

**FORTY WITNESSES,
COVERING THE
WHOLE RANGE OF
CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE**

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Forty Witnesses, Covering the Whole Range of Christian Experience by S. Olin Garrison

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THE WHOLE RANGE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

Rev. S. OLIN GARRISON, M.A.,
EDITOR,
(Author *Probationer's Hand-Book*.)

INTRODUCTION BY BISHOP C. D. FOSS, LL.D.

*"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you
and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and
in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

NEW YORK: PHILLIPS & HUNT,
CINCINNATI: CRANSTON & STOWE.

1833.

TO THE
ALUMNI AND STUDENTS
OF
DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
AND TO THE
YOUNGER MINISTRY OF THE GENERAL CHURCH,
TO WHOM ARE
CHIEFLY COMMITTED THE MOST FORN SPECIFIC AND ETHICAL
PROBLEMS OF THE NEXT QUARTER CENTURY,
THIS VOLUME OF EARNEST TESTIMONY
IS MOST
Respectfully Dedicated.

153896

PREFACE.

THE object of this volume is not to set forth a doctrine, but to reveal a life. While it is recognized that all life must have a concrete expression, nevertheless, the book, when carefully read, will show the difficulty of uniformity in doctrinal statement, and, perhaps, the utter impossibility of the most devout minds agreeing upon the terminology and marks of deeper religious experiences especially. And yet the editor hopes that he has gathered into a convenient and compact shape data which will furnish some capable pen the material from which to write a truer philosophy of Christian experience than has yet appeared.

Among the purposes of the book are: (1) models of discriminating statements of experience; (2) checks to extravagance in religious language; (3) cautions against professing obtainments before they are reached; (4) to show the easy possibility of losing the very highest graces, and (5) the wisdom of frank and open confession of serious lapses.

Sincerity is of more value than maintaining a doctrine. Pride is often thrust into souls easily ambitious for a doctrine, or profession, or mode of statement. What is more seductive than pride of opinion, and what more rigid than the vain-glorious

maintenance of a position once gained, or thought to be gained? These "witnesses" show how easy it must be for weaker minds to mistake their experiences: how few, perhaps, have a broad view of what it means to be "perfect in love," and how many, in all probability, lapse very frequently from even the highest state of grace.

Moreover, the book will teach the folly, for any reason, of giving up seeking and preaching a state of grace plainly set forth in the Word, and logically demanded by every system of religion that strongly appeals to the intellect of the race.

Furthermore, the collective volume is unconsciously at war with bigotry and exclusiveness of doctrinal statement; it especially teaches, "between the lines," charity toward the opinions and expressions of all men; it recognizes that men are often better and truer than their statements, and also that men, very blunt and exact in definition, often succeed in winning souls, not so much because of their nice discriminations, as they may suppose, but in spite of them, and by virtue of their real goodness and downright earnestness. Few men ever clearly analyze, if indeed it be possible, the true secret of success in themselves or others. There is always large room for the influence of unconscious environments.

And yet, while the book teaches charity, the editor will regret exceedingly if his grouping of witnesses shall, in this age of excessive liberalism, tend to take any rigidity out of the back-bone of a spiritual church. Let no one be discouraged, but sweetly hold fast that whereunto he has attained;

be not afraid to investigate the reasons for the hope he has within him; reconstruct his spiritual building, if need be, and push upward until he comes in the perfection of love, the perfection of faith, the perfection of hope—a divine trinity in human experience—which the Scriptures clearly promise in this life.

While the book has not been made all that was intended, nevertheless it will be found scriptural, rich in clear statements, abounding in exact discriminations, and replete with sound sense, all of which will magnify its value and tend to promote the piety of the Church. Nearly all the "witnesses" are over fifty years of age, and some are past eighty. To encourage the children one little girl is admitted to the witness stand, a delicate and often dangerous thing to do before such an audience, but this unique experience could hardly be rejected. The reader will notice how many were converted in childhood or youth. It is also of interest to study the relation of epochs in the narration of experiences.

The witnesses were asked to write out of their hearts, and without an eye upon their dogmas or theology. Each one was asked to give a plain, straight-forward story, chiefly of the inner life, and without adornment. The following is an extract from a circular sent to them by the editor.

"Knowing with what relish people listen to the narration of personal experience, and with what zest thoughtful people read intelligent and discriminating accounts of the inner life, I have thought it wise to gather into a small compass testimonies to salvation from sin. The accounts of Christian

experience in the religious press are not only ephemeral, but incomplete and inadequate. They seldom arrest the attention of the thoughtful. The very few attempts to meet this demand in book or pamphlet form have, so far as I have been able to learn, failed of their purpose largely, and, I venture to think, for apparent reasons. Such books and pamphlets have admitted argument, controversy, 'peculiar views,' or dreams and other matter, generally of doubtful expediency; verbosity and religious cant have been indulged, together with other irrelevant matter. Moreover, there have been allowed the testimonies of witnesses immature, and incompetent, by reason of inability to correctly analyze and accurately express the phenomena of their experiences. It is my design to secure the testimonies of ripe, capable witnesses, living and dead, and, as far as possible, throw them against the theoretical and practical infidelity of the age. Recognizing, however, that the charm of all spiritual biography has ever been a complete salvation, and also remembering that every philosophy should be judged by its best exponents, I have chosen those witnesses whom I have understood to believe the Scriptures promise 'perfect love,' or 'holiness' or a 'second experience' (as Miss Havergal calls it), and who also believe themselves at some time to have had this higher experience. I have it in mind to prevent, as far as may be, premature and superficial testimony, and to help correct and root out delusions and snares, as well as remove from the main vision all that is non-essential, irrelevant and dangerous to the doctrine and life of purity.