

the
PLAIN TRUTH
a magazine of understanding

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Wide World Photo
Wrecked by earth tremors—park section of downtown Puerto Montt after an earthquake ripped through Chile last spring. Leaning in foreground, is a lamp-post. The picture was taken by an American Mercy airlift team which brought 900 tons of food, clothing and medical supplies to the disaster areas. Read in this issue the astounding facts scientists have discovered in the International Geophysical Year about future potential earthquakes!

The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong

Purchase of the church building at Eugene, Oregon, increasing opposition, and rapid growth of the work are related in this 33rd installment.

IT WAS now spring, 1935. We had severed all direct or official ties with the Oregon conference [Church of God with headquarters Stanberry, Missouri, identified in Rev. 3:1-6 as the "Sardis" church], though we endeavored to maintain a friendly Christian fellowship relation with them.

The new Church of God had been organized late in 1933, meeting at the Jeans country schoolhouse, 12 miles west of Eugene, Oregon. The "Three-Point Campaign" of radio, publishing, and evangelistic campaigns was now well under way. The "Radio Church of God" program had started on the air, on Eugene's little 100 watt KORE, the first Sunday in 1934. *The PLAIN TRUTH*, Volume 1 Number 1, had been printed February 1, 1934. The campaign in downtown Eugene had begun the first of April, 1934.

And now, spring 1935, the Alvadore campaign had ended with a new little church of fifteen members, meeting at the Alvadore schoolhouse, some fifteen miles northwest of Eugene. Now we were forced to hold services at Jeans and Alvadore only on alternate Sabbath mornings, with services held each Sabbath afternoon at our home on Fourth Avenue, Eugene.

Purchase of Church Building

Usually, members at Jeans would drive over to Alvadore, or attend at our home in Eugene, on the odd sabbaths after I was unable to preach at Jeans. Likewise, Alvadore members usually drove to either Jeans or Eugene when I was not at their school. But this situation was not very satisfactory.

The need of a church home in Eugene to combine these three small groups focused our attention on the place that our people had built in 1931.

The building of this little church house had begun immediately following

the close of the tent campaign held in Eugene in the summer of 1931 by Elder R. L. Taylor and myself. Mr. Taylor had, prior to this campaign, owned a small retail lumber business in Eugene. Apparently, he had failed in business, but came out of it with a small amount of lumber on hand. He now proposed to "donate" that lumber toward the erection of a small church house in Eugene. He only had part of the needed amount of lumber, however. So church brethren were induced to contribute funds for most of the construction costs. A few donated labor, including a carpenter and an electrician. They had never completed the construction. Siding had not been put on the outside, and plain slabs of wall-board had been nailed up inside, with quarter-inch spaces unfilled in between slabs. And there were no seats or pulpit or furnishings of any kind.

While I was at Astoria in the newspaper business, in my final "detour" from my life's real calling, Mr. Taylor had written me that "we had lost the church building." He was correct in saying that "we"—the church members—had lost it. But *HE* had not. He had traded it and a small piece of land he owned to a Mr. Powell who lived next door to the little church, for Mr. Powell's house. This, in turn, he had traded for a small island in the Willamette River opposite Eugene. Because of the partial amount of lumber he had "donated" to the church house, Mr. Taylor had insisted on holding the deed to the property in his own name. Although church brethren had contributed much more than he, they had allowed it to be held in his name. He had "sold them down the river," and come out with a little island in the river for himself.

Late in May, 1935, Mr. Powell was living in the little unfinished church house. Mr. Elmer Fisher, Mr. W. E. Conn and I approached him about the

purchase of the place. The purchase was made, for \$500. Mr. Fisher put in the first \$100 to bind the deal. Various church members put in, later, another \$100 or slightly more, and most of the balance was contributed by elderly Mrs. C. A. Croffoot.

Now came the question of how the new property was to be deeded. Mr. Taylor's action had given church members cause to question the honesty of a minister who had the church property deeded in his name. I was determined that no such suspicion should have grounds for being directed toward me. I insisted that my name should not be connected in any way with the deed to this property.

In this particular case, as subsequent events proved, it would have been safer for the church if control of the property had been in my hands. But I said, then, "If we can't trust such men as Mr. Day, Elmer Fisher, and Mr. Conn, then nobody can be trusted." Perhaps I didn't realize as thoroughly as I do today that God says we can trust no man.

On my own recommendation, the property was deeded to "J. M. Day, Elmer E. Fisher, and W. E. Conn, as trustees for the Church of God at Eugene, Oregon." Actually, as I learned from attorneys later, this was a loose and unsafe way to protect the property of the church, legally. Anyway, the purchase was made late in May, 1935, after some four months of the unhandy functioning of those three little separate churches.

Completing the Building

Immediately we set out to put the building in shape for holding services. I asked the members to contribute special offerings to purchase necessary lumber and paint. We purchased the siding lumber, which was put on by volunteer labor. I filled in the quarter-inch spaces

between plaster boards with the proper plaster cement, myself, then the inside walls were painted and the outside also.

I looked into other church buildings for ideas about the seating. The most economical way proved to be to build our own seating in the form of benches, with a center aisle and two narrow outside aisles down the side walls. I designed the pattern after observing various more costly benches in larger church buildings. I sat in various ones, to determine what design would give the most comfort. Then, with some of the men of the church helping, we built the seats.

Those seats are still there today. Only today the little church house is completely outgrown, and a much larger modern new church building is, as I write, on the architect's drawing-boards. A twenty-acre "dream site" on the outskirts of an enlarged Eugene has been purchased for the new home of this "mother church" of the "Philadelphia" era of the true church which Christ himself built and still directs, rules, and blesses.

Mrs. Armstrong and Elmer Fisher painted those church seats in an attractive brown color while I worked on other things. In the new church at Alvadore, one of the members was a cabinet maker by profession. He built the pulpit and an altar rail around the front of the rostrum.

On June first, 1935, The Church of God at Eugene, Oregon, held its first service in the new building, consolidating the three groups into one church.

Convincing Atheist Communists

Soon after occupying the new little church building, I began holding every-night evangelistic services there. We mimeographed hand-bills and had them delivered to front porches all over town. We called it "The Little Church at the end of West Eighth Avenue." Its location, then, was a half block beyond the city limits.

While these meetings did not attract thousands, the little church house was usually fairly well filled.

One night my subject was the prophecy of Daniel 11—the longest prophecy in the Bible. It begins with events of Daniel's time, in the first year

of King Darius. It foretells the swift conquering flight of Alexander the Great, his sudden death, the division of the Empire into four divisions. Then the prophecy carried along the events of the King of Egypt and the King of Syria or the Seleucidae—as "King of the South" and "King of the North."

One ancient history covers the details of those events and those following in this long prophecy. That night I read a verse of the prophecy, then a paragraph showing its fulfillment from *Rawlinson's Ancient History*, carrying straight through to the time of Christ, the early Apostles, and on to our present, and the immediate future.

At the close of the service a young lady who had come for the first time, with two companions, waited to speak to Mrs. Armstrong. Her friends went on out. She asked if she could make an appointment to talk to Mrs. Armstrong and me.

"I'm an atheist," she said. "Or at least I thought I was when I came here tonight. But now I feel myself slipping. To tell the truth we three girls thought it would be good sport to come out here and laugh at the ignorant medieval religious superstition we expected to hear. I've always believed religion is a silly superstition—the 'opium of the people.' But tonight we couldn't laugh. I never heard anything like this. I have to admit no human writer could have written that long prophecy and made it come to pass, step by step, over so many years. What I heard tonight makes sense. It is not like any religious teaching I ever heard. I want to ask you some questions."

Mrs. Armstrong arranged a private talk with her for the next afternoon. She jabbed sharp questions and pointed questions at us, but they were all promptly answered. She continued to attend the meetings, and after a couple of weeks she believed, repented, and was baptized. We learned that she was the secretary of the local Communist Party! She resigned from the Communist Party forthwith.

This young lady was jeered and ridiculed for taking up with "medieval superstition," of course.

One day she walked into the small front room of the old Masonic Temple

which I was still using, rent free, for an office. She was actually leading a half-reluctant man by the arm.

"Mr. Armstrong," she said, "this man is a Communist—one of my former associates in the Party. He's an atheist. He says he *knows* there is no God. We encountered each other across the street just now. He said he would like to meet that weak-brained idiot of a preacher that hypnotized me into believing foolish superstitions. He said that he would *prove* that evolution is true and there is no God by making a monkey out of you. So I grabbed his arm and said, 'Come right along. Mr. Armstrong's office is just across the street.' I have marched him over here, and I have come along to laugh at the show, as he proceeds to make a monkey out of you."

At the moment I had a Bible in front of me. I pushed it aside.

This was a challenge that inspired fast action. I gave a quick silent prayer for guidance.

"Sit down!" I said to the man in a commanding voice, and taking immediately the initiative before he had a chance to utter a word. "So you're going to make a monkey out of me by proving there is no God. First, I'll shove this Bible out of the way because you wouldn't believe anything it says, anyway. Now *you* must be a very highly educated man, with a brilliant intellect. I want to find out just how bright you really are, and how much you know about some of the laws of science. Do you know something about radioactivity and radioactive elements?"

