

LEARNER DRIVERS

Harry Foster

It was wonderful to be seventeen! For a long time Roy had been waiting for this landmark in his life, for his father owned a car and had promised to teach him to drive as soon as he was old enough. Now the day had come, and Roy wasted no time in buying the provisional license and the two 'L' plates.

His two younger brothers were very amused that Roy should have to own that he was a learner, for in most things he was so ready to put them right, as if he already knew everything. So they joked quite a bit about the large letter 'L' which he was forced to carry around, and they even asked him when he was going to add the letters 'G.B.', for 'getting better'. Roy, however, paid no attention to their mocking. It is true that his main concern was to be rid of the 'L' plates, but that could only be by attending to two matters. The first concerned a person and the second a book.

The person whom he depended on was an experienced driver. Sometimes it was an instructor and sometimes his father, but always there had to be a person sitting by his side when he was actually driving. At times his companion just reached out a helping hand and at others he spoke words either of warning or encouragement, as well as instructions as to what to do and when to do it. Roy was most grateful to have such a companion by his side, especially when difficulties [39/40] arose, but his great objective was to be able to drive alone. That could not be, though, until the knowledge and experience of the companion was actually inside himself, till the day when it was, as it were, an inner voice which warned or guided rather than someone outside of himself. This would enable him to discard the 'L' plates, for he would have acquired personal knowledge.

The other matter to which he had to give his attention was a book, the Highway Code. Here again, he could only pass the test as a driver by proving that its information was not only in the book which he carried around with him, but inside his mind because he had read and digested its contents. It would be no use to repeat parts of the book by heart, he needed to know how to act in accordance with its

rules.

Then came the day of the test. Was the book really inside him? His answers to the Examiner proved that it was. Was his driving knowledge inside him instead of in another person sitting by his side? Again, he was able to prove that it was. So, to his great delight, Roy was told that he had passed the test and was now a driver. He could hardly wait to remove those 'L' plates, and his father shared his joy. Later, however, his father explained kindly to him that although he no longer had to carry the plates he must remember that he was and should always be a learner. After all, Roy had already taken his stand as a Christian, and what is a disciple if not a learner?

And when you come to think of it there are similarities in this matter of driving and in the whole business of Christian living. We, too, have a book -- the Bible, which is God's Highway Code. It must get inside us, so that we not only become familiar with the words but have our lives governed by its message. We also have a wonderful Companion and Guide. The great purpose of the Christian life is to learn how to proceed and be governed by His inner presence, so that we have a heart experience of His warnings and promptings. This was what Jesus meant when He explained about the Comforter, saying: "... you know him for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17).

From A Witness And A Testimony 1973, London, England