

## Open Letter of Warning

To all of precious faith in Christ Jesus, you have likely received Bible Reading Calendars (BRCs) and tracts, mailed from Oaktree Cottage on behalf of The Westminster Tradition (TWT). You may have wondered about this ministry and its founder Elijah Thomas Chacko (ETC). You may have been surprised by the dearth of online information about them. I am writing as a founding trustee and former director of the Westminster Tradition UK (WTUK), until recently a representative of TWT to the UK and Europe. I am sending this letter to you to acknowledge that which is good and expose and forewarn you against that which is evil within TWT. I confess that for almost 10 years I have actively assisted in the work of this ministry. I wish to repent of the part I played in propagating deceptions and troubling those I have sat in spiritual judgment over. If you are one of these, I ask you to forgive me and to pray to God for me. I have been spiritually conceited and have despised those who are my betters in the Lord. If my repentance is to be sincere, the responsibility falls upon me to highlight the divisive emphases and evil fruits of TWT.

TWT is a small ministry which has pockets of affiliates internationally. Those who adhere closely to its teachings number several thousand. It sprang up originally in Singapore and Malaysia, and has subsequently spread to the Philippines, Nepal, India, China, Inner & Outer Mongolia, Australia, UK and the USA. The Bible reading calendars that TWT sends out are considered by Elijah Thomas Chacko to be the 'identity card' of his ministry. This card contains a number of signature verses and also a set of doctrinal distinctives on the rear. These statements present TWT in the best light and make no mention of those things which truly distinguish TWT from other groups. TWT propagates many teachings which are very necessary for the church in our times. As can be seen from the calendar, they preach a gospel which purports to be Calvinistic and experimental, stressing on the high standard of salvation and the need to be personally justified. They purport to be governed by the Regulative Principle of public worship and endorse exclusive psalmody, head coverings, the primacy of preaching and the proper keeping of the Christian sabbath. The ministry is expressly opposed to the heresies of: (1) Arminianism and Hyper-Calvinism (2) Roman Catholicism (3) Dispensationalism (4) Pentecostalism and Charismaticism (5) Pre and Post-Millennialism (6) Easy-believism and (7) Ecumenism/Eclecticism. English is endorsed as the Lingua Franca of the world and the King James Version as the best English translation of God's Word. TWT endorses a Congregationalist church polity ('subscribing to the Cambridge Platform') in word but not in deed.

Having been overawed by the zeal with which my brethren within TWT clung to many of these praiseworthy distinctives, I closed my eyes for many years to the questionable teachings and abuses of authority within the ministry - abuses which spiritual men from outside the ministry have unhesitatingly condemned as cultic. Firstly, those within TWT view themselves as the true and remnant church and believe ETC is the 'second Elijah' (Mal 4:5) and immediate harbinger of Christ's Final Return. Elijah teaches that he has been directly anointed by God and sent to 'restore all things' (Matt 17:11) i.e. doctrines. He believes that in every epoch of time, God has raised up two anointed witnesses and that he is eschatologically the last of these. In consequence, he has unbridled authority within the churches, and whether directly or by proxy, appoints all the leaders internationally. It must be understood that TWT masquerades as a ministry but functions in every way as a church, encouraging members to cut off from their former associations. ETC has complete editorial control over the daily newsletter (the 'New Jerusalem Times') which is the chief medium of communication within TWT. Membership is usually by baptism (doctrinally paedobaptist; ambivalent in practice), but though administered in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, it is clearly understood to be the baptism of Elijah - a baptism into his ministry, person and doctrine. Thereafter, departure from Elijah is construed as apostasy; their end being perdition. Though they occasionally acknowledge other leaders to be authentic, such leaders are necessarily viewed as inferior in anointing and office to Elijah Chacko - perhaps as Obadiah and Micaiah to Elijah of old. Several years ago I was rash enough to make a public vow to obey every instruction of Elijah which wasn't directly contrary to Scripture. My vow was immediately and publicly endorsed by him. This illustrates his desire to rule over others. The more indoctrinated a person becomes, the more he understands that his obedience to Elijah must be complete and unquestioning. It is considered spiritual pride to question 'the anointed of God' and a direct impediment to salvation, tantamount to the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. It is tantamount to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Preaching any sermons except those of ETC is strongly discouraged. Anyone who deviates from this rule will be reported and is liable to face reprisals.

Yet an upright person cannot but disagree with many of his teachings. For they are in direct contradiction to God's Word. The errors are often subtle and nuanced but the fruits are plainly seen. Women are appointed to preach. Mothers are discouraged from bearing children, pressured into taking up secular employment and committing the children they

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have into the care of others. Home schooling is actively discouraged. The family structure is deliberately weakened and wives and children are taught that obedience to Elijah Chacko is of greater import than obedience to one's own husband or parent (e.g. by spiritualising the fifth commandment). Should a husband or parent reject this usurpation of authority, divorce or separation may well be the price they pay.

Most of the deviations from Scripture increase ETC's hold over the consciences and actions of his followers. For example, TWT has no written constitution or document of church government to my knowledge. ETC does not subscribe to a Congregational polity but does exactly as he wishes. Even on occasions where a council of elders is convened, none would dare to oppose his decisions. The elders may advise Elijah, but they would never censor or correct him. Those like myself who have tried, are publicly shamed and shunned. Their families are also encouraged to do the same. With the passage of time, Elijah Chacko has shown increasingly antichristian tendencies, usurping much of the glory that should belong to Christ. There is an expectation that all news from missionaries, congregations and individuals should be routed through him. It is frowned upon for one brother to communicate with another in a private capacity. Many speak to Elijah using the pronouns 'thy', 'thee', and 'thine', which are otherwise reserved by those same people for addressing God. It is expected of his disciples that they frequently acknowledge Elijah as the source of their blessings (spiritual and temporal) and profess that he has taught them all they know. In practice, he exercises a mediatorial role, such that without him his disciples profess they could hardly be saved. He operates as prophet, priest and king, without check or balance. He is viewed as the Moses of our times, leading the true church through the wilderness of the world, to the brink of Jordan and the Promised Land. Elijah is viewed as a personification of the law and preparer of men's hearts - the schoolmaster who brings us to Christ (Gal 3:24). Hardly a means of humbling his followers is omitted. The most senior and respected elders are publicly humiliated and disciplined for minor infractions. They are sometimes physically struck by Elijah Chacko. Those who resist are taught that they are rejecting 'the law' and cannot therefore be led to Christ and salvation. Nobody in his ministry (except himself) openly professes salvation. In circumstances when ETC expects opposition, he uses intrigue, misinformation and private communications to divide congregations and families. In this way he strengthens his influence over some and drives the rest away - not unlike Diotrephes of 3 John 10-11. He silences those who leave by warnings of dire judgment should they speak against him and wrests providence to reinforce his threats. TWT is secretive. Public information on TWT and ETC are deliberately kept to a minimum: his tracts are selectively distributed and his sermons rarely made available. Conference attendance is by invitation only.

The chief means by which the Westminster Tradition grows is through the activity of its few, highly trained missionaries. Though barely a handful in number, they are dynamic and efficient and travel rapidly from one church to another. If not given an official pulpit, they will try to convene informal Bible studies. Their initial messages are doctrinal and edifying, and have a strong emphasis on the need for hