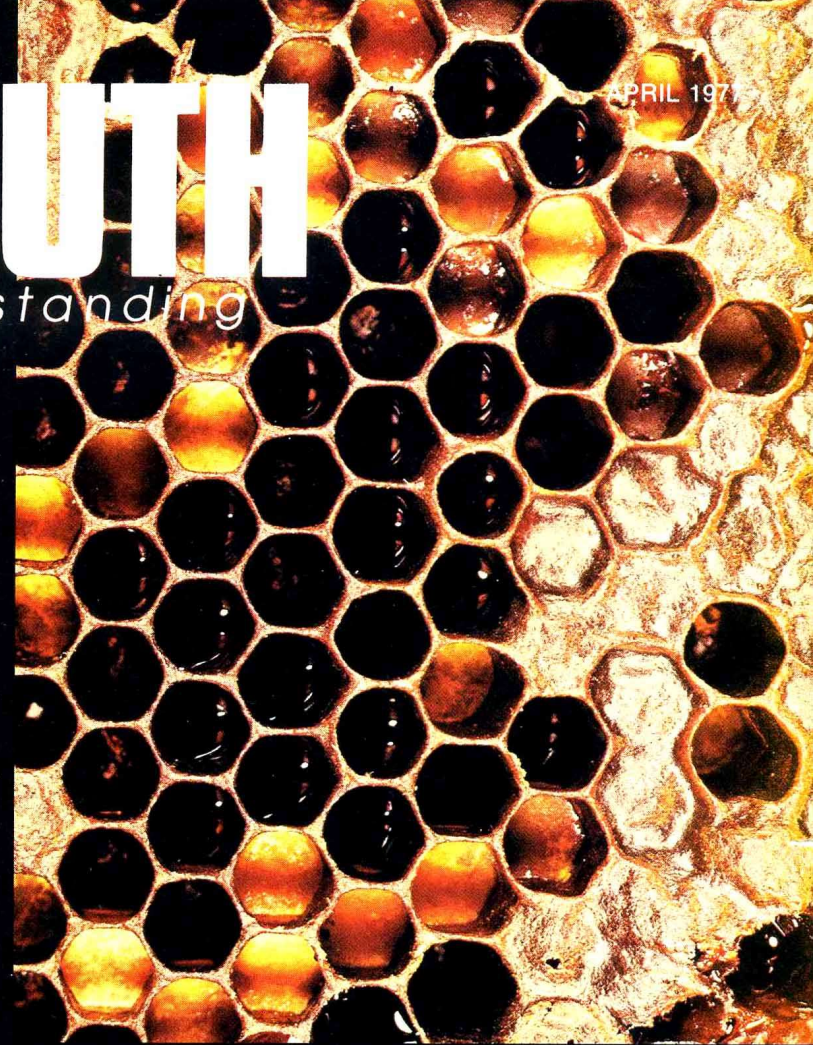


the
PLAIN TRUTH

a magazine of understanding

APRIL 1977



THE WONDERS
OF
CREATION
**CHANCE
OR
DESIGN
?**

From Seattle, Washington, comes this question from a reader of *The Good News*, after reading my "Personal" on "What we should learn from the spectacular Israeli strike to free scores of hostages from skyjack terrorism. The amazing parallel!"

His question:

"Dear Mr. Armstrong, I read with interest your article in the December *Good News*. I am enclosing part of it with underlinings that I would like more information on.

"I would appreciate receiving a short and concise statement of the basis of your call from God. Did He visit you personally? How was this Bible commission announced to shake someone like me to be able to know that you are the 'APPOINTED'? Will there be any need for a successor to you? And how is it provided?"

"I enjoy your magazine. Best to you."

The letter was not anonymous, else I would not give it an answer.

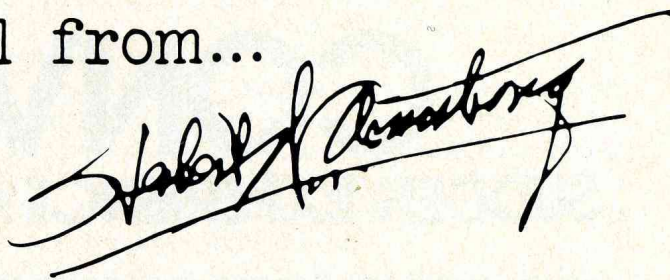
But I feel many readers might be interested in the answer. God did appear personally to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Christ did appear personally in calling His twelve apostles. There is every reason to believe that He appeared in person to the apostle Paul, in calling and instructing him.

I have often compared my call and teaching from Christ to Paul's account in Galatians 1:10-17.

First, he gave one of the evidences of the authenticity of his apostleship in verse 10: "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Then comes his teaching and commission: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. . . . But when it pleased God, who . . . called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood [humans]: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

Personal from...



A Frank Answer to a Reader's Sincere Question

There is every reason to believe that Jesus Christ appeared in person to Paul in Arabia, and for some three years taught him just as He previously had taught the original twelve for some three years.

Jesus Christ is the *personal* living Word of God. The Bible is the *written* Word of God. The Bible was not in print in Paul's day. Paul, when called, did not go to men, or those recognized by men as God's teachers, but he was taught directly by Christ the *personal* Word of God. In like manner, when God called me, by circumstances I believe He maneuvered, in the autumn of 1927—after preparing me in many ways while I was unconverted and traveling the wrong road of life (see volume I of my autobiography)—I did not go to any school of religion, to any denominational teachers, or to any humanly taught theological seminary. I went directly to the living CHRIST for teaching THROUGH HIS WRITTEN WORD!

I was immediately shocked to see with my own eyes that in Protestant Sunday school, from a child, I had been taught precisely the OPPOSITE of what God PLAINLY SAYS in His written WORD!

How do I know HE guided me? Two reasons: 1) My eyes saw exactly the SAME WORDS my human

teachers of Sunday-school days had seen—the difference being that they "believed" in the BIBLE—but did NOT believe WHAT IT SAID—and I did believe WHAT IT PLAINLY SAID. 2) I had been brought to a full and complete REPENTANCE and UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER to GOD, according to WHAT HE SAID (which I believed). I had given my life without any reservations to HIM. I had forsaken THIS WORLD, the glamorous future it appeared to promise me—everything—to believe and follow HIM, AND HAD ACCORDING TO HIS PROMISE RECEIVED HIS HOLY SPIRIT TO OPEN MY MIND TO HIS SPIRITUAL TRUTH! I knew it was TRUE, because it made sense and nothing else did!

Little by little, in almost day-and-night study of HIS WORD, much of it on my knees, God opened more and more TRUTH to my understanding. Always I had craved UNDERSTANDING. And God was giving it to me.

After the first six months of this intensive biblical study, God brought me to this complete surrender, and gave me the gift of His Spirit in the spring of 1927. I feel He gave me also the special gift of UNDERSTANDING.

I DID NOT CHOOSE THE MINISTRY as a life vocation. I had long before
(Continued on page 42)

CONVERSION

SUDDEN EXPERIENCE OR LIFELONG PROCESS?

Almost everybody, it seems, is all mixed up on this matter of spiritual conversion. It's part of the missing dimension in knowledge. Let's make it clear and plain as God Himself reveals it.

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Yesterday I was speaking before a packed house in the Ambassador Auditorium here at Pasadena headquarters. I had occasion, so I felt at the time, to sort of "bare my soul," so to speak, and relate the circumstances of my own conversion fifty years ago—not that it is typical of the manner and circumstances in which all people must come to conversion. Different ones will come to it in a large variety of circumstances.

Yet there is, after all, **ONE WAY** to real conversion, regardless of individual circumstances.

But is it a single sudden experience one undergoes once in a lifetime—and then he is "saved," as it is often expressed, once and for all—or is it a gradual experience of **CHANGE** continuing throughout a lifetime?

Life's Journey?

At times I have expressed the idea I think many millions have come to believe and on which they are staking their eternity. It is this: You are on a journey on a railway train. It is your life's journey, whether long or short. At the end of the line, because of Adam's sin, the switch is automatically thrown to send you directly down to hell, where you will be burned alive—constantly burning, yet never burning up because you are an immortal soul that can't die. Or, as millions also believe, it will shoot you directly to "purgatory."

But, if at any point in your life during the journey you "accept Christ as your Savior," then at the instant of that sudden experience, in whatever manner such experience takes place, the switch at the end of

the line is suddenly thrown to shoot you immediately up to heaven. And there you shall live **FOREVER** in idleness and ease, in glorious surroundings of splendor, with nothing to do—no responsibilities anymore—nothing but to be enraptured with the delight of gazing continually on the face of Christ your Savior.

About thirty years ago a man said to me: "Let me see if I can define *your* belief as contrasted to what you claim many millions of others believe." Then he explained the belief of the many approximately as I have stated it just above.

"But **YOU** believe," he continued, "that after one is initially converted, accepting Christ, he must then live a life of obedience to God's way, struggling against himself to overcome all wrong ways and **GROWING** spiritually in Christ's knowledge and in grace—thus training himself and qualifying to carry an important **RESPONSIBILITY** in the next life. You believe that when he dies, he is **DEAD**, will not go to heaven or hell, but will come to life again by a resurrection from the dead, and he will be here on earth. Then he will have immortality, and he will be **REWARDED** according to what his works were in this life—the **BIGGEST** reward being to have conferred on him the **HEAVIEST** and most important **RESPONSIBILITY**. Is that what you believe?"

"Well, not exactly," I replied, "but you are not too far off."

"Well," he said, "I want the first way with the other millions. I **DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO CARRY ANY RESPONSIBILITIES**—if indeed there *is* any life after death. I'd rather go to heaven and be **FREE** from work and

responsibility. I prefer the idleness and ease forever."

"Reward" of Idleness and Ease

Well, today, thirty years later, now in his 70s, this man has been given his wish—so far as the idleness and ease is concerned. He long ago retired. He has nothing to do but just **SIT, SIT, SIT** all day long in his small and modest living room, morbid with gloom, frustrated with inactivity, wishing to die, but unable to die. He was sent to the hospital with cancer; the doctors did not give much hope he would survive the operation. But he did, and they sent him home to die. But he didn't die. A couple years later he was rushed to the hospital with an acute gallbladder infection. Peritonitis began to set in; the doctors gave him almost no chance to survive the operation—yet it was sure death in less than 24 hours unless they operated. But again his sturdy constitution survived, and he was sent home and recovered.

At a funeral of a relative which we both attended some two years ago, he said to me, "I'd give anything to have a responsibility such as you have that keeps you busy traveling all over the earth." He had discovered that idleness and ease for eternity would be indeed a poor "reward" of conversion.

When Is One Saved?

Just what is this thing we call "conversion"? What do we **MEAN**—"**SALVATION**"? Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized... and ye shall..."—**WHAT?** Be saved? No. "... Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

When I was holding the six

weeks' series of nightly meetings in 1933 in the country schoolhouse west of Eugene, Oregon, a local Bible "scholar" sought to catch me off guard and expose what he supposed was my ignorance of the Bible by heckling. He said, "Mr. Armstrong, may I ask you a question? Have you been saved yet?"

I replied, "If you know your Bible, you know that Jesus said, 'He that shall endure unto the END, the same *shall be saved*'" (Matt. 24:13).

So again I ask: Is CONVERSION a sudden experience, or a lifelong PROCESS?

I had to ask myself, IF we humans are destined to live an ETERNAL LIFE in HELLFIRE because of what ADAM did UNLESS we "accept Christ" at some time during this life's journey, then why—yes, WHY—were we ever put on earth in the first place? If we then get the "reward" of idleness and ease and NOTHING TO DO for all eternity in heaven, then WHY did God put us here?

That belief made no sense at all to me.

But I read in the eighth Psalm the question: "WHAT IS MAN, that thou art mindful of him?" (Verse 4.)

Yes, what is a mere man? Why should God even CONSIDER us; have His mind on us? Of what importance are we? WHY did He put us humans on earth? Was there any reason—any PURPOSE?

This same question is asked in the book of Hebrews, where it is more fully answered.

Begin with verse 5, chapter 2, where we find the subject matter of the chapter: "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection THE WORLD TO COME, whereof we speak." The context here is speaking about the WORLD TO COME. The implication is that there was a time when the world *was* in subjection to the angels. But the world to come will NOT be in subjection to angels. WHY? Continue on: "But one in a certain place [here referring to what I quoted above from the eighth Psalm] testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels [elsewhere trans-

lated 'for a little while lower than the angels']."

Yes, man, lower than angels. WHY should God be concerned about us? Even though man possesses the capacity to invent intricate machines and fly to the moon, he is really not much now. Puny man is filled with evil, always fighting, struggling, doing evil, bringing suffering on himself.

The Incredible Human Potential

BUT, now notice the incredible, fantastic, unbelievable future HUMAN POTENTIAL we can fulfill—if we are willing. "... Thou crownedst him with GLORY and HONOR, and didst set him over the work of thy hands" (verse 7).

What does "the work of God's hands" include? THE WHOLE VAST UNIVERSE—the PHYSICAL universe and the SPIRITUAL universe!

Unbelievable? Read on!

"Thou hast put ALL THINGS in subjection under his feet. [In chapter 1, 'all things' is translated by Moffatt as 'the UNIVERSE.'] For in that he [God] put ALL in subjection under him [man], he left NOTHING that is not put under him."

INCREDIBLE? But notice the next words: "But now we see NOT YET all things put under him."

Verse 9 goes on to explain that NOW what we see is JESUS already crowned with GLORY and HONOR, and, as in chapter 1, UPHOLDING AND SUSTAINING THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE by the word of His POWER.

Yes, Jesus, as chapter 2 continues to show, is the pioneer who has gone on before, the captain of our salvation, the first to be BORN of GOD of MANY BRETHREN! (Rom. 8:29.)

Now the above passage from Hebrews 2 was speaking about the world to come, NOT today's world. Angels will not be in power over it. But angels WERE on this earth—the earth *was* in subjection to them—before the creation of Adam (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17).

The angels sinned and became demons. Lucifer, then king over the earth, the supergreat archangel, became Satan. And NOW, God has placed MAN on earth and given to

him the potential that was THE ANGELS—if we "make the grade" where they failed.

The angels turned from, rebelled against, and rejected the GOVERNMENT OF GOD which then ruled the earth and the angels that inhabited it.

What about MAN? Man has also rebelled—SINNED!

But through Jesus Christ, who paid man's PENALTY of death in his stead, man MAY, if he will, REPENT—turn FROM Satan's way of "GET," of SELF-CENTEREDNESS and rebellion—and through Christ's sacrifice be reconciled to GOD.

Upon real repentance, turning to God's law of LOVE and FAITH in Jesus Christ, being baptized in His name, we may be reconciled to God, from whom our sins have cut us off, and we may then receive the GIFT of His HOLY SPIRIT.

That may rightly be called the experience of CONVERSION. I could write a whole book on that experience—what it means to receive the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD; what the HOLY SPIRIT really is, and MEANS.

It BEGETS us with the very life of God—for the Holy Spirit is His life, coming into us from His very Person. It begets us with GOD-life. We become HEIRS of God and joint-heirs with Christ, who has already had put under Him the WHOLE VAST UNIVERSE.

Not Yet Born of God

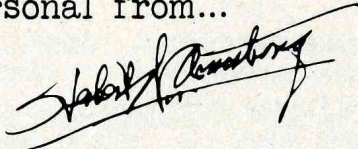
The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of UNDERSTANDING—the very MIND of God which, with our spirit, opens our minds to UNDERSTAND God's KNOWLEDGE as He *reveals it* (revealed knowledge) through the Bible.

But we are NOT YET BORN of God—not yet POSSESSORS—only HEIRS; not yet BORN—only BEGOTTEN, as we once were begotten in our mother's womb before we were BORN. And just as we were first an embryo and a growing fetus in our mother's womb, so now we must GROW in the knowledge of Christ and in grace (II Pet. 3:18).

We start out the Christian life like newborn babies.

WHY were we put here on earth?
(Continued on page 44)

Personal from...



(Continued from page 1)

chosen advertising and journalism as a life profession.

My first employer, when I was 16 and in a job away from home, filled me with a vigorous, energetic AMBITION—a burning DESIRE to become successful—plus the willingness to pay the price in STUDY, HARD WORK, PERSEVERANCE and DRIVE. I had not yet chosen my life goal, but by 18 I had. And I WORKED at it. I worked hard by day, studied hard by night. I put myself where I would be in constant contact with so-called big and successful men. My dealings were with presidents and board chairmen of America's great industrial, banking and commercial corporations. I was filled with AMBITION, SELF-CONFIDENCE, DESIRE TO DRIVE MYSELF TO THE TOP.

Are not these all GOOD qualities? Yes?

No! Satan has deceived this world into thinking they are. But they are all based on Satan's "GET" principle of life. In my conversion I learned that God's principle of life is the OPPOSITE—GIVE instead of GET—LOVE instead of competition, strife, resentment, rebellion.

Conversion meant getting RID of egotistic SELF-confidence, and replacing it with the confidence that is FAITH—confidence in CHRIST. No longer were things to be accomplished through my own vaunted and vain SELF-power, but through the POWER OF THE LIVING CHRIST! It meant complete reliance on HIM.

