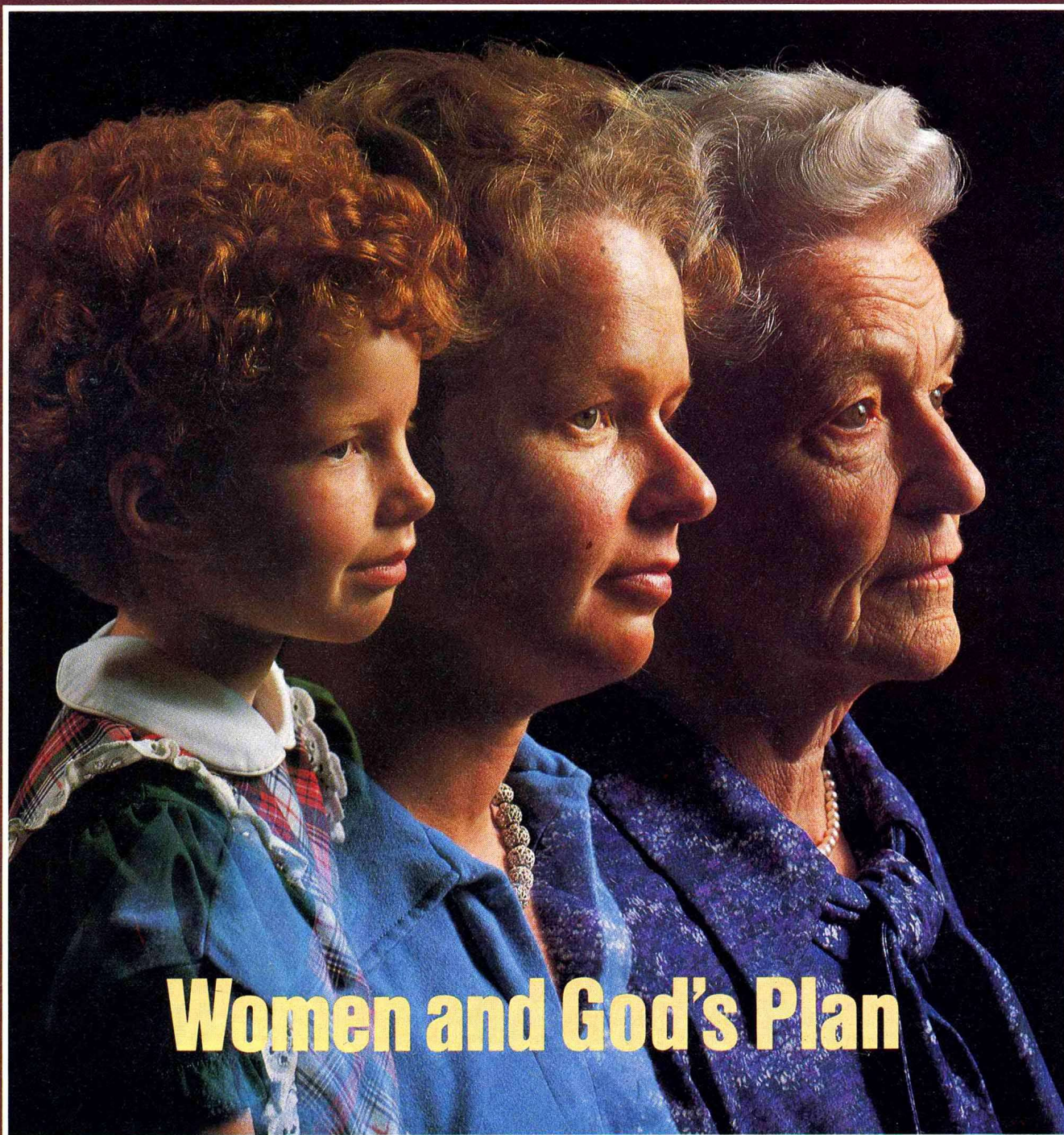


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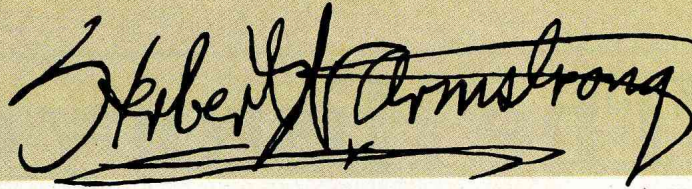
Good News

**History of the
Worldwide Church of God**
By Herbert W. Armstrong

JUNE-JULY 1980



Women and God's Plan



HOW MANY times have you heard non-Christians, judging one who professes Christ, say in disgust, "Well, if that's Christianity, I don't want any of it!"

