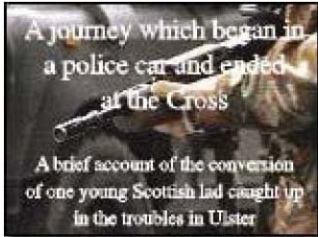




The Burning Bush—Online article archive

A Journey Which Began In A Police Car and Ended at the Cross



A brief account of the conversion of one young Scottish lad caught up in the troubles in Ulster

My name is Jim D Thirty-four years ago, I was born into a decent Scottish working class family which was nominally Protestant. From the age of five until I was fifteen, I was sent to Sunday School and then to the Boys' Brigade. My family were good people and had little time for sectarianism, but from an early age I watched the troubles in Ulster unfold night by night on the television. I felt that Ulster's fight was my fight.

My first taste of bigotry came when a Hibernian parade passed through my town and I was spat on and cursed by elderly Romanists, including a drunken priest. I was only ten but I understood which "tribe" I belonged to then. A few years later, I witnessed our town being turned upside down in the wake of the IRA Hunger Strikers' deaths in the mid-'80s. It seemed that the entire Roman Catholic community and the press were rabid IRA supporters. This shocked me and I decided then to fight back. I was very much into flute bands and through contacts with certain adults, when I was sixteen I got involved in transporting all manner of weaponry around the country. But even then I noticed that all my contact points were pubs or clubs and that a fair amount of the money being raised was being spent behind the bar. I became more involved and joined the Ulster Defence Association. I was very anxious to start shooting "Provos".

I received a very basic "training" in Scotland and then again when I went to live in Ulster. But instead of engaging the enemy, all my time was taken up boozing in the local pubs and clubs, raising money and generally acting the gangster. Our main objective was to get cash, and extortion was the favoured method. Protection money was demanded from local loyalist businesses. They basically paid us not to harm them or their business and to ensure that we did not rob them! I did not like this activity so I spoke out strongly against it and other corrupt activities.

Unfortunately, my protests angered my "Commanding Officer" and as a result the order was issued for me to be murdered! God's providence was evident at that time because my "comrades" refused to do it and instead they smashed my legs with a hammer. I still retained my position within the UDA.

I was still keen to get to grips with the rebels and every time a "team" meeting was called I hoped that I would be given a target, but usually it was just to plan or carry out a robbery. Men were becoming scarce with half of our "team", over 20 men, in prison, nearly all of them for robbery. We always robbed businesses in our own Protestant areas, since we felt safer doing that than robbing Roman Catholic businesses!

Then one day I was lifted by the RUC. This was fairly usual but this time one of the policemen was a Christian. For the first time in my life I heard the gospel. As I was being driven to Crumlin Road Jail, PC J . . . told me of my position as a sinner and of my need of the Saviour. The conviction that followed this introduction to the gospel was most unwelcome.



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I used drink, drugs and every other vice to shut out God. But God is sovereign and after an agonising and humbling two years, I came on my knees in repentance to the Lord Jesus Christ. He lifted me up when I was dead in trespasses and sin and gave me eternal life. He saved my soul and, praise be to God, he saved my long-suffering wife and my son also. My life is now totally transformed and dedicated to proclaiming Christ to all men.

How sad it is that I, who for years was a church-going Presbyterian, heard the gospel for the first time in the back of a RUC vehicle en route to prison! I do thank God for PC J and all those other Christian policemen who faithfully witness for Christ. I was a drunken thug but I thought I was a Protestant.

Without God, you cannot be a Protestant. Godless loyalist paramilitaries and Roman Catholic terrorists are in the same camp and are under the same leadership, that of Satan. Our forefathers clearly knew that without God Ulster was lost. Then why have we turned away from Him to our own devices?

For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed, Isaiah 9:16.