

Spring '76 conversation with a garage manager who was doing excellent work on our car, being shorthanded. I: 'Mechanics come in all qualities, and you're triple A; so do ministers: I'm a minister.' M: 'You *are*? I love Jesus, got converted two years ago...haven't told anybody about it for four months, I hate laying trips on people, though I did it for some months after my conversion, and saw it wasn't doing any good.' He got so excited that he forgot to put on one of the hubcaps, and I had to come back later. In spite of his being shorthanded, he said, 'Come into my office. I've just got to tell you the whole story!' And he did: 1/2 hour! I talking very little, taking notes. Impression: Handsome, intelligent, probably no formal education beyond highschool, early thirties, high-energy, happy in and proud of his work, good relations with his workers. "Burnt out" on the cults. This verbatim is in order and represents his emphases: [Forgot to add, though it's impertinent: white.]

M: "I used to beat my wife so bad that I took to not going home nights. Bars instead, where I'd pick up women and spend the night with them. I loved my wife, I really did; and I didn't want to hurt her. And I never lied to her till one weekend she pressed me hard and I said I hadn't spent Friday night with another women: when I had, between two women. That got to me. There wasn't anything else for me to be proud about myself, except not lying. That really bothered me."

I: "You notice I've been taking notes. Mind if I share your story?"

M: "Of course not! Jesus saves, and we need to tell the story, right?" [Attitude: joy, not arrogance.] "One night I'd been drinking heavily, didn't go home, got to work with a severe hangover and no shave and found myself praying 'Oh, Lord, what's happening to me?' In comes an old friend to get his car fixed, and he sees me a mess and calls me aside and tells me what Jesus had just done for him and says 'He can do it for you, too, just as easy!' And I say 'Yeah?' And he says 'Come to this Pentecostal church with me Wednesday night, will ya?' and I say 'I've tried everything else, so sure' and he says 'Great! I'll pick you up' and he did."

I: "Anything happen?"

M: "Not that I can remember, except inside me. Inside me there was this awful tug of war. I became convinced that Jesus was the answer to the mess I was, and I was mad at that conclusion: I didn't want no savior, I could take care of myself, I always had, hadn't I? But I wasn't now, was I....I went home and got in bed and in the middle of the night there was this awful storm and I felt a force coming at me and I was terrified and I dropped out of bed and onto me knees and cried aloud, 'God, don't let it get me! Save me!' And--this was at my sister's house, because I wan't going home those nights--my sister came in and said 'You crazy or something?' And I said 'No, just scared.' I'm glad I didn't tell her about the force; not just that she wouldn't understand, but I felt it would make matters worse inside me."

I: "How could it make things any worse?"

M: "I'm not sure; but I felt guided not to talk about it at the time. As I see it now, the Lord had to do a work in me: he had to clean me out. I was schizo, and talking about it would have made it worse, somehow....Well, for some weeks I was tutored by the devil through my drinking friends, who made fun of any serious conversation I began and told me I was crazy. But it was something worse than crazy; it was something I learned later to call 'demonic': evil powers were after me, to convince me not to turn to Jesus. When I dropped on my knees that time, the storm stopped as I prayed, and the candle--the current had gone off in the storm--suddenly became so bright it lit up the whole room brilliantly....Soon after, I had on a train another attack of evil spirits: the force come after me; I got off and ran to my sister's and said '...., give me a Bible, quick!' Then I knocked myself out with a sixpack. Two years later I tell this story in a party of Christians and a brother says 'Let's pray for our brother,....' and my wife says 'He's jealous, he beats me, he's lustful'--this, when the brother looked at her and said, 'What's the matter with him?' All at once I felt the force come up through me screeching and screaming, and suddenly I was quiet, and I jumped up and began praising the Lord. I soon learned that Christian witness is growing in love, and being faithful in the natural things."

I: "Are you still with that group of Christians?"

M: "Yes, around the homes on Sunday mornings; a Salvation Army place Wed. evenings. We raise money for the Army. And my wife and I have copyrighted eight Gospel songs."