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*Salvation*

# **Contemporary Conversions** **(Selections)**

By

*Bernie Smith*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

**Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World**

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# CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS

(Selections)

Compiled and edited by

**Bernie Smith**

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[Transcriber Note: The conversion story selections in this digital publication are not an endorsement, per se, of the beliefs and practices of those denominations to which these converted individuals belonged. Rather, they are intended to glorify Christ and to be a blessing to all who may read them. -- DVM]

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**Publisher's Preface**

The compiler of this book has brought together the personal conversion experiences and religious background of twenty-five ministers from a variety of church groups. [I have selected only 12 of these conversion stories. -- DVM] In most instances the stories are told in the words of the men involved. In a few cases the narratives have been written by Rev. Bernie Smith on the basis of personal interviews. Some differences of theological belief and church practice appear in these stories. Both the compiler and the publishers thought it best to let each person tell his own story, and give his own interpretation of what happened to him, and the meaning of his experience. The whole book is bound together by the unified voice, "Ye must be born again." The necessity and reality of personal conversion is here set forth with vigor, clarity, and challenge.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Echoing down the corridors of time still comes the striking challenge of Christ to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." Although uttered nearly two millenniums ago, this command was meant for our century also.

Many of us are familiar with the born-again experiences of such men as Paul, Luther, Augustine, Wesley, and other earlier leaders. If Christ's command to Nicodemus still holds true, then it is imperative that present-day religious leaders have their own Damascus Road.

Few people today know the conversion stories of our present leaders. It is with this thought in mind that this book was compiled, for this in reality is the story of how twenty-five people found God. Each writer was selected for outstanding work in the ministry; for, without exception, they all rightfully deserve their places in the front ranks of American ministers.

It is interesting to note the similarity of early environments. Many spent their childhood in adversity, but were trained by Bible-believing, God-fearing parents, and in consequence surmounted every obstacle to become leaders of men.

It is the desire of the compiler that these testimonies will cause many to gain a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to strengthen their resolve to serve him daily. Should such be, this work has not been done in vain.

**Bernie Smith**

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### **The Conversion of C. I. ARMSTRONG**

Dr. C. I. Armstrong was formerly a missionary among the Onondaga Indians in central New York. Later, he was a pastor in Pennsylvania, a national evangelist, and then pastor of Houghton College Church, in Houghton, New York. In 1942 he was elected president of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness.

Six generations of godly Methodists carried the name of Armstrong from 1775 to 1896. They were of Scotch-Irish descent. The grandfather of the writer of this sketch, Timothy Armstrong, spent the last seventy of his ninety years in the service of his Christ -undoubtedly one of the greatest champions of the spiritual life in the Methodist circle in his day. His Son Alexander, the third of six children born in that home, was most powerfully converted at the age of thirty under the ministry of a Spirit-filled Methodist pastor, using the text, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Four children came to the household of Alexander and Emma Pexton Armstrong, the fourth one being the subject of this sketch, Dr. Chauncey Irwin Armstrong.

From earliest childhood, family worship was conducted in that home, with all taking part each morning and one reading a scripture and offering prayer noon and evening. Many, many times the story of the father's conversion at the age of thirty was told in the presence of Chauncey. It made a profound impression on the lad. Every religious influence was brought to bear upon him that could come from a godly home like that one. The services of the church were most regularly attended, with all the family on time and seated in the family pew. The fear of God, the fear of hell, the love of Christ, the power of the blood to save to the uttermost, the careful keeping of the Sabbath by these old-fashioned Methodist parents made a deep impression on this boy.

Nevertheless, much patience and many prayers went up to the throne of grace from the hearts of these self-sacrificing parents that this youngest child would someday soon surrender his life to Christ and become a real Christian. When he was around ten, his parents encouraged him to learn Scripture by promising him a quarter for each of the Psalms and certain other short portions of Scripture that he would commit to memory. Not realizing the value this Word would be in the future, but rather being infatuated with the incentive for some easy money, he set at the task of memorizing scriptures as a splendid source of financial revenue. All the time, however, God's hand was upon him for good.

When Chauncey was ten, the family moved to Rome, New York, where the father carried on a large mercantile business. Between school periods and on Saturdays Chauncey delivered groceries and ran errands for the store.

At the age of thirteen, with his mother's consent reluctantly given, he enrolled in the boys' choir at the large Episcopal Church in his home city for more than a year of training and singing, observing Lent and all the holy days of the Anglican calendar. This brought him a slight revenue in addition to delightful association with other boys of his age.

For some reason, religion was now to him simply a Sunday convenience that was laid aside until the next Sabbath, lest it be a weekday inconvenience. Looking back across the years, we marvel at the patience of that mother, whose heart must have been torn with great anxiety over the spiritual future of her boy. Three different times in the lad's life he narrowly escaped being involved with a gang of boys, most of whom served time in after years in penitentiaries for their crimes; but God in his mercy intercepted the plan of the lad to go with them and spared him and his parents what might have been a different story.

When Chauncey was fifteen, a converted prize fighter, Rev. John Scobie, of Ottawa, Canada, came to the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Rome (New York) for a series of meetings. The news spread over all the city that this man had recently been a prize fighter. He had fought Bob Fitzsimmons.

Curiosity drew a number of lads to this meeting, including the writer of this article. For three nights the lads of the neighborhood sat on the back seat of this church, amused as they listened to this man with a queer Canadian brogue and an Irish accent. He talked about men knowing God, and declared that you could know him "as sure as you are a foot high." He would often say, "Unless you repent of your sins and get saved, don'cha understand you'll go to hell as sure as you're born?" Something somewhere took hold of this Armstrong lad on that third night. He ceased to feel amused, and he seemed to be arraigned before the bar of justice with the all-seeing eye of an all-knowing God upon him. Everything that seemed foolish or funny previously in the meeting now became a fiery javelin of convincing truth in his heart.

The invitation was given, and several moved out of their seats and went to the place of prayer. The poor lad named Armstrong almost shook with conviction. He tenaciously hung on to the seat in front of him lest those about him should discover his predicament. Why he did not seek God that night, only God knows. As soon as the benediction was finished, Armstrong almost ran out of the church, and dashed up the street for seven blocks to his home. Before going upstairs he took off his shoes, hoping that his mother would not hear him come in, although it was not yet ten o'clock. As far as he was concerned, sleep had left the country; he rolled and tossed throughout the night, weeping and begging God to let him live until the following night that he might go back to the meeting and make his peace with God. He revealed nothing to his parents concerning his spiritual plight, but his old-fashioned, gingham-aproned, homekeeping mother was in close touch with God, and she sensed very keenly that her youngest child was battling with terrific conviction.

It was November 15, 1910, at the close of the message by Evangelist Scobie, during the last verse of "Just As I Am," that an odd old man slipped his arm around Chauncey's shoulders and said in tender, appealing tones: "Son, don't you feel it's time to seek the Lord? Come on, let's go tonight." The altar was already filled, but they readily found a place in the corner of the front seat. The Sunday-school superintendent and the class leader of the church knelt on either side of this lad as he wept his heart out before the Lord, feeling that he was one of the worst sinners that had ever lived. How sincerely those two godly men prayed for the salvation of this boy, along with other old saints who have long since passed on to glory!

It was exactly 9:45 P.M. that the workers and seekers started singing Dr. Isaac Watts's immortal hymn, "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away." Thanks be to God, the burden did roll away at that instant, and Chauncey felt the kiss of pardon in his soul. He rose to his feet with tears streaming down his cheeks. He then gave his first testimony in public, between sobs, saying, "I know, I really know, that Jesus saves me tonight."

