

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To Pastor Charles Ball, October 10, 1965

Levi T. Pennington
George Fox University

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October 10, 1965.

Charles A. Ball, Pastor,
Friends Church,
Newberg, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

While I have no reason to suppose that the end of my life on earth is close at hand, at the age of 90 it is not reasonable to suppose that there is a great deal of time left; and with the thought of what I should appreciate if our positions were reversed, I am giving some of the facts that you might desire if you were in charge of any funeral or memorial service for me after I am gone.

I was born at Amo, Indiana, August 29, 1875. When I was seven years old the family moved to Long Lake, Michigan, and later to Traverse City. I attended the little one-room country schools, graduated from the Manton High School in 1892 and from the Traverse City High School in 1894. I taught in five different country schools, ending my secular teaching as head of the school in Rogers City, the county seat of Presque Isle County. I became city circulator of the Daily Eagle of Traverse City; later I became reporter of the Morning Record, later the Evening Record, of the same city, made me a reporter, and before I left that daily I was city editor. I left journalism for the pastoral ministry of the Friends Church in Indiana, serving ~~many~~^{six} different congregations, in two cases two at a time, Westland and Western Grove, South Wabash and Old Wabash, Knightstown and South Eighth Street, Richmond. While serving these last two meetings I attended Earlham College, from which I was graduated in 1910. In 1911 I became president of Pacific College, which position I held till 1941, with one year leave of absence for religious travels in eastern United States and in England and Ireland, and two years leave of absence to serve as director of the Forward Movement of Friends in America. In addition to my service of the local Friends church, where I was repeatedly asked to fill the pulpit when the meeting was temporarily without a pastor, I was clerk of Oregon Yearly Meeting for nine years, and served in other capacities. During my work as president of the college I was also active in the work of the American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, the National ~~Association~~ Council for Prevention of War, the Oregon Council of Churches, Near East Relief, the Heifer Project, Inc., ~~and many other organizations~~ and since my retirement from the presidency of the college I have served these and other causes and organizations, including the Herbert Hoover Foundation. In 1922 I received the Master of Arts degree from the University of Oregon; in 1923 Linfield college conferred on me the degree of Doctor of Divinity; and in 1960 Earlham College honored me with the degree of Doctor of Laws.

In more personal matters, I married Bertha May Waters in 1898, and to this union were born Mary Esther, now Pearson, of Greene, New York, and Bertha May, now Pulsifer, of Portland, Oregon.

My wife Bertha May died in 1905; in 1905 I married Florence Rebecca Kidd, who died in 1960. If you should wish to refer to our more than fifty years together, with any suggestion as to what her loss meant to me, Browning's words as he thinks of the end of life are expressive:

For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast
 Oh, thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest.

It seems to me that if I were speaking of one who has lived the sort of life that I have lived, I'd think a fitting end would be the words of Gray at the close of his Elegy:

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

All this may seem to you like a man trying to write his own obituary and to preach his own funeral sermon. But I am sure that some of these things I have written would be wanted in the case of a funeral or memorial service, and I thought it might save you some inconvenience if you could have some of this material in advance.

With the hope that I may still have some time to seek to advance the kingdom of God on earth, and that I may be ready when my change comes,

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.