I had to get rid of VANITY and a feeling of superiority to other humans, and replace vanity with humility, exalting CHRIST instead of myself. I could be His INSTRUMENT, if I placed myself fully in His hands in faith and obedience—but when anything was accomplished, it was HE, not I, who did it. At first, as is human, I went overboard—to the opposite extreme—and took MEEKNESS to mean WEAKNESS. I let others run all over me. Finally, however, Christ guided me into achieving BALANCE.

No, Christ didn't visit me IN PERSON, but He did IN SPIRIT. I did not WANT to be a minister. I wanted to be an advertising man. But I did become so wrapped up in the THRILLING and EXCITING discovery of new gold nuggets of TRUTH that, as a writer, I began to write articles about the wonders of TRUTH being revealed to me. A few people I knew personally began urging me to speak out publicly. I resisted for a few years. Finally God opened my eyes to a truth I knew a certain

Conversion meant getting rid of egotistic self-confidence, and replacing it with the confidence that is faith—confidence in Christ. No longer were things to be accomplished through my own vaunted and vain self-power, but through the power of the living Christ! It meant complete reliance on Him.

humble group of BELIEVERS in a rural area had never seen nor discovered, and God gave me such an urge to SHARE this knowledge with them that I agreed to talk before them. My wife said she would hardly have called that first preaching a sermon. But the hearers were enthralled—excited—and wanted me to come and preach again.

In preaching, I did not choose God, HE CHOSE ME—just as He chose His original apostles. The Church of God had existed since Christ founded it in A.D. 31. But by A.D. 70 Christ's gospel—which was announcing the KINGDOM OF GOD—had been SUPPRESSED and replaced with ANOTHER GOSPEL. The true Church of God was forced to go underground as a great false church rose to power. Thousands—millions—were tortured, martyred. The true gospel was no longer preached to THE WORLD—but secretly to the very few, UNDERGROUND.

Christ's GOSPEL was the announcement of the coming KINGDOM OF GOD—including the

restoration of THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD to govern all the earth. By the time God committed to me His great commission, we had reached the beginning of the END TIME—the END of THIS AGE—and had reached the generation in which THE KINGDOM OF GOD was to be established to rule ALL NATIONS and usher in WORLD PEACE.

My first broadcast was in October 1933, on a small 100-watt radio station. It proclaimed TRUTH listeners had never heard before. It was the TRUE GOSPEL. Listeners were SURPRISED—shocked. Yet they saw with their own eyes in their own Bibles what I proclaimed. Letters rolled in. The radio station manager was surprised at the mail response. He invited me to put together a regular radio program.

The first issue of *The Plain Truth* appeared February 1, 1934. The regular broadcast, then weekly, started the first Sunday in 1934.

Actually, God committed to me the GREAT COMMISSION—to carry His true gospel of the KINGDOM OF GOD to ALL THE WORLD—after much trial and test and proving.

No, Christ did not visit me in person. He has not been doing it that way since He visited the apostle Paul in Arabia.

Then HOW DO I KNOW?

How may YOU know?

Christ Himself gave one answer: "BY THEIR FRUITS YOU SHALL KNOW."

The disciples of John, after he was in prison, came to Jesus to ask a similar question: "How may we KNOW you are God's ANOINTED ONE—the Messiah—the Christ?"

Jesus answered, "Go tell John what you see being DONE—being ACCOMPLISHED." So I say: LOOK INTO YOUR OWN BIBLE. You will find where Christ Himself said what would be DONE in the GREAT COMMISSION in our time: "And this GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the END [of this age] come" (Matt. 24:14). That's what it says!

But although millions claim they believe in the Bible, FEW believe WHAT IT SAYS.

Do you? □

what our readers say

Alcoholism Article Helped

Freddy C., who contributed to your article on alcoholism, has for some time been connected with this organization. He sent us a copy of your current edition, and we are so impressed by all that has been written on the subject that we feel we would like to distribute it a little more widely to our workers and our clients. If, therefore, you would be able to let us have a number of copies, we would be most grateful.

We would like to congratulate you on having brought this subject so effectively to the attention of the public and believe it can only do an immense amount of good. We only wish that facilities for treating and rehabilitating alcoholics were more plentiful.

