

## **my journey so far**

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*I'm not sure who will be the more interested in this, people who think I might have been a class mate, or heresy hunters looking for clues as to where I 'went wrong'. After looking this over, those are the only two groups I can imagine ploughing through the entire 21 or so pages. Anyway, I've tried to include something worthwhile for both groups.*

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My wife made the mistake of marrying an artist. Now that I've published a few novels, along with a few other types of literary work, it occurs to me that I owe a few other people an explanation of who I am, and what makes me this way. In the next 23 pages of rambling drivel, I'll attempt to trace my spiritual roots.

***the faith of c.t. studd*** -- I was born of missionary parents in Thailand. They belonged to a group called WEC, which now stands for World-wide Evangelisation for Christ, founded by C. T. Studd, who believed that if it were God's will for one to go somewhere as a missionary, God would also provide for expenses without having to ask anyone for donations. He set the precedent himself and made it a policy in WEC, that missionaries not even leave broad hints regarding their financial needs, apart from the unavoidable submitting of plans for prayer. It worked for him and for my folks.

To make matters worse, my parents didn't just settle for the relatively inexpensive task of church planting and coaching; rather, they felt the burden to begin a literature ministry as well. This also entailed printing and shipping costs. The only thing the newsletters could say, after the initial announcement of their intention was, 'Praise God for the response to our last issue, we are planning another one for July,' etc. -- no list of expenses, no letting on that the printers in Thailand don't provide their service free of charge, nor that postage stamps don't grow in our back yard. Yet, the money always came in on time to pay the printing bills and other expenses. Some dear granny in Ireland, England or America would feel the urge to send us just the amount that we needed, and it would arrive just a few days before, if not right on the deadline. It happened all the time.

***church*** -- When I referred to the task of church planting as relatively inexpensive, that was because it was usual practice with the Thai WEC mission teams to begin with what we today think of as house churches. They would go to some village or other where the gospel had never been preached and begin sharing via tract evangelism, open air meetings, children's meetings, house to house visitation, or even doing medical work (in the days before public health became widely available). Then, they would begin holding regular meetings in the home of whomever was the most interested. That's how the church started. The most mature members of the new group were soon appointed as elders, and the church would carry on with no budget -- no rent, no pastor's salary -- apart from a small offering taken to get whatever they needed, like song books etc. The missionaries and Thai volunteer workers would fill the pastoral gap by showing up on whatever day of the week was convenient for them, and giving foundational teaching. Thus, church wasn't always on Sunday morning, but it could be Tuesday, Wednesday, or wherever they fit on the worker's schedule. Every few months or so, local leaders would

meet at some convenient location for training. That way, no one thought of themselves as 'reverend', nor deserving of a fat pastor's salary. They all continued to work at whatever they had been doing to keep themselves alive, in addition to feeding their flocks. It was only when some of them would meet pastors of other denominations at national conventions that they would hear how others did it, or fall prey to someone suggesting, 'Join us! You'll get lots of money!', and fall for the tragic misnomer that for a church to 'grow up', means to get a professional to do all the ministry that the members were doing before.

**denominations** -- Now, we would call them house churches. Then, they would have probably been thought of as resembling the Plymouth Brethren style of doing church. The missionaries themselves were from just about every group *but* the Plymouth Brethren (who had their own missionary organisation, and thought of the rest of us as too liberal). The field leader, Uncle Wilf, was Lutheran, Auntie Ellen was Congregational, Uncle Art and Auntie Gini were Baptist, my mum was Presbyterian, and my dad's background was a mixture of things. Only later did I learn that interdenominational-ism was associated with the Charismatic movement, but WEC was already so, even before Charismatics had anything to do with it. The Pentecostals and Charismatics began joining the field fellowship relatively late. Uncle Hans, from Holland was the first Pentecostal to be accepted by WEC Thailand. Later, there was Uncle Cyril who went to the same Bible School as Rienhard Bonnke, along with a few others.

Even without the Charismatic/Pentecostal influence, there was still the sense of God speaking to people individually, doing financial miracles, and even a miraculous healing on occasion. Worship during the field conferences was something that could be felt, even without tongues and prophetic experience. Auntie Kaeomoon, one of the pillars of the Tak church had a sister, so badly affected by demonic possession she to be chained. Some of the WEC missionaries, including my parents and Uncle Hans, a new missionary at the time, prayed for her deliverance and she recovered. A few years before that, a young man was raised from his death bed through a prayer by Uncle Wilf, Auntie Ellen and my Mother, all the while the men were building his coffin downstairs. Prayer, especially during annual prayer conferences was fervent and mountain moving. For some Thailand WECcers, it was a very natural transition when the Charismatic movement made itself felt in Thailand. There were the usual dividing lines drawn, of course, but as time went on, the non Charismatics learned to live with the Charismatics, and *vice versa*. Even then, there was the occasional word in tongues with an interpretation.

**wec style communalism** -- But now, I'm getting beyond myself. My formative years were back when travelling back and forth from one field station to another was like visiting members of an extended family. It was almost a communal atmosphere. In Tak, there was the 'North House', run by Auntie Ellen, and a turnover of new missionaries studying the language, including a family or two, and others staying over on business. The 'South House', run by Auntie Hanna, was more of the same. Then, there was the 'Middle House', next to the Chinese school, at one point run by Uncle Art and Auntie Gini. I stayed there for one year, with their two daughters, Beth and Ruth, while Beth and I attended the little school run by Auntie Evy (wife of Uncle Wilf). I, and her son, Dan were in the third grade together. That's just a snapshot in time.

I began to recognise a pattern quite early of single uncles and aunties pairing off and getting married. I would notice that a particular uncle and an auntie would be together a

lot, and then suddenly, there would come an announcement of their engagement. I don't remember it specifically, but I was told much later by Uncle Stan, that one day I went to him and asked, 'Are you going to marry Auntie Audrie?' He thought no one had noticed!

**parent's background** -- So, communal living that came with some aspects of the Jesus Movement later on, wasn't such a new thing to me. We were from all backgrounds: English, Irish, American, Canadian, Scottish, Welsh, Australian, New Zealand, Holland, Denmark, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Baptist, Reformed -- My own family was a case in point. My dad was raised in a working class family living in a low cost housing estate in Belfast, Northern Ireland. His conversion came while serving in the RAF during World War II, through Assemblies of God evangelists. He also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit through them. Then, back in Belfast, he went to the same church his mother took him to as a boy, a sort of Plymouth Brethren assembly off Cragagh Road, called Cragagh Hall. That continued to be his home church in Belfast. Then, after a two year term at Emmanuel Bible School, with a Wesleyan Holiness emphasis, he came to Thailand with WEC, where he met my mother. She had followed her parents footsteps in returning to Thailand. They were Presbyterian missionaries in the city of Lampang, Northern Thailand, where she was born. She had received a Masters degree, while my dad, at the time hadn't even finished secondary school (he later did completed that, and a master's degree through home study. That was long before cheap diplomas became available via Internet).

That's the WEC part of me.

**plymouth brethren and other influences** -- Plymouth Brethren also played a role in my spiritual upbringing. At fourteen years old, I was left to study in America. For the first year of that, I stayed with my Uncle Stan and Aunt Esma, missionaries to Honduras, who just happened to be on their one year leave (furlough, as missionaries call it) in Washington State. There, we attended the local Brethren assembly where I saw first hand 'how it was done in Bible times'. I say that facetiously, but I also mean it. I still have a fond respect for them for attempting to do church the way they did it in the New Testament. *How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.* (I Corinthians 14:26) All that, apart from 'the tongue', was how it was done during the 'breaking of bread' service every Sunday morning. I enjoyed it, and it felt like church. They didn't have a pastor, rather a group of elders who were native to the local community. I also learned other things as well, that I un-learned later on, such as had to do with tongues, which they said wasn't applicable for this day and age, Dispensationalism, and the non involvement of women in public ministry. But the two aspects that I saw demonstrated in a positive way -- the involvement of the whole body in corporate worship, and lay leadership rather than a professional pastor -- stayed with me.

After that, I moved to stay with my Aunt Claralice (my mom's twin sister) and her husband, Uncle Carl, a Presbyterian minister, whom my Plymouth Brethren uncle thought was a liberal. Well, okay, they did vote for George McGovern, but with me, he was more of a disciplinarian. I needed it, of course. To be sure, he wasn't the fundamentalist that my uncle was, but he tried to open my eyes to the fact that salvation goes a lot further than what happens up at the alter during a meeting.