Upon reaching home at ten thirty he found his mother on her knees with an open Bible before her. He ran to her, threw his arms about her neck, kissed her several times on the cheek, and said: "Mother, Jesus saved me tonight." The surprise of his life came with her reply. She looked up kindly with a smile from another world across her countenance, and said, "I knew it nearly an hour ago. While here in prayer around nine thirty tonight the assurance came to my heart that you had been saved."

The following April, on Easter Sunday, that mother and son were received into membership in the church in which he had been converted. One year from that Easter great sorrow broke this lad's heart when his mother's casket stood in the very spot where they had taken the vows together the preceding Easter. Her death gave him a burning desire to be true to God. There were the usual high-school spiritual problems. Then came the call, before high school was finished, to the Christian ministry; then the preparation for going away to school; the attending of college in a distant city; uniting with the conference later; going as a missionary for six years among the Onondaga Indians in central New York, where he learned the language and was adopted into the tribe with an Indian name; the appointment as adviser to the United States Board of Indian Commissioners under President Woodrow Wilson -- all these things were undertaken without the support of a saintly mother's prayers.

During his ministry as missionary he met Miss Ruth Baxter, a talented pianist and Christian worker, who traveled with a ladies' evangelistic quartet known as "The Four Girls." In the process of time this acquaintance ripened into a beautiful courtship and culminated in a happy marriage, which has borne the fruitage consistent with two consecrated lives for more than a quarter of a century now.

An eleven-year pastorate in western Pennsylvania, attended by great spiritual success, brought Mr. Armstrong face to face with a very clear call to full-time service in the evangelistic field. He had become widely known as a song leader and music director in camp meetings, conferences, and conventions all through his ministry, having continued his musical education faithfully from the time of that first training in the Episcopal choir many years before.

Ten strenuous years were spent across this nation, preaching among thirteen denominations in churches, missions, and camp meetings of all sizes, with a great harvest of souls. In 1942 a call from Houghton College Church, Houghton, New York, backed up by a clear leading of the Spirit, indicated the fact that this was the next place God would have him occupy. One month prior to accepting this college pastorate, and, strange to say, at the National Holiness Convention held in this very church to which he had been called as pastor, Dr. Armstrong was Surprised by being elected president of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness. He has carried this work along with his pastorate for four years.



He spends each summer in evangelistic work in camp meetings throughout the nation, with a slate booked for six to ten years in advance.

At the commencement exercise of Asbury College, May 31, 1944, in recognition of his work both as president of the National Holiness Convention and as pastor, the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him.

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**The Conversion of  
WILLIAM H. BARRETT**

Commissioner William H. Barrett is one of the world's leading Salvationists, having given many years of his life in such work. He is at present territorial commander of the Salvation Army for the eleven western states, Alaska, and Hawaii.

I have been requested to write the story of my conversion, and I do so in the hope that someone reading this might be helped spiritually. What I say here is given in the spirit of humility and thankfulness to God, who has led me, fed me, and blessed me beyond my wildest dreams of childhood. There is only one valid reason why I should look back, and that is to receive stimulation and inspiration to press on the upward way.

My parents were sincere and loyal Christians, having been brought to Christ by a simple but forceful message delivered by an old-time friend at a Salvation Army open-air service.

After the personal testimony, my father approached his friend and said, "John, where did you learn to preach?"

"I gave my heart and life to Christ in a recent revival meeting," John replied. "I do not preach, but only tell what God has done for me."

That night both Father and Mother followed the Salvationists to a little hall. When the invitation was given they responded, knelt in prayer, and took a solemn vow to love, serve, honor, and worship Christ. My parents never went back on that pledge to God. It may be of some interest for readers to know that, many years later, I married the daughter of the man who led my parents by his sincere personal testimony into the new and living way to God.

When I became eleven years of age, I sat in a meeting and listened to an officer of the Salvation Army preach the old-time gospel story with fire and power. He pleaded that young boys and girls should come to Jesus when their hearts are tender, and become Christians before the devil hardens them. This thought made a great impression on my heart and mind, leading me to an immediate decision for Christ.

I knelt at the mercy seat between two men who had gone deep in sin, and workers assigned to deal with the penitents gave all their time, energies, and words of advice to the old sinners, and not one of them paid any attention to the little boy who was seeking light and salvation. However, I made my confession to God, prayed for pardon, and promised to live a life pleasing to my Lord and Master.

That episode of conversion took place over fifty years ago. The spiritual vision and strength I received that Sunday evening formed the foundation of my life, which has honored God by more

than forty years of service in soul-winning. I have not kept a record of conversions in my meetings, but thousands have been won to Christ because a timid and unpredictable boy found Christ without the help of workers who should have spoken to him.

I love Bible study, and this has helped me in the hour of temptation. Like Jesus, I have tried to be radiant and let my light shine. I am an officer in the Salvation Army because I responded to a Divine urge. Like Paul, I have preached Christ crucified, and I have tried by God's help to be the personification of truths I have taught others. I have had a singleness of purpose -- to honor God and do his will.

Now I feel impelled to say a few words regarding the conversion of children. We need to lay more emphasis on child and youth evangelism. Dance halls, inns, taverns, and places of amusement are filled with young people. Childhood and youth delinquency is prevalent everywhere. Young people are also charged with unmentionable crimes in our city courts. What is being done to guide them into right thinking, reasoning, and living?

It is not necessary for our young people to sow wild oats and then repent. We do not want them to fall over a precipice and be picked up broken in life. No, we must lead them to Jesus when their hearts are tender, and get their feet on the path of righteousness. I declare unto you that I believe in the conversion of the child, because I know that Christ came into my heart before I entered the teens.

Our lives can be divided into three distinct and separate periods. (William Shakespeare wrote of the seven ages of man.) Let us look at the three periods -- childhood to youth, youth to manhood, manhood to old age. Youth is a time of imagination; manhood, a time of realization; and old age, a time of reflection. Moses said, "We spend our years as a tale that is told" (Ps. 90:9). What will be the tale concerning your life?

May I say that I believe from the depth of my heart that God has a plan for every life, and if we will keep in the center of his will all will be well. Young people, I urge you to pray, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). David Livingstone placed himself in God's hands and took the gospel to darkest Africa.

In bringing my story to a close, I will give twelve foundation stones upon which to build a pure and noble life: (1) The Bible -- build on its sacred truths. (2) Prayer -- our one and only contact with God. (3) Vision -- "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (4) Love -- the greatest thing in the world. (5) Purity -- "Blessed are the pure in heart." (6) Courage -- do right whatever happens. (7) Optimism -- keep looking up. (8)

Ambition -- to be good and do good. (9) Friendship -- don't be a hermit. Have fellowship with God's people. (10) Gratitude -- ingratitude is the world's greatest sin. (11) Reverence -- never make light of sacred things. (12) Faith -- in God, in others, and in yourself.

What I have written is from my heart, and if I had my life to live over, I would again seek Christ early and do his will from my heart. Religion is a challenge to children and young people; those who accept the Lord Jesus will live victorious lives!

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### **The Conversion of CHARLES EWING BROWN**

Since 1895 Dr. Charles Ewing Brown has been active in the ministry of the Church of God, having preached both in America and in many foreign lands. He began preaching as a boy, and even in his student days he found opportunities to preach constantly.

Dr. Brown has served successfully as pastor in several large congregations. He has served in executive capacity for various church agencies, and is now instructor in theology in Anderson College and Theological Seminary, along with his many other duties. He is widely known all over this country and abroad. He has traveled extensively throughout the world and has lived a life of service for the church. He is at present editor of the Gospel Trumpet.

