

# THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN

by Archibald Alexander

The almost Christian may have a speculative knowledge of all the leading truths of Christianity, and may be able to defend them. The almost Christian entertains a great respect for religion and its professors and institutions. The almost Christian feels a strong desire to enjoy the benefits of the gospel, and may often have his affections much moved, and may form many good resolutions; he may indeed possess a counterfeit of experimental religion, so like that it may deceive not only the man himself, but the most judicious ministers. The almost Christian may be exceedingly conscientious and exact in attending on all the external duties of religion; as touching these, he may be "blameless;" and in regard to zeal, he may be ardent, so as to put to the blush the real believer.

He may also be liberal, and contribute liberally for the support of the gospel, and to feed the poor. He may become a popular preacher of the gospel, and be the means of the conversion of others. He may even go to foreign lands, to bear the glad tidings of salvation to the heathen. He may, in short, do everything which the real Christian does, and feel everything which the real Christian feels—but one. He fails in one single point, but that is an essential point. He never has given his heart to God. He loves the world better than he loves Christ. That most excellent gift of charity has never been poured into his heart. His religion may be all traced to the mere love of happiness, and the operations of a natural conscience, enlightened and awakened by the doctrinal knowledge of the truth.

The apostle Paul teaches, that if a man without CHARITY, that is, love to God and man, should possess angelic eloquence, prophetic knowledge, and the power of working the greatest miracles; yes, if he should have zeal strong enough to make him a martyr, and liberality great enough to induce him to give away all his goods, it would "profit him nothing." Such a one would, after all, be only an almost Christian.

The deceitful heart of man will turn itself into every conceivable form and shape but that of true holiness; of this it may assume the shadow, but never the reality.