The three years I was with them, my Uncle and Aunt directed a children's shelter in the

hills of Eastern Kentucky, called Buckhorn Children's Centre. The institute provided a home and a semblance of a family life for children who had to be removed from their families for whatever reason, ranging from severe poverty to mild delinquency. I was only there during holidays. The first year, I studied at Stony Brook School for Boys. As my father in Thailand complained that the school fees were driving them "stony broke", my aunt and uncle wisely decided (with my consent) to move me to nearby Annville Institute, where some of the Buckhorn residents also went, also a boarding school situation. Thus, I spent my two remaining years of high school.

The summer before my last year, I made a trip back to Thailand for the holiday, and stayed with my parents for two months. The Charismatic movement had arrived in force, and my parents had been attending the weekly meeting at the Eubank's home in Chiangmai, where all the Charismatics in town met. Alan and Joan Eubank were missionaries working with Payap University. My mother had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit at their meeting, and my dad's RAF experience was revived. Then, I received it as well, coached by Auntie Jeanette, another WEC missionary. The WEC field fellowship was divided down the middle over the issue. However, they kept to their policy of working together and accepting one another's differences. That was back in 1973.

Up to that point, I had been to one school for every year I had been in school: My mother taught me the first two years. I had to repeat the second grade during our furlough in America. That was okay, because she had started me early anyway. The first school where I attended a class with other children was Troy Avenue School in Ventner, New Jersey. We stayed at an apartment complex for missionaries, called 'Houses of Fellowship'. Everyone, supposedly, remembers where they were when they heard that John F. Kennedy was shot (well, okay -- some of you weren't born yet). I had just got home from Troy Ave. and some of my friends at Houses of Fellowship informed me. In middle of that year, we travelled to Washington State, where I finished second grade in the small mountain town of Carrolls. Then, I had third grade with my two friends, Dani and Beth, taught by Dan's mum. After that was one year at Dalat School, a missionary school that had recently had to evacuate from Dalat, Vietnam, as that war was escalating. Since the facilities they had located in Bangkok on such short notice was way too small, they moved again over the Christmas break to the Cameron Highlands, Malaysia. After that year, WEC Thailand decided to start their own school in Bangkok. That was named Bethel School. Dan, Beth, her sister Ruth, and a number of others ranging four levels, sat in one room while Miss Wenburg gave us our lessons. Bethel School makes it's appearance in my novel, *The Zondon*, as Salem School (no reference to Mr. Creakle's Salem School of Dickens' fame). We were there two years, until the WEC field fellowship decided it would be more sensible to move us all to Chiangmai, and instead of having a school, simply be a hostel so we can attend the already existing school, Chiangmai Coeducational Centre. Then, during our next furlough, I attended Roosevelt Jr. High in Glendale, California, while we resided at the C&MA compound for missionaries on furlough. After that is when I joined my Plymouth Brethren uncle and aunt while attending Montecello Jr. High in Longview, Washington. Then, of course, it was Stony Brook, then Annville where I finally got to spend two years. My education was thoroughly American, and that's how I acquired such a horrible accent! (That list, by the way, is for the benefit of anyone who thinks I may have been a classmate.)

*his house, new hope, etc.* -- In 1974, my parents arrived on their furlough in time for my high school graduation from Annville Institute. From there, we drove to Southern California, where we visited my grandmother, now in a rest home for retired Presbyterian missionaries in Duarte. From there, we planned to drive to Washington State, to another old family homestead. However, I wanted to see more of my grandmother. I felt sorry for her being left alone in a nursing home. Someone suggest a local 'Christian house', a sort-of 'Jesus people' commune in Arcadia, called 'His House', not far from the rest home. They accepted me, and I moved in.

Even though I had had my experience with the Holy Spirit the previous summer, the final year in high school had brought pressures and distractions which I hadn't successfully coped with, so I was almost in a back-slidden state when I arrived in California. The spiritual atmosphere of His House was just what I needed -- I knew I needed it, and was glad to be there.

Occasionally, a group of us trekked off to Calvary Chapel for their Saturday night free concert. It was at one of those, that my experience with the Holy Spirit was revived. The dry spell was over.

His House was regarded by all its members as a 'church', yet there was no Sunday service. The residents along with a large number of non-resident members met on Monday and Friday night for praise, worship and Bible study, in addition to a Wednesday night "brother's meeting" for the residents. It was lead by a group of about three or so elders. Most of the members attended other churches in the locality on Sunday morning, but some, including myself, didn't (although I occasionally attended weekly meetings at similar ministries, such as Canyon House, and Zion Ministries. I even popped into the local synagogue on occasion).

While residing at His House, I began my first attempt at writing a novel. That was in the days before personal computers, and as I tended to make typos, I wrote it by hand -- not that my handwriting was much better. It was a fantasy, a sort of long rambling parable. During that time, I had trouble staying very long at a workplace. I lasted only a month each on two or three jobs, before the boss decided I was useless and let me go. After a while, the elders of His House spoke to me and Dan Redler told me that writing a novel wasn't good for my concentration. He asked me to give him my giant notebook, and he'd keep it for me until a later time. I never did get it back, probably because I forgot to ask for it on moving to Anaheim two years later.

I began taking courses at Melodyland School of Theology (MST), in Anaheim. At first I went along with others from either His House, or Zion Ministries, whoever happened to have classes there on the same evenings as I did. I got my feet wet in theology *a la* Dr. Tappiener (a Calvinist) and Dr. Rod Williams (more of an Armenian), learned the Torah from 'Rabbi' Lou Sheldon, I sat under a lot of teaching by Walter Martin. Those were the days before the organisation he founded became famous for heresy hunting -- then, it was just the cults. But my favourite subject was church history, taught by Bob Whittaker, who had the gift of breathing life into it, and making it applicable to our time. My grades weren't very good, however.

After the first year at MST, I decided to move closer, along with a couple of people I'd come to know. One of these was an older lady named Mary, who became like a spiritual mother to me. She was involved in a group that went on outreaches in the inner city areas of Watts and Compton. Out of that a group was formed called New Hope of Love

(NHoL). It was intended to be a women's ministry, but in practice, there was just as much activity involving men -- mostly students of MST. One of our thrusts, apart from evangelism and personal ministry, was the uniting of believers across racial and denominational lines. We met often with pastors of churches in the black community, and joined them in door to door evangelism, and for crusades. The leader of our group was also named Mary, whom we occasionally nicknamed 'Chocolate Mary' while the Mary I lived with, the vice president, was 'Vanilla Mary'. Even though both Chocolate and Vanilla were also members of Melodyland Christian Centre, I considered New Hope of Love as my home church. I even paid my tithe to them.

Another group I became involved with was called To Every Creature (TEC). Greg Fitch, an MST grad, and Bob Curry, former missionary to Brazil, were the leaders of that. The reason I mention them is one of my few remaining American contacts from that era was from that group, Joe Zeyak. While NHoL was radically into penetrating racial and denominational barriers, TEC was just as much so for 'the regions beyond'. They gave me my send off back to Thailand, and later issued me with a certificate of commission for ministry, which I still keep to this day.

I drew a few cartoon tracts which I published myself whenever I had the funds. One was an A4 size four-page comic with characters in the same style as Mad Magazine's Don Martin -- big chins, protruding bellies. It was entitled, *One Hot Afternoon On the Way Home From Work*. It didn't have my name on it, only, 'Not by Don Martin.' The invitation at the end was of a 'try it, you might like it' sort -- not very heavy on repentance. Greg Fitch, president of TEC also commissioned me to write a cartoon tract that their teams could use. That was along the line of *Four Spiritual Laws*, with a few differences.

There were other friends worth mentioning, fellow MST students and fellow troopers on numerous NhoL expeditions. Thomas Calhoun had a strong positive influence on me. He looked the part of a radical with his rugged black face with a beard. The reason for the beard was actually a skin condition. If he shaved, his tight ringletted hair would knot up under his skin. He was extremely outgoing in greeting people, showing the love of Messiah. Some, especially those not used to mixing with people of other races, felt intimidated by him, but he had a way of using that to open doors. He had a ministry of challenging nominal, half way Christians to go 'all the way', and give their 'all' to Him. I needed that at the time.

I remember the date 7-7-77. The Christian radio station we were listening to was making a big thing of all the sevens in a row, being the number of God and all. I was in Thomas's car as the two of us were driving from California to Louisville Kentucky, Thomas' home. I had also grown a beard, so I also probably looked the part, and I had nurtured a one-track mind -- *all for Jesus!* On a ministry trip to the city park with some of Thomas' old contacts at the Louisville Teen Challenge centre, one little girl approached me and asked if I was Jesus. Before we returned, someone prophesied over me that on my return, I would receive a word as to God's will for me.

