

STRAIGHT PATHS

Vol: 4 | Issue 2
July - Aug, 2025

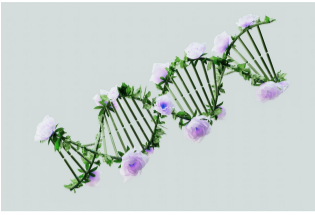
"...and make straight paths for your feet..." Hebrews 12:13

EDITORIAL

Some people are more particular about order than others. Sometimes, disorder irritates us. At the same time, the order we see outside can pleasantly or unpleasantly surprise us. Sin brings disorder in the life of a believer, but God has provided the remedy: confession and repentance, which we need to adopt, as we learn in Life Issues. In the Jesus Series, Thomson B Thomas explains how The Lord Jesus' incarnation was lowly but it involved perfect divine order. At his birth, the Israelite law was fulfilled. Conversely there is perfect order in God's dealings with his children. He knew us, He redeems us, sanctifies us and glorifies us to His satisfaction and our benefit. In Apologetics, we come across biological order - many organisms, including humans are closely similar to others. This should not disconcert us. It shows how God conceived the creation as numerous variations on a few broad themes. Discipline and order can greatly help us be productive for God, as we see in the life of missionary Henry Breidenthal. The ultimate disorder and destruction is found in death, and the gospel is the only remedy. May God help us order our lives as we read this edition of Straight Paths.

Johnny Varghese

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DEVOTIONAL

Together For Good

Straight Paths Team

God Has Revealed The Various Steps Involved In The Trajectory Of A Redeemed Person, Right From God's Foreknowledge Of The Person In Eternity Past, To His Glorification In The Future



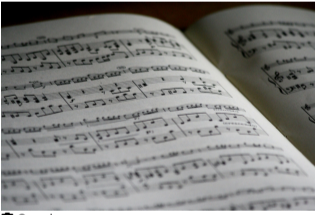
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MISSIONS

Henry Breidenthal

Straight Paths Team

A Deep Love For God, Leading To Discipline And Perseverance, Helped This Man Of God To Spread The Gospel In A Land Where People Are Apathetic To The Gospel



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HYMN STORY

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The Straight Paths Team

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GOSPEL

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Straight Paths Team

The Morbid Feelings Of Uncertainty And Death That Come In Our Lives Prompt Pleas For Help That Only The Lord Jesus Can Offer

For Private Circulation Only

STRAIGHT PATHS

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

Homology

JOHNNY VARGHESE

In the last few articles of this series, we have been surveying the evidence that materialists offer for evolution. We have looked into the proposed mechanism of evolution, the fossil record, and vestigial organs. In this article, we examine another evidence: homology.

Modern authors define homology as similarity in genes or organs due to shared ancestry. This definition assumes that evolution has taken place, and is an indication of how ingrained belief in evolution is in the scientific community. If the definition of a thing assumes evolution, it cannot be evidence for evolution. How do we know these structures are homologous? Because they have evolved from the same structure. How do you know evolution has taken place? Because we find homologous structures in organisms. This is circular reasoning. However, we can define homology without assuming evolution. Homology refers to the similarity in genes or organs that occurs as part of the overall structural similarity in the body or genome. Let us consider a few examples.

The forelimbs of whales, humans, birds, and dogs look very different on the outside. They work in different environments and serve different functions. However, the pattern of bones is very similar across species. Evolutionists think that it's unlikely that such similar structures would have evolved independently in each species, and more likely that the basic layout of bones was already present in a common ancestor of whales, humans, dogs, and birds.

The similarity of the plasma membrane (as well as other cell structures) is also an example of homology.

The entire genome is homologous in most organisms.