For months a certain popular magazine has been running a series of articles on "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met." Owing to the pressure of more urgent matters, I have not had the opportunity to read more than two or three of these articles, but that reading suggested to me a few words of appreciation and appraisal of the most remarkable man I ever met.

I suppose that loyalty to my father, as well as due credit to his strong personality, would suggest that to me personally he was the most remarkable man I ever saw. But the man to whom I refer was a man who also influenced my father more powerfully than any other man, and therefore a large part of my father's influence upon me would go to the credit of this man.

In my lifetime I have traveled somewhat extensively both around the world and over the world. It would be a foolish boast to intimate that any distinguished person in the world remembers me personally or knows me by name. Nevertheless, I have in my travels seen and met personally many of the men whom the world calls great, and as I compare these men of known reputation with many brilliant and able men unknown to the world -- when I lump these altogether and compare them with the man of whom I am thinking -- I feel very sure that the illiterate, unknown evangelist whom I first met fifty years ago, in January, 1895, was by all odds the most remarkable man I ever met.

As nearly as I can tell, it was January 14 when I, an eleven-year-old farm boy, dragged my way through the winter mud of southern Illinois to my home on the hilltop. There my mother told me that the preacher was in the sitting room. I had heard a great deal about this preacher and was eager to hear more. He was an uneducated countryman from southern Indiana, who had come into our country in a most unusual manner.

As I look across the span of fifty years, I can see very clearly that he was not only an uneducated man, but one whom people would call an intense fanatic as well. I certainly have much reason to be thankful for this, because if his devotion had not amounted to the intensity of passion I doubt that he would have ever found his way into our community. And if I had the choice to make I would ask for ten times as many fanatics in the church as we have at the present time.

Of course, I am opposed to fanaticism, as all intelligent men are, but I have found that when a man is an honest fanatic he can be tamed down and taught, and some good will come out of such a highly tensioned life. But when a man is cold and halfhearted, all the schools and all the discipline of life seem ineffectual to tone him up to the passion and power of a fruitful Christian life.

Therefore I feel that I show no disrespect to the memory of the man who helped me most of all men when I say bluntly that he seemed a fanatic, for he was only a young, uneducated man filled with a passionate zeal for his Lord. He lacked any training, experience, or discipline which would moderate him into the wise ways of successful Christian living.

God sent him into our country to preach the gospel, he felt. He rode as long as he had money and then, leaving the train, he walked, carrying his two traveling bags and dragging his weary feet through the mud and snow.

He was going into a completely strange country, where he knew nobody. At last he grew too tired to walk farther. On his knees under a tree he prayed for guidance, and there he felt led to go to a small house, where he was kindly welcomed. In that neighborhood he preached and held a stirring revival. One night he went to bed intending to go home the next day, but in the night he received a leading of the Lord to go to Mount Zion. And although he tried to disobey the leading, he arose the next morning, after a sleepless night, with a decision to go to Mount Zion. My father was a drunkard, an infidel, and a gambler. For fifteen years he had not attended church, but on the day when the Lord sent Brother Willis Bunch to Mount Zion, he sent my poor lost father there to hear him, and my father was saved within a few days.

Now this is the man who was at our house sitting by the fire. I was very deliberate about doing the chores that night. Perhaps they had never been done better before, because I hesitated to go into the room and meet this strange man. For fifty years I have pondered over that dramatic moment in my life. There never was a greater one for me. As I placed my hand upon the doorknob I trembled. I was deeply afraid, not knowing why. But now I know, for on that day I met the Word of God. I met my fate for all time and for all eternity. I met a man who, in spite of his extreme views, was a holy, consecrated man of God, a man who was literally incandescent and aflame with the eternal fire of the Spirit. That man turned the current of my life.

As I entered the door I saw a big man sitting by the fireplace. He was perhaps more than six feet tall, broad-shouldered, with a big black beard sweeping nearly to his waist, and he wore a fine Prince Albert coat.

Never have I seen a man more alert in his efforts to win souls. As soon as he saw me enter the door he did not wait for me to approach him, but arising from his seat he came to meet me. He knelt down on the floor beside me, put his arms around me, and began to talk to me lovingly and intimately about myself, my soul, and my Lord. Leading me to the fireplace, he sat down and took me on his knee, for indeed I was very small compared with the giant man that he was. There he continued the discourse on heavenly things, as if I were somebody very important whose soul's salvation was a matter of the deepest urgency.

He was going to begin a meeting in our neighboring schoolhouse, but in the meantime he fell ill, so the rest of the family went to meeting and I stayed at home with the preacher. He was not too ill to sit by the fireside and talk to me. There earnestly and lovingly he led me to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that night while he was not able to go to the schoolhouse to preach, he won me to the Lord. He lighted a lamp in my soul that has burned for now these fifty years.

Brother Bunch has long ago gone to his eternal reward. He was never very successful in religious work, due largely to his extremism, his lack of training, and his failure to use the God-ordained means for sowing the seed and reaping the harvest in due and reasonable order. But he lived a good life and ended his days in the order and peace of the Christian way. He was not a great preacher in the eyes of the world, but he won my father and me to Christ.

From a personal viewpoint, he was the greatest preacher I ever met. With all my heart I thank God that I met him when I did, for I am sure that no living man could ever thrill me again as that man thrilled me when he brought, in humility and Christlike passion, the living coal of the gospel to press it to my lips; when he stirred and moved me from the very depths of my being with the mighty challenge of the coming of the Word of God.

And so it is. We want to do good, we want to help people, we want to give them something they will appreciate, and even though we hesitate to say it, down in our hearts we want to be remembered. Oh, that God may help us to see that we can never give people anything better than the gospel! We can never do anything more for them than to get them saved. We shall never be better remembered for anything than for the sacred work of bringing a soul to Christ.

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## **The Conversion of JOHN R. CHURCH**

Dr. John R. Church is a member of the Western North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church. For the past twelve years he has served as an approved evangelist of the church. Dr. Church has traveled extensively; he has preached in many of the nation's largest churches and in many colleges. He is an author, and over one hundred thousand copies of his books have been sold.

I consider it an honor to be asked to give my testimony in this book. While I have nothing yet of which to boast, I am glad to be a humble witness for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ called Paul to preach, he told him that he had been called to be a minister and a witness to the Gentiles. The Lord wants us not only to preach, but also to witness to the truths we proclaim. This is in accordance with New Testament practice.

I would not have anyone think that I have anything of which to boast. I would, however, like to give Christ the glory for all he has done in my life. Naturally, in giving one's own testimony one has to use the personal pronoun I many times, but in doing it I want it understood that it was Christ who did the work. Paul said: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Here Paul uses the pronoun I and me a number of times, but no one would dare accuse him of boasting. I want to manifest the same spirit of humility in giving my testimony for Christ.

I had the good fortune of being born and brought up in a very devout Christian home. My mother was one of the godliest women that I have ever known. I cannot remember the first time I ever heard my mother pray. As far back in my recollection as I can go, I can remember kneeling at Mother's knee and lisping that little prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Some of the fondest recollections of my childhood are those seasons at night when Mother had finished washing the dishes, sat down, and gathered us children around her knees to read to us from the Bible, or Aunt Charlotte's Bible Stories, and talk to us about God. I am so thankful that God did not give me a card-playing, cigarette-smoking mother. My mother did not hunt a deck of cards or a pack of cigarettes. She was more interested in our spiritual welfare than she was in the things of the world. I owe a great deal to Mother and her Christian influence on my life.

My parents were poor people. My grandfather was killed in the Civil War; my father was bound out as a boy to work for his board and clothes. He never was privileged to go to school a single day in his life. My father worked all his life as a day laborer, and I can remember when he worked for a dollar a day. There were eight of us children; things were not always plentiful at our house, but we did have a Christian home. My father was a good man, who loved his family and always took an interest in our spiritual welfare. He helped Mother in her effort to give us the right kind of teaching and training. They took us to Sunday school, and kept us for the preaching service. They instilled into our hearts and minds some great truths and conceptions that have held us steady all down the

pathway of life. I owe a great deal to my parents, and the training they gave will never be forgotten. I thank God for such a home, for such training and teaching.

I was definitely converted in an old-fashioned Methodist revival when I was about nine years of age. My conversion was very clear and unmistakable. I have never had any doubt about my conversion. Some people say that children do not know what they are doing at that age, but I want to testify that I knew what I was doing, and I feel certain that my sins were forgiven and that I became a child of God at that time.

I lived a very happy Christian life until I was about fifteen years of age. Then I began to feel the call to preach, which at that time I did not want to do. I wished to make money, to win a place for myself in the business world. I began to fight the call to preach, but the Lord was patient with me. Finally I told God that I would not preach, and I backslid. I lived in this condition until after I was married, when I was a little over eighteen years of age. I had the good fortune of marrying a fine Christian girl. Through her godly influence, and in answer to her prayers, I was reclaimed. It happened in a revival meeting that was being conducted by Rev. C. C. Totherow, one of the godliest men that I have ever known.

At the time, I was in the market business in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. When I went to the altar, I told God that I would give up my business and prepare for the ministry. I sold out my business and began to make plans to attend Rutherford College in order to prepare for the ministry.

Rutherford College was a Methodist school in North Carolina, the kind of school that a poor boy could attend without being humiliated about his clothing and lack of money. I did not have any money or anyone to help me in a financial way. At the time I went there, we had one child. We had a hard time financially, but we learned many things that have been of help to us in the years since that time.

The outstanding thing that happened to me while in college was the fact that I sought and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When I went to school, I knew nothing about this. I was in the same condition as the people at Ephesus, whom Paul found and asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They said they had never heard of such a thing. I, too, had never heard of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

When some of the men at Rutherford College began to talk to me about this baptism, it was so new and strange to me that I did not know what to think of it. I knew I was a Christian, that I was called to preach, but I had heard nothing of this experience. At first I was a little shy of such teaching. I felt, however, that I wanted all God had for me. I made up my mind that I would find out what the Bible really taught on this subject. I read my New Testament through eleven times in one month. I carried a red pencil with me; when I would find a passage of Scripture that I thought taught this truth, I would mark it with red. I soon became convinced in my own heart and mind that the Bible taught the baptism of the Spirit.



I also began to read the testimony of other men, and I saw that many of the greatest saints of the past had testified to this same experience. I was convinced in my mind. Then, too, I felt in my heart that I needed something more than I had.

I prayed and sought for the baptism of the Holy Spirit for about five months; then one morning in an all-night prayer meeting we were having at the college I received the baptism. It came to me about 1:30 A.M., March 19, 1920. I was in the Platonic Literary Society hall at the time it came to me. I cannot describe the physical sensation that came over me, but the most notable thing about this experience was the fact that I had such a clean, pure feeling after the physical sensation subsided. I had never felt so clean and pure in my life. I felt that all sin was gone, that now I was actually fit to stand in the presence of God and man. I shall never forget that experience. It is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me. I feel very unworthy of what God did for me at that time, but I do thank him for doing it. I never could have gone on in this work and accomplished the things God had for me to do if it had not been for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I wish I could get all of God's people to see that this same promise is unto them. (See Acts 2:39.)

I feel that I am a very unworthy servant of Christ, but I am glad that I can testify that there is adequate grace to take care of all sin in the human heart. The minimum of atonement more than covers the maximum of the Fall. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4).

To Him be all the glory, now and forever. Amen.

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# CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS

Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

## **The Conversion of FRED L. DENNIS**

One of the United Brethren's outstanding contributions to the field of the ministry is found in Bishop Fred L. Dennis, of the Northwest District of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. He served many years as pastor of the First United Brethren Church in Dayton, Ohio. Bishop Dennis has indeed given many years of active service for the cause of the Kingdom.

After thirty-six years in fellowship with Christ, it is possible to determine the background of one's conversion experience. My mother died before I came to know her well, but I have cherished the report of her conversion when she was a girl of fourteen. Hence, I am certain that she offered many prayers for her children, and perhaps special prayers for her only boy, who was the baby of the family.

An older sister of mine, only thirteen, took over the responsibility of housekeeper and mother to the two younger children. She developed into a sturdy Christian, whose death many years ago left the church impoverished.

Possibly the most immediate background for my conversion was furnished by the devotion of my stepmother. She had entered my life nearly ten years after the death of my mother, and continued the same kindly, Christian soul until her homegoing, only two years ago. When she came to us, I was at the proper age to respond to the suggestions of some of my blood relatives that I try her patience. Perhaps her red hair made some folks anticipate displays of temper under annoyance.

I was forced to admit years ago that I lost every bout. There were times when I should have felt better if she had resorted to physical violence. She had what seemed to be an inexhaustible supply of "coals of fire," which she heaped on my head in copious quantities. Daily in the home she talked about principles of Christianity as applied to the problems and perplexities of life...

What was the secret of her strength? Memory calls up the scene. Every morning after breakfast, and before the dishes were washed, she would retire to a quiet spot to read from the Bible. She read it straight through, avoiding none of the historical portions. Many times she confessed that the lesson was too deep for her understanding; but in this experience all of us join her.

A few months before her death she gave me the Bible which had served her so faithfully for many years. A new volume had replaced it, for the old one literally fell apart. When I opened her old volume, it seemed to open naturally at the close of the Old Testament. On a blank page there she had written the year, month, day, hour, and minute that she had finished reading the Old Testament. This is the way it runs: "Finished reading the Old Testament, and began to read the New Testament." The entire page was covered with those entries, which I found were eleven in number. Eleven times she had read the entire Old Testament! Then I wanted to know what she had written at the close of the

New Testament. There were the entries in her peculiar writing-thirteen of them! "Finished reading the New Testament, and began to read the Old Testament," she wrote.

I wonder how many ministers of the gospel have excelled her in her devotion to the Word. Only recently I heard a nationally known minister, retired because of age, say that he never had read the Bible through. I wonder how many gems of truth he has overlooked.

When one considers the roots of his religious life, he is likely to include far more than a crisis experience in his definition and description of his conversion. A revival meeting provided the essential environment in which seed sown in Sunday school, worship services, and in the home could come to harvest. Our pastor was an elderly man, whose only riches were the "riches of God in Christ Jesus." His faith and devotion seemed boundless. Also, an older cousin of mine was a voluntary worker in this revival. He had been saved gloriously from a life of wickedness, much of which life had been spent in our community. God sent him back to his former home community as a witness to His saving grace. It was this cousin whom God used to confront me with the claims of Christ upon my life, at the close of a young people's prayer service, immediately preceding public services at the church.

"Fred," he said, "isn't this the time that you ought to give your life to Christ?"

"No," I replied. "I'm not under conviction."

I was honest in that reply. I had heard people say they could not eat or sleep for weeks because of their sins. Up to that time I had lost neither appetite nor sleep because of my sins. I thought I was immune. But my cousin was not through with me.

"But you know that you are a sinner, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," I replied, still confident of my ground. "Anyone who is not a Christian must be a sinner."

"Then," said he, "if you know that you are a sinner, you know that you need a Savior."

That was the shot that brought me down. That was new to me. No one ever had presented the matter so simply and so clearly.

We knelt before a davenport in that home. Only five of us remained, for the others had gone to the church. Our group was composed of two older men, one being our host, two of my cousins, and me. For a time the prayer period seemed ineffective.

