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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

FRANCES E. WILLARD
(Methodist)
Two Accounts

FIRST ACCOUNT

I was lying on my bed in my home at Evanston, Illinois, in the crisis of typhoid fever. It was one night in July, 1859. The doctor had said that the crisis would soon arrive, and I had overheard his words. Mother was watching in the next room. My whole soul was intent, as two voices seemed to speak within me, one of them saying, "My child, give me thy heart. I called thee long by Joy, I call thee always and only because I love thee with an everlasting love."

The other said, "Surely you who are so resolute and strong will not breakdown now because of physical feebleness. You are a reasoner, and never yet were you convinced of the reasonableness of Christianity. Hold out now and you will feel when you get well just as you used to feel."

One presence was to me warm, sunny, safe, with an impression as of snowy wings; the other cold, dismal, dark, with the flutter of a bat. The controversy did not seem brief; in my weakness; such a strain would doubtless appear longer than it really was. Solemnly, definitely, and with my whole heart I said, not in spoken words, but in the deeper language of consciousness. "If God lets me get well I'll try to be a Christian girl." I was then nineteen years old. But this resolve did not bring peace.

"You must at once declare this resolution," said the inward voice. Strange as it seems, and complete as had always been my frankness toward my dear mother, far beyond what is usual even between mother and child, it cost me a greater humbling of my pride to tell her than the resolution had cost of self-surrender, or than any other utterance of my whole life has involved. After a hard battle, in which I lifted up my soul to God for strength, I faintly called her from the next room, and said,

"Mother, I wish to tell you that if God lets me get well I'll try to be a Christian girl." She took my hand, knelt beside my bed, and wept and prayed. I then turned my face to the wall and sweetly slept ... That winter we had revival services in the old Methodist church at Evanston. Dr. (now Bishop) Foster was president of the university, and his sermons, with those of Drs. Dempster, Bannister, and others, deeply stirred my heart. I had convalesced slowly and been out of town, so these meetings seemed my first public opportunity of declaring my new allegiance. The very first invitation to go forward, kneel at the altar and be prayed for, was heeded.

Waiting for no one, counseling with no one I went alone along the aisle with my heart beating so loudly I thought that I could see as well as hear it beat as I moved forward. One of the most timid, shrinking, sensitive natures, what it meant to me to go forward thus, with my student friends gazing upon me, can never be told. I had been known as "skeptical," and prayers (of which I then spoke lightly) had been asked for me in the church the year before. For fourteen nights in succession I thus knelt at the altar, expecting some utter transformation, some slice of heaven to be placed in my inmost heart, as I have seen the box of valuables placed in the cornerstone of a building and firmly set, plastered over and fixed in its place forever. This was what I had determined must be done, and was loath to give it up. I prayed and agonized, but this did not occur.

One night when I returned to my room baffled, weary and discouraged, and knelt beside my bed, it came to me quietly that this was not the way; that my "conversion," my "turning about," my religious experience (re-li-gio, to bind again), had reached its crisis on that surrender night when I said "yes" to God. A quiet certitude of this pervaded my consciousness, and the next night I told the public congregation so, gave my name to the church as a probationer, and after holding this relation for a year -- waiting for my sister Mary, who joined the church "in full connection." Meanwhile I had regularly led since that memorable June, a prayerful life which had not done for some months previous to that time; studied my Bible, and, as I believe, evinced by my daily life that I was taking counsel of the heavenly powers.

Prayer meeting, class meeting (in which Dr. Hemenway was my beloved leader), and church services were most pleasant to me, and I became an active Christian worker, seeking to lead others to Christ. For I had learned to think of and to believe in God in terms of Jesus Christ. It had always been my difficulty, as I believe it is that of so many. By nature all spiritually-disposed people (and with the exception of about six months of my life I was always strongly that) are Unitarians, and my chief mental difficulty has always been, and is today, after all these years, to adjust myself to the idea of three in one and one in three. But, while I will not judge others, there is for me no final rest, except as I translate the concept of God into the nomenclature and personality of the New Testament. What Paul says of Christ is what I say; the love John felt it is my dearest wish to cherish.