Mrs. M. S. Gibb,
Chief Executive,
Helping Hand Organization
London, England

The Aerosol Hazard

I was shocked when I read your article "Aerosols Are Destroying Our Atmosphere" (December *Plain Truth*). If your readers accepted the article as "truth," thousands of workers in our country could be laid off due to the gross misunderstanding and unwarranted fear generated by your poorly researched article. You have certainly done a disservice to most of us in the aerosol industry who do not use the propellant systems that your article mentioned. I believe that you will find that the majority of the two billion aerosols produced in this country in the past 12 months do not contain chlorofluorocarbons. Based upon recent DFA and CPSC actions, you can feel assured that the propellants referred to in your article will soon be phased out of existence. But please do not damage an industry by only telling half the story.

Seth R. Schnebel,
New Haven, Connecticut

Plain Truth Faces Issues

I can't say that I always agree with your feature writers and their views on where we are all heading. Putting it in broader perspective, even the old standards of good and bad no longer apply. Many of the issues at stake would tax the ingenuity of the world's most brilliant sociologists. It is discouraging to note that the churches everywhere prefer to remain silent on these very issues, almost being afraid to speak out against what passes for the establishment. But *The*

Plain Truth is refreshingly different and a departure from the commercial press. Tired of so much journalistic mishmash and all those tired old cliches, I turn to your newest monthly edition with real interest. The reporting of vital issues in terms of universal Christianity is what we need, not sectarian coverage.

Charles D. Stiff,
Connel, Argyllshire, Scotland

Earthquake Survival

The September *Plain Truth* carried the best summarization of what to do before, during and after an earthquake that I have come across. Since we in the Southern California area especially need to be prepared to respond to this type of problem, this information is very down to earth and useful to us as a company and as individuals. I request your permission to use the information in our local plant safety program.

Roger J. Mazer,
Plant Safety Coordinator,
Borden Chemical Co.,
Compton, California

Life on Mars?

I was disappointed with your recent editorial "Life on Mars?—No Way!" You may be entirely right in your conviction that there is no life on Mars. But you seem to feel that in the entire universe this is the only planet that harbors life because God in some capricious moment willed it that way. To me this is a cop-out. I cannot imagine that of the trillions of stars and quadrillions of planets that this solitary planet we call Earth is the only place where life abounds. It is contrary to elemental reasoning, regardless of whether the Bible says so or not, or whether you infer as much from Scripture. It may be fine to have such sterling faith, but one should not lose all shreds of intelligence in arriving at conclusions. This may be the only planet in our solar system to harbor life, but there are myriads of solar systems in the cosmos. The chances are there must be trillions of planets with life forms aboard. And this is the opinion of most scientists.

Wade S. Rizk, M.D.,
Jacksonville, Florida

Policeman Finally Writes

Please excuse my writing, as I am cramped behind the wheel of a patrol car in Atlanta, Georgia. I suppose, like so many others, I have put off writing for your information for one excuse or another. Recently I heard a number of

your broadcasts dealing with crime and juvenile delinquency. I have always thought people were too busy in their own race to destruction to notice what is taking place in today's society. I am very relieved that I am not the only person in the world who believes in criminal prosecution. Keep up the good work.

Charles Rhodes,
Woodstock, Georgia

Minister Wants Correspondence Course

I am an ordained minister. One massive problem exists yet in my life, however. Simply stated, I do not believe in much of the teachings I have worked so hard to learn. Too many are backed by 'church tradition' rather than the Bible. I hope you don't mind having a minister as a student of your Bible course. It is my ambition to learn the truth as long as God is willing to let me do so.

R. H.,
Spokane, Washington

• *The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course is sent free to those who request it, regardless of religious affiliation.*

CONVERSION

(Continued from page 3)

To learn to OVERCOME and completely turn from the WAY the sinning angels (II Pet. 2:4) went, and to let Christ develop IN US His holy, righteous, spiritual CHARACTER—God's WAY OF LOVE! This we must do SO THAT WE MAY QUALIFY TO MAKE OVER—RE-CREATE, so to speak—the ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

Insignificant as it may seem, HUMAN LIFE is endowed with the most fantastic, awesome potential possible even as GOD views it!

Next month I want to write for you about my own conversion and much more about what conversion REALLY IS. □

RECOMMENDED READING

Booklets by Mr. Armstrong on related subjects include: *What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?*, *What Will You Be Doing in the Next Life?*, and *Just What Do You Mean—"the Unpardonable Sin"?* These booklets are provided free of charge by the Worldwide Church of God as a service in the public interest. Worldwide mailing addresses are on the inside front cover.