

History of the *Plain Truth* magazine

By CM White

Version 1.0

“Surely nothing could have started smaller. Born in adversity in the very depths of the Depression, this Work of God was destined to grow to worldwide power. But I did not realize its destiny then. There were no illusions of grandeur. It was not through any planning of mine that the little three-point campaign then being launched was to expand into its present global scope and influence.” (*The Autobiography*, Vol 1, Ch 31) Read the rest of chapter 31 about the modest beginnings of *The Plain Truth* and also the article “Plain Truth. 40 Years and still ahead of its time,” *Plain Truth*, January 1975, pages 25-29.

Year	Event
1928	<p>HWA had several articles published in <i>The Bible Advocate</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Can a Sabbath-keeper believe in evolution?” (front page article) (1 May, vol 62, no. 18); • “Planting the evolutionary concept in your child’s mind” (11 Sept, vol. 62, no 36); • “The Sabbath a perpetual covenant” (18 Sept, vol 62, no. 37); • “Does the Lord heal the sick today?” (9 Oct, vol 62, no 40); • “Have we tarried for the power to carry the Third Angel’s Message?” (16 Oct, vol. 62, no 41); • “Does the Lord heal the sick today? Chapter 2” (23 Oct, vol 62, no 42); • “The “Pact of Paris.” Will it End War?” (30 Oct, vol 62, no 43); • “The “Pact of Paris.” Will it End War? (continued)” (6 Nov, vol 62, no 44); • “The “Pact of Paris.” Will it End War? (continued)” (13 Nov, vol 62, no 45); • “The “Pact of Paris.” Will it End War? (continued)” (20 Nov, vol 62, no 46); • “Ten rules that lead to health” (18 Dec, vol 62, no. 40).
1931	<p>HWA (Associate Editor) and Roy Taylor (Editor) publishes the <i>Messenger of Truth</i> periodical (vol 1, no 1, Sept). It is unknown which, if any, of the articles were written by HWA. Apparently only one further edition was ever published. Refer to the explanation below</p>
1934	<p>First edition of the <i>Plain Truth</i> published 1 February</p> <p>“Immediately the idea came of realizing, at last, the dream I had cherished since 1927 - the publication of a magazine, to be called <i>The Plain Truth</i>. Back in 1927 I had made up an entire “dummy” of this proposed magazine. I had even written articles for it. I even had a professional letter artist design a front cover idea in 1927 -- and I had tried designing one myself. But we had never had the “wherewithal” to start publishing a magazine. This ambition to publish <i>The Plain Truth</i> was the natural outgrowth of earlier business experience. Much of my 20 years of advertising experience had been spent in the class magazine field ...</p> <p>“Necessity is the mother of invention. If we could not afford to publish a high-quality, professional-appearing magazine, I would simply convert the mimeographed “BULLETIN” I had been issuing for our scattered church brethren in the Willamette Valley into <i>The Plain Truth</i>.”</p>