Our host sought to help by suggesting that perhaps I was expecting too much. He said: "Fred, you were never much of a sinner."

That is poor counsel for a penitent who is seeking the Lord. But God used even that faulty suggestion to make crystal clear to me that, whereas I was known in the community as a moral youth, in the sight of God I was a very great sinner.

Presently, in the midst of the prayer period, I realized peace of soul. My statement to those about me was to the effect that I had peace with God. We hastened to the church, where services had begun. In that service I was given an opportunity to witness to Christ as my personal Savior. As the first of thirty-one converts in that revival, I had unusual opportunities to become established in the faith ... I shall never cease to be grateful for outstanding experiences which mark epochs in my spiritual development.

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CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS  
Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

**The Conversion of  
CHARLES EDGAR BYERS**

Rev. Charles Edgar Byers, a writer of no mean ability, has served many years as a successful pastor for the Church of God. His magazine articles have been read by countless thousands. He is currently pastoring the First Church of God in Springfield, Ohio.

At the age of twenty-three I was converted, on March 9, 1905, in an old-fashioned revival meeting which was being conducted by the Church of God about two and one-half miles west of Springfield, Ohio.

For five or six years I had seldom attended church or Sunday school. My parents were religious, and during my childhood days they were very diligent in keeping my four sisters and me in the church services. The church to which my parents belonged did not believe in Sunday school, but church services were conducted each Sunday morning and evening. Cottage prayer meetings were held during the week in the homes of the church members, and Father required that we children attend these services, as well as the Sunday services. The week-night prayer meetings made a deep impression on my young life.

When I was about fifteen years old, trouble arose in the church of my father's choice, and he did not attend church for several years. This gave me an opportunity to go to another church. I attended Sunday school at this neighborhood church for about one year, then drifted away.

When I was twenty-one I was married to a girl of an entirely different faith. This made but little difference to me, for I had already lost all interest in Sunday school and church. We were married in the fall of 1903 and spent our first winter in the city. About four months after our marriage I became discontented. I could not understand my uneasiness of mind. When at work I would become downhearted, and many times I would go to a remote place in the factory to weep. I wondered why I was so dissatisfied. I lost interest in my work, also in the friends with whom I associated. This strange feeling increased, until I found myself weeping in the presence of my wife. She could not understand my attitude, and wondered if I were disappointed in her. This hurt me deeply, for I knew that I loved her even more after our marriage. I finally decided I was homesick for the country, because I had been reared on the farm.

This homesick and lonesome feeling continued all winter. The next spring, in March of 1904, we moved to the country, where I worked on the farm during the summer. After moving to the country I was troubled very little with strange feelings. We enjoyed a pleasant summer. That fall, my wife and I moved to my father's farm, where I felt I would be perfectly contented. As the winter months came on and I had leisure for thinking, these strange feelings of discouragement and dissatisfaction returned. This condition continued until I could hardly work. I knew I was not sick physically. I had no appetite, and I was restless at night. When I watched the sunset, I would weep. Oh, what a deep longing came into my soul! At last I tried to pray. It did no good, because I still did not understand.

My childhood days came before me. I remembered when we knelt around the old-fashioned family altar, how Mother would lay her hand on my head and pray that God would keep her boy from the use of strong drink, narcotics, and other sinful habits. When I recalled the prayers of Father and Mother, I would weep the more.

A few miles away, a revival was in progress in a little country church, so I decided one night to attend. I did not care for the evangelist, although he was a fine, godly man. The very first song pierced my heart. I could not keep back the tears; it seemed the minister was preaching directly to me. Long before the preacher had finished his sermon, I was convinced that I had found that which would satisfy the longing of my heart. However, I did not surrender my heart to God that night, and my conviction became greater. The next morning the burden almost crushed me; I felt that I was the meanest man in the world. My sins rested on my soul like a mountain. About nine o'clock that morning I promised God that if he would let me live until evening I would go to the house of God and there I would give my heart to him. This I did. I went forward, bowed at an old wooden altar of prayer, and after I confessed my sins to God and promised him that I would do anything he asked of me, he spoke sweet peace to my soul, and I was conscious that my sins were all forgiven.

In less than a half-hour after God saved me, the devil whispered, "How do you know you are saved?" I began to question in my mind if it were so; my joy all left me, and the same old gloom and darkness filled my soul. I wept and prayed that night, doubting if I were saved. The next morning about seven o'clock it seemed as if someone were talking with me. A voice seemed to say, "Read your Bible." I left the barn where I was working, went to the house, and asked my wife for the Bible. She gave it to me, and I opened it to Romans 10:9-10, which says: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." I said, "Lord, I do believe." That moment my soul was filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Today I am sixty-two years old; my soul is still satisfied. I have found that it pays to serve God under any and all circumstances. Following my conversion, I set out to make restitution to all men whom I had wronged. This meant the restoring of some things that did not belong to me. I never stopped until I could look every man, woman, and child, as well as God, in the face and could say, "There is nothing between me and my Savior." What a joy to know one is right with God and his fellow men!

Beloved, you who read this, if you have never been converted, seek God's pardoning love and favor until you know he speaks peace to your soul, and until you can say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

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## CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS

Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

### **The Conversion of RODNEY C. CAUDILL**

A pulpit orator in his own right, Dr. Rodney C. Caudill has spent the past twenty years as pastor of the First Church of God in Middletown, Ohio. As he was constantly pressed with calls from the field, he recently resigned his pastorate in order to devote some time to evangelism.

I was brought up in a very strict, religious home ... The Southern Methodist Church was my home church. I heard strong preaching by able ministers all through my early training. The emphasis was mostly on conversion, or being born of God.

When I was in my teens, I studied telegraphy and went to work for the Louisville and Nashville Railway Company. It was while working for the L & N that I found the Lord. A group of evangelistic workers came to the little town where I was working. I attended their meetings a few times, only to find that the gospel had put me under deep conviction. I knew that I was lost and only the Lord Jesus Christ could save me. For days I tried to be saved without going forward to the place of prayer. I knew what some of my friends would say. But the burden became so heavy that I felt that I could not carry it longer. I made up my mind that I would go forward and settle once for all the problem of sin.

It was on September 19, 1915, under the canvas of a tent, on my knees, that I found the Lord as my Savior. That day is the brightest spot in my whole life. For it was then that light broke in upon my darkened soul. Overjoyed, I felt that everybody would be glad to know that such an experience of holy joy could abound in every life. But I soon found that it was not acceptable to everyone.

When I returned to my office that afternoon, I was filled with the joy of God's eternal love. I called a friend of mine who worked about twenty-five miles from me. I said, "Bill, I have found the Lord as my Savior, and what a wonderful experience it is." I closed the telegraph key, but there was no answer from Bill. When I did hear from him, he told me that those words sank deep into his heart. He went out and found the Lord, too. Then he went home and told his wife and children what had happened to him. His wife wanted the same experience. She prayed through, and so did his older children. While I was telling Bill about this experience on the telegraph wire, others heard it, got under conviction, and found the Lord.

Soon after my conversion I felt an inward urge to enter the ministry, but I knew that I was not prepared for that great calling. I began at once to make preparation for the work to which I felt the Lord was calling me. I had a family and had to work, preach, and study as opportunity afforded. But the Lord was good to us in every way. He blessed us with health, a spiritual fullness of good things, and many valuable friends in the ministry and out. I entered the work of the Lord in 1916, doing some preaching; but when World War I came, I gave the government all my time until after the war. I went back full time to the work of the Lord in 1921, and have been at it ever since.

It has been my happy privilege to see thousands of souls led to Christ and forgiven of their sins ... To the dear Lord be all the praise and glory for all that has been accomplished in my life. He has done it all. For all the hardships, his love and Spirit have compensated fully.

