

Christianity, A “First-Hand” Religion

Dub McClish

Sometimes a second-hand car gives good service; a second-hand religion never does. The religion of Christ must always be first-hand. I have said this and believed it for a long time, but the following experience brought its truth home in a powerful way. While talking with a college-age young man, he spoke of having to make a decision during his high school years of whether to attend a certain dance. He carefully explained to a friend the reasons he had heard from his parents why a Christian should abstain from such activities. The friend replied with the incisive question: “That's all fine, but is that your religion or your parents?” This young man said he had never thought about his own convictions before that question.

We can certainly commend the parents under discussion for trying to train their son properly. At least he knew the right answer to the issue, whether he believed in it or not. This is much more than can be said for many.

However, there was a crucial breakdown somewhere. This boy (like many Christians young and old) had a knowledge of the Truth without a love and appreciation for it. I judge this incident to be illustrative of a great problem in the church. A large number of people who are baptized, as youngsters are lost in a few years because they failed to develop the personal conviction of Truth that faithfulness requires. In short, they adopted the religion of their parents or of a friend instead of obeying the Gospel of Christ.

I certainly do not know all of the remedies to this problem. It seems to me that one fact stands out, however: the inculcation of the knowledge of God’s Word, as important as it is for our children, is insufficient by itself. We must incorporate into our children a love for the Lord and for His Word. This means that our behavior before them must be that which “adorns (beautifies) the doctrine of God” (Tit. 2:10). We must somehow make the Lord and His Word so real and so lovely to our children that they are bound to Him through their own conviction and desire to live for Him. This, I believe, is the key to a “first-hand” Christianity.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the August 21, 1974, edition of *Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.]

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