Year	Event
	<p>My idea for this magazine, from the start, had been to publish a magazine, not for church members, but for the general public -- the unconverted and unchurched -- an evangelistic-type publication to bring to the world God's TRUTH -- making it PLAIN! So now, even if it had to start with about 250 copies done by hand on a mimeograph, I would start it! Like the grain of mustard seed, it started, very possibly, the smallest of magazines. But it has grown into a professional-appearing 32-page magazine of over 8,000,000 circulation." (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 31) [emphasis mine]</p>
<p>1935</p>	<p>"During the year 1935, we continued grinding out a hand-made <i>Plain Truth</i> on the antiquated Neostyle. The mailing list had started with 106 names. But through 1934 and 1935 it continued to grow as a result of the radio program ... A <i>Bulletin</i> dated March, 1935, announced the addition of 200 copies to the <i>Plain Truth</i> circulation, and a radio listening audience estimated, by the mail response, at 8,000 every Sunday." (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 35)</p> <p>"... <i>The Plain Truth</i> was suspended from publication ... After I failed to TRUST GOD by going on KXL when He opened its door to us, we were allowed to print and send out only two more issues of <i>The Plain Truth</i> -- March and July issues, 1935 -- AND THEN <i>The Plain Truth</i> WAS ENTIRELY SUSPENDED FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS! After the issue of July, 1935, there was not another issue that year." (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 37)</p>
<p>1936</p>	<p>No <i>Plain Truth</i> published</p>
<p>1937</p>	<p>No <i>Plain Truth</i> published</p>
<p>1938</p>	<p>"There was not a single issue of <i>The Plain Truth</i> during 1936. There was not one number of <i>The Plain Truth</i> all during 1937. Not until January, 1938, did <i>The Plain Truth</i> appear again!" (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 37). It was published again on 1 January.</p> <p>"A bulletin sent to local Oregon church members, dated January, 1938, announced the Plain Truth mailing list was now 1050." (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 39)</p> <p>"Finally, after more than four years on the air, we managed to produce the first really printed Plain Truth!" (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 39)</p> <p>"This was done by combining May-June into one number! It had to be printed on inexpensive newsprint paper. The page size was larger than the present magazine, but it contained only 8 pages. This was the first issue that carried under the masthead the slogan I had always wanted: "a magazine of understanding." (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 39)</p>
<p>1939</p>	<p>"So it was that on February 4, 1939 -- five years after the first issue of The Plain Truth -- a letter to our few co-workers said: "I will have to tell you that we are VERY SERIOUSLY IN NEED of a new mimeograph machine. The present one is about worn out, and we are producing this issue of The Plain Truth under difficulties. I can get a very good used mimeograph, almost new, one capable of turning out the large amount of work that is necessary in this office, and [that] will last for several years, for \$65. There is not one cent available for the mimeograph, unless some of our friends can send in a special and additional offering just for this purpose."</p> <p>"By April 5, 1939, a letter to co-workers found in an old file says: "At last, after many unavoidable delays, we are sending you The Plain Truth. This issue goes to about one thousand NEW READERS. It is still mimeographed, because we have not enough funds to print it, as we did two issues last year. It is a tremendous task, and nearly all</p>

Year	Event
	<p>the work is done by Mrs. Armstrong, our daughter Beverly who is office secretary, and myself.” (<i>Autobiography</i>, Vol 1, Ch 40)</p> <p>“The February-March, 1939, issue of The Plain Truth contained another article on the resurrection of the Roman Empire to come.” (Ch 40)</p>
1940	<p>“The March, 1940, Plain Truth was the first since November, 1939. It was still mimeographed. The circulation was 2,000 copies.” (Ch 40)</p> <p>“The co-workers’ <i>Bulletin</i> dated November 1 reported the subscription list of The Plain Truth had reached 3,000. We still had to keep the mailing list by handwriting, or typing, and in this manner personally address every copy.” (Ch 41)</p>
1941	<p>“By mid-May we were receiving between 200 and 300 letters from radio listeners every week, and mailing out 5,000 copies of The Plain Truth.” (Ch 41)</p>
1944	<p>“The circulation of The Plain Truth had climbed to 35,000 copies, now reaching every state and province in English-speaking North America.” (Ch 46)</p>
1945	<p>Plenary session to plan the UNO at San Francisco Civic Opera House. “As editor and publisher of The Plain Truth, I was able to obtain full press credentials from the State Department, as a fully accredited press representative, and also associate press credentials for Mrs. Armstrong.” (Ch 48) (refer to HWA’s WW2 predictions below)</p>
1946	<p>Plain Truth circulation reaches 75,000 (Ch 49)</p>
1947	<p>“The special January, 1947, number of The Plain Truth, announcing the future college in Pasadena, brought applications from both prospective faculty members and students.” (Ch 55)</p>
1948	<p>“During 1948 we had been able to print The Plain Truth only twice, prior to September. We had gotten out an abbreviated eight-page issue in March. But then we were put off the air on our one BIG station, and we managed only one more -- a June number -- prior to September. By holding publication down to eight pages, we were able to issue a Plain Truth every month for the remainder of that year -- September, October, November, and December.” (Ch 58)</p>
1949	<p>“In 1949 I felt we should get back to the 16-page size. This was possible only by combining the first issue as a January-February number. It still was a tight financial struggle through 1949 as evidenced by the fact that I was able to print only two more editions that entire year -- one in July, the other in November.” (Ch 58)</p>
1950	<p>“During 1950 I was able to publish only FOUR issues of The Plain Truth -- in February, March, April, and August. As an evidence of the tight financial squeeze of the year, all four editions had to be reduced to a mere eight pages once again.” (Ch 58)</p>
1951	<p>“The Plain Truth circulation had grown to more than 50,000” (Ch 59)</p> <p>“But, even with the editorial help of students, finances permitted the publication of only four sixteen-page issues during the remainder of 1951 -- plus one sixteen-page Plain Truth, issued October, 1951 -- written wholly by me.” (Ch 59)</p>
1952-53	<p>“I have already covered student participation in producing The Plain Truth and The Good News, which became its temporary substitute, from April, 1951, through May, 1953.” (Ch 60)</p>
1956	<p>April, 1956, saw a big improvement in The Plain Truth. It was the first issue to come out with a real front cover. Until then, the leading article always had started on the front cover. That first pictorial cover was all black and white, and showed a picture of the Library of Ambassador College. This front cover design has been further improved since, beside adding color and a heavier cover paper. Also that issue made</p>

