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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

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(Methodist)

During the summer and autumn of 1844, emigration began to push vigorously towards the central portion of Wisconsin. The Rock river Valley had already become the theme of conversation, and the object of interest to the settlers. Each wave of population bore its eager burden still farther on; until early in July, among others, we found our resting-place at Wanpun. Having made out selection to embrace as much prairie, woodland, and water-power as we could well encompass, our first duty was to prepare a shanty as a dwelling-place; and our next, to provide means of subsistence. In connection with opening of farms, we soon entered upon the erection of a sawmill; and a competence blessed our household. Religious consecration her altar in the "shanty," as the first day saw it completed, and the shades of evening mantled the unpretending evidence of the march of civilization. a walk of twenty miles to attend a quarterly meeting at Fond du Lac secured the attendance of a regular itinerant -- Rev. Joseph Lewis, at Wanpun -- to organize a class. the class consisted at first of six members, -- Rev. Silas Miller, a local deacon at that time; his wife, Eunice; his daughter, Mrs. Malvina F. Hilyar, and her husband, Henry L.; the second son, Ezekiel T. Miller, who was made class-leader; and the present writer, a younger son, then an exhorter. With the increase of settlements, there came an increasing demand for ministerial labor. Until early in the summer of 1845, these calls became so pressing, that they largely embarrassed our business arrangements. A consulting was held; and it was finally decided the writer, being then twenty-two years old and single, could leave home better than the father. It was then believed to be only a temporary provision, until men could be obtained from abroad. But how little we know of the future! A few weeks were spent at Brothertown among the Brothertown people, in the absence of the missionary; and, at the close of the summer, I returned to Fond du Lac, in which charge Wanpun was included, and was licensed to preach, and recommended to Conference.

My first charge was called Green-Lake Mission, and included of the presiding elder, Rev. William H. Sampson, as to the boundaries of my charge, he said, "Fix a point in the centre of Lake Harican, and strike a line to the north star, and another to the Rocky Mountains, and you will have your eastern and southern boundaries." To these two appointments others were added, until in due time the charge numbered twenty-four. The spirit of revival came down among the people, and many were added from month to month; until, at the close of the year, the Lord possessed the land.

But I took my pen more especially at the present moment to refer to an item of personal experience, which has already been to my mind like Jacob's Bethel.

My large circuit when fully organized, required long journeyings, which I mostly performed on horseback in summer, and sometimes in cutter in winter. Sometimes my ride on the Sabbath would be forty miles long, and afford the pleasure of preaching four times. On one of these excursions, I became very much exercised on the subject of Christian holiness. I had previously given the subject special thought; but now it seemed to assume an importance with which I had never clothed it before. Not only did the teaching of our standards bear an unusual clearness, but my heart began to realize an impressiveness I had not felt before, to the same extent.

I preached on the subject at my morning appointment; and as I swept over the prairie some ten miles, in the face of a driving snowstorm, to my noonday appointment, I resolved to preach on the same subject again. I did so, and with much better satisfaction to myself. Twelve miles more of storm, and I was again before a congregation to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; and I am free to say, I had become so full of my theme, it seemed to me that this alone could be my subject; and hence, though changing my text, I discoursed on gospel purity, showing that experimental religion presents itself to the conception of the mind under three clearly-defined ideas, -- justification, regeneration, and sanctification. The drift of thought ran on this wise: By justification, in this connection, we mean simply the pardon of sin; and the man who finds this grace stands as fully accepted before the law, through Christ, as though he had never sinned. By regeneration, we mean that radical change of man's moral and spiritual condition which subjects all the faculties and powers of the soul to the control of the Divine Spirit.

The work wrought in the heart by the Spirit includes not only the entire subjection of the "man of sin," but the introduction of the spiritual reign of Christ. This change is so radical, that it may well be said, "Old things have passed away, and all things have become new." These states of grace, wrought at the same moment, we ordinarily call conversion; and they attest to the heart by the witness of the Spirit. If the subject of them shall "go on unto perfection," the Spirit will lead him "into all truth." the justified person need not backslide in order to have a sense of His need of sanctification. Nay, he must not backslide if he would have either a clear conception of the great blessing, or even a drawing towards it. If he should be faithful to the grace already received, the Spirit will enlighten him, and lead to the discovery of new fields, as the astronomer rests his calculations on the worlds already discovered when he peers into the unexplored regions beyond. The increase of spiritual illumination will reveal conditions, both as to himself and the economy of grace, of which he had no adequate conception before.

The moral perception, thus quickened by the Spirit, will furnish painful revelations as to himself. He will discover that there linger still some remains of the carnal mind. Pride, the love of the world, selfishness, self-will, and sometimes even anger or other evil passions, will begin to stir in the heart. The revelation will awaken alarm; and often the temptation will follow that he is not a Christian at all, or these motions of sin would not be realized. But there need be no alarm. The evidence of conversion is not wanting; yet there needs to be an additional work to secure entire freedom from sin. This additional work is sanctification. The old carnal nature is not entirely renovated and made pure. Though the tree is cut down, the roots show their remaining

vitality by sending up the shoots around the old stump. The "mightier" than the "strong man armed" must come, and pluck up by the roots. When the evil principle is thus plucked out and destroyed, the blessed Christ holds the heart without a rival; the grace of the Spirit now became planted in the garden of the Lord, where neither brier, thorn, or thistle grows.

Do any ask, "Is this perfection?" We answer, Yes: not that absolute perfection which admits of no growth or expansion, for none but the Infinite can know such a perfection; but such a state as casts out sin, the evil principle which has retarded the growth of the soul, and has now planted in the genial soil, all the seeds of righteousness. So far from being opposed to growth, such perfection intensifies the agents of growth. The sermon closed with an exhortation to "go on unto perfection."

At the close of the service, a good sister referred in very earnest terms to the discourse, and was especially grateful for the ministry of a man who evidently understood so much about the deep things of God. Instantly the thought passed my mind, "Ah, yes! but there must, after all, be a great difference between merely understanding the theory, and knowing 'the deep things of God' in the heart." This thought troubled me. It came back again and again, and often resolved itself into the question: "How can you teach others what you do not know yourself?"

The hasty supper was eaten, and I was away, as I had ten miles to my evening appointment across the prairie. The snow was still falling moderately, but borne on a driving wind, which was rendering the going heavy and the path invisible. As my noble horse heading towards home, my next appointment, he seemed to go with the wind; but, for a time, I seemed scarcely to heed him, as my thoughts were busy. The question came with still increasing force, "How can you preach to others what you do not know yourself?" At length I resolved; and, scarcely stopping to measure the movement, or estimate the consequences, I was on my knees by the side of the cutter, engaged in prayer. My first conscious thought of my surroundings was awakened by the wrestling of my horse as my right hand held him firmly by the lines. Then came the suggestion, "This is a very unpropitious time to settle a matter of this importance. With a fractious horse by the rein, a terrible storm sweeping over the bare prairie, filling the already blind snow-path, you had better defer the matter for the present." My reply was, "It is time this matter were settled, and I propose to settle it now."

"But the snow-path is nearly filled; and you will lose your way, and perish." I still replied, "It is time this matter were settled, and I propose to settle it now." -- "But it is getting dark, and your congregation will be waiting for you. You better go on and fill your appointment, and then attend to this matter." The Lord helped me to reply again with still greater emphasis, "It is time this matter were settled; and God helping, it shall be settled now." Instantly the light broke, and I was able "to reckon myself dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ my Lord." Feeling assured I had learned by happy experience the power of the blood to cleanse from all sin, I was found in due time at my appointment, preaching from the text, "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

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THE END