Another one involved with us was Steve Sheppard. At the time Thomas and I returned from Kentucky, he was the NHoL emissary to Compton, where he was residing, working along side one of the churches in our network. He later became involved in TEC, got married to another MST student, with whom he later went as missionaries to Mexico. He was very good with languages, especially Spanish, but had also studied Chinese and Japanese. He's still very involved in missions, and I've recently reconnected with him via

Facebook.

Full of faith and energy, I was all set to join Steve in Compton, along with Thomas, but 'Vanilla' Mary nipped that in the bud. 'You are going back to work!' I was behind in my share of the rent and other responsibilities, and my excursion to Louisville hadn't helped matters!

Apparently, that was the 'word regarding God's will' that had been prophesied over me as we left Louisville. I did a lot of growing up in those days.

**word of faith** -- Another force I was exposed to was the Word of Faith movement. It was 'Vanilla' Mary, who initially introduced me to that.

At first, I was a bit slow to wholeheartedly embrace the new healing doctrine. I wasn't sure, for one thing, if Yeshua's atonement at the cross actually included healing, or if Isaiah's reference to healing in chapter 53 wasn't figurative. About that time, I read a book by Smith Wigglesworth, which pointed out that Matthew 8:17 refers to the passage in Isaiah 53 as indicating just that - healing through Yeshua's 'bearing our sickness, and carrying our diseases'. I looked it up. Sure enough, it did!

Then, at an early morning prayer meeting, my nose dripping like a tap, Thomas Calhoun said, 'Now, Bob, don't you leave here without your healing!' Something about how he said it sparked faith in my spirit. I said, 'Okay,' and by the time I left that house, I was healed! Gradually, through more seminars, tapes and books, and seeing it work on a few more occasions, I was a confirmed 'faith' man.

**off to thailand, and the faith of my parents** -- After a send off by both NHO and TEC, I set off to Thailand in 1979 armed with pamphlets by Kenneth E. Hagin. However, this was not a new thing to my parents. As I said, WEC is also a faith mission, and C. T. Studd was every bit as radical for his day as Hagin, Copeland and others were in 1979.

With the faith taught to them in WEC, they got their leaflets off the presses and food onto our table. However, they didn't have a car in the early days, but went around on bicycles and public transport. Looking back, I can see that their leaving me in America to study wasn't simply a convenient move on their part (as some would say, to get me 'out of their hair'). They released me by faith. I believe it was that faith that saw me through for many years.

Sometime later, my dad began listening to tapes by various Charismatics, including Kenneth Hagin, and was motivated to begin believing God for more than just the basics to survive. Soon, he was driving a second hand pick-up truck.

About that time is when I returned to Thailand, having been filled to the brim with the uncompromising Word of Faith message. However, I was dismayed that while my parents accepted the 'faith message' for the most part, there was a margin of 'compromise'. It verged on being 'C. T. Studd' type of faith instead of 'Kenneth Hagin' faith!

Maybe, they thought, God might use sickness sometimes.

Definitely not! I said.

Also, they'd pray many times for the same thing.

No! I'd say. You pray the prayer of faith only *once*! After that, you're praying in doubt!

I had a lot to teach my parents, if only they'd humble themselves and listen! My faith knew no compromise. So I thought...

In retrospect, my dad's faith actually bore more fruit. Even after retirement, at the age of 80, he would spend only the warmer half of the year in his home in Northern Ireland, but the cooler half in Thailand, translating gospel tracts and Bible courses like before. At

86, he made his last trip. God may use sickness to teach some people, but not him! What's more, just about every computer I owned, I inherited from him!

As for my mother -- while I preached a lot about the power of prayer, she actually had the self-discipline to do it. She was up regularly at five every morning, interceding for the churches in Thailand and elsewhere, her fellow missionaries, and for my dad and me. She didn't go in for luxuries. She finally started wearing a nice wrist watch when my dad bought one for her and all but forced her to wear it. Every time my dad talked about buying a new computer (which he often passed on to me), my mother would say, 'You need a computer like you need a hole in your head!' Much later, my dad conceded that she was probably right.

My parents were staying in the town of Kanu, when I joined them. I didn't stay put, however. I made friends here and there, traipsed off to places like Chiangmai, where my parents knew quite a few people from their years living there. In Bangkok, I made friends with Assemblies of God missionaries, and through them, I met Rod and Debbie Ritchie, missionaries with Church of God. They, along with some of the AOG missionaries were also 'Word of Faith'.

Joe Zeyak, my fellow student at MST, came out to visit Thailand. I took him to visit all the missionaries and pastors I had made contact with. He also introduced me to a group of Filipino missionaries with a group called Christ to Thailand. Joe had met Sonny Largado in the Philippines on the same trip, and later introduced me.

All the while, the Thai language was returning to me little by little. I would memorise Bible verses in Thai, and spend a day at a time working on sermons to preach in Thai based on those scriptures.

After my Thai had improved, my parents decided to turn me loose on a small group of new believers not far from us, mostly contacts provided by a mission hospital a couple of hours drive away. A young man name Wirote joined us. He had begun believing in a different part of the country, and had moved to the village his wife lived in. Since he was my age, we hit it on. One day, after I had been reading Kenneth Hagin's pamphlet on the Holy Spirit, I decided to take a leap of faith and teach on the subject, and lay hands on the believers to receive. Despite never having done it before, I told them to expect something when I laid my hands on them. To my surprise, Wirote's lips began shivering, and he began speaking in tongues. On a trip to Bangkok, I had obtained some books in Thai by T.L.Osborn, one on healing. I passed that one to Wirote. On week days, he went to work in another town, where he slept at the work place. One day, his boss's brother came by, who had a severe ailment -- I've forgotten what. Wirote showed him a page he had been reading, and offered to pray for him. He did, and the man was healed! After that, Wirote began to operate with the gift of healing.

Closer to home, some school students who resided at a hostile for students away from home, began dropping by. Living with them was a young man who was doing work for the local utilities. He had a fiancée who believed, living in his home town. With minimal persuasion, he and some of his companions believed. They began coming to our house regularly.

I'm sure that between the two ministries, had I chosen to stay put, I could have gone a long way. As it was, my attention was drawn elsewhere.

It was my Word of Faith sympathies that prompted me to accept Rod Ritchie's invitation to assist him in his church planting venture in Bangkok. This eventually led to



my officially joining Church of God and receiving credentials as a minister. A semblance of a church began, and I stayed at the house they had rented for that purpose. Later on, Rod invited a Thai-Chinese Christian worker to work with us, named Somnuk. He had some ministerial and clerical experience, and was engaged to Lily, a young lady from Hongkong.

**church of god --** After one year with them, Rod suggested I go back to school to finish my degree. He suggested a Church of God institution in Fresno, West Coast Christian College. I had preferred to go to Rhema Bible Training Centre in Tulsa Oklahoma, Kenneth Hagin's school, but I settled for WCCC. In retrospect, I'm glad I did.

I touched base again in Southern California, where I stayed with my old NHoL friends Steve and Christie Sheppard. Steve had a painting business, but they were planning to move to Mexicali, just South of the border in Mexico. I had been there once on a ministry trip along with a large team consisting of NHoL and TEC friends.

During the two and a half years I was back in U.S.A., I renewed acquaintance with a number of my old friends, including 'Vanilla' Mary, Joe Zeyak and Bob Curry.

On my term breaks, I visited Southern California a few occasions. I also made some friends in the Fresno area. One was a day student, who lived in a small town just outside of Fresno with his 10-year-old son. For a part of my first summer, he and I worked in the fields doing temporary labour as described in my novel, *The Zondon*.

After a year and a half, I almost completed a Bachelor's degree at WCCC. I was actually a much better student than I had been at MST. I had completed the Biblical-Theological course requirements, but lacked courses in the sciences, etc. However, I didn't like the idea of continuing to accumulate a debt though my student loan. I opted to go to work in Southern California.

During that time, I drew a few more cartoon tracts and published them as I had the funds. These ones reflected my Word of Faith approach. One was titled, *The Good Life is Yours for the Taking*. Again, not a lot of emphasis on repentance.

Meanwhile, Rod and Debbie Ritchie had taken their first furlough from Thailand, and decided not to return. They had turned the new Bangkok church over to Pastor Somnuk, whom Rod had groomed for the job. After that, Pastor Somnuk decided to accept an offer of a scholarship to study at a Korean Presbyterian seminary in California. By now, Rod Ritchie was pastoring a church in Simi Valley, California, not far from the L.A. area, the same church his dad had pastored. Thus, unknown to me, all three of us were in S. Cal.

After we got back in touch, Rod recommended to the Church of God missions board that I be appointed as a missionary, post haste, and sent to Thailand. The Far East Superintendent, Rev. Lovel Cary, agreed. Thus, I was appointed as a missionary by the missions board in Cleveland Tennessee.

**church planting, kuiburi --** The experience that I'd say, defined my five years as a missionary was my involvement with church planting in Prachuab province in the South. I had been given a copy of a book called *Church Planting Methods*, by David Godwin, in which the author tells of how he started churches by holding a crusade in a city that would go on for months until it evolved into a church. I decided to try it.

I had been working with a believing couple named Daeng and Nit in the town of Kuiburi for almost a year. A friend of mine, Doug Gehman, then living in the town of Huahin had a crusade ministry, and agreed to hold a five day crusade in Kuiburi. We obtained permission to use the unfinished market shelter, and I rented an old termite eaten

house nearby. The crusade went as planned, although with less turnout than we expected. However, among those who were turned on were a young farming lady named Mem and her sister, Pua. Mem found a leaflet advertising the meetings, and had come to be healed of high blood pressure. After that, she confessed faith, and then went home and prayed for her father to be healed. He was healed, and she was a confirmed believer.

After the meetings were finished in the market shelter, we carried on in the wooden house. Mem had a number of friends she thought ought to come, and took me in my dad's tiny Daihatsu pick-up to fetch them. In addition to them were a group of old ladies who lived within walking distance, and began coming regularly. Every night, I shared the word, and then we prayed for the sick.

The effect of doing it every night for a protracted period was just as Godwin said in his book. The atmosphere, the nightly prayers for healing, the continued teaching and preaching of the word infused an energy into the new converts that went much farther than a weekly visit. At the end of forty days of meetings, we baptised twenty converts. A much more detailed description of this experience is found in my article, *A Brief History of Plukchit Church of God, Thailand*.

Again, it was my dad's car, that he had had the faith to buy -- brand new this time. However, it wasn't in quite as mint condition when I was finished with it. There were the dents from the rocks.

I had been studying the life of the Apostle Paul, and began to aspire to a similar ministry. The first time that rocks began to fly at the car from out of the darkness in middle of nowhere, on the way back from dropping everyone off, I said, 'Lord, I don't have to be *exactly* like Paul!'

Then, there were the nails in the road. One day, I had to make an emergency call to my parents, living in Huahin, and they came, bringing two new tires and some inner tubes, because the local garage didn't have them in our size. My dad didn't mind the dents in his car, as they were for a good cause.

Then, help came from an unexpected source. Mem had become a prayer warrior, and told me, the next evening, 'I believe you should go home by the long way tonight.' We did, and there were no rocks or nails. The following night, she felt we should go in the long way, and return the short way. Again, no rocks.

There were other problems with the car as well, such as with the fuel pump. Even that was our salvation one night. On the way home, this time with Nit and Daeng in the front with me, the car died. Nit felt we should just stay put for a while and pray. A white sedan overtook us (the Daihatsu was also white). We heard something that sounded like a shot. As it turned out, the people who had stoned us on previous occasions were waiting with a gun, but mistakenly shot at the sedan. No one was hurt, but the owner of the sedan was very upset at the perpetrators.

Some time after that, some unpleasant things befell that group of young men, which everyone attributed to having 'touched God's anointed.' I reserved comment, and still do.

Another more positive miracle was that Pua, Mem's sister began reading. I didn't know she couldn't read, so during a Bible teaching, I asked her to read a verse from the Bible. She did! This had also happened to Nit's cousin some months earlier, soon after she had believed.

It was a great experience. A church was birthed. Because it was a difficult area, I believe this was the only way it could have started. However, I must say now, if I had it to

do over again, I would probably emphasise repentance a little bit more. Our invitation was more like, 'try it, you'll like it'. We said it wasn't a matter of changing religion, but embracing Yeshua. However, by not being more specific on what it meant to embrace Yeshua, some took it that they could attend both the Buddhist temple and church. To do it the hard way would have made the initial results look a little bit less impressive, but could have made for better quality Christians. But you couldn't have told me that then, of course.

At one point, as I was teaching the Kuiburi leaders, I noticed Mem had her eyes shut. She later said there was a light radiating from my eyes as I spoke. Looking back, I don't think I had to humility to handle the power we seemed to be moving in without going off the tracks somewhere -- which I did, but rather gently, by God's mercy.

***thabsakae*** -- Our success in Kuiburi had inspired me, and I determined to see more of the same. I quickly developed a vision for a vigorous crusade/church planting ministry that I hoped would multiply as it went. It would involve low budget crusades in low rent locations, like we did in Kuiburi, and workers would be trained, some to be pastors of the new works, and others to eventually be released to a similar ministry. Thus, the crusade team would multiply itself, and so would the churches. It would be a low budget operation, not because I thought I lacked the faith for a big budget, but because I wanted to do it in a way that local people would immediately recognise as something they could do themselves with the resources they had. Thus, it wouldn't be dependant on an income from overseas, as most mission work was in Thailand.

With this in mind, I opened an outreach centre further South in the town of Thabsakae, in the same province, hoping to repeat the success we saw in Kuiburi. Instead, we were bogged down with problems which I didn't have the backbone and the self discipline to deal with.

Things seemed to start off okay though. Our experience was replete with dreams and visions. Mem went along on the exploratory trip, and a vision of hers seemed to indicate an empty house on the edge of the main highway, which we ended up renting. However, there were other things received that had we taken more heed, could have helped us to side-step other problems down the road.

When we moved into the house, we found a homeless 11 year old boy named 'T' who had been sleeping on the premises.

Some time before that I had been inspired by a short film by the Salesian Fathers, on their work with homeless children in Columbia, titled *Gaminos*. T fit the profile of the fiercely independent homeless children described in that film. He stayed with us a week, before running away -- but not before capturing my heart and my imagination. I've had a corner of my heart reserved for homeless street children ever since. They've shown up in a few of my novels, including *Pepe*, as well as in my latest, *The Eurasian*, in the character of Annie 'ol Iron.

In Thabsakae, I was assisted by Nit's brother and his wife, who took up residence in the outreach centre. He had originally introduced me to his sister in Kuiburi, which had led to my beginning the work in that area. We saw some fruit in Thabsakae, we saw progress and growth with the church in Kuiburi, we did crusades and such, but my goal of vigorous miracle church planting never got off the ground. We made friends with a Presbyterian pastor and her husband, Rachue and Uthai, a Chinese couple who had started a small church right on the seaside. They were somewhat at odds with the main

Presbyterian church in the town, and they readily showed their enthusiasm for our endeavour.

In those days, I was of the attitude that as long as I was at the cutting edge of God's agenda, as my experience in Kuiburi 'proved', I had every right to zoom on ahead with it, leaving everyone else choking in my dust trail. Therefore, the less than amiable relationship between us and the local Presbyterian parish didn't bother me very much.

I began a program of teaching and equipping for the benefit of the leaders of both the Kuiburi and the Thapsakae. Often I included the Chinese couple as well. On one occasion, when Barry McKnight, then residing in Huahin, came to teach, Uthai received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rachue, his wife had already been moving in that way before we met them.

We hosted a number of YWAM teams, mostly specialising in street drama. I used to take these teams to the various weekly outdoor markets in our area, and also involved them in crusades that Doug Gehman held in various locations. One visiting team specialised in construction work, and they rebuilt Uthai and Rachue's meeting shelter by the sea.

One person who used to accompany a couple of YWAM teams, including a YWAM Discipleship Training School (DTS) from Bangkok was a young Thai lady named Bless. I had met her a few years earlier, when she, herself, was a DTS student. Thought it didn't seem so at the time, these meetings were significant. Our chance meeting again years later led to our getting married.

The Thai couple I had been working with were having severe marriage problems. Also, relations between him and Uthai and Rachue weren't good. Eventually they moved away.

Meanwhile, Uthai and Rachue decided to move their work from the seaside to the main highway near our outreach centre. The fact that they would have been so close to us, didn't seem to me to be a good thing. I proposed that we merge our work, which they agreed to do. The only problem was that I was a salaried missionary with Church of God, and therefore under obligation to keep whatever work I did within the context of Church of God. Uthai, in the mean time, went for training with Hope of Bangkok Church, with the intention of making our work a Hope of Thapsakae Church.

**resignation** -- That was probably the initial reason I began to consider resigning from my missionary appointment. Other reasons included the fact that I was caring for a child whom I hoped to adopt. Church of God missions policy forbade single parent adoptions.

Another factor, which I now see as the more legitimate reason for my decision, was the conflict between my position as a salaried missionary, and what I was encouraging the local workers to do. Certain ones were always complaining that their monthly support wasn't quite enough, and were asking me to try to get the head office in America to increase it. I, with my WEC influence was loath to see an increasing dependence on foreign support, and tried to encourage them to be more resourceful and exercise faith. However, I was living on a missions salary myself, which was far more than what they received. Was I exercising the same faith that I was asking them to do?

On the other hand, I was also paying the rent in Kuiburi (albeit very low), in Thapsakae, for my own flat in Bangkok, and my foster child's school fees. This was a drain on the income that I had, and it wasn't increasing either. It looked like I was at an impasse, and that I needed to do something radical to get me over into living by faith

instead of dependence on something that wasn't enough anyway.

So, I resigned my missions appointment. They kept me as an associate missionary, as I was still in good standing. I didn't join Hope of Bangkok church though, so I was left in limbo for a while.

**hitting bottom** -- I now believe the decision to resign my appointment was right, although the timing of it may not have been the wisest. Even then, my savings, plus some generous gifts that came later, would have got me through had I not made a very bad move.

I had been becoming interested in financial investments, especially the commodities/futures market. I thought I saw signs that I was hearing God's voice -- rather, premonitions of how the market would go. I thought I saw a very steep mountain, with cliffs on both sides. After spending one day at a brokerage house, I noted that the chart for that day's day trading resembled that mountain. I could have made a lot of money by doing a long position on the up side, and then a short one on the down side. So, I sank what savings I had into the futures market -- that and an overdraft. A few months later, I was burnt out and in debt.

That, of course, was the consequence of unbridled freedom, and the lack of accountability to anyone. Then, I fell prey to the opposite extreme, abusive control by leadership that I didn't dare contradict because I believed they spoke for God to my life.

After I quit the futures markets, I spent some time working with a friend who was the national president of Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, and also had a greeting card business. I had already been involved in his FGBMFI Bangkok chapter for a couple of years already. There, I had a chance to develop my computer skills, and gained experience in administrative work.

Just after I started work, my mother was diagnosed with cancer of the liver. It was also in her lymph nodes and the bone. She took radiation treatment to get rid of the cancer in the bones but she turned down Chemo therapy, as that wouldn't have saved her anyway. She passed away six months later, and was buried in Chiangmai. The funeral was well attended. Besides being a prayer warrior, she had been an encouragement and inspiration to many, both in and out of WEC.

My foster child was at the funeral, and cried for her like she would a grandmother. They had become close. Later, it became more and more clear that I must find a new family for her. I wasn't financially prepared to give her the care she deserved, and she would soon be growing into her teens. I'd be no match for whatever peer pressure she'd encounter. She had been staying with some of my other friends, whom I had hoped could take more and more of the responsibility, but that didn't work out either. Some old WEC friends in Tak knew of a rural family who had been wanting to adopt a daughter, as the wife couldn't give birth. It worked out just right, and she went to live with them.

Releasing her was a painful decision. That, my mother's death, my financial failure, and the fact that I was following a leader who thought he knew me better than I did; all contributed to the rock-bottom state I was in.

One factor that began bringing healing to my life, later on, was the practice of journaling, simply listening in prayer to God's voice, and writing down what comes. I received some beautiful words that way, straight from the Father's heart to me. Also, a book by Roberts Lairdon particularly ministered to me, *Controlling Spirits*, helped me understand the bondage I'd been under.

Another healing factor in my life was my friendship with Dr. Joy Seevaratnam, in Penang. A lot of what I know about the power of releasing, and of the importance of relationships, I received from him. About this time, I read an early version of Rick Joyner's *Visions of the Harvest*. It planted a seed in me that began to bear fruit later on.

A few months later, my father asked me to help find a buyer for his car and use part of the proceeds to pay off my bank debt. He went on a furlough to Ireland. I joined him later on, spending three months with him in Belfast. After he returned to Thailand, I took the job of minding a compound that WEC was trying to sell, in Bexhill-on-Sea, South England.

While still minding the WEC house, I had a small amount of cash to keep me for a while. I went as often as I could into London to attend Kensington Temple. I also did research on my project, *The Emissary*.

*The Emissary* was my personal journey into our Jewish roots. The rough form of the book took four to six months to complete, but I continued editing and doing research on it over the next 12 years. It probably constitutes a whole category of my spiritual development and education. The idea for it was an outgrowth of both my journaling experience, and my study of the book of Ephesians with the idea to gain a perspective on Paul's revelation. The seeds of that were my interest in the life of Paul during my Kuiburi days. The theme of release and dying to one's own agenda, learned from Dr. Joy, also figured prominently. Another aspect was what began with my experience with T, the homeless boy, on whom I based one of the characters.

It was a fictionalised account of Paul's second missionary journey. To make it more historically authentic, I began doing research into the daily life in the Greek and Roman world. Then, on seeking the advice of Jacob Prasch, whom I'd met at a FGBMFI convention in Brighton, he gave me a reading list which led to more research into the first century world of Judaism, both rabbinical and otherwise. This field of study now goes under the heading of "Jesus Studies", and "New Perspective on Paul".

The original version of my book read almost like a narrative sermon in places. It was called *The Apostle* then, but I later purged it of all 20th century Christian terminology, so it sounds much more like what an adventure novel should, with far fewer devotionals.

As I said, it was a twelve year journey, in which I studied a little bit of Hebrew, read rabbinical commentaries, parts of the Talmud and various *midrashim*, what secular scholars say about that period of Church/Jewish history, and what's been applied by the Messianic Jewish movement. It took me to the local synagogue in Bangkok where I was even invited to *Shabbat* supper with the rabbi on a couple of occasions.

Probably most importantly, I engaged in a study of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. The version I read was the *Soncino Chumash* used in synagogue worship, a parallel Bible with Hebrew in one column, and a Jewish English translation opposite, with commentaries by rabbis like Rashi, Rashbaum, Nachmanides *etc.* on the bottom half of each page. A few things that repeatedly stood out to me were the command to lay hands on the head of the sacrificial animal, and ritual immersion. One day, it occurred to me that these were two of the foundational teachings listed in Hebrews 6, baptisms (washings) and laying on of hands. They suddenly took on new meaning. That was just one observation. I'm now convinced that a foundation that the church is lacking today is an understanding of the Torah.

As I said, it was a twelve year journey, so I'm getting ahead of myself.

One immediate result of my Torah study was the realisation that Paul's insistence on working to support himself instead of living off his ministry, was his rabbinical training. The rabbis always worked at a trade to support themselves rather than take financial compensation from their pupils. That, plus the WEC ethic of not soliciting donations, I suppose, is what has always made me feel uncomfortable with any suggestion that I try to raise support as a missionary the traditional way. To this day, I feel better about holding a job, even if time and energy for ministry suffers. I don't necessarily think it's wrong for others, just as Paul acknowledged that one mustn't muzzle the ox, but I've never felt it was right for me. That's why, while my novels targeted to a secular audience may put food on my table, my writings directed towards enriching believers will always be made available for free, or at no more than production cost.

***bexhill-on-sea*** -- When I got to the end of my cash reserve is when my time was also up at the house. WEC ministry that had hoped to move to a new premises wasn't able to complete their transaction until they had sold this one, and since the bottom had fallen out of the market, things were at an impasse. They decided to move back temporarily and do another training course. In the mean time, I had met Alan Maynard a retired salesman, and chapter president of the local FGBMFI. I found him through the directory listing in *Voice Magazine*. I moved in with them as a lodger and applied to social services as an unemployed person. Very little work was available that would have paid more than the income they gave me, so as long as I went twice a week to look for something, I could go on and complete my novel, and join Alan in his endeavours.

Alan Maynard was the type of believer pastors love to hate, not because he was out of order, but he was endowed with the divine gift of dissatisfaction. I don't mean that factiously, either. He always looked for something in a church that wasn't there, the community aspect, the people-centredness, the opportunity to be involved in real relationships. He was the spiritual 'party pooper'. Where others flocked to conventions and conferences, receiving deep and profound revelations straight from the throne of G-d, and thought it was the next best thing to being in heaven, Alan had the disturbing habit of noting that very little actually changed afterwards.

'Emerging Church' hadn't been invented yet, but Alan was already asking all the right questions. However, I was still a fan of big conventions, big churches and that sort of thing.

The local FGBMFI chapter had dwindled to about two or three who met once a week at Alan's home. After my arrival, he felt inspired to give it another push. As we were in middle of a recession and a housing slump, and quite a few in the area were unemployed, we had a luncheon targeted for people who couldn't afford a sumptuous banquet.

Another project we became involved in was a church plant. A local Plymouth Brethren assembly had disbanded due to ageing and dwindling membership. At the same time, the Assemblies of God church in the next town, St. Leonards on Sea, decided to plant a daughter church in Bexhill. The committee of the old Plymouth Brethren were glad to let the AOG people use their old premises. In fact, some of the old members joined us, including a retired missionary (I've always found missionaries to be more open minded about most things than their 'stayed-put' counterparts). Alan and I thought this was the greatest thing, Pentecostals having fellowship with Plymouth Brethren! But it wasn't to last long. A Plymouth Brethren committee in another town decided this couldn't go on, and they decided, instead, to send a missionary of their own to restart the local assembly.

Even though the new group were of the 'Closed' Brethren, the old members of the 'Open' Brethren felt obliged to return out of loyalty. However, the AOG meetings continued in Alan and Margaret's home, so, for the rest of my time there, I was included in a house church. We had our good times.

Despite everything else that was going on, most of the time I had my head buried in the computer, either writing or editing *The Emissary*. Alan was the first one with the audacity to suggest that I might not be prioritising relationships enough. I didn't pay him much heed at the time. Later, Dr. Joy helped me to see it more clearly, and other experiences (some recounted in my on-line book, *Eyes*) helped me to realise that relationships, and how we view other people, probably constitute the most important aspect of Kingdom living.

I also longed to return to Thailand.

***back to thailand*** -- After Alan Maynard answered a call from a friend of mine in Bangkok, whom I hoped to join, he decided to pay for my trip back to Thailand. It happened so quickly that my head was still spinning when I boarded the plane.

I worked along side Richard Woon for the next year and a half. I had met him in the company of Sonny Largado, whom I had met through Joe Zeyak. Richard was Chinese, from Penang, Malaysia, but by the time we touched base again, he had emigrated to Sweden, and had a Swedish passport. He had been running a daycare centre for children from the slums nearby. He had targeted a slum community in a rather obscure corner of Bangkok, that didn't get much attention otherwise. That was my first experience at teaching children -- albeit, I was teaching Thai literacy to Thai children.

I was still editing and rewriting bits of *The Emissary*. I also transcribed Lighfoot's translation of *The Shepherd of Hermas* into a readers edition, leaving out some of the more difficult to digest bits.

I also discovered that Bangkok had a sizeable Jewish community. I began attending the synagogue on occasion. Actually, there were two synagogues, one older one that was little attended because the Jewish community was spread too far apart to attend on *Shabbat*, and another that started as the result of a large number of Middle-eastern *Separdim*, who had located in the area in order to engage in the gem trade. About a month before I started showing up, the two communities had come together and decided to recruit a rabbi from the *Lubbavitch Chabad* movement. I found Rabbi Kantor to be very friendly, and I've even had *Shabbat* supper with him on a couple of occasions. I also did a lot of reading in the synagogue library, studying bits of the Talmud and other references. I also learned a lot from the rabbi himself, I've danced the hora arm in arm with a Chissidic rabbi on either side, I've danced around the bema holding the Torah scroll on Simcha Torah, fortified with a few shots of vodka -- but it's a funny thing: as of this writing, I've never yet attended a Messianic Jewish worship service.

I read a few books, though, some by Dan Juster, one by David Stern, and others.

I began my period of theological deconstruction began about that time. I began to review all my reasons for believing in Dispensationalism and the pre-trib rapture. I used my grandmother's old Scholfield Bible for my reference as to what and why Dispensationalists believe what they do. I began to see it as an external filter, placed over the Bible in order to make everything 'fit'. There were really no foundational passages in the Bible to support the filter itself, so I dumped it.

One long term project that I started at this time was the *Tishbyte Foundational Bible*



*Study Series*. It started out with a Sunday morning message I gave at the small church service we held at the day care centre. My plan was to teach them through the foundations of the Christian life, beginning with the Old Testament. Thus, the first instalment, which I preached that morning, *Creation and Fall*.

Outside of the daycare, my closest contacts were with Dr. Joy Seevaratnam, in Penang, Malaysia, where he pastored Full Gospel Assembly. I also renewed acquaintances with other old friends, namely, Christ to Thailand Institute, in Pakchong, North-east Thailand, where Tosh and Dawn ran a Bible training centre. I had also been good friends with Duane and Joyce Kleppel, Dawn's parents. On one visit, on which my went along, Duane invited him to fill in for him as an instructor during his upcoming furlough. My dad, on the verge of retirement from WEC, accepted the offer, and even stayed on after Duane and Joyce's return some months later.

After a year and a half working with Richard Woon, I moved to Penang, where I became engaged to a young Penang lady. It didn't work out as well as I hoped, and we later broke the engagement. I did receive a lot of mentoring and input from Dr. Joy and his wife, Elsie.

Full Gospel Assembly was a part of a network of churches, all of the same name, all previously Plymouth Brethren churches that no longer felt welcome because of their experience with the Holy Spirit's gifts. Most of them maintained the concept of leadership by a group of elders. I had also, previously, been acquainted with some of the leaders of FGA Singapore, who were also a part of the regional leadership of FGBMFI.

Later, the elders of FGA Penang decided to send me to try my hand at church planting again, working closely with Christ to Thailand Institute.

Another old friend of ours, Wayne Crook, was a crusade evangelist who had held a few large crusades in Thailand in the past, very similar to those of T.L.Osborn. Doug Gehman, who had held the crusade in Kuiburi earlier on, was also closely associated with him. Tosh and Duane had invited Wayne to come and hold a crusade in a nearby village. Since I had once started a church on the heels of a crusade, they invited me to follow it up. The people at FGA, Penang, liked the idea, so they supported me financially.

We had the crusade, but it was not nearly as successful as such crusades had been in the past. A lot of children came, and we did get a list of addresses of interested people to follow up, and people who were, apparently, healed, but the only thing that came of it was a children's work that lasted for several months.

The kids had a great time, and came by the old rented house every day.

I created the first version of *The Happy Kingdom* at that time, for the purpose of having a concise teaching about the Kingdom of God to present to those interested. I published it via local photocopy shops. I followed that up with another one called, *The Man Inside* (I've since rewritten *The Happy Kingdom*, and added in elements of *The Man Inside*, which is the version now available on my *Scribd.com* account).

After four months, I opted to close the centre. FGA, Penang had gone through a split. Continuing to receive support, under the circumstances, would have put me in a awkward position, along with certain other parties. Tosh invited me to join the staff and teach a few courses. I lived on the campus, sharing a room with my dad, ate my meals in the school canteen, and received a small allowance besides.

During my time there, I continued working on the *Tishbyte Foundational Bible Study Series*. It wasn't called that yet. I completed the first four lessons, covering the Old

Testament, and then did four of the five lessons going through the book of Matthew. More were planned. However, I left off writing it at that time

**toronto** -- I was still in Penang, attending Full Gospel Assembly, when the movement of that name hit. A couple of visiting speakers came from Australia and were holding a prophetic seminar. They were laying hands on people who fell over, laughing. I had hands laid on as well. I didn't laugh compulsively, but I believe I did receive something.

Later, in Pakchong, an old WEC friend, Craig Denny came by to visit. He shared experiences he had while in Myanmar some time before, and what had happened to WEC missionaries while watching a video by Reinhard Bonnke. Later, he invited me to join him on a trip to Yangon, where we witnessed a move of the Holy Spirit in a way I never had before. Later, a team from Toronto came to Bangkok and held a week of meetings. Almost the entire WEC field fellowship was there in force. That was probably the aspect that impressed me the most, that and the fact that the church in Tak, where WEC first began in Thailand, took a leap in growth after that.

I've heard many things said about the whole Toronto thing, but speaking for myself, I can honestly say that the experience has drawn my attention to things like repentance, relationship and intimacy with God, and a love for Yeshua. If the movement lacks anything, it would be in the area of foundations. That isn't so much the fault of the movement itself, but simply people's failure to realise its importance.

My process of deconstruction began to take in things like my basic Pentecostal belief, and Word of Faith.

The revival aspect of the Toronto move inspired me to see the Holy Spirit experience as an ongoing thing, as being continually filled with the Holy Spirit (as the tense of the Greek in Ephesians 5:18 indicates) rather than a one time 'rites of passage', as classical Pentecostal doctrine tends to describe it.

As for Word of Faith, I speak of the movement as though I officially left it. I've actually made no recantations nor repented of anything I picked up with them -- unless it's *sectarianism*. I just no longer feel under pressure to profess or emphasise something just because one particular group of Bible teachers do. When I hear someone else teach on something new, I no longer run to find out what my favourite 'Faith' teacher has to say about it.

I used to hold to the pre-tribulational rapture theory just because they did. Originally, I was post-trib. No one ever convinced me from scripture that it was pre-trib, but I thought if Kenneth Copeland believes it, and all my 'faith' friends uniformly believed it, it must be so, so I changed my mind. Then, during my theological 'deconstruction', I found I wasn't satisfied that the context of the scripture passages -- the *logos* -- supported it.

I think I must have been in the movement for close to 20 years, counting from when I first began listening seriously to their teaching, till I decided I would stop labelling myself as Word of Faith. Over all, I think I learned a lot from them. The concise practical teaching on how to exercise faith was just what I needed at the time. One of the biggest criticisms of the movement is that of reducing everything down to a formula. On one hand, it is a valid criticism, but on the other, it was good for me at the time. It got me started.

I suppose that if I had had the chance to listen to John Wimber before I did Kenneth Copeland, I would have gone in that direction instead. As it was, I began to experience healing for my own body, and began to move in healing ministry. By faith I laid hands on

people for the baptism of the Holy Spirit after reading a book by Kenneth Hagin on the subject. On the other hand, I was probably never in the right environment to be swept away by the excesses of prosperity doctrine, or to be tied up in knots over "negative confessions" -- that environment polluted by consumerism.

So, I've not turned against it, as some have, I've actually retained many of the things I've learned in it, but I no longer call myself 'Word of Faith.'

As for the 'Toronto' thing, I think the same thing can be said for that as for 'Word of Faith'. In the West, we tend to notice their abuses, especially as they become integrated into the 'consumerist dream'. They have a way of becoming trendy, and people do it for the novelty, or because their friends do it, or to enrich their already comfortable lifestyle. It becomes one more symptom, rather than a cure. It's that fact that has turned away the more serious seekers.

On the other hand, it's been said that the Prosperity message has been having a far different effect in Third World countries, in places like South Africa, where whole communities have begun to rise from extreme poverty, thanks to both the Work Ethic and faith in the promises, as taught by Word of Faith missionaries -- as long as they don't evolve into consumerist societies, or fall prey to preachers promising a "100 fold return" for their life savings. An interesting side note: the late Kenneth E. Hagin didn't teach the "100 fold return". He believed it was un-scriptural.

In my own involvement with the Revival group in Bangkok, keeping up the official website, I had as it were a front row seat. One group that came regularly to our meetings, were from a shelter for girls who had been rescued from forced child prostitution. On their backs, 'soaking' in the Holy Spirit, they were receiving healing of some horrendous experiences that the rest of us could only imagine (or would rather not, as the case may be). WEC missionaries reported that the evangelism efforts in Tak had taken a leap forward. Probably the biggest impact was the effect it had on Karen hill tribal communities in far off Maehongson province. Nominal and marginal church members were suddenly becoming on-fire, enthusiastic believers, shedding their alcohol and drug habits. Non-believers were being added to the village churches. Karen communities from Chiangmai all the way to Tak Province have been affected.

In my personal life, it caused me to look more to the basics of what Christian life and community is all about, the importance of relationships, and intimacy with God. Also helping me in this way were the writings of Rick Joyner, both his articles in Morningstar Journal, and his book, *The Final Quest*.

About that time is when I was reunited with an old acquaintance, Pontip (or, as she is known in Ireland, Bless). She was a staff member of YWAM, working as director's assistant for Project LIFE, the charity arm of YWAM Thailand. We saw a lot of each other for about a year, and then got married in April, 1998.

Having to deal with people every day, she was able to see past a lot of the hype the Christians often fall for, and some of their 'spiritual' reasons for thoroughly down to earth problems. She wasn't as enthusiastic about attending revival meetings as I was. Usually, she was tired out from a day's work, so often, if I went, I had to attend alone, with the obligation that I not come home too late.

Being married has also forced me to live out more and more of what I believe in an up close setting. It's the best thing for growing up, and it has its rewards.

I had moved from Pakchong to Bangkok as a prelude to the marriage. My dad had

finally retired, but was still spending half of his time back in Thailand. He was there for the wedding.

The wedding was attended by over 400 people, representing just about every facet of both of our lives. Besides YWAMmers, there were WECcers, Church of God pastors and members, members of FGBMFI, people from the revival group, even the Chinese pastor from Thapsakae.

***making a living*** -- To support my new family, I got a job, telemarketing. The company I worked for inspired a few scenes in *The Zondon* (ie. 'Crayton Securities'). It also receives passing reference in *Pepe*. I suppose I could just about sum up this period of my career by stating that I make an appearance in both of the novels under the name of 'Boz'.

At that time, I began to change my direction in my writing. I had begun to realise that my earlier books were too offbeat, for the traditional Evangelical audience -- too much about repentance, making early Christianity look too Jewish, non-support of the consumerist dream; they could have served as good counter balance to the *Left Behind* series, but even that would be a mark against them. I began to realise that my best chance of success would be to write for the secular reading audience, like C.S.Lewis, Tolkien, and others did. Among other things, it's a bigger audience.

I wrote *The Story of St. Catrick*, while working at 'Crayton Securities'. I had it published through a subsidy e-publisher, which did e-books and POD (printing on demand). Because I paid the fee to get it formatted and set up, the company automatically accepted it, a bit like a vanity press. Since I ordered twenty copies, and it wasn't too long, a lot of my friends actually read it and (so they told me) thought it was good. I did all my writing under the pseudonym of 'C. Baruch'.

Not long after, the "self publishing" trend began to take off. That same publisher was later merged with another, and then bought over by Amazon and renamed "CreateSpace". *Catrick* has since been through a rewrite, and republished by the same.

When we moved out of our one room flat into a nice three story town house, our nephew, Golf, came to live with us. His dad, Bless's youngest brother, had been killed in a motorbike accident some years before. He had been living with his grandparents (my in-laws), and Bless had been something like a god-mother to him, so she was the obvious one to take over parental responsibility. That made me his father by default. He was about ten when he came.

After three years working the phones, like Boz in *Pepe*, the boss donated me to his favourite charity, Human Development Foundation, or Mercy Centre, working with Father Joe Maier. I based the character of Fr. Antonio on Fr. Joe, and, of course, Mercy House is Mercy Centre. The difference is, the actual Mercy Centre also includes an AIDS hospice, and a large kindergarten for slum children. It's located in middle of the Klong Toey slum. Like Dockyards Community in *Pepe*, the masts of ships docked in the Klong Toey harbour can often be seen towering over the roofs. Apart from Silom Road being the inspiration for Comino Real street, the similarities end there. The politics and other aspects of my fictional land of Cardovia are not based on any country in particular.

I wrote *The Zondon* while working at HDF, and I got the germ that later developed into *Pepe*.

The job at HDF lasted for a year, as long as my old boss had the funds to keep me there. I started out translating children's case histories and their letters to their sponsors. Later, after they discovered my artistic talent, and ability to teach it to the kids, Fr. Joe

decided that I was to spend at least half of my time in the art room. Just like in the story, we were making clay tiles for a mural to go up in the centre.

When the money ran out, I had to find other ways to support myself. Joe Zeyak suggested to Sonny Largado that I work with them, which I did for a few months, but they were unable to raise any support for me. Dan Dunham, who had previously been a missionary in Chiangmai, and knew my dad, suggested English teaching, as he had been doing to supplement his income. As he was planning to go away for a few months, he introduced me to his private students, who agreed to hire me in his place. We were able to barely get along on that income.

Our son, Abie, was conceived just as I lost the job at HDF. When he was born, it was Saturday, and I was teaching my private students. My phone had gone off line for some reason. When I got it on, I realised that Bless had been trying to call me. I called her, and she said, 'You have a son!' I thought she was joking. Finally, she put our friend, Marie Goode on, and she all but ordered me to high-tail it to St. John's Hospital. She had started to have bleeding while with another friend, she called the doctor, who told her to get into the hospital post haste. Bless called Marie on the way, so she and our other friend were among the first to see Abie in this world.

When she was about to have Abie, Bless had officially retired from her post at Project LIFE.

Besides working, organising the family and writing novels, I was continuing to explore some of the other issues. While surfing the internet, I discovered a website of someone who was asking the same questions I was, Len Hjalmerson. I emailed him, he emailed me back, I sent him one of my articles, he posted it on his site, and he suggested that I surf to the *Next Wave* e-zine. They might like some of my stuff. That's how I discovered the 'Emerging Church' crowd. I've since had several articles published in Next Wave (most of them, under the pseudonym of 'C. Baruch'). One of them was on why I decided to write for the secular audience, entitled, *Writers, Go for the Bigger Market Share*.

On Len's site, I also found an article by Andrew Strom. I read his material with interest. Though he disagrees with many of the other voices I also listen to, such as Rick Joyner, I must say, that I was impressed with his article, *The Nine Lies of Today's Church*. I agree with them, for the most part. Through him, I've come to be aware of some of the consumerist tendencies that tend to pollute otherwise valid moves of God in the West -- the market hype, the sensationalism -- which I'm seeing, more and more, doesn't belong in the message of the Kingdom of God. I don't agree with *everything* he says, but I find him a good counterbalance.

When Abie was seven months old, we arrived in Ireland. Bless was able to obtain Irish nationality through Post Nuptial Declaration (they've discontinued that law now), so she has no trouble living in Ireland, U.K. or anywhere else in Europe (I wish Thailand would have a similar law). Golf stayed with us for three months and attended the local jr. high school. Since we weren't able to get a longer visa for him, he returned to Thailand, where he's been lived with Bless's parents.

As for our income, my only recourse was to go on the dole (social benefits). After two months, I was declared habitually resident, and therefore eligible. Four more month again, I was eligible for their training program, Bridges to Employment, and got a job that suited me, as a Quality Software Tester, at Northbrook Technology. That job lasted

me two and a half years until we decided to pack up again and return to Thailand. In the mean time, we were a part of Emmanuel Church. I helped teach in a Bible school they had for aspiring ministers.

I wrote *Pepe* while there. I think *Pepe* is my best written novel so far.

I also wrote a novella, titled *Allegory*, which represents a further theological deconstruction.

I won't go into detail here as to exactly what was deconstructed, only to say that once having deconstructed a long held doctrine, it's not time to rush out to tell the world. Some doctrines, though not 100% accurate, may still serve as a safeguard which would not be wise to remove right away. The result could do more harm than good -- unless we can, at the same time, impart a deeper understanding of the fear of the Lord. Focussing on the holiness of God, keeping Him central to all, will prevent the 'slingshot effect' that would inevitably result from foolhardy deconstruction.

During that time, I discovered Scot McKnight's blog, *The Jesus Creed*. He follows some of the same theological trends that interest me, namely Jesus Studies, and New Perspective on Paul, and applies many of the findings to his theology -- Kingdom of God oriented.

I began to feel that my own theological leaning might be described as a mixture of Emergent and Messianic. It appeared to me that both were moving in somewhat the same direction, and doing similar types of theological deconstruction and reapplication. However I couldn't find any blogs or websites that reflected this common trait -- until recently, when I discovered Derek Leman's *Messianic Musings*. I found it through a link he had to Jesus Creed. I've been enjoying him ever since.

After three years in Northern Ireland, we spent a further three years back in Bangkok where I taught at a bi-lingual school in Bangkok, Sarasas Witaed Romklao, which Abie also attended.

*Pepe* was finally released, my first book to be accepted by a more-or-less traditional publisher. As it was being prepared, as edits and rewrites were being shuttled back and forth, I decided to trash my old pseudonym of 'Baruch', and use the name most of my friends know me by, 'Bob'. And then, I changed it yet again to my childhood name, 'Robby Charters'.

While waiting for *Pepe* to be released, I wrote *The Adventures of Eetoo*, a combination space opera/'Ben Hur' story. The main character is a member of a tribal group that has been living in space, but arrives on earth at the climax of Yeshua's ministry. While *Emissary* might never see a publisher's list (for good reasons), the research I did for that came in quite handy for *Eetoo*. It was a return to being an obviously 'Christian' book, with the same stumbling blocks.

Also, I rewrote *The Happy Kingdom*, also available on the same website. It's been updated according to how I now understand the theology of redemption and the Kingdom of God (heresy hunters, take note!). It's much heavier on repentance and the demands of discipleship.

After an absence of a few years, my dad made one more trip to Thailand and spent three months. He was sponsored by Emanuel Church, which he had continued attending after we left N. Ireland.

Because my dad was getting older, and my visa situation wasn't very stable, we felt we should move back to N. Ireland, which we did in 2009. Bless was accepted as a staff

member of YWAM Belfast, and helped them until they were given their new premises in Rostrevor.

My dad, who had been in top health all his life, suddenly succumbed to a heart attack. Then, months later, he developed a severe throat problem, which reminded me of my mother's case before they discovered, too late, she had cancer. When he finally went for a scan, they discovered his cancerous growth, and again, it was too late to treat.

We made weekly (myself -- twice weekly) visits to him, travelling from Belfast. After more than a year in Belfast, we decided to move to Lurgan to be closer to him. However he passed away in 1 June, 2011. His funeral was held at Emanuel Church, and he was buried in the cemetery on Tandragee road, just outside of Lurgan. Among the last things he did was to proofread *Eetoo*, marking the miss-spellings and grammer/style errors.

Even though my dad was no longer there, we kept to our plans to move to Lurgan, which we did in July. We're still there, as of this update.

While still living in Belfast, I had made some changes to my published list. I had already published *Catrick*, *The Zondon* and *Eetoo* at Smashwords.com and Amazon Kindle, and they were doing better than *Pepe*. I decided to cancel the arrangement with *Pepe*, and self publish that as well.

In 2010, my old friend, Wayne Crooke, emailed me, asking my advice on getting a book formatted for Kindle. The book in question, which he had helped a friend to publish, had a lot of illustrations in it, but after looking around, I found it was possible to do in Kindle format. He begged me to do it for him.

He was pleased with the result, and then asked me to do two more, his own autobiography and a book by another fellow missionary about adopting Cambodian children. This time, he offered to pay me.

Finding out that I could format books with illustrations into Kindle format, I did a few of my own, including *The Happy Kingdom*. Then, I began doing ePub conversions as well, producing ebooks for iPad, Nook and other devices.

After the move to Lurgan, I realised that I had a business idea, and started my business. It's still struggling, and doesn't pay for everything yet.

Another project I began in Belfast, which I completed in Lurgan was my fifth full length novel, *The Eurasian*. That's my second blatantly Christian novel after *Eetoo*. It's set in the future, towards the end of the 21st century. One of the characters is our son, Abie, who is now an old man. The main character is his grandson, Mickey. Again, I'm remembered as Boz. Besides Annie 'ol Iron, the cast includes a mystic rabbi, a 'Messianic' Navajo, and a troop of Singlish speaking Asians. It's dystopian, and I'm afraid that it may rub against the nationalist sensibilities of some Americans and Thai.

During the earlier half of 2013, I began to work, once again, on my teaching outlines, the *Tishbyte Foundational Bible Study Series*, posting what I had so far onto my account at Scribd.com. I finally completed all twelve modules in early 2014, designed a cover, and published it on Smashwords and Amazon Kindle. At this writing, I'm working on a print version that will go up on the CreateSpace website, and will also be available on Amazon.

The very first draft of this autobiography was intended to go with that, so that those who followed the Bible study would know me a bit more, and where I'm coming from.

Be that as it may, that brings us up to the present. This has been the second revision of this autobiography (not including a few additions).

We now fellowship at Emmanuel Church, Lurgan, where I volunteer on Wednesday mornings for "Coffee Morning", and help with the children's ministry. Emmanuel had been founded by Philip Emerson in his home some years ago, and has grown until they now meet in a building that was previously a supermarket. Just like the FGA churches in Malaysia and Singapore, the core leadership grew up in the Plymouth Brethren.

The worship and ministry centre of Emmanuel Church is located right on the dividing line between the Catholic and Protestant communities of Lurgan, which has had a particularly turbulent time of it during the troubles. In fact, Lurgan is one of the three towns that make up what's known as the "murder triangle" of Northern Ireland. Like Nazareth, it's said, "What good thing can come from Lurgan?"

The vision of Emmanuel is to "rewrite the story of our city". Even though the theological base of some of the teaching is Plymouth Brethren style Dispensational Calvinism (though not all), there is a strong emphasis on repentance, and a consciousness that it's the Kingdom of God that is being established and expanded by our prayer and good works. If you've read this far, you'll know I'm a fan of the latter, but not the former. Interestingly, the elder who most emphasises the "once-saved-always-saved" theology, and teaches pre-trib rapture, is one of the most transparent, Christ-like people I know, and I'd much prefer to be near him than many who might agree with my theology.

That's where we are now. More later, as more things happen in my life.