"Well, yes," he stuttered. Evidently my fast and sharp attack caught him by surprise and he was on the defensive before he could recover.

I asked him if he agreed with certain laws of science. Of course he had to answer that he did. I followed up the attack, snapping questions at him forcing him to answer and commit himself. Before he realized what was happening he had admitted that science proved there has been no past eternity of matter—that there was a time when radioactive elements did not exist—and then a time when they did exist. He had also admitted that life could come only *from* life, and not from the not-living. Before he realized it he had admitted

there had to be a First Cause, possessing LIFE, able to impart life to all living organisms.

"Now," I pursued, "you're a real intelligent man. I'm sure you won't deny that! You have a MIND. With it you can think, imagine, reason, plan. You can make things. But *you cannot make anything that is superior to your mind!* Do you agree to that, or can you show me that you can originate and produce something superior to your mind?"

He was getting more confused by the minute. Of course he could not demonstrate that he could produce something superior to his own mind, so he was forced to admit it.

"Then you have admitted that whatever can be produced must be devised, planned, and produced by an intelligence GREATER and SUPERIOR to whatever is produced. Do you know of *anything* that is more intelligent, and superior, than your mind?"

I knew his vanity could never admit of anything superior to his mind.

"I guess not," he admitted weakly.

"And yet you acknowledge that something less intelligent than your mind could never have produced your mind and that it must of necessity have been devised and produced by an Intelligence GREATER than your mind. So you see you have admitted a First Cause having LIFE, and of intelligence superior to the most intelligent thing you know, in order to bring YOU and YOUR MIND into existence. Look at all the forms of LIFE on this planet—the way each is constructed—the way each functions—the way each needs certain things like water, food, sunshine, and a certain range of temperature, in order to function and exist. Could YOU, without any pattern to go by, think out, design, produce, set in motion, and impart a functioning LIFE to all these life forms of the fauna and flora of the earth? Or do you think it took a GREATER POWER, a SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE, a LIVING CREATOR, to design, plan, and create and sustain this earth and the entire vast universe?"

He could take no more. "W— W— Well," he stammered pitifully, "I won't worship God even if you DO make me admit He exists!" This was a last attempt at defiance.

"That's a decision God is forcing YOU to make," I replied. "He won't make it for you. He will allow you to rebel and refuse to worship Him. But He did set laws in motion, and whatever you sow, that shall you reap!"

The young lady did not laugh. It was not funny!

A few weeks later I met this man on the street corner. He made one last effort at brave retaliation to salve over his wounded pride.

"I'll never bend MY knees to your Christ," he said.

"Oh yes you will!" I replied firmly. "There is a judgment day coming for you, and the Creator that lets you breathe says EVERY knee shall bow to Christ—even if He has to break the bones of your legs!"

I encountered this man many times on the street after that, but he never again discussed religion. He always treated me with respect.

My First Wedding

I must go back a bit now, to recount an incident that occurred in February or March of 1934. It was shortly before my wife and children had moved to Eugene from Salem.

I was asked to perform my first marriage ceremony. Ernest McGill, one of the twelve children of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. McGill, whose names have appeared before in this autobiography, asked me to perform the ceremony for him and Ora Lee Wilcox.

It caught me by surprise. It was the first time, since my ordination, I had been called on for such a ceremony. I was totally unprepared.

My first thought was to go to the pastor of some church in Eugene and ask him for his form of marriage ceremony. But on the heels of that thought flashed in the next second the thought that I had found the Bible entirely different from modern-day religious beliefs, forms and ceremonies. I realized then that instead of going to MEN to learn how to perform a marriage ceremony, I should go direct to the Bible. Instead of learning from men, I should learn of GOD.

Immediately I studied all I could find in the Bible about marriage. I did not find the words of a specific ceremony

written out, but I did find God's PURPOSE in marriage—that God had instituted it—and God's requirements of both husband and wife. The wording of the specific ceremony, itself, came naturally by putting together the essential scriptures concerning marriage.

When the wedding day came, the ceremony was simple, plain, taken from the Scriptures. I had seen that it is GOD and not man, who joins husband and wife as one flesh. Therefore they were married, not by me, but by GOD during a prayer. Everyone thought it was the most beautiful wedding ceremony they had ever seen. God's ways *are* beautiful! That same ceremony, with very few alterations, is still being used today.

But I must recount here an accompanying incident. I had, of course, written my wife that I was to marry Ernest and Ora Lee. A little later she found our elder son, "Dickie," age five, missing. When he didn't show up she became frantic. Finally she found him hiding under a bed, sobbing as if his little heart would burst.

"Why, Dickie," she called, "what's the matter?"

