



## Thoughts from the Bible and Books

A Newsletter for University Reformed Church  
4930 S. Hagadorn Rd., E. Lansing, MI 48823 - 517.351.6810

July 2005

*In the spirit of Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress, I have written an allegory for (post-) modern American life. In this story, Evangelist tries to lead twelve individuals to The Pearl of Greatest Price. By no means, is my story as creative or powerful as Bunyan's. But perhaps it will be helpful all the same. The story will unfold throughout the summer issues of TBB. So you'll have to keep reading!*

### Many are Called, But Few are Chosen (Part 2)

Mr. Comfort's decision to head for home did not sit well with Evangelist. "He is cowardly and too easily pleased" Evangelist thought to himself. And although he was not happy with the choice, Evangelist's work too important to think on it very long. Besides, there were still eleven with him. And so he pressed on.

In fact, "pressed" described their present situation quite well. Evangelist and the eleven had come to an extremely narrow part of the Path and the whole party was compacted tightly together. It had been roughly eight hours since the group set out and they had already covered much ground. After leaving Blandanddark, they passed through the booming town of Second Thoughts (Mr. Comfort is no doubt reclining there still waiting for his coach back home), past the Suburbs of Good Intentions and into the stony region of the North. Currently, they were pressed between a rock and hard place, literally. The Path darted straight ahead but narrowly, with jagged rocks to the right and a steep wall of earth to the left. The group was forced into a single file line, walking sideways, each leading with his right shoulder through the

squeezed terrain.

All eyes were focused on the narrow slit of sky between rock and earth just ahead of them when Rebellion snapped. "I can't take it anymore!"

Civil Religion piped up, "Calm down. Just keep going."

"Don't stop now. Let's see if this Path really goes somewhere," Skeptic added.

"You don't understand." Rebellion was frantic. "I can't go any farther. It's too confining. I feel trapped. I need some room to breath and move. I can't live like this."

Chosen tried to reason with Rebellion. "The Path is narrow because to travel off the Way on either side is far too dangerous. The restriction is restricting, you're right, but it's for our safety."

"Lies! All lies! Why should we trust this narrow little Path? What sort of game is Evangelist playing? Don't the rest of you see? Think of what must be beyond these rocks to the right and over this earth to the left. Evangelist knows what's on the other side. I'm sure of it. He's keeping it from us."

"You're right. I am keeping it from you." Evangelist had overheard the entire conversation. But before he could continue. Rebellion interrupted.

"You heard him with your own ears. He's keeping it from us. He's doesn't want us to see the pleasure and refreshment that lies outside the boundaries of this narrow Path. Don't be fools. Come with me."

And with that Rebellion pushed his way to the back of the pack and scurried up over the jagged stones. As they cut him and bruised him Rebellion continued crying "Fools! Fools!" But when Rebellion's angry cries were overtaken by shrieks of pain on the cruel rocks, it was hard to feel foolish for sticking to the narrow Path.

No sooner had Rebellion's cries faded away than Evangelist had another problem on his hands. Blame was hurt. There was nothing particularly new about this. Blame was always hurt. Not even Evangelist knew when to believe Blame, because he always seemed to be injured. According to Blame, the grass hurt his nose and the dirt hurt his feet and the sun hurt his eyes and the wind hurt his skin and the pack hurt his back and on and on. But now, he really was hurt. In his rush to ill-conceived freedom, Rebellion had rudely shoved Blame to the ground. And Blame, who was never one to fall gracefully, had gashed his shoulder against the hard earthen wall.

"I'm bleeding! And it's all Rebellion's fault," Blame hollered.

"There, there. You have a nasty little scrape, but thankfully it's not deep. You're going to be fine." Evangelist tried to console him as he applied some ointment and bandages with Tolerant's help. "Come on. Let's get you on your feet."

"Don't touch me!" Blame whimpered. "I'm hurt."

"I know you're hurt," said Evangelist. "It was brutish of Rebellion to push you like that. But we have to keep going. If you like, I'll carry your pack for you to ease the burden on your shoulder."

"No!" Blame was defiant. "I don't want any help from you! I wouldn't be here if you didn't drag me here. You don't care a thing about me. How could you let me fall like that?"

"Rebellion often leaves many people wounded. I'm sorry you were one of them. I will do everything I can to see you safely to The Pearl of Greatest Price. Now, won't you let me carry your pack?"

"It's all your fault Evangelist. Everything is your fault. My whole life has been pain and I don't need more of it from you. I'm leaving." So Blame left too. He hobbled off in the opposite direction with a new found, and most conspicuous, limp—sometimes limping to the right and sometimes to left, but always conspicuous.

Eventually the group made their way through the cramped quarters into the open plains, where they made camp for the evening. Many were weary from the day's activities, but Evangelist cheered them with stories of the Great City and its lavish beauty. Skeptic listened with great curiosity while Civil Religion beamed a warming smile and Intellect added here and there some informative comments about the nature of

beauty. All enjoyed Evangelist that night, but Chosen in particular drank deeply of his hopeful words. They had a kind of irresistible appeal to him.

As the rest of the group lay sleeping, Mr. Busy tossed and turned. His mind was elsewhere. You see, he was a very important man in the land of Blandanddark. People came from every corner of the town to meet with Mr. Busy. They came for his advice or his money or even just his signature. The pace was such that Mr. Busy had scarcely slept the past week. And now his mind was racing. "Who will meet with so and so? What will happen to the this and that? How will the town go on without me?" It was rather silly of Mr. Busy to think that so many lives would fall apart without him, but you have to remember he was very busy and therefore, it seemed to him, a very important man.

"Are you alright? You look frazzled" Evangelist whispered, trying not to wake the others.

"Not at all," Mr. Busy replied. "I am anxious about the state of affairs in Blandanddark. How will they get along without me? I am a very important person you know. Busy, busy, very busy."

"Yes. I understand. Sounds quite demanding. But I imagine they are getting on without you, just as my City is getting on without me."

"No, you don't understand." Mr. Busy had no time for Evangelist (busy people, as you know, rarely have time for anything). "I can't afford to lie on this hard ground all night and listen to your protestations. I must get back at once."

"Please reconsider," Evangelist urged.

"No thank you. It's been a wonderful trip, but surely you understand. I am simply too busy to go any farther. Blandanddark needs me."

"Or you need them," Evangelist said in a still small voice that Mr. Busy couldn't hear. He already had his hat in his hand and his back to his guide. "Too busy. Just too busy. I have so much too do," he said waving a hurried goodbye. "Maybe another time when things settle down a little bit. Too much to do. So so busy."

Evangelist counted on his fingers. "...Six...seven...eight. Only eight left." Evangelist sighed. He wasn't happy with Mr. Busy, but his job was too important to wallow in discouragement. Besides, there were still eight with him. So they pressed on. But first they slept.

*to be continued...*