I feel like saying this last word. The only solution to the world's present problems is the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything else has failed and will fail. My prayer is that as long as I remain here he will help me to point weary souls to the haven of rest in the love of God.

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# CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS

Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

## **The Conversion of W. G. HESLOP**

W. G. Heslop is an outstanding evangelist, pastor, and author. His books have been read and enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people. Dr. Heslop is serving at the present time as editor of the Higley Sunday School Commentary.

This conversion of sinners is brought about (1) by the word of the Lord -- "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7); (2) by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and (3) through the preaching of the gospel. This conversion, or change of heart, is one of the most important things which can take place in the life of a sinner.

I was converted to Christ when I was a boy of only eight and one-half years. I never remember a day in my life that I did not love God, Christ, and the Holy Bible. I never remember a time in my life when I did not read the Sacred Scriptures, attend church, and want to have fellowship with Christian people. I have always loved God, loved the Bible, and loved godly people. Between the ages of eight and nine, I attended a Methodist revival in my home town. A woman evangelist, belonging to the Pentecostal League of Prayer in England, brought the message of the hour. My young heart was touched. When the altar call was given, I wended my lonesome way forward for prayer. Kneeling almost in the middle of the mourners' bench, I cried to God for the forgiveness of my sins, and to be filled with the Spirit. No one but the evangelist paid any attention to me. She placed her hands on my head and breathed a prayer for me. That night the burden of my sins rolled away. I could truthfully sing,

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I went home that night with a light heart, a quiet conscience, and a desire and determination to be true to God. I told my parents the step which I had taken, and was disappointed that they did not yield to Christ immediately. While not outwardly wicked as the world regards wickedness, my parents nevertheless were not Christians and very rarely attended church. I was sure that it was because they did not know about the Lord and was quite sure that they would want him when I told them how I felt about it. Their coldness and indifference was quite a surprise to me.

The Methodists, at that time, conducted regular street meetings each week. I attended the street meetings and regularly testified to the saving presence and power of Christ. I was about nine years old when I prepared my first sermon for the open-air service. An elderly Methodist local preacher, named William Cutbertson, placed his hand upon my head and said, "God bless the little preacher." From that time to the present, I have never ceased to preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, however, having no encouragement at home, my feet would slip and stray; I would do things, say things, and go to places that I knew were not pleasing to God, and which, therefore, caused me to feel quite uncomfortable. Every revival or protracted meeting in the church would usually find me with my hand raised for prayer, or kneeling at the mourners bench. It became such a common thing that one day, when I was about twelve years old, and was proceeding down the aisle to the mourners' bench, I heard a very good man whisper to another, "Oh, it's just Willie Heslop." Such a remark, of course, hurt my young heart. Instead of following me down and kneeling beside me and praying for me, he almost blocked my way to God. My young heart was tender; had I made a remark like that about another person going forward for prayer, at the next revival meeting I would have been down at the altar asking forgiveness for it. Some people, however, seem to be able to say anything and do anything and get away without either confessing it or seeking forgiveness for it.

From the time of my conversion to Christ I have desired the very best that God has for me, both for time and for eternity. I never retired a single night without praying, "O God, fill me with the Holy Ghost." The passion of my heart and the cry of my soul was for a clean heart, a pure life, and to follow the Lord fully. Night after night I would go to sleep singing the words:

Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
Nor can the mem'ry find,  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,  
O Savior of mankind.

O hope of every contrite heart!  
O joy of all the meek!  
To those who fall, how kind Thou art!  
How good to those who seek!

And those who find thee, find a bliss  
Nor tongue nor pen can show:  
The love of Jesus, what it is  
None but His loved ones know.

Never for one moment since my conversion have I enjoyed anything that the world has had to offer or give.

At the age of nineteen I left home and went to the big city. I became quite active in Sunday school, in the young people's society, and in the church. Finally, the church asked me to study for the ministry. While studying for the ministry, a book entitled Gregory's Theology was placed in my hand. This theology was one of the texts in the course of study of the Methodist church at that time. Both in my heart and life and ministry I had felt a lack, a need, a need of cleansing and purity in my

own heart, a lack of power and unction in my own life and ministry. I had prayed for years for a clean heart and to be filled with the Holy Ghost. While reading this text in the course of study, I came to the chapter on "Sanctification." This was exactly what I needed. I began seeking in great earnest. Night and day, day and night, would find me praying for the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. But how to enter in I knew not. Two of the men who were the greatest blessing in my life during my boyhood days were John Stoves and T. L. Scott. John Stoves was a postmaster, and T. L. Scott was a chemist and druggist. They were both sanctified men, and they lived the life. One day Mr. Scott ventured to speak to me about being filled with the Spirit. This was exactly what I wanted, although I did not tell him so. He urged me to send for a book entitled Holiness and Power, by Dr. A. M. Hills. This I finally did, and it was while reading Dr. Hills's book that I learned how to enter into the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

After six months of sincere consecration and absolute dedication, on Tuesday morning, August 31, at about twenty minutes past nine in the morning, I took a sheet of paper and wrote out my consecration. I had no sooner signed my name to the consecration than my hand of faith reached up and grasped God's hand of power, then something like the feeling of purging fire flowed through my entire being, and I knew that God had sanctified my soul.

I have been tempted, tested, and tried, but never once have I doubted the fact that on that Tuesday morning, August 31, about twenty minutes past nine, God cleansed my heart from sin and filled me with his Spirit. I have made many mistakes for which I have been very sorry; I still have many faults and failings about which I mourn and which I seek to mend; but never once since that glorious morning have I doubted the fact that God sanctified my heart. I have need of the continued presence of Christ and the cleansing blood of Christ, but never once since that day have I doubted the fact that in my heart love was made perfect.

O for a heart to praise my God,  
A heart from sin set free,  
A heart that always feels Thy blood,  
So freely shed for me.

A heart in every thought renewed,  
And full of love divine,  
Holy, and right, and pure, and good,  
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

With other believers I pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." With others I realize my need of the constant intercession of Christ above, as well as the intercession of the Holy Spirit within. With others I feel the need daily of the atoning blood of Christ, but I also know that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses my heart from sin. The Comforter abides, and the great desire of my heart now is that all men, everywhere, might know Him whom to know is life eternal.

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CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS  
Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

**The Conversion of  
BASIL MILLER**

Dr. Basil Miller is now engaged in full-time Christian journalism. His prolific pen has given the world a large number of books, and he contributes regularly to various religious periodicals.

Dr. Miller, should he desire to do so, could list six degrees after his name from various universities and seminaries. He and his family reside in Pasadena, California.

I never knew the time when I was not in church, or when religion was not a part of the daily routine of my life. My earliest recollections are of those times in a small southern Indiana home when Mother called the three children around her, took from the near-by mantle a leather-covered, stiff-backed Bible, and read a few passages from it. Many, as I have found later, were the tear-stains and thumb-marks on this Book, where Mother found comfort and spiritual power during the early years of widowhood.

Reading finished, the four of us would kneel, and through prayer Mother literally opened the heavens.

Come Sundays, no day was too stormy, no blizzard too severe, but the family found its way to the small-town Methodist church, where the services threw around my youthful life the influences of God, salvation, and grace. And the revivals, then called "protracted meetings" -- I assume because of their month's length -- came each February in that little town of Laconia, Indiana. Mattie Miller and her small children could be counted on to be present.

Memories linger of those "more than forty years ago" meetings, when the preacher thundered against sin, and salvation seemed the order of the day.

I thus grew up as a child under the spiritual influences of a godly mother and of the constant power of the church. I took the church and the Bible as distinct elements in my life, as much so as the tiresome days spent in school, when the rule of the rod impressed me little.