How many judge GOD by the way professing Christians live? How many assume that one must live a perfect life before he can become a Christian?"

How many say, "If I could give up smoking, I'd become a Christian"?

How many think a Christian is supposed to be perfect, never doing anything wrong? Suppose you do see or hear about a Christian doing something WRONG. Does that mean he is a hypocrite — that he is *not* really a Christian, after all?

Is it possible for one to actually sin, while he is a Christian, and *still* remain a truly converted Christian?

I suppose nearly everyone would reply in the negative. But here is a vital point *you need to UNDERSTAND!*

It's hard to believe — but TRUE! Few know just what *is* a Christian. Few know how one is converted — whether suddenly, all at once, or gradually. Does conversion happen *immediately*, or is it a process? IT'S HIGH TIME WE UNDERSTAND!

The TRUTH is that there is a sense in which true conversion does take place *at a definite time* — all at once. But it is also true that in another sense conversion is *worked out gradually* — a process of development and growth.

NOW NOTICE CAREFULLY!

When does one really become a Christian? It is when he receives God's Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:9, we read that *unless* we have the Holy Spirit, we are not Christ's — not Christians.

There is a definite TIME when God's Spirit enters into one. At the

very moment he receives the Holy Spirit, he is, in this first sense, converted. Yes, *all at once!* If he has Christ's Spirit, he is Christ's — he is a Christian! He has been begotten as a child of God.

But does that mean his salvation is complete? Is he now fully and finally "saved"? Is that all there is to it? Is he now, suddenly, *perfect*? Is it now impossible for him to do wrong?

NO! Far from it! But *WHY?* What's the answer? Why do so many misunderstand?

Here is the GOOD NEWS you need to know.

First, there are two conditions to becoming a Christian: REPENTANCE and FAITH. These two we, ourselves, must perform. Yet no one can, of himself, say: "O, now I see — I must repent. All right, I hereby repent." One does not just decide casually, as a matter of routine, to repent. WHY?

Jesus Christ said that none can come to Him, except the Spirit of the Father draw him. God *grants* repentance. God calls one, and convicts the mind and conscience by His Spirit, working on the mind externally. Usually a real struggle goes on within. The person has been shaken to know he has done wrong — he has sinned. He is not only sorry — he abhors himself! He is brought to real REPENTANCE, not only for what he has done, but for what he now sees that he is.

Yet he, himself, must make the decision. If he does repent, surrender to God and in faith accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior, then, upon performance of these TWO conditions, God promises to put within him the GIFT of the Holy Spirit. This is the *very life* of God — SPIRIT life. It imparts to him the very divine nature!

Then *what*, at that stage, has happened?

This new convert has only been

begotten of God — not yet BORN. He has not received the full measure of God's Spirit Christ had — he is only a *spiritual babe* in Christ — he must now GROW spiritually, just as a newly conceived fetus in its mother's womb must grow physically large enough to be born as a human.

This new convert has now repented, in his mind, from the depths of his heart. HE MEANS IT, too! In all sincerity, in his mind and heart he has *turned around to go the other way* — to live a different life. He is now a CHRISTIAN — he has received God's Holy Spirit. He really wants to do what is right — to obey God — to live GOD'S WAY.

Yet he finds he does not *do* this perfectly! Many, at this stage, become discouraged. Some give up even trying to live a Christian life. And WHY? *Because of the false notion that a Christian is one who becomes PERFECT at one fell swoop* — or, that one cannot become a Christian until he has broken all wrong habits, and *made himself* righteous.

It's vital to UNDERSTAND how true Christianity really works!

The newly begotten Christian must grow up, spiritually. What would you think of a human baby who became 6 feet tall all at once, without growing up? The growing-up process requires TIME. There is an instant when a person receives the impregnating Holy Spirit of God — when he first becomes a Christian. But he is only a spiritual infant. He must grow up spiritually.

The newly converted person, *in his mind and heart*, sincerely has about-faced! He has actually gained contact with GOD, and received God's Holy Spirit. God's own divine NATURE has now been conceived within him.

BUT THAT'S ALL — it is *merely conceived* — not yet full grown! And his human nature is still there — it has not been killed or removed!

(Continued on page 25)

The History of the Beginning and Growth of the Worldwide Church of God

By Herbert W. Armstrong

I was ordained at or near the day of Pentecost, 1931. It was June. The Oregon Conference had a small tent. Robert L. Taylor and I took it to Eugene, Ore., and we placed it in a vacant lot on West 10th Avenue. I engaged an upstairs room in a house across the street, with a small kitchenette. I provided my own food while there.

We placed a small platform at the front of the little tent and managed to set 50 folding chairs. That is all — just 50!

I must have gotten out some kind of handbills or advertising in a newspaper — what, I do not now remember.

Our campaign was to last six weeks, six nights a week, skipping Saturday nights. We had the 50 seats filled most of the time.

Mr. Taylor and I alternated preaching every other night. The first night I emceed and led a song service. He preached.

When we had lived in Portland, Ore., I had gained some little experience with “Pentecostal” people. Yet at that time I really knew little about them. I was somewhat overawed by their “speaking in tongues,” their glib “testimony” about how Jesus had blessed them. I did not really

understand it yet. But one thing I had noticed, they had no desire to keep God’s commandments, and they had no real biblical knowledge. There were a certain number of verses — or parts of verses — that they had memorized, but always putting on them a meaning totally contrary to the intended meaning in the context.

The Oregon Conference brethren were definitely against this “tongues” movement, especially a Mr. J.J. McGill, a big 6-foot-4-inch man with a husky frame. Mr. Taylor had been questioned about this, for those brethren wanted none of that in the Church. Mr. Taylor had solemnly assured them he was totally opposed to it.

As the meetings wore on, I noticed two couples of Pentecostals attending, and gradually, when he was speaking, Mr. Taylor encouraged their loud “Amens” and “Praise the Lords” and “Glory Hallelujahs.” I began to be suspicious.

There was no sign of any real results in our meetings, and that was discouraging. One night a real storm blew in. Mr. Taylor and I went over to drive the tent stakes in deeper, lest the tent be blown away. No one came, but one couple, who drove up as we were driving deeper the tent stakes. Mr. Taylor said he was going home — no one was coming.

I said to this couple, it was a shame to have driven in — they had

come six miles — in such a storm, and then have no service. I asked them if they would care to come across the street to my room, where it would be dry and warm, and we could at least have a Bible study.

They came. They gave the appearance of being a very “poor” couple. He certainly was not handsome (for that matter neither was Abraham Lincoln), and she was not beautiful. I felt sorry for them. But later I learned he was the most successful farmer around!

Mrs. Margaret Fisher asked me, when we reached my room, if I would explain the Sabbath to them. Her husband Elmer believed we should keep it, but she said, “All these churches can’t be wrong.”

“Why,” I replied, “that’s precisely what I said to my wife when she began keeping the Sabbath. That’s the question that resulted in my conversion. I’ll be delighted to explain it.”

I did, she accepted it, and thereby, unknown to me at the time, *began* the first convert of the Worldwide Church of God! The Fishers were to mean much to the start and founding of God’s true Church of our time!

And, incidentally, this was the SOLE FRUIT borne by our six weeks’ campaign — when Mr. Taylor was not with me. GOD NEVER BLESSED ANY EFFORTS WHEN I TEAMED WITH ANY SARDIS MEN!

In due time I learned that R.L.

Taylor was, always had been, Pentecostal.

Once he told me I was not "spiritual" enough. He asked me to go with him to an all-night "tarry meeting," so I could get (notice that word *GET*) my "baptism."

I said I preferred to follow Jesus' example and His teaching, to go to a solitary place or into a small closet and pray *ALONE!*

"You'll never get your baptism that way, brother!" he said sternly and rebukingly.

"Then it's something I don't want," I said.

The six-weeks tent meeting ended with no results, except the night with the Fishers in my room.

Meanwhile Mr. Taylor had brought up the idea of building a small local church building. He felt he could carry on and build up a church. He induced the Oregon Conference to buy a 50-foot-wide lot, then a half block outside city limits at the end of West Eighth Street.

It now developed that Mr. Taylor had not so recently arrived from Southern California, as he had led us to believe. He had been in the retail lumber business in Eugene and had failed. He had a small amount of lumber left on hand — not enough, as I remember, to finish the building of the small church. But he would donate the lumber. Of course he maneuvered to have the property deeded in his name.

The Oregon Conference decided now to team me up with this young minister, Roy Daily. There was "an interest" (to use their expression) up in St. Helens, Ore., 25 miles north of Portland on the west bank of the Columbia River. It turned out that the "interest" there was one woman who was filled with so much zeal she made the church officials think a few dozen people were prospective members.

I bought a half page in the St. Helens newspaper, announcing the meetings. One couple came one night only. Mr. Daily "preached" a full sermon in loud preachy tone at this couple. They never came back.

Then Roy and I went over to Umpine in far eastern Oregon, near Walla Walla, Wash. Roy knew of a member there, a Mr. Preston. He felt we could draw a crowd there.

We drove over, rented a hall, advertised, started a meeting. Roy and I slept in the same bed in the Prestons' spare room. About 35 to 50 came to our service the first two or three nights. Then attendance increased.

After about two weeks of these meetings, a letter came from Mrs. Florence Curtis, secretary of the state conference, saying the treasury was almost empty, and a meeting had been called a couple days after we received the letter to decide what to do. The conference was employing Mr. Taylor as well as Mr. Daily and me, each at \$20 per week salary.

"I'm driving back for that business meeting," said Roy, "starting at 5:30 tomorrow morning."

"But Roy," I exclaimed, "we have a campaign going, with increasing attendance!"

"I'm not concerned about that," answered Mr. Daily. "That board will let you and me out and keep Mr. Taylor on, since they can no longer keep all three of us. I'm going back and fight for my own interests!"

I simply could not understand that kind of reasoning. To me, the Work of God came first, not protecting my personal interest.

Nevertheless, at 5:30 sharp next morning Roy started driving back alone. I was left alone to finish the campaign. Now interest in the campaign took on new life. The attendance increased. I had five new conversions and baptisms.

By now I had begun to notice that when I worked alone God blessed my efforts and spiritual fruit was borne. But I noticed that not one of the Sardis ministers ever produced a convert. I asked some older members in the church, and not one of them could remember of a single new convert ever having resulted from the work of one of those ministers.

Had they, themselves, been converted and had God's Holy Spirit working within them, they too, would have been spiritually productive. Had I teamed up with a truly converted minister, results would have been much greater than when I worked alone. But when I teamed up with one of those men — *NO RESULTS* came!

IT IS THE SAME TODAY! Some ex-ministers of God's Church have gone

out to draw a following after them. Some of them have drawn a *FEW* — yet so far as I can verify, they have drawn *ONLY* the embittered, resentful, unconverted members whom our local churches have been much relieved to be rid of! *THAT IS THE WAY CHRIST ACTS!*

Actually the business meeting had been postponed, and Mr. Daily had run off from our meetings for nought. But a little later the conference did lay him and me off and keep on Robert Taylor — later to their sorrow!

My mistake

It was near the end of November, 1931. I was left without an income. But I didn't worry. I had learned to *LIVE BY FAITH*. I prayed for *GOD* to solve the financial problem — and I had faith He would.

Almost immediately a former business colleague, who had been advertising manager of the Vancouver daily newspaper when I had conducted a six-month merchandising survey for that paper, came to see me. He had started a new daily newspaper in Astoria, Ore. — without capital and in the midst of the rapidly descending depression. Would I come out and bail him out of his difficulties? He knew of no one else who had the peculiar know-how and experience to save his new paper from going under.

I mistakenly supposed this was God's answer to my prayer. I should have known better. I should have known God's Word says a minister must keep at it, in season and out of season, and Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." But I was still a "babe in Christ," and did not think of these scriptures. I looked on it as a very *TEMPORARY* job to help an old friend.

"I will come out and help you for one month," I agreed, "just the month of December."

But once out there I was stuck. The circumstances were entirely different than I had supposed, and I was stuck there until February, 1933.

Meanwhile for the first seven months of my Astoria stint my wife and children remained in our rented house on East State Street, Salem.

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The History

(Continued from page 3)

Early July, 1932, my wife called me. Garner Ted, then almost 2½, was stricken with pneumonia. I rushed in a newspaper car back to Salem, arriving late at night.

My wife was still awake. Garner Ted was lying on a sofa in the living room. Immediately I knelt by his side, my wife with me, and I anointed him, asking God to heal him. Suddenly it came to my mind I ought also to ask God to heal his speech. He had been born dumb. He could not speak a word — and now 2 years and 5 months old. He could only make motions, and grunt, saying, “Ugh! Ugh!” I asked God to restore his speech.

Afterward my wife told me that while I was praying for God to heal him of the pneumonia, she had silently asked God to put it into my mind to ask for his speech to be healed also. Ted was instantly healed of the pneumonia. The very next morning he was able to say a number of single words. In about three days he was talking in whole sentences.

Also while at Astoria, a member down in the Willamette Valley, Milas Helms, who by then was president of the Oregon Conference, drove to Astoria, arriving after 10 p.m. He had come unannounced in his pickup truck. It was December, 1932, or January, 1933. He had driven from his farm near Jefferson, Ore., thinking I might be too busy to come, but if he arrived with his pickup truck, he felt I would drop everything and go.

His little son, James, was stricken with pneumonia — not expected to live. The highways were icy and covered with snow. We arrived back at his farm about 5 a.m. Immediately I anointed and prayed for the boy. He was healed instantly, and later that morning was up out of bed, dressed and playing.

Again in late February, 1933, Milas Helms drove out unannounced to Astoria. The Oregon Conference had a little money — a very little.

By now — as a matter of fact — since December, 1931 — I had realized the mistake I made in going to Astoria. My wife and I had been praying earnestly to be returned to Christ's

ministry. Our prayers at last were answered — but not until God knew I had learned the lesson of STAYING WITH IT, once in His ministry.

Mr. Helms explained a man named A.J. Ray, a former president of the California Conference of the Church of God, had come. He was anxious to bring to Oregon from Southern California a friend, a Sven (Sam) Oberg, supposed to be a “great” preacher. But the Oregon brethren had been “stung” by one supposed great preacher from Southern California, Mr. Taylor. I had learned that Mr. Taylor had failed utterly to raise up a single member for the church at Eugene, had traded the property off for an island in the river near Eugene, and had estab-

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lished a colony there of “Pentecostal” people, each of whom had donated all their properties and cash over to Taylor. The colony had gone on the rocks, the people had left and some had sued Mr. Taylor. They won their case. That was the end of the “great” Taylor.

Mr. Helms said the brethren did not want to get deceived by another “wonder preacher” from California, and they all wanted to get me back in harness before he arrived. They could only pay \$3 per week, but farmer members would supply us with eggs and produce, and they would also supply us with 100-pound sacks of whole wheat flour, with sugar and such things. The house rent they had selected for us was, I believe, \$7 per month, which they paid.

Mr. Oberg was a man of 53. He

arrived only a day or so after I had. If R.L. Taylor had “swept them off their feet,” Oberg did MORE! He was SO GREAT as a speaker and a man, on first appearance and first sermon, I actually thought of Hebrews 13:2 — that we might be entertaining an angel unawares. Oberg was TOO PERFECT to be human!

But the brethren had been taken in once, and they saw to it that I was hired before he and Mr. Ray could contest it — and there was no more money for Mr. Oberg. He and wife, age 25, and little girl about 3 or 4, all stayed at the Runcorns.

Immediately I wanted to start a major city-wide campaign with Oberg as speaker. I would handle the advertising and emcee. But Oberg and Ray wanted to hold a SMALL campaign in the Hollywood resident area of Salem, in an empty store building. There were many empty store buildings then. Probably more than half of small businesses in the United States had failed during the Depression. And 1933 was the year President Roosevelt closed the nation's banks!

My disillusionment of the super GREAT, GREAT Mr. Oberg began. I was in a humbling process. I was small in my own eyes. Mr. Oberg loomed as a spiritual GIANT. But I did have vision. And I did learn that Oberg did not think BIG!

For these Salem meetings I had handbills printed and distributed, and a half-page ad in the newspaper.

On opening night I was greatly alarmed — and so was Mr. Ray, Mr. McGill, Mr. Helms and others. The “Pentecostal” people were coming IN FORCE!

I had said before, I had observed that these people were glib and loud in their “Amens” and “Hallelujahs” and bragging testimony testifying of their own spiritual perfection since RECEIVING (GETTING) their “baptism,” misquoting scripture, always using it out of context, and UNWILLING TO OBEY GOD!

We called a hurried huddle.

“Just leave everything to me,” assured the GREAT Oberg. “I know exactly how to handle these people.” He got away with it.

By the third night the “Pentecostals” had taken over. I preached ser-

mons of spiritual truth and UNDERSTANDING and RIGHTEOUSNESS — but they had no taste for that. Oberg had hundreds of stories stored in his mind — tear-jerking stories, laugh stories, every kind. But NO BIBLE TRUTH. Just a DELIVERY and PERSONALITY! After a few nights I dropped out of the every other night turns for my preaching. I preached to our own brethren on the Sabbaths, but he preached every weekday night.

The wild and weird antics of these “Pentecostal” people increased.

But was this *GOD'S* Spirit doing such crazy things in them? This is a good place to quote a scripture in this connection the reader needs to understand: “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet . . .” (Deut. 13:1-3).

To resist or disobey God's commandments is to “go after other gods.”

God's Holy Spirit is the Spirit of a SOUND MIND. The weird antics, spiritual bragging and ways of these people were definitely NOT of a sound mind!

Satan's counterfeits are, indeed, DECEPTIVE, and by them Satan lures multiple thousands and even millions.

Absolutely NO “FRUIT” was borne by those meetings. Those meetings lasted some four months, Mr. O.J. Runcorn paying the \$10 monthly storeroom rent. Nothing was accomplished but a nightly emotional jamboree.

All through this “campaign” the conspiracy of Messrs. Oberg and Ray against me deepened. They wanted my \$3 per week and were willing to use any dirty politics to “GET” it.

My father had died in April, 1933. My wife had gone in late April or early May to be with my mother on the farm, near Molalla, Ore. One night my wife was awakened from an intensive dream. God's angel was giving her a message: “GO TO SALEM AT ONCE! GO TO SALEM AT ONCE!

Enemies are plotting against your husband.”

She was too alarmed to let the dream go unheeded. She came immediately to Salem. About the same time, Milas Helms drove in a hurried emergency trip from his farm south of Salem to warn me that Messrs. Ray and Oberg were privately going around to brethren with an accusation against me. We had four children, the two boys then 3 and 4. Oberg was an addict on neatness and precision. Naturally part of the time, toys and playthings were scattered around our house. Otherwise my wife was a neat housekeeper. These two men were saying I was disqualified for the ministry because I was “not ruling well my own household, and

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my wife was not neat and tidy enough.”

Milas was then president of the conference.

“There is only one thing I can do to help you,” he said, “beside warning you. I will be chairman of the business meeting they have set up. I can let you speak first, if that will help.”

The propaganda of these men was false. I did rule well my own household, and my wife was a good housekeeper. Normally I should have wanted the last word — to speak last. This time, God led me to choose to speak first.

The business meeting was held in the little church in Harrisburg, Ore. Messrs. Oberg and Ray had stern faces.

I prayed. God showed me what to say. Mr. Helms opened the business

meeting with prayer, then immediately gave me the floor, and I sprang to the pulpit before either of the conspirators realized it. They were taken completely by surprise. I said I was going to speak openly and in complete frankness. I understood Oberg and Ray had pressured the calling of the meeting as an INQUISITION, to accuse me FALSELY — that my eyes had just been opened to a conspiracy going on against me. I understood their charges were to be against my wife. I acknowledged that I myself was not perfect any more than my inquisitors. If they had accusations against ME, let them make them, and I would only ask the brethren to PRAY for me. But in all boldness I said that if one of these men dared say a word against my wife, I would forget I was a minister, and CLOSE THEIR MOUTHS WITH MY FISTS!

My speech was short and to the point! As I had confessed some of my own faults, asking all of them to pray for me, every eye but those of the conspirators was filled with tears.

I sat down. Oberg and Ray were then called. There was nothing left for them to say. I had confessed personal faults and imperfections, and the brethren would have backed me in shutting their mouths from accusing my wife.

God pulled me through that inquisition.

The Oregon Conference brethren all loved me. Only the jealous ministers hated me. The brethren still looked to ME for LEADERSHIP, in spite of Mr. Oberg's “perfection.”

As the Salem “meetings” came to an end, Mr. Elmer E. Fisher, the farmer living seven miles west of Eugene, asked me to come there for a campaign. He was chairman of the school board of Firbutte School, 8 miles west of Eugene — a one-room country school seating 36. At the same time the conference had rented the church at Harrisburg, seating 150, for a “campaign.”

I preferred the smaller schoolhouse, leaving the 150 seats for Sam Oberg at Harrisburg.

Now came the BEGINNING of what has grown into the WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD. But I was not yet through with the Ray-Oberg persecution. □

(To be continued)

PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

Understand this!

We were all born HUMAN. We all have HUMAN NATURE. Few seem to know what human nature is. It is a strong PULL — a tendency — and, like gravity, it is a *downward* pull. Like a strong magnet, it draws us in the way of SATAN — that is a pull toward self-gratification and jealousy, envy and resentment toward others. It is the spirit of rebellion against authority, hostility toward God and the law of God. That is human nature. It is within you. But how did human nature become that way? Adam and Eve were not created with that nature.

Originally God created the beautiful archangel Lucifer. He sealed up the sum of wisdom, knowledge and beauty. But one thing he lacked — the righteous CHARACTER to choose the right way, and resist the wrong — to discipline the *self* in the way he ought to go, instead of the way of self-desire. So Lucifer became Satan. He allowed pride and vanity, selfishness and greed, a lack of outgoing concern for others — the spirit of competition, opposition, strife, effort to acquire and to exalt the self — to enter his mind. He became perverted.

Satan, ever since the Garden of Eden, has beamed his new perverted thinking into the minds of unwitting human beings. So humanity has accepted Satan's nature and allowed it to become infused with human nature.

God's purpose in having created humanity — in having caused *YOU* to be born — is to reproduce Himself. And GOD, above all things, is PERFECT, RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER! God is able to create character within us — but it must be done as a result of our independent free choice. We, as individual separate entities, have our part in the process.

What *is* perfect character? It is the ability, in a separate entity, to come to the KNOWLEDGE of the right from the wrong — the true from the false — and to CHOOSE the right, and possess the WILL to enforce self-discipline to do the right and resist the wrong.

Like muscle, character is developed, and grows by exercise. My name is Armstrong. I suppose I could make my arm stronger, and develop the muscle, by constantly bending it back and forth at the elbow. But if I pull, or push, against some heavy weight or resistance, the muscle will develop much faster. Therefore God allows us to have this NATURE that exerts a heavy pull *against* that perfect righteous character — to give us something to *strive against*, for THE VERY PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING AND DEVELOPING RIGHT CHARACTER!

God's CHARACTER travels in the direction of His law — the way of LOVE. It is an outgoing CONCERN for

What *is* perfect character? It is the ability, in a separate entity, to come to the KNOWLEDGE of the right from the wrong — the true from the false — and to CHOOSE the right, and possess the WILL to . . . resist the wrong.

others. God has that character! He has an outgoing concern for you and for me. He GAVE His only begotten Son to reconcile us to Him, and make the JOYS of His character and everlasting life possible for us. He showers on us every good and precious gift. He even puts within us HIS DIVINE NATURE — *when* we repent and turn *from* the wrong way of this world, begin to resist it and turn to Him through faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior!

God's divine nature is the nature of love — of giving, serving, helping — of outgoing concern. It is the nature of humility.

Now when one is converted — has repented, and *turned from* Satan's and this world's false WAY — has at

once received God's Holy Spirit — his HUMAN nature, as I said before, does not flee. It, too, remains. It *still* exerts a pull. We still live in THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD, and *it* exerts a pull. God still allows Satan to be around — and HE exerts a pull.

So we now have three pulls to resist — to overcome! We must now *overcome* these three — Satan, this world and our own selves. We have to battle against these three, in order to develop and strengthen RIGHT CHARACTER within us. God says plainly it is THE OVERCOMERS who shall be saved — who shall reign with Christ!

No human being is strong enough to do this BY HIMSELF! He must seek, and IN FAITH receive, the help and power of God. Even with God's power he will not overcome such forces easily, or all at once. IT IS NOT EASY! Christ plainly said the way to ultimate salvation is hard, difficult. It's a constant BATTLE — a struggle against self, the world and the devil. The creation of CHARACTER comes through EXPERIENCE — it takes time!

This development is a process. It is a matter of GROWTH — DEVELOPMENT. It requires, to become perfect, full and right knowledge of the very Word of God — because Jesus taught that we must *live by* EVERY WORD OF GOD.

The natural, unconverted mind cannot fully and rightly UNDERSTAND the Scriptures of God. The acquisition of this KNOWLEDGE, in itself, is a procedure requiring TIME. It is the DOERS of this Word, not hearers only, who shall be saved.

But can any man DO, immediately and all at once, this new way he now learns about? Can any man, all at once, break all habits he now sees are wrong? No, he finds he has a fight against acquired former habits.

He still has this PULL of human nature to overcome. This nature is a law working within him. The apostle Paul calls it the law of sin and death.

Paul was *converted*. Paul was a real Christian. He had repented, accepted Christ and received the Holy Spirit. With his MIND, he wanted with all his heart, and in real, intense sincerity, to DO God's WAY! But did Paul do it perfectly? Let him tell.

LISTEN! "For we know that the law is spiritual," he wrote, "but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:14-17).

He is speaking of human nature within him. He continues: ". . . for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (verses 18-24). Then he thanks God — that GOD WILL — through Jesus Christ, and by the power of His HOLY SPIRIT. BUT *IT TAKES TIME!*

The truly converted Christian will find that he often stumbles, *under temptation*, and falls down — even as a physical child learning to walk often falls down. But the year-old child does not get discouraged and give up. He gets up and starts out again.

THE TRULY CONVERTED CHRISTIAN IS NOT YET PERFECT!

GOD LOOKS ON THE HEART — the inner MOTIVE — the real *intent!* If he is trying — if he gets up whenever he falls down, and in repentance asks God's forgiveness and sets out to do his very best NOT TO MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN — and to persevere with renewed effort to OVERCOME, God is rich in mercy toward that man in his striving to overcome.

Speaking to CONVERTED CHRISTIANS, John writes: "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And *if any man sin* [even though he ought not], we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for OUR sins" (I John 2:1-2). Yes, for the sins of converted Christians. Such people often are under heavier temptation than before conversion. They are STRIVING against sin — STRIVING to overcome. But they are not yet perfect. Sometimes they are caught off guard. They may actually sin. Then they WAKE UP, as it were, and realize what they have done. They REPENT. They are filled with remorse — *truly sorry* — disgusted with themselves. They go to God, and CRY OUT FOR

HELP — for more power and strength from God to OVERCOME!

This is the WAY of the Christian!

It is the way of a constant BATTLE — a striving against SIN — a seeking God in earnest prayer for help and spiritual POWER to overcome. They are constantly GAINING GROUND. They are constantly GROWING in God's KNOWLEDGE, from the Bible. They are constantly rooting out wrong habits, driving themselves into RIGHT habits. They are constantly growing closer to God through Bible study and prayer. They are constantly growing in CHARACTER, *toward* perfection, even though not yet perfect.

The truly converted Christian will find that he often stumbles, *under temptation*, and falls down — even as a physical child learning to walk often falls down. But the year-old child does not get discouraged and give up. He gets up and starts out again.

With Paul, they say: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I FOLLOW AFTER . . . Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this one thing I do*, FORGETTING those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS" (Phil. 3:12-14).

But, someone may ask, what if one's life is cut off, and he dies *before* he has attained this perfection? Is he saved, or lost? The answer is that we shall never obtain absolute perfection in *this* life.

I said, earlier, that a person who is converted does receive the Holy Spir-

it at a *definite time* — *all at once!* Not the full measure Christ had — he is not at once full-grown spiritually — only a spiritual babe in Christ. Yet he is then a changed, converted man — changed in mind, in attitude, in the *direction* he has set himself to strive to travel. Even though he has not yet reached perfection — even though he may have stumbled under temptation, and taken a spiritual fall — as long as, in his mind and heart, he is earnestly striving to travel GOD'S WAY, to overcome and grow spiritually — as long as God's Spirit is in him — as long as he is being led by the Spirit of God, he is a begotten SON OF GOD.

If, anywhere along this life's journey, that life is cut short, such a man will be resurrected.

It is only the one who deliberately QUILTS and GIVES UP — who REJECTS God and God's way, and rejects Christ as his Savior — who turns FROM this direction of GOD'S WAY, *in his mind and heart* — in his inner INTENT — who deliberately and intentionally in his mind TURNS FROM Christ, who is lost. If, once having been converted, having received God's Spirit and TASTED of the joys of GOD'S WAY, one deliberately rejects that way, makes the DECISION, not under stress of temptation, but deliberately and finally, NOT to go God's way, then God says it is IMPOSSIBLE to renew such a one to repentance. He would have to REPENT of that decision. But if he WILLFULLY made it, not in a time of temptation, but calmly, deliberately, willfully, then he just WILL NOT ever repent of it.

But anyone who FEARS he may have committed the "unpardonable sin" — is perhaps worried about it, and HOPES he *has not* committed it, and still WANTS to have God's salvation — no such has committed it — such a one MAY repent, and go right on to salvation IF HE WANTS TO!

If you have stumbled and fallen down, *DON'T BE DISCOURAGED!* Get up and press on ahead!

If you see a Christian do something wrong, *DON'T SIT IN JUDGMENT AND CONDEMN* — that's God's business to judge, not yours! Let's have compassion and mercy — we don't know the inner heart of others — only GOD does! □