All living organisms share:

- The same genetic material (DNA)
- The same, or highly similar, genetic codes
- The same basic process of gene expression (transcription and translation)
- The same molecular building blocks, such as amino acids

The homology extends to the genes and hormones. For example, humans, cows, chickens, and chimpanzees all have a gene that encodes the hormone insulin. Beginning with Darwin, evolutionists conclude that humans and these organisms have a common ancestor that must have had a form of the gene that subsequently got modified. Human and chimpanzee insulin proteins are much more similar than human and chicken insulin proteins. Evolutionists conclude that humans and chimpanzees are more closely related than humans and chickens. Similarities that evolutionists don't think are related to common ancestry are called analogies. Examples include birds and bats both having wings, or sharks and dolphins both having fins.

Evolutionists think homology is robust evidence that all organisms have evolved from a common ancestor. According to one author, "the evidence is so solid and comprehensive that it cannot be denied by reasonable people" [1]

Interestingly, English naturalist Richard Owen who invented the term 'homology' in 1848 did not regard the phenomenon as pointing to common ancestry. To Owen, homologous similarities indicated that God must have used a common structural plan or archetype for all the vertebrates, and then single, more specific plans for vertebrates of each class. He believed in evolution guided by God, who "foreknew all its [the archetype's] modifications."

In response to homology as evidence for evolution, we point out the following.

The Design Alternative

Homology comes across as evidence for evolution only when one discards the possibility of creation and design. Homology is perfectly consistent with the Biblical account of creation. "Why would a Creator use only one genetic code when millions of codes are possible?" asks the evolutionist. The simple answer is: "one suffices". Why should we expect God to make things more complicated than necessary?

When engineers design devices, they use the same overall body plan for multiple models. We should not think God would never do this. If one type of design is superior to others, would it not be appropriate to use the same design multiple times? Automobile, bicycle, and pushcart tires have a hollow rubber tube, a valve, and axle. This is not because they evolved from a common ancestor, but because their designers find that this plan is superior to other alternatives (such as a metal disc).

Darwin knew this explanation. There are some, he said, who believe that "It has pleased the Creator to construct all the animals and plants in each great class on a uniform plan". But he rejected this explanation because it "is not a scientific explanation". [2] This illustrates our position, stated earlier, that homology counts as evidence for evolution only because the person excludes the possibility of creation.

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When engineers design devices, they use the same overall body plan for multiple models. We should not think God would never do this.

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The Analogy Anomaly

If all similarity is due to common ancestry, then the closer the relatives, the more similar they must be. However, there are examples of organisms that are only distant relatives (according to the evolutionary storyline), showing close similarities in some aspects. Such similarities are called analogies, and the process that resulted in them is called "convergent evolution" - the same thing evolving independently several times.

Thus, the eye supposedly evolved 60 times! [3] This is fanciful storytelling.

Morphology versus Genes

If the similarity in the organs of different organisms is due to common descent, it is logical to expect that similar genes program these organs. However, there are cases of homologous organs controlled by genes that are entirely different.

'What mechanism can it be that results in the production of homologous organs, the same "patterns", in spite of their not being controlled by the same genes? I asked this question in 1938, and it has not been answered.' [4]

It is also worth noting that some homologous organs don't develop in the same way from the embryo. For example, the forelimbs of the newt, lizard, and human develop from different trunk segments. And the kidneys of fish and amphibians develop differently from the kidneys of reptiles and humans.

To summarise, 1) homology is not as homologous as it looks (the genes are different in some cases), 2) the similarity that is there is adequately explained by a Creator's design economy, and 3) homology does not help the evolutionary story avoid fanciful claims that enormously complex and similar organs evolved dozens of times independently. Homology should be a reason to honour the Creator, not deny His existence or involvement with nature.

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2. Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, Mentor Books, New York, 1958, p.404
3. Dawkins, R., Climbing Mount Improbable, W.W. Norton, New York, 1996.
4. Sir Gavin de Beer, Homology, An Unsolved Problem, Oxford Biology Reader, 1971

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BEHOLD AN ISRAELITE

THOMSON B THOMAS

Looking at a young man, who would later become His disciple, Jesus said, “Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile.” Jesus said this about Nathanael (John 1:47). The character Jesus appreciated in him was also present in Himself. Jesus was born as an Israelite. He was born as the descendant of Abraham and David. As a Jew, He underwent all the rites of the Jewish Law. The family in which He was born was committed to the Law of Moses. At His birth, they fulfilled all the commands of the law for a newborn male child.

