

My Testimony

Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by the Vice President of Conference (Ex-Baille James Gray, J.P.)

I TESTIFY TO THE REALITY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, as revealed in the events of a life not uneventful to myself, though it has contained little of dramatic or romantic interest for others. I cannot doubt the truth of Divine direction, because I have experienced it. As I look back upon the days of childhood and youth, I cannot refrain from praising the God of my life—

“Whose love hath gently led me on,
Even from my infant days.”

“I will sing unto the Lord because He
hath dealt so lovingly with me.”

I TESTIFY TO THE POWER OF EARLY RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS AND INFLUENCES.

From my earliest recollections it was my longing to be good, and that desire being fanned by influences to be referred to presently, I found myself ready at twelve years of age for a definite and conscious surrender to God. It seemed the inevitable issue of all I had thought and felt. I could, do no other. As I thought of what Christ had done for me, my heart yearned to love Him. I DID love Him. His great love had won my heart. Early decision for Christ means much, and I, for one, have no doubt that a child can possess a real religious experience.

I TESTIFY TO THE POWER OF PERSONAL INFLUENCE UPON ME. My earliest religious recollection goes back to the fourth or fifth year of my age, when a scholar in connection with the Working Boys' and Girls' Religious Society at Ayr. This Society provided a meeting for boys and girls on the Sunday forenoon, which differed from the Sunday school in that the teaching was given from the platform, the scholars being placed under the care of monitors, who were responsible for the visitation and oversight of their respective scholars. My monitor took me round with him while he delivered tracts. It seems strange now that he should have taken so much notice of a little child, but so it was, and I was still a wee fellow when I was lifted up to that monitor's dying bed that he might see me for the last time on earth. It was only a year or two later (living now in Glasgow) when a monitor of the Glasgow Foundry Boys' Religious Society (an institution similar to that at Ayr) spoke to me personally and pointedly about Christ and the godly life. Those words remain as a living memory to this day. Then after my conversion, and after (some time later) my union with the Primitive Methodist Church, once again personal influence had its effect upon me. By the way, I became an attached Primitive Methodist through the word of a godly worker in the Church who, observing my division of interest and service between the Salvation Army and the Primitive Methodist Church, advised me to be one thing or the other. He was quite friendly to the Salvation Army, but felt that a young Christian needed a definite religious attachment. And I felt it, too, for although my conversion was registered through the Salvation Army, and I had thrown myself enthusiastically into the work as a Junior Soldier, the lack of the teaching element in the Army was soon felt, and, realising that more vital help was to be found at the Methodist Church, I took the good brother's advice and united with the Pollokshaws Primitives. The Rev. W. Stott was resident minister at the time, and he interested himself in the lads, of whom I was one of the youngest. We laboured at grammar and arithmetic, and began our acquaintance with theology by the perusal of Gregory's *Handbook*. In all this, I am emphasising the

value of the personal touch. We know not what we do. when we put ourselves alongside a young life in friendly interest and Christian love.

As an instance of the tactless and repelling spirit, I may recall an evening when, as a Junior Soldier, I and another lad passed the time before the senior officers came for a meeting by kicking a ball about in the street. When the Capitan came, he was much displeased. To play football was a sin, and he demanded that the boys should go afresh to the penitent form as sinners. I refused to do so, having no sense of guilt in the matter. Men who deal with young people need much wisdom and much sympathy.

I TESTIFY TO THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE as a bulwark against temptation, and as an aid to godliness. When we were youths, we were too busy in the Church to have any leisure for frivolities. Our every hour was filled up, and though that may not be the ideal in many cases, I do not doubt that our absorption in Church work saved us from many a snare. It made backsliding almost impossible. We were constantly surrounded with the influences that helped to foster piety and to strengthen devotion. And from those early days until now, I have found strength in Christian work. One thinks of Paul's words to Timothy: "In so doing, thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." To do nothing but to think of one's own soul is the sure way to weaken the soul-life. "He that loveth his life shall lose it."

I TESTIFY TO THE PRESENT GRACE OF CHRIST. Not in the past only has Christ been real and precious to me. He is a Friend to-day. I love Him more to-day than when a boy because I know Him better, and because experience has confirmed and established what faith long ago believed. We practical men test by results. That the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is true I am assured from the fact that it works. It does what it claims. It meets the yearning of the little child, it grips the hero-worshipping youth; it satisfies the growing demands of growing years. It is good in the home; it hallows business and social relationships; it makes life worth living. And I believe it will meet every need that can arise on this side of the River.

"And after death its joys shall be
Lasting as eternity."

References

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