Year	Event
	another BIG jump ahead -- it went to twenty-four pages. Until then, the Plain Truth magazine had never gone beyond sixteen pages." (Ch 62)
1957	"With the February, 1957, issue, The Plain Truth made another important advance." (Ch 62)
1958	"The November, 1958, issue of The Plain Truth took another leap ahead. With the first installment of <i>The Bible Story</i> by Basil Wolverton, the magazine was enlarged from twenty-four up to thirty-two pages." (ch 62) "By that time, the circulation of The Plain Truth had gone up to 175,000 copies." (Ch 70)
1959	Planning commenced to print the magazine in Britain (Ch 73)
1961	Plain Truth appears in German (August)
1963	Plain Truth appears in French (June)
1965	First full colour cover (Feb)
1967	Estimated 2.5 million readers (Ch 74)
1968	Plain Truth appears in Spanish (Feb) Plain Truth appears in Dutch (Sept)
1972	"Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos declares martial law. Though other media are closed down, <i>The Plain Truth</i> and the <i>World Tomorrow</i> program are favorably known and are allowed to continue in all phases" (" <i>Milestones in the Life of Herbert W. Armstrong</i> ")
1976	Circulation reaches 100,000 in South Africa (Ch 80)
1982	"1982 was the most successful year by far in the history of this Work. The Plain Truth circulation took a big leap ahead -- now well over five million copies a month" (Ch 83) Plain Truth appears in Italian (July)
1984	Plain Truth appears in Norwegian (Feb)
1986	Circulation reaches 8.2 million in 7 languages

Sources:

WCG (1986) "Milestones in the Life of Herbert W. Armstrong," *The Good News*, May, pages 26-27
 Armstrong, HW *Autobiography of Herbert W Armstrong*, vols 1 & 2

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***The Messenger of Truth* explanation**

"The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong," *The Plain Truth*, vol. 24, no. 12, December, 1959, page 11

"As the meetings continued, Mr. Taylor proposed to get out "a paper." I told him then of my vision of someday beginning publication of a magazine to be called "The PLAIN TRUTH." As early as 1928 I had prepared "dummy" copies of this envisioned magazine. I had even had a professional letter-artist design a front cover.

But this was really Mr. Taylor's magazine--or "paper," as he called it. He accepted part of my plans, by incorporating the word "TRUTH" into its name. He named it "The Messenger of Truth." Since I had had so many years' experience in newspaper and magazine work, he delegated to me the work of designing the mast-head, and the make-up. It had to be a paper of very few pages. Lack of funds dictated that. I designed it as a small, 8-page magazine. Since we could not afford a special cover, the lead article began on the front cover ...

"I might mention here that, so far as I know, only two issues of this "paper" of Mr. Taylor's ever were published. As a publishing enterprise, it was a "dud." He decided that the reason 50,000 or more subscriptions did not come in spontaneously as a result of the first issue was because it contained nothing about the Sabbath. This first issue came out about September 1, which I believe was after the close of our tent campaign. We prepared it during the last weeks of the campaign. I had left Eugene, and had no part in the second edition. It was devoted heavily to the Sabbath. The response was less than that from the first issue. When this did not bring in the subscription money, a few years later Mr. Taylor got out an issue of a "paper"—he may have still called it "The Messenger of Truth" devoted primarily to arguments against God's Sabbath!"

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Addendum – HWA's WW2 predictions (Chapter 44)

"Before going to Des Moines to begin the broadcasting over WHO, I had written and turned over to the printers in Eugene the articles for the August-September issue of The Plain Truth. We were not up to twelve pages, although it still was coming out bimonthly. The leading article in that number revealed the amazing Japanese plan for conquering the United States. It was based on a Japanese Mein Kampf, called the Tanaka Memorial. This plan had been in process of development for three hundred years -- growing out of an ancient document dated May 18, 1592. The great national hero of Japan, Hideyoshi, had set forth in this document the great national plan for world empire and setting the Mikado on the throne to rule the world.

This had been a Japanese national dream for three centuries. Then on July 25, Baron Tanaka, then Premier, presented The Tanaka Memorial as a definite blueprint for world conquest to the Mikado. This led directly to the bombing of Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941. It was based on the religious conviction that the Mikado is the direct descendant of the Mother of Heaven. Being, therefore, the SON of Heaven, the Emperor had to be established on the throne of the world to show that he is GOD. Thus even the Japanese attack had vital significance as another counterfeit of CHRIST'S GOSPEL of the kingdom of God -- and of Jesus Christ as the true SON of GOD, who is to RULE THE WORLD!

An article captioned "The WAR, at the Moment" said this:

"We entered the supreme CRISIS of this war the first of July. It came with the launching of Hitler's supreme gamble for the Russian Caucasus The situation is this:

We do not have to WIN the war this year, but Hitler does! United States power is mounting fast. It is only a matter of perhaps ten to twelve more weeks until this nation shall be able to hurl such crushing power against the Axis that, with this power steadily increasing, the ultimate outcome will be assured, with victory for the Democracies It might, even then, take us until 1945 to end it, but the outcome would be predetermined From now on Axis power cannot increase, while Allied power will "And so it is A RACE AGAINST TIME The Germans, to win, must win before we get set with the power we shall have by approximately November 1st. They must knock Russia out of the war. They must take Suez and drive the British out of the Mediterranean and the Near East. They must be ready to turn

west, against the British Isles, without fear of attack from behind, free to hurl their WHOLE POWER against Britain in one supreme final victory, before we can launch the much-talked-of offensive against Hitler's Europe Hitler staked everything on his death-gamble that he could knock out Russia before the Allies can open the second European front."

There, in summary, was the analysis of the war as of August, 1942, as reported in The Plain Truth. Looking back in retrospect, the analysis was accurate. Hitler did take too big a gamble. United States' might did turn the tide before the end of the year. And it did take until the spring of 1945, just as predicted, to END it!"

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- *History of the Place of Safety Doctrine in the Church of God*
- *History of the Plain Truth magazine*
- *History of the World Tomorrow Broadcast*
- *History of Worldwide Church of God Ministerial Conferences*
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GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

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