Six years passed by, during which I grew to love more and more the house of God and the fellowship of the blessed Christian people who were my brothers and sisters in the church. The first bereavement of my life came to me three years after I became a Christian, in the loss of my only sister, Mary, whose lifelong companionship had been a living epistle to me, of conscientiousness and spirituality. In her death she talked of Christ as "one who held her by the hand," and she left us with a smile fresh from the upper glory. A great spiritual uplift came to me then, and her last message, "Sister, I want you to tell everybody to be good," was like a perfume

and a prophecy within my soul. This was in 1862. In 1866 Mrs. Bishop Hamline came to our village and we were closely associated in the work of the "American Methodist Ladies' Centennial Association" that built Heck Hall. This saintly woman placed in my hands the Life of Hester Ann Rogers; life of Carvosso; Life of Mrs. Fletcher; Wesley's Sermons on Christian Perfection, and Mrs. Palmer's Guide to Holiness.

I had never seen any of these books before, but had read Peck's Central Idea of Christianity, and been greatly interested in it. I had also heard saintly testimonies in prayer meeting, and, in a general way, believed in the doctrine of holiness. But my reading of these books, my talks and prayers with Mrs. Hamline, that modern Mrs. Fletcher, deeply impressed me. I began to desire and pray for holiness of heart.

Soon after this, Dr. and Mrs. Phoebe Palmer came to Evanston as guests of Mrs. Hamline, and for weeks they held meetings in our church. This was in the winter 1866; the precise date I cannot give. One evening, early in their meetings when Mrs. Palmer had spoken with marvelous clearness and power, and at the close those desirous of entering into the higher Christian life had been asked to kneel at the altar, another crisis came to me. It was not tremendous as the first, but it was one that deeply left its impress on my spirit.

My dear father and a friend, whom we all loved and honored, sat between me and the aisle -- both Christian men and greatly revered by me. My mother sat beyond me. None of them moved. At last I turned to my mother (who was converted and joined the church when she was only twelve years old) and whispered "Will you go with me to the altar?" She did not hesitate a minute, and the two gentlemen moved out of the pew to let us pass, but did not go themselves. Kneeling in utter self-abandonment I consecrated myself anew to God.

My chief besetments were, as I thought, a speculative mind, a hasty temper, a too ready tongue, and a purpose to be a celebrated person. But in that hour of sincere self-examination I felt humiliated to find that the simple bits of jewelry I wore, gold buttons, rings and pin, all of them plain and "quiet" in their style, came up to me as the separating causes between my spirit and my Saviour. All this seemed so unworthy of that sacred hour that I thought at first it was a mere temptation. But the sense of it remained so strong that I unconditionally yielded my pretty little jewels, and great peace came to my soul. I cannot describe the deep welling up of joy that gradually possessed me. I was utterly free from care. I was blithe as a bird that is good for nothing except to sing. I did not ask myself "Is this my duty?" but just intuitively knew what I was called upon to do. The conscious, emotional presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit held me. I ran about upon His errands "just for love." Life was a halcyon day. All my friends knew and noticed the change, and I would not like to write down the lovely things some of them said to me; but they did me no harm, for I was shut in with the Lord.

And yet, just then, there came, all unintended and unlooked for, an experience of what I did not then call sin, which I now believe to have been wrong. My own realization of it was, however, so imperfect that it did not mar my loyalty to Christ. In this holy, happy state, I engaged to go to Lima, New York, and become preceptress of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary. Just before leaving, my honored friend Dr. _____, who was visiting Governor Evans, said to me one evening, "Sister Frank, there is a strange state of things at Lima. The Free Methodists have done great harm in

Western New York by their excesses in the doctrine and experience of holiness. You know I believe thoroughly in and profess it, but just now our church has suffered so much from the 'Nazirites,' as they are called, that I fear if you speak and act as zealously at Lima in this cause as you do here it may make trouble. Hold to the experience, but be very careful in statement."