Luke presents the nativity of Jesus in more detail than the other gospel writers, likely because he portrays Jesus as a perfect Man in his Gospel – birth holds significant importance for humans.

The child Jesus was circumcised, purified, and presented in the Temple, according to the Mosaic Law.

The Circumcision

God gave the first instructions for circumcision to Abraham. He presented circumcision as a sign of the covenant (Genesis 17:9-14). All the male children were supposed to undergo this rite of circumcision as an external sign of their membership in the Jewish community and as a part of the covenant. This covenant may be the Abrahamic covenant. A covenant envisages agreements to be adhered to and promises of blessings to the adherents thereof.

God reiterated the instruction regarding circumcision in Leviticus 12:3. “And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.” Luke says, “And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb” (Luke 2:21, 22). Joseph and Mary were not renegade Jews. They did all things the law demanded concerning the infant Jesus. According to Jewish practice, the child was officially named at the time of circumcision (as Jesus). The angel Gabriel had given this name at the time of conception (Matthew 1:25).

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A covenant envisages agreements to be adhered to and promises of blessings to the adherents thereof.

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The Purification

Luke says about the purification of Mary and the presentation of Jesus. He gives it in a simple, direct, and no-frills narrative. There are no verbal embellishments here. “Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons’”” (Luke 2: 22-24). Luke says that it was according to the law. The law in connection with these appears in Leviticus 12:4-6. The process of her purification was rather simple. Mary would enter the Temple through the ‘gate of the firstborn’ and come to the Nicanor Gate with the sacrificial items. At the gate, a priest would come and receive the items from her and offer the sacrifices. Then the priest would return and sprinkle on her the blood of the sacrifices and declare her holy. This ritual occurred on the thirty-third day after the circumcision. For her purification, Mary chose to offer two turtle doves, the poor man’s offering, indicating the financial status of the family that Jesus was born into. God chose the poorest of the poor to make the whole of humanity rich in spirit.

The Presentation

The parents did not have to carry the child to the Temple, but godly women would, following what Hannah did in bringing Samuel to the Temple. Thus, Mary brought Jesus to the Temple. The presentation was in two steps. First, the parents would present the child to the priest in recognition of God’s ownership of the child. All firstborns belonged to God. On receiving the child, the priest would pronounce two blessings. One would be an expression of thanksgiving for the Law of Redemption. The second would be a blessing for the gift of a firstborn son. The parents would give the priest the five shekels of silver stipulated in the law as the redemption money. All these, Joseph and Mary, completed as per the law, as Law-abiding parents.

Two Testimonials

After the presentation of Jesus was over, two people uttered certain beautiful things about the child Jesus. Luke tells us that the first person, Simeon, was just and devout. “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:25, 26). He came there at that very moment.

When Simeon saw Jesus, he said, “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel” (vv 29-32). He took Jesus in his hands, spoke these words, and testified about the child.

The second testimony was from Anna, a prophetess. Luke says, “Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (vv. 36, 37). Luke says, “And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (v. 38). She did two things: she gave thanks to God and spoke to the pious people who desired redemption for Israel. Everything she said in her prophetic spirit is not known. But what a pattern she makes to all who have found the Saviour to be grateful eternally to the Father God and proclaim the truths of His excellencies to those who care to listen! We do not know what effect these had on the minds of those young parents. But they likely were grateful to God for choosing them to be a part of what God was doing amid humanity, in history.

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THE SPIRITUAL RHYTHM OF CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

EBY VARGHESE

In the modern Christian experience, few spiritual practices are as neglected—and as vital—as confession and repentance. In an age dominated by self-expression and personal affirmation, the rhythm of regularly naming sin and returning to God has become, for many, a forgotten path. Yet, this rhythm forms a foundational part of Christian discipleship. Scripture not only commands confession and repentance but presents them as the gateway to renewed intimacy with God and restored spiritual vitality.

