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HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN  
(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)  
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

**WILLIAM MCKENDREE**  
**(Co-laborer with, and successor to, Francis Asbury, and the first native American Bishop of  
the Methodist Church)**

His Conversion

Young McKendree bore his part in the Revolution, and was at Yorktown when Cornwallis surrendered. In 1820 he passed over the ground with a friend and showed him where his camp was. A spell of sickness brought him into the jaws of death. He prayed as sinners pray, when great fear is upon them, and vowed as they vow. But his confidence in his own sincerity was shaken by the startling question, suggested he knew not how: "If the Lord would raise you up and convert your soul, would you be willing to go and preach the gospel?" He shrunk from the answer, and trembled at this test of obedience. With returning strength and health, he went back to the vain world with lessened confidence in promises of amendment made under fear:

In this situation I continued until the great revival of religion took place in Brunswick Circuit, under Mr. John Easter, in 1787. On a certain Sabbath I visited a gentleman who lived in the neighborhood; he and his lady were going to church, to hear a Mr. Gibson, a local Methodist preacher. The church as open to any occupant -- the clergy having abandoned their flocks and the country and fled home to England. My friend declined going to church, sent a servant with his wife, and we spent the time in reading a comedy and drinking wine. Mrs. \_\_\_\_ staid late at church, but at last, when we were impatient for dinner, she returned, and brought strange things to our ears. With astonishment flushing her countenance she began to tell whom she left "in a flood of tears," who were "down on the floor," who were "converted," what an "uproar" was going on among the people -- cries for mercy and shouts for joy, etc. She also informed us that Mr. John Easter was to preach at that place on the following Tuesday. My heart was touched at her representation. I resolved to seek religion, and began in good earnest to pray for it that evening.

Tuesday I went to church, fasting and praying. Mr. Easter preached from John iii. 19-22, "And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world," etc. The word reached my heart. From this time I had no peace of mind; I was completely miserable. My heart was broken up. A view of God's forbearance, and of the debasing sin of ingratitude, of which I had been guilty in grieving the Spirit, overwhelmed me with confusion. Now my conscience roared like a lion. "The

pains of hell got hold of me." I concluded that I had committed the "unpardonable sin," and had thoughts of giving up all for lost. For three days I might have said, "My bed shall comfort me, then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions, so that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." But in the evening of the third day deliverance came. While Mr. Easter was preaching I was praying as well as I could, for I was almost ready to despair of mercy. Suddenly doubts and fears fled, hope sprung up in my soul, and the burden was removed. I knew that God was love, that there was mercy even for me, and I rejoiced in silence.

Mr. Easter confidently asserted that God had converted my soul, but I did not believe it, for I had formed to myself an idea of conversion -- how it would come, and what must follow; and what I then felt did not answer to my idea; therefore I did not believe that I was converted, but I knew there was mercy for me, and I greatly rejoiced in that. However, I soon found myself in an uncomfortable condition, for I immediately began to seek and to expect a burden of sin answerable to my idea, in order to get converted. But the burden was gone, and I could not recover it. With desire I sought rest, but I thought that greater distress than I had felt must precede that blessing, and therefore refused to be comforted. And thus for several weeks I experienced all the anguish of grasping at an object of the greatest importance, and missing my aim -- of laying hold of life and salvation, then falling back into the vortex of disappointment and distress. But deliverance was at hand.

Mr. Easter came round, and his Master came with him, and in the time of meeting the Lord, who is merciful and kind, blessed me with the witness of the Spirit; and then I could rejoice indeed--yes, with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Within twenty-four hours after this I was twice tempted to think my conversion was delusive, and not genuine, because I did not receive the witness of the Spirit at the same time. But I instantly applied to the throne of grace, and, in the duty of prayer, the Lord delivered me from the enemy; and from that day to this I have never doubted my conversion. I have pitied, and do still pity, those who, under the influence of certain doctrines, are led to give the preference to a doubting experience, and therefore can only say, "If I ever was converted," "I hope I am converted," "I fear I never was converted," etc., but can never say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life."

### His Sanctification

The same preacher by whom he had believed followed, "not long after," with a sermon on sanctification. McKendree examined the doctrine, and found it true; examined himself, and "found remaining corruption, and diligently sought the blessing held forth." In its pursuit he says, "My soul grew in grace and in the faith that overcomes the world;" and he thus concludes the description of this phase of his experience: "One morning I walked into the field, and while I was musing, such an overwhelming power of the Divine Being overshadowed me as I had never experienced before. Unable to stand, I sunk to the ground more than filled with transport. My cup ran over, and I shouted aloud. Had it not been for a new set of painful exercises which now came upon me, I might have rejoiced 'evermore;' but my heart was enlarged, and I saw more clearly than ever before the danger of those in an unconverted state. For such persons I prayed with anxious care. At times, when called upon to pray in public my soul would get into an agony, and the Lord would in great compassion pour out his Spirit. Souls were convicted and converted, and Zion rejoiced abundantly in those days."

Source: "The History of Methodism" by Holland McTyeire

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THE END