So I went to Lima with these thoughts, and there quite soon, in a prayer meeting in the old seminary chapel my good friend, Prof._____, whose subsequent experience has been such a blessed heritage to Christians, replied to a student who rose to inquire about holiness, that it "was a subject we did not mention here."

Young and docile-minded as I was, and revering those two great and true men, I "kept still" until I soon found I had nothing in particular to keep still about! The experience left me. But I think my pupils of that year will bear me witness that for their conversion and spiritual upbuilding, I was constantly at work.

Since then I have sat at the feet of every teacher of holiness whom I could reach; have read their books and compared their views. I love and reverence and am greatly drawn toward all, and never feel out of harmony with their spirit. Wonderful uplifts come to me as I pass on clearer views of the life of God in the soul of man. Indeed, it is the only life, and all my being sets toward it as the rivers toward the sea. Celestial things grow dearer to me; the love of Christ is steadfast in my soul; the habitudes of a disciple sit more easily upon me; tenderness toward humanity and the lower orders of being increase with the years. In the temperance, labor and women questions I see the stirring of Christ's heart; in the comradeship of Christian work my spirit takes delight, and prayer has become my atmosphere. But that sweet pervasiveness, that heaven in the soul, of which I came to know in Mrs. Palmer's meeting, I do not feel.

I am afraid I love too well the good words of the good concerning what I do; that I have not the control of tongue and temper that I ought to have, and that I do not answer to a good conscience in the matter of taking sufficient physical exercise. But God knows that I constantly lift up my heart for conquest over them all, and my life is calm and peaceful.

Just as frankly as I "think them over" have I here written down the outline phenomena of my spiritual life, hoping that it may do good and not evil to those who read.

I am a strictly loyal and orthodox Methodist, but I find great good in all religions and in the writings of those lofty and beautiful moralists who are building better than they know, and all of whose precepts blossom from the rich soil of the New Testament. No word of faith in God or love toward man is alien to my sympathy. The classic ethics of Marcus Aurelius are dear to me, and I have carried in my traveling outfit not only a Kempis, but Epictetus and Plato. The mysticism of Fenelon and Guyon, the sermons of Henry Drummond and Beecher, the lofty precepts of Ralph Waldo Emerson, all help me up and onward. I am an eclectic in religious reading, friendship, and inspiration. My wide relationships and constant journeying would have made me so had I not the natural hospitality of mind that leads to this estate.

But, like the bee that gathers from many fragrant gardens but flies home with his varied gains to the same friendly and familiar hive, so I fly home to the sweetness and sanctity of the old faith that has been my shelter and solace so long.

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," is the deepest voice out of my soul. Receive it every instant, voluntarily given back to Thyself, and receive it in the hour when I drop this earthly mantle, that I wear today, and pass onward to the world invisible but doubtless not far off.

FRANCES E. WILLARD, EVANSTON, ILL., May 20, 1887.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by S. Olin Garrison

SECOND ACCOUNT

Probably next to Queen Victoria of England, Miss Frances F. Willard is the most widely known and best beloved woman of the English-speaking world. She has well been called the "uncrowned queen of America." And her dominion was not limited to this country, for wherever Christianity has gone her name and fame and good works are known. She has probably done more for the cause of temperance and social purity than any other woman, living or dead. And at her death, Christians of all faiths, Romish and Protestant, were loud in her praises. This remarkable woman, with almost world-wide fame for her ability and good works, not only believed in this doctrine, but also professed to have tested its truth in her experience. The following extracts are from what she wrote in 1887. After giving an account of her conversion and growth in grace, she says:

"In 1866 Mrs. Bishop Hamline came to our village, and we were closely associated in the work of the American Ladies' Centennial Association that built Heck Hall. This saintly woman placed in my hands the Life of Hester Ann Rogers, Life of Carvosso, Life of Mrs. Fletcher, Wesley's Sermons on Christian Perfection, and Mrs. Palmer's Guide to Holiness. I had never seen any of these books before, but had read Peck's Central Idea of Christianity, and had been greatly interested in it. I had also heard saintly testimonies in prayer meeting, and, in a general way, believed in the doctrine of holiness. But my reading of these books, my talks and prayers with Mrs. Hamline that modern Mrs. Fletcher, deeply impressed me. I began to desire and pray for holiness of heart. Soon after this, Dr. and Mrs. Phoebe Palmer came to Evanston as guests of Mrs. Hamline, and for weeks they held meetings in our church. This was in the winter of 1866; the precise date I cannot give. One evening, early in their meetings, when Mrs. Palmer had spoken with marvelous clearness and power, and at the close those desirous of entering into the higher Christian life had been asked to kneel at the altar, another crisis came to me. [The first was at the time of her conversion, previously noted.] It was not so tremendous as the first, but it was one that deeply left its impress on my spirit kneeling in utter self-abandonment, I consecrated myself anew to God.

"I cannot describe the deep welling up of joy that gradually possessed me. I was utterly free from care. I was blithe as a bird that is good for nothing except to sing ... The conscious, emotional presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit held me. I ran about upon his errands 'just for love.' Life was a halcyon day. All my friends knew and noticed the change, and I would not like to

write down the lovely things some of them said to me; but they did me no harm, for I was shut in with the Lord ...

"Since then I have sat at the feet of every teacher of holiness whom I could reach; have read their books and compared their views. I love and reverence and am greatly drawn toward all, and never feel out of harmony with their spirit. Wonderful uplifts come to me as I pass on -- clearer views of the life of God in the soul of man. Indeed, it is the ONLY LIFE, and all my being sets toward it as the rivers toward the sea. Celestial things grow dearer to me; the love of Christ is steadfast in my soul; the habitudes of a disciple sit more easily upon me; tenderness toward humanity and the lower orders of being increases with the years. In the temperance, labor, and woman questions I see the stirring of Christ's heart; in the comradeship of Christian work my spirit takes delight, and prayer has become my atmosphere."

Nor did this creed and experience make her narrow or bigoted, but rather tended to broaden her views and enlarge her sympathies and charity. She says:

"I am a strictly loyal and orthodox Methodist, but I find great good in all religions and in the writings of those lofty and beautiful moralists who are building better than they know, and all of whose precepts blossom from the rich soil of the New Testament. No word of faith in God or love to man is alien to my sympathy. The classic ethics of Marcus Aurelius are dear to me, and I have carried in my traveling outfit not only a Kempis, but Epictetus and Plato. The mysticism of Fenelon and Guyon, the sermons of Henry Drummond and Beecher, the lofty precepts of Ralph Waldo Emerson, all help me up and onward. I am an eclectic in religious reading, friendship, and inspiration. My wide relationships and constant journeyings would have made me so had I not the natural hospitality of mind that leads to this estate. But, like the bee that gathers from many fragrant gardens but flies home with his varied gains to the same friendly and familiar hive, so I fly home to the sweetness and sanctity of the old faith that has been my shelter and solace so long."

Miss Willard closes her testimony with the following words:

"'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' is the deepest voice out of my soul. Receive it every instant, voluntarily given back to thyself, and receive it in the hour when I drop this earthly mantle, that I wear today, and pass onward to the world invisible but doubtless not far off."

And, no doubt, he did receive it at the last, for among her last words were: "How beautiful to be with God!" This experience has the characteristics of others given in this volume. It came after conversion, was instantaneous, was certified to consciousness, was abiding, and was followed by growth -- "wonderful uplifts" and "clearer views of the life of God in the soul of man." It will be noted, too, that Miss Willard seems to trace her "tenderness toward humanity," and her great zeal in the "temperance" and other causes, to the inspiration and strength given and continued to her through this wonderful baptism and indument. This experience was given some twenty-one years after she received this blessing, and ten years later she died in the same faith and experience. And may we not be permitted to add that if this superb specimen of Christian womanhood could come down from her high place in the world's admiration and esteem, and "sit at the feet of every teacher of holiness and "love and reverence" them, and could humbly kneel at

the altar of prayer and seek this blessing, and then meekly profess the enjoyment of it, certainly her humbler sisters can well afford to do so?

Source: "Scriptural Sanctification" by John R. Brooks

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THE END