Confession and repentance are not to be occasional religious exercises or emotional responses reserved for spiritual crises. Instead, they are ongoing spiritual rhythms—grace-filled habits that recalibrate the soul and nourish our walk with God. These practices do not merely expose sin; they reveal the beauty of divine mercy. They draw the believer not into shame, but into the presence of a gracious Father who delights to forgive.

The Biblical Heart of Confession

At its essence, confession is the act of acknowledging the reality of sin before God. The apostle John writes, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jo. 1:9, ESV). The Greek word *homologeō* (to confess) means “to say the same thing” —to agree with God’s verdict on our sin. In confession, we stop rationalizing, blaming, or minimizing. We name sin for what it is. King David provides a poignant picture of confession in Psalm 51, written after his grievous sin with Bathsheba. His prayer is strikingly honest: “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (v. 4). David does not conceal, deflect, or justify. He confesses. But his confession is not merely a plea for forgiveness; it is a longing for transformation: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (v. 10).

Psalm 32, a companion to Psalm 51, describes the internal toll of unconfessed sin. David writes, “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long” (v. 3). The result of his confession, however, is liberation: “I acknowledged my sin to you... and you forgave the iniquity of my sin” (v. 5). Confession is the beginning of spiritual freedom. Without it, the soul withers; with it, the soul breathes again.

Repentance: More Than Sorrow

While confession names the wrong, repentance enacts the return. Repentance involves more than remorse—it is a decisive turning of the heart and mind. It is a change of mind, direction, and behavior. It is both an inward and outward transformation. Jesus inaugurated His earthly ministry with the call: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). Repentance, in His teaching, was not just a moral imperative but a necessary re-orientation to life under God’s rule. To repent was to align oneself with the reality of God’s kingdom.

One of the most explicit pictures of repentance in Scripture appears in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). After squandering his inheritance, the son comes to himself. He returns to his father, rehearsing a confession: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you” (v. 21). Yet before he can finish, the father runs to embrace him, clothing him with honor and joyfully restoring him. The prodigal’s conduct is biblical repentance—not merely turning from sin, but turning toward the Father who welcomes and restores.

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Barriers to Confession and Repentance

Despite their centrality in Scripture, many believers struggle to practice confession and repentance regularly. Several barriers contribute to this.

First, pride often keeps us from admitting our faults. In a culture obsessed with appearances and performance, vulnerability can feel like weakness. Yet the gospel teaches that only the humble receive grace (James 4:6).

Second, fear hinders confession. We may fear rejection, punishment, or the exposure of shameful deeds. But Rom. 2:4 reminds us that “God’s kindness is meant to lead [us] to repentance.” God’s invitation to repent is grounded not in condemnation, but in compassion.

Third, there is the obstacle of spiritual apathy. Unconfessed sin numbs the soul. Without the regular rhythm of repentance, we slowly lose our sensitivity to God’s Spirit and drift into spiritual complacency.

Cultivating a Rhythm of Return

To walk faithfully with God, confession and repentance must become regular rhythms, not occasional responses. They are part of what Martin Luther described in the first of his 95 Theses: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” Believers can cultivate this rhythm in several practical ways:

Daily Reflection and Prayer: Practicing a daily examen—a time of reflection at the end of the day—can help identify areas where we’ve resisted God’s will or fallen short. This time of prayerful honesty invites confession and re-orientation.

Scriptural Guidance: Praying through passages like Psalms 32, 51, or 139 helps shape our understanding of sin and God’s mercy. These texts become spiritual mirrors, helping us see ourselves clearly and inviting us into grace.

Incorporating Repentance into Worship: The Lord’s Prayer includes the petition, “Forgive us our sins...” (Matthew 6:12), reminding us that repentance belongs in our daily worship. Whether privately or corporately, confession should be a regular part of our interaction with God.

