Now there is no effort, vain fleshly effort, to beat myself into a faith in God. I just can't help resting and trusting in a God who has revealed Himself as the Lord has done so lovingly to me".

He had found! He had found! *We must find too.* We must act, for the days or too urgent, far too urgent, for any to stand aside with idle hands. *We*

must repent, *We* must enlist, *We* must be revolutionaries! Would that we had more among us of the calibre of those early Christians of whom it was said, "these men who have turned the world upside down are come hither also"! That's it! that's it! Of course what they were actually doing was turning the world the right way up and they did it most successfully from dungeons, catacombs, the bloody arena and the up-lifted cross. They were revolutionaries for Christ because they were constantly being filled with His Holy Spirit. Their very presence seemed to provoke a choice in those they met; they were to those who preferred their sin a "deadly fragrance that made for death",* and to the others a "vital fragrance that made for life".

The Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest revolutionary the world has ever

* 2 Cor 2: 16. (Moffatt)

known, affected people in exactly the same way. There could be no neutrality when facing Him. He drove men into the open to declare themselves not with the lash of a whip but with the love of a heart; a love that took him to the lowest haunts of vice as well as to the most exalted circles of respectability where he spoke the truth fearlessly, careless of its reaction against Himself although it nailed Him finally to a Cross. We are called to this life too. This is a solemn thought but need not overwhelm us because the ultimate issues are not in our hands but in His; and they are safe there. He calls us to follow Him recklessly. "Live dangerously, love lavishly, serve humbly". Are we willing?

Then let us act at once. We must first make it the settled purpose of life to be as revolutionary as Christ was—no more, no less. We must then get

right with God—absolutely right—confessing and forsaking our sins.* We must make restitution where our sins have affected another,† but not attempt this until Christ has come into our lives to take full control, for we will need His strength to carry this through;‡ in the spirit of love where the other is concerned, and of honesty—100% honesty—where we are concerned.

The revolution is already beginning to spread! First my own life is 'turned upside down'; next my friends' also through an honest and loving confession and a witness to the mighty power of the living Christ. Then my family reacts to the change and after patient and persistent prayer and selfless living on my part, the whole home begins to come under the spell of the Saviour's love.

* Prov. 28: 13

† Matt. 5: 23, 24.

i John 1: 9

‡ Phil. 4: 13

One by one they capitulate. The seed of the word of God, written and spoken and lived (that revolutionary seed which has life in itself), has done its secret work. The impossible has happened!

But we must act together as well. Let us immediately set about forming in our own Church and district a nest of revolutionaries. Two is an excellent number with which to commence Bible study, prayer and frank sharing of our experiences and problems so as to clear the way for concerted action. Let the nest meet in some private home growing slowly as one and another becomes intrigued and finally won, and all the while letting God guide you out into a daring offensive. Act!

"All things are possible to him that believeth."*

* Mark 9: 23.

"He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."† Youth on fire for Christ? It must be! It shall be!

But not until our hearts catch fire.

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† Matt. 3: 11