"I don't want Daddy to marry Ora Lee," he sobbed. "He married you, and he's my Daddy, and it's *wrong* for him to marry any other woman."

Of course his mother explained. Later he, himself, performed marriage ceremonies, and I performed his wedding ceremony.

Our "New" Office

Following the evangelistic meetings in the old Masonic Temple in downtown Eugene, April and May, 1934, I had retained for some time, as mentioned above, the use of one of the smaller rooms as an office. I do not remember just when, but later—probably early autumn, 1935—Mr. Frank Chambers, owner of the building [and somewhere near half of all downtown Eugene, it was rumored], told me he had a tenant for the entire building, and I would have to move. Up to that time he had not charged any rent for this smaller office room. He said he had a vacant room in the Hampton Building, across from the Post Office [a new Post Office has been built since] on the southwest corner of Sixth and Willamette. How-



AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(Continued from previous page)

ever, he would have to charge me \$5 per month office rent.

Well, we seemed to be getting up in the world. From no office rent we now advanced to paying \$5 per month office rent!

However, it was an inner room, without windows for ventilation. There was a transom over the door leading into the hall. There was another transom over a locked door leading into the Labor Union Hall adjoining. But instead of fresh air, the stale tobacco

The Hampton Building, corner 6th and Willamette, in Eugene. Here in the small, inside one-room office, The PLAIN TRUTH was published.

smoke wafted regularly through this transom on mornings following a union meeting. There had been a skylight in the ceiling, but it was so dirty very little light filtered through.

During the years we occupied this office we were able to work only about two hours at a stretch, then having to vacate the office for an hour or so while the air changed a little. After some months we did manage to afford a small electric fan which kept the stale air circulating.

There were two or three old tables in this room. Unable to afford a desk these were used as office desk, and tables for printing, folding and mailing the mimeographed *Plain Truth*. There were also a couple of old chairs in the room.

For filing cabinets in which to keep folders of correspondence and records we went to a grocery store and asked for some cardboard cartons. The ones they gave me apparently had contained

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reverberated across the valley to the awe-struck listeners. It was like the voice that might come from a giant thousands of feet tall; and it spoke in Hebrew, the mother tongue of the Israelites.

"Come up on the mountain, Moses!" the voice thundered. "Come alone! Do not allow anyone to follow you!"

Still trembling, as were all the elders and officers about him, Moses walked past the barricades, slowly made his way up the side of Mt. Sinai and disappeared over a smoky ledge.

(To be continued next issue)

Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong

(Continued from page 12)

bottles of whiskey, since they had big whiskey labels printed on the sides. I pasted plain wrapping paper around the outside to conceal these labels.

Into this office we moved the very old second-hand neostyle—ancestor of the mimeograph—and our old second-hand ten-dollar typewriter. This constituted our entire printing equipment, on which *The PLAIN TRUTH* was printed for the first few years.

I wrote the articles, then cut the stencils. The local mimeograph representative permitted me to visit his office once a month and cut the headline on one of his "scopes." It was Mrs. Armstrong's job to grind out the sheets on the old hand-cranked neostyle. Every sheet had to be fed in by hand, then slip-sheeted by hand after each sheet was printed. She then assembled the pages, folded them, and addressed them by hand in pen and ink. She maintained the mailing list—all written in ink on sheets of paper.

What a far cry that was from the way *The PLAIN TRUTH* is printed and mailed today! Today it is published in three editions in Los Angeles, London, and Melbourne. In those days the circulation was building up from around 175 or 200 copies at the start. Today it is running around 275,000 copies, pressing rapidly toward 300,000! Today the Los Angeles edition comes rolling

at the speed of a newspaper off magazine presses as large as those printing *TIME*.

Today several trained workers are employed maintaining the mailing list, which fills many steel cabinets, not only in our two-story Ambassador College Press Building in Pasadena, but also in our Administration Building at Ambassador College in England, and in our large seven-room suite of offices in Sydney, Australia. The operation in both Sydney and England today is many times larger than the *entire* operation back in those pioneer days in 1935!

Today the handsomely printed, 32-page, two-color copies flow at rapid speed through modern addressing machines, with a force of some fifty employees doing the addressing, sorting into mail sacks, and getting them loaded onto large trucks to be whisked to the post office there. But in this one respect we did have one advantage in those days. Mrs. Armstrong and I were able to carry the entire mailing of the mimeographed *PLAIN TRUTH* in our arms across the street to the post office—and before we did, we always knelt and prayed over them, laying our hands on all the copies asking God to bless them and those who received them.

Next installment will continue surprising events and the development of this work during the Depression Years.

LA PREDESTINATION

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