Accountability and Community: James 5:16 exhorts, “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” Trusted relationships where believers can speak openly and pray honestly are vital to a life of ongoing repentance.

Contrary to cultural perceptions, the ultimate fruit of confession and repentance is not guilt or gloom—it is joy! After confessing, David prays: “Restore to me the joy of your salvation” (Psalm 51:12). True repentance restores what sin steals—peace, intimacy, and spiritual vitality. The Puritan Thomas Watson observed, “Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.” When we minimize sin, we also diminish grace. But when we walk in the rhythm of confession and repentance, grace becomes astonishing again. The gospel rhythm is: confession, repentance, forgiveness, renewal. And then again, as needed. Each cycle draws us nearer to Christ, not in condemnation but in communion.

Conclusion: The Daily Return

The life of faith is not a straight line; it is a journey of constant returning. Confession and repentance are not spiritual emergencies—they are spiritual necessities. They are the path to home, the way to keep our hearts tender and our hands clean before God. In a noisy and distracted world, the still, small rhythm of confession and repentance offers something deeply countercultural: humility, honesty, healing, and joy. The Father’s arms are always open. The invitation stands. Let us return—again and again—to the grace that first saved us, and the grace that still restores.

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Trusted relationships where believers can speak openly and pray honestly are vital to a life of ongoing repentance.

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TOGETHER FOR GOOD

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

God not only saves those who put their trust in Him, but also tells them of the path and prospect of salvation to generate a grateful heart in them. Romans 8:28-30 is one such passage. It tells us what God did in saving us: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Paul lines up all the golden terms in the work of salvation in these verses.

Paul calls believers “those who love God.” Loving God applies to all believers. There are no two divisions of believers, like those who love God and those who do not. All the believers love Him. Paul makes this clear when writing to the Corinthians: “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed” (1 Corinthians 16:22). To the Ephesians, he says, “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Ephesians 6:21).

Paul writes this after an extended passage on God’s help in the sufferings of God’s people (Romans 8:17-27). In a sense, he is continuing with the same topic. He is stating that even the works of God in salvation assure us that all things are working together for the good of the believers. He who has done all these to save them shall sustain them also in all circumstances. In this context, he mentions all that God did in saving His people.

God foreknew those who should be saved.

In general terms, to foreknow means ‘to know before.’ God knew us before the foundation of the world. He knew us when there was nothing. The psalmist says, “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:16). He saw us before we were formed. But the scope of foreknowledge is not just knowing details about us or knowing what we will do when the gospel is given to us. In the New Testament, the phrase ‘to know’ implies an intimate relationship. When the author of Genesis says that Adam knew his wife or when Jesus told the workers of iniquity that He did not know them, a close, intimate relationship is implied. Thus, when the Bible says that God foreknew us, it means that before anything existed, God saw those who would be saved and got into a relationship with them. This was the first step in our salvation – the Father foreknew us.

God ‘predestined’ those whom He foreknew.

Election and predestination are related terms. But the distinction is in the object involved. While election has to do with the people chosen for salvation, predestination has to do with the purpose. “Having predestined us to the adoption as sons” (Ephesians 1:5). “Being predestined according to the purpose of Him” (1:11). In Romans, Paul says, “He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son” (8:29). In all these verses he mentions the purpose of the action. The word used for ‘predestination’ means ‘to mark out.’ The saved ones are marked out to be partakers of salvation and its blessings. The ultimate purpose is that they should be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ

God ‘called’ them who were predestined.

One of the titles used for the saved ones is that they are ‘called.’ God has called them out of the world, sin, darkness, and from under Satan. This calling may refer to the hearing of the gospel or the inner call which the Spirit gives when the gospel is given. Without these, the outward and the inner calls, no one can come to the Lord for salvation. Paul tells Corinthians, “For you see your calling” (1:26). He goes on to say that this call came to those who were unworthy, that none should boast about their call or choice. This call is unto eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10).