Leaving Indiana in 1905, I found myself a boy in the rough-and-tumble of Indian Territory -- now Oklahoma -- but Mother, however, brought her religion with her; and as the "schoolmarm" in the tinker-toy town of Pocassett, she helped start a church so that her children, as well as others, might be reared in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Religion with me, however, did not become a personal matter until I was twelve, when the family, as a result of Mother's being elected to teach in a small school out of which Bethany-Peniel College came, moved to Oklahoma City. Here, I discovered, grace, prayer, preaching, Bible study, and other religious activities became the order of the day. Hence it was natural that I should give my heart to the Lord and accept him as my personal Savior.

Among the preachers who came to the school for revivals was Dave Hill, then known as the "Sawmill Evangelist." He was big of body, round of face, sincere in the pulpit, jovial in social contact. His revival came in the late fall of 1908, and Dave, with few sermon notes and a full knowledge of God's saving power, stood in the pulpit denouncing sin and calling sinners to repentance.

I recall little of the previous meeting, nothing of the sermon, not a word of his text, but on Friday night of the first week, when Brother Dave finished with his message, there was a stone where my heart ought to be. I felt that the message was distinctly for me, and when the red-faced preacher thundered out his invitation, I walked with many others, both young and old, down the aisle and knelt about the third from the extreme left-hand end of the altar.

Here, as instructed by the Spirit, I told God my childhood problems, opened my life to his incoming, confessed my youthful sins, stood on the promises, as the evangelist had indicated, and took Christ as my Savior.

I knew nothing of the technique -- called theology -- of what took place. But I did know that whereas I knelt sorrowful, I arose joyous; whereas I had walked the aisle a sinner, I felt forgiveness, the stone becoming a heart filled with joy; whereas I could not sing, the angels seemed to be lilting forth in gracious melodies that a sinner had come home.

That childhood conversion saved me the sorrows of a life of sin. At once, though young, I felt the pull of God to a career of Christian service. When I was called to the ministry the following year, there was a distinct "yes" in my heart to the biddings of my Savior.

Many years have passed since then, not a little water has gone under the bridge of my experience, I have learned and forgotten many things ... but the memory of my conversion and the very spot where I knelt to give my heart to God are as vivid today as when I first met the Savior. Grace saved me from many crimes, evil experiences, and a life of sin before, not after, I had committed them.

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## CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS

Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

### **The Conversion of M. KIMBER MOULTON**

Rev. M. Kimber Moulton is pastor of the mother church of the Nazarene movement, the First Nazarene Church of Los Angeles, California. He is also international president of the Nazarene Young People's Society. Only forty-one years of age, Rev. Moulton is one of the nation's outstanding young pastors.

On a hot July day in the tropics in 1904, a baby boy came into the home of a missionary couple named Rev. and Mrs. C. O. Moulton, who were serving their Savior in behalf of the rough jewels in ebony on Barbados Island, British West Indies. This baby boy's sister, who was then eight years of age, came bursting into the room of that home at Hastings. When Lila saw that bald-headed boy, her face brightened up and her eyes fairly popped out of her head. Then she exclaimed, "Oh, name him Morris Kimber!" She had known Morris Kimber, who was the son of a Quaker preacher. She idolized Morris, and naturally he was on her mind, therefore her baby brother must bear the same name. Her parents agreed. The missionary father was happy indeed. There was the boy for whom he had prayed, promising to give him to God for the Christian ministry. He must now fulfill that promise. He then lifted the babe in his arms and, looking up toward heaven, prayed a prayer of dedication, while the tears rolled down the cheeks of the mother and sister. Four and a half years after that day, down at the harbor in Bridgetown, Barbados, this missionary family stood together watching the people embark in small boats to be taken out for embarkation on the large steamer, as they called it in that day, which was anchored in the harbor. There were many fond farewells observed. The husband and father had to leave for British Guiana. The small boat was waiting. He must take leave of his family. There were four in the family now: his wife, who was called Eva; his oldest daughter, Lila; his only son, Morris Kimber; and the latest comer -- little Donna, just one year old. As the small boat pulled out, the family and friends waved farewell. Seven days from the day Missionary Moulton arrived at Georgetown, British Guiana, he was buried. Mother Moulton received a cablegram with two words on it: MOULTON DEAD. Through the sorrow she struggled. She cried out, "O God, why?" The answer came back, "Doth not the Judge of all the earth do right?" She prayed for God to give her strength to care for her children and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Under the good providence of God, she brought them back to the United States. They lived successively in Providence, Rhode Island; Galeton, Pennsylvania; Plainville and North Attleboro, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut.

The boy born in the tropics has grown to young manhood. He is now nineteen years of age. It does not look as if that prayer of dedication prayed on that July morning nineteen years ago would be answered. He is a rather wild and reckless young man. He has forsaken the church of his boyhood days. The ways of the world have fascinated him. He loves the theater, the pleasures of the dance possess him. He uses tobacco freely. He refuses to listen to the pleadings of his mother. He will go his own way and make his own life after his own sinful desires. Already he has begun to taste

alcoholic beverages. His mother's heart is nearly broken. She prays through the nights. She solicits the women of the little Nazarene church on Hungerford Street in Hartford, Connecticut, to join her in prayer in that little building each Saturday afternoon.

Then one Saturday night in December, 1923, that wayward son makes his way to a dance on North Main Street. He enters and checks his hat and coat. It is early evening, eight thirty. He dances twice, then makes his way to the cloakroom, where, in exchange for his check, he receives his hat and coat. A young lady leaves her partner and rushes to his side, saying, "Kim, what's the matter?" He replies, "I'm sick of this business. I'm so sick of it that I don't know what to do. I'm going home." He goes home and spends a restless night.

The next afternoon, Sunday, he is uneasy, although he is with his worldly friends down at the corner on Main Street. As the night shadows begin to gather, he turns to one of his friends and says, "Neal, I do not feel very well. I'm going home." Neal tries to persuade him otherwise, but he is bent on going home. On reaching home he says to his sister Donna, "Where is that church you go to, anyway? Let us go down there tonight." They go together to church. He laughs and makes fun, but the next Sunday he is back at the same place. The following Sunday morning he is there, too. He spends the afternoon at home. It is the thirtieth day of December, 1923. Donna is playing the piano and singing hymns. In spite of anything he can do to hold them back, the tears well up in his eyes and flow down his cheeks ...

At the little church that night he takes his seat, the aisle seat, second from the front. Dr. H. V. Miller preaches on the text "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." How tasteless the world has become to Morris Kimber! How hungry he is for the satisfying portion! He longs to taste of the delectable bread of the Lord. The earnest preacher announces an invitation hymn. The congregation stands with opened hymn-books. As Kimber stands there, he trembles. He is about to burst out with convulsive weeping. His song-books slips from his fingers. He rushes to the altar and bursts out with brokenhearted pleadings and petitions for mercy from God. Tears wet the sleeve of his coat and drop onto the altar rail. His dear mother is by his side. How earnestly and tearfully she brings to a climax her intercessions in behalf of the salvation of her wayward son! He cries earnestly to his God to blot out his transgressions ... All of a sudden his countenance changes. He is smiling through his tears. The burden is lifted. His sins are gone. He rises up, happiness in his heart. He goes out with peace, and he is led forth with joy. The mountains and the hills break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands. The street lights look brighter. The firmament is lighted up almost like the day. Everything is changed! All the earth takes on new beauty. His eyes behold the King!

He is changed. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus. He bears witness everywhere at every opportunity to the marvelous miracle of divine grace. He answers the call to preach. At forty-one years of age he is now in the fourth year of his pastorate of the mother church of the Church of the Nazarene, First Church of the Nazarene, Los Angeles, California.

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CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS  
Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

**The Conversion of  
HAROLD A. SELLECK**

Rev. Harold A. Selleck has spent nearly twenty-five years of his life as a successful pastor for the Orthodox Evangelical Friends Church. He is one of that movement's most valuable workers and has had a major part in establishing a number of new churches. He is at present pastor of the Bayshore Friends Church in South Texas.

I was born into a Quaker home in Emporia, Kansas. Mother and Father had been converted in the revivals of 1880 to 1890, that had enlivened the Orthodox Progressive Friends Church. Mother served many years as president of the Christian Endeavor Society of the First Friends Church. Standards of Christian living were held high, because Quaker living was not just a First day observance. The family made their homes in the same block with the First Church, so that the four children would have access to every influence offered by the church.

Mother brought us up on such verses as, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," so that we would not depend on our "birthright membership" in the church. She dedicated all four of us children to God, and as a result the two sons are ministers, one daughter married a minister, and the other daughter married a lawyer who has proved that a man can really be a lawyer and a Christian.

Our parents regularly attended church services, seating us children in the pew so that we would not have a chance to disturb meeting. I loved the hearty singing and preaching and the "speaking in meeting" of various Friends. I can still hear the voices that gave their witness to God's saving and sanctifying and keeping grace. They were as beautiful as any music. However, we dared never ask to leave the church after meeting began, and as a result many times I became so thirsty that I resolved that if I ever built a church there would be a drinking fountain in front of every seat.

Although I was taught that the Father God had sent his only begotten Son to be my Savior through the shedding of his blood upon the cross, and that Jesus loved us more than his own life, yet I early, some way or other, imbibed the idea that God was an old man with a long beard, flowing robe, and piercing eyes, going about trying to see how bad we were, and hating us. As a result I feared God and would cover up my head in bed, winter and summer, for fear of God, and the devil too. Evidently the verse, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," had inspired a part of this idea.

Mother faithfully reminded us that as children we were under the atonement, but when the moment arrived that we knew we must confess our sins, we must confess, for we then had come to the age of accountability and were responsible for our own spiritual experience. Up to the age of twelve I had no realization of my own need.



One day the superintendent of our Junior Christian Endeavor Society, who was the older daughter of our pastor, asked the group of children, "How many of you have been saved?" There was a feeling as if my heart had come up suddenly, hard, and hit me under the chin. I wanted the benediction to be said quickly so that I could run. That simple question awakened a real need. I was afraid the young woman, Inez, would run after me and make me get saved right there.

Revival meetings were being held nightly by the pastor. It was my duty to pump the pipe organ. I had to stay up in the organ loft behind the organ until the service was over. A real agony of soul was developing.

It was my duty to take a bucket of milk to the back door of the parsonage each evening; so one evening when I wanted Inez to come to the door to take the milk, I was afraid she would. I knew I had to tell her that I was not saved. So that evening when Inez did come at my knock, I said, as I handed the bucket up to her, "Inez, I'm not saved." Then down the alley I ran as fast as I could go, expecting every second to find her grabbing me by my coat collar and telling me I had to get saved then and there.

A night or two later I again pumped the old organ, hungrier than ever. Coming down from the organ loft, I went weeping to Inez and told her I wanted to be saved. We knelt at the altar rail; in a few moments God heard my confession of sin, and the burden rolled away. There came the knowledge that God loved me and saved me. How light and happy I felt.

The same week the girl who later became my wife was also saved. That week at the altar we both dedicated ourselves to God and received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This is the only baptism Quakers recognize; we found it to be our own real experience.

Even before I was saved, perhaps as early as my fifth year, I knew that God had called me to be a minister. Father said very emphatically one day that he did not want any of his children to be preachers because of the small salary and privations ministers endured. The church needed very much to get the vision of tithing, but the older Friends did not practice it until we younger ones began to tithe. I never revealed to anyone that I felt a call to the ministry, yet in high school every subject I studied was with the thought of how it would prepare me for the ministry. So when, at the age of about sixteen, I gave my testimony that God called me to special service, it was accepted as a natural result by all. My father was as happy as anyone that three of his children served in the ministry.

Edith and I were married at the same altar where we were saved and sanctified, using the old-fashioned Quaker ceremony. She has used her beautiful talent for music, and her sweet, quiet strength, until she is as much looked to as pastor as her husband.

The Lord has used us, with others, to revive three old Friends Meetings that were about to pass out of existence, and to lead in founding seven more churches during our twenty-four years of pastoral service. At this time we are in our eleventh year as pastors of the Bayshore Friends Church in South Texas.

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# CONTEMPORARY CONVERSIONS

Compiled and edited by Bernie Smith

## **The Conversion of F. G. SMITH**

Dr. F. G. Smith was ordained a minister in the Church of God in November, 1900. Since that time he has served as an evangelist, missionary to Syria, editor in chief of the Gospel Trumpet, president of the general Foreign Missionary Board, and as pastor. He is the author of numerous expository and doctrinal books, as well as other writings.

Dr. Smith spent fifteen years as pastor of the McKinley Avenue Church of God, Akron, Ohio, and is now president of the Gospel Trumpet Company in Anderson, Indiana.

My parents, Joseph F. and Mary A. Smith, lived on a farm in Michigan, where I was born November 12, 1880. For years they had been nominal church members, but in a revival meeting held near their home by Church of God ministers in January, 1883, they became awakened to their spiritual need and became Christians indeed.

On June 19 of that year they took me, a mere child, to a camp meeting held by the same people about six miles from our home. That day an outstanding miracle took place when a young lady named Emma Miller was instantly healed of total blindness. So great were the shouts of joy in the camp that they were heard by people living in the town of Bangor, nearly three miles distant. I was terribly frightened, not understanding much about the cause of the excitement, so my older sisters put forth an effort to pacify me. This healing was a topic of conversation in our home afterward; hence the tremendous impression made upon me by that experience became permanent -- the earliest event in life that I can distinctly remember. At this writing, the lady who was healed then (now Mrs. Emma Palmer) is still living at an advanced age in Anderson, Indiana.

This background of childhood experience -- a home in which God's Word was read and prayers offered daily and the mighty saving and healing power of Christ was conceived to be present and operative in the world -- led the way to my own definite, individual conversion at an early age.

This supreme event took place on September 15, 1890. An old-fashioned "protracted meeting" had been in progress for a week six miles from our home. On that pleasant Sunday Father and Mother took us in a lumber wagon to that meeting. Near the close of the forenoon service a wonderful preacher and man of God, named Daniel Sidney Warner, arose and told how during the week he had held special children's meetings daily and that many of the children had really given themselves to the Lord. He announced another such meeting for one o'clock.

At one o'clock I was there, sitting on the front seat. This same minister, who had often visited our home, arose and began talking to us. After a while he addressed me directly, saying, "Fred, would you like to get saved also?" I replied, "Yes," and knelt at the altar of prayer. The preacher came and knelt also. Placing his hands on my head, he began praying with such fervor of spirit that I seemed to be melting away under the power of the Spirit of God. When he said, "Lord, give this boy a new

heart and a new spirit," I thought my heart had actually gone out of me! Praise God! I wonder even yet how so much joy and glory could be poured into one little soul. If I should live to be as old as Methuselah I could never forget that day.

I myself began preaching at the early age of seventeen, and now, after the lapse of nearly forty-eight years of an unbroken ministry extending around the world, after witnessing the conversion not only of scores, but hundreds, even thousands of others, as well as the divine physical healing of many -- I still rejoice in the glories of that childhood day when Jesus washed my sins away.