God ‘justified’ those who were called.

There are many words used in the Scripture to explain how God dealt with the sins of those who trust in Jesus: Jesus took away their sins, He remits sins, He forgives sins, etc. And He remembers them no more. But justification is greater than all these. It means that God declares we have not sinned at all. This is more than what we can understand. This declaration becomes possible because of what Jesus did. He took our position. We had sinned against God, and heaven’s punishment was due on us. But Jesus stood between God and us and took the blame for all that we had done. Thus, we were relieved of all charges against us. The grace and goodness of God manifest in this are beyond our comprehension.

God has ‘glorified’ those who are justified.

Paul says, “Whom He justified, these He also glorified”. It is interesting to notice that the usage is in the past tense. Those who are saved are already glorified. This is more than we could understand. We are still in our weak, falling, failing, fragile bodies. They are not yet redeemed. How can we say that God has already glorified us? There are two ways in which we may explain this usage. One explains it positionally. In Christ Jesus, we are already glorified. This we call positional glorification. Second, the past tense is used to assure us that glorification is going to happen. It assures that God shall glorify all those who are saved. They are in the process already. And He shall complete it.

These are great works of God in salvation, in its past and prospects. These are the golden words in the divine works in salvation. Each word is rich with blessed insights into God’s love and wisdom.

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MISSIONS

HENRY BREIDENTHAL

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

Henry Breidenthal was born in 1932 as the youngest of six children in a nominal Christian family in Kansas City, USA. At the age of 10, an intruder entered his house. A detective residing nearby heard his mother's screams and shot the intruder dead. This incident impacted Henry deeply. He began to attend church and thought of becoming a missionary to earn his place in heaven.

One Saturday during his teenage years, he attended a packed Youth for Christ meeting in which the preacher powerfully presented the gospel. Henry learned that no one could earn his salvation. He was convicted and saved. His plan to become a missionary remained. "Once I learned that salvation is by grace, what else could I do?" he asked.

Deferring to his parents and older brother, he studied medicine at the University of Missouri. While doing his residency (internship) in Dallas, he would encourage the young people there to study at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). "Why don't you attend DTS?" someone asked him. After receiving his medical degree, he enrolled at DTS and earned a master's degree in theology in 1962. In DTS, he joined a monthly prayer meeting for East Asia. He learned about Hudson Taylor and was highly impressed with his ethos of not soliciting funds. He joined Overseas Mission Fellowship (OMF), the organisation that Hudson Taylor had started, and sailed to Singapore. From there, he went to Bangkok, where he spent a year studying the Thai language and culture.

The OMF leadership felt it would be good for him to work at their leprosy hospital for a few years. They then let him focus on his heart's desire: direct evangelism.

Henry moved to Northern Thailand, where he reached out to the Mien tribe, which is also present in neighbouring Laos and Vietnam. He lived in huts in the mountains, staying in each village for days, weeks, or months, depending on the reception of his hosts. He tried to treat villagers' health problems with limited equipment, but his primary objective was to introduce the gospel. William Merry, a friend who visited him there, wrote, "He was supposed to be fed by a tribal family, but at that time of year, they worked in their fields and could only provide a few meals. He didn't mind living simply and going hungry at times. He was reaching people who had never heard the gospel."

Breidenthal gradually learned to deal with the challenges of evangelism in Thailand. Thais are willing to acknowledge His existence and add Him to their already complex pantheon of supernatural figures, but extremely hesitant to believe in Christ, that is, trust Him fully.

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In the 1970s, sensing the need expressed by several churches, the Overseas Mission Fellowship and the Christian and Missionary Alliance founded the Bangkok Bible College using donations from many Thai believers. Breidenthal became the first director. The college then consisted of just one two-storey building in which he and five students lived.

One of those five students was Chumsaeng Reong who had come after an elder in his church told him that an impressive American doctor who was like a "Bible encyclopaedia" would be heading the college. "If [this doctor] is so great, why are there so few students?" he remembers thinking. "And why is the building so shabby?"

Despite these misgivings, Reong continued for five years in college. He went on to become a pastor, seminary instructor, and founding director of the Wycliffe Thai Foundation. The college is now called Bangkok Bible Seminary and serves about 1000 Thai students.

During the decades in Bangkok, Breidenthal would spend each Sunday afternoon handing out tracts in a public park. Occasionally, someone would tell him that handing out tracts was not a good way to evangelise. He would reply, 'Well, that's my method. What's your method?'

He once reminded a student and coworker that Jews for Jesus in New York City handed out 1.3 million tracts in one year and had only 2,000 responses. Yet from those 2,000 came 200 professions of faith from a resistant Jewish population. Breidenthal was not discouraged by getting only a few responses. He would sow the seed extensively.

Breidenthal went on to establish Chiang Mai Theological Seminary, where he taught till 2018. He also planted several churches.

Observing that after Africa, Southeast Asia has the largest number of people without a Bible in their language, Breidenthal also worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators. "It's like if you are going to help hungry people, they are better off if you teach them to fish than if you give them fish", he said.

Breidenthal's commitment has been an inspiration to many Thai Christians. He would never count the days leading to a furlough, and Thai Christians recognised that this stemmed from a great love for the Thai people. He is also famous for his spiritual discipline, in particular his motto, "No Bible, No Breakfast" that he lives by to this day - he won't eat until he has spent time with God's word. He never accumulated any significant wealth or possessions. Coworker Larry Dinkins wrote about him, "He leads daily prayer and starts and ends most conversations with intercession. His cherished prayer book has hundreds of names which he systematically covers in a daily ritual of prayer and petition."

On the negative side, he would get so caught up in his work that he would forget to take care of himself. Friends needed to check on his food and rest. Sometimes he was too strict, and his blunt style of communication would put off Thais. But they appreciated his willingness to admit mistakes, make genuine efforts to adapt to Thai culture, and invest deeply in individuals. Very old now, he is as enthusiastic for the gospel as ever.

“

He is also famous for his spiritual discipline, in particular his motto, "No Bible, No Breakfast" that he lives by to this day - he won't eat until he has spent time with God's word

”

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HYMN STORY

THE OLDEST ENGLISH SONG

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

One way in which the depth of the heritage that the English people have is that the oldest English song is a Christian hymn of praise to God. While the song does not get deep into Biblical theology, it praises God as the Creator. It emerged during the 7th century AD, part of an era when the Anglo-Saxons from Northern Europe were arriving and settling in England.

The gospel reached the pre-Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of England very early. After the Anglo-Saxons migrated into and became the dominant ethnic group in England, the gospel slowly but surely penetrated Anglo-Saxon society. There was significant influence from Rome, where the Roman Catholic Church was slowly forming. But there was also true devotion to Christ. The dominant language was called Old English (Anglo-Saxon) - the earliest recorded form of the English language. The Anglo-Saxon culture was oral, but as Christianity took root, more and more content began to be written.

The primary source for information about the hymn and its author is the Venerable Bede [1]. Bede writes that Caedmon was a cow herder who worked for a monastery. Caedmon had no musical abilities. One day, at a campfire after dinner, Caedmon's friends passed around a harp. Everyone who got the harp would play it and sing a song. Unable to sing, Caedmon slipped away in disappointment and embarrassment. That night, in a dream, a man appeared to Caedmon and asked him to sing a song. When Caedmon replied that he cannot, the man said, "Sing to me about the beginning of all things". To his surprise, Caedmon could compose a few lines of melody. On waking, Caedmon informed Hilda, the leader of the monastery, who encouraged him. He composed more lines. Hilda brought in teachers of the Bible who could instruct Caedmon and evaluate what he wrote. Caedmon's hymn is supposed to be the first song that he wrote. He later wrote songs on Genesis and other parts of the Bible, and said that he wanted his songs to motivate people to turn from the love of sin to the love of righteousness.

Old English lyrics:

Nū scylun hergan hefaenrīcaes Uard,
metudæs maecti end his mōdgidanc,
uerc Uuldurfadur, suē hē uundra gihuaes,
ēci dryctin ōr āstelidæ
hē ærist scōp aelda barnum
heben til hrōfe, hāleg scepen.
Thā middungeard moncynnæs Uard,
eci Dryctin, æfter tīadæ
fīrum foldu, Frēa allmectig.

Modern English translation:

Now [we] shall honour / heaven-kingdom's guardian,
the measurer's might / and his mind's plan,
the work of the father of glory / as he of each wonder,
eternal lord, / the origin established;
He first created / for the children of men
heaven for a roof, / holy creator.
Then Middle-earth/mankind's guardian,
eternal Lord, / afterwards bestowed
The lands to men, / Lord almighty.

Critics see in Caedmon's song older styles of Old English applied for the first time to describe a Christian theme. English hymnody developed enormously over the centuries, and Caedmon's hymn was the beginning. One researcher says that Caedmon's work "had a newness that was lost in the course of time" [2]. If we find it mediocre, it is because we are used to the high standards of later English poetry.

References

1. Bede, Ecclesiastical History of the English People Malone, Kemp (1961). "Cædmon and English Poetry".
2. Modern Language Notes. 76 (3): 193–95.

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THE FINAL BOARDING CALL

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAMS

On a seemingly ordinary day, tragedy struck unexpectedly. The Air India flight that crashed near Ahmedabad has left behind a trail of shattered families, aching hearts, and a nation in mourning. Lives were lost in an instant. Plans, dreams, and routines were interrupted by the cruel reminder that life, no matter how well planned, is fragile and uncertain. As images of twisted metal and rescue teams flooded our screens, many of us were left stunned. Some wondered, “It could have been me.” Others said, “That could have been my father, my friend, my child.” And indeed, it could have. Moments like these remind us of an often-ignored truth: life is unpredictable! No one boarding that plane knew it would be their final boarding call. No one woke up that morning thinking their day would end in disaster. But it did. And in its wake, we are left grappling with questions no one can avoid forever.

We live in a world that offers us the illusion of control. Technology, medical advances, planning apps, and insurance policies give us the sense that we can forecast and secure our futures. But the reality is more sobering. The Bible says, “You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (James 4:14, ESV). That’s not poetic exaggeration. It’s divine wisdom. We are not guaranteed tomorrow—not even the next hour. We do not control the future. Life is fragile, and every breath is a gift.

But if this is true, are we left only with anxiety and fear?

Into this fragile and broken world, God has spoken—not with cold fatalism or abstract philosophy, but with a personal promise of hope, life, and security in Jesus Christ. The gospel tells us that though we live in a world marred by death, sin, and tragedy, God has not abandoned us. He entered this unpredictable world in the person of Jesus, not to remove suffering instantly, but to redeem us from its ultimate consequence—eternal separation from God. Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

This is not just a high claim. It’s a promise backed by an empty tomb. Christ faced death, conquered it, and now offers eternal life to all who trust in Him. For the one who trusts in Jesus, death is no longer the end—it is a doorway into everlasting fellowship with God. In a world where nothing is certain, the gospel offers the one unshakable assurance: an eternal life in Christ!

If you have not yet considered this Jesus, let today be the day. In Him, there is forgiveness for every sin, peace for every anxious heart, and eternal life beyond the grave. Tragedies remind us that we are not in control. But they also invite us to seek the One who is. In this unpredictable world, only one thing is certain—Christ died for sinners, rose again, and offers eternal hope to all who believe. Will you receive Him today?

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Straight Paths is a bimonthly e-zine which exists to edify young believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in their Christian life, to help them apply Biblical principles in their daily lives, and to equip them to share their faith with others. It also exists to serve anyone else who may have an interest in the Bible.

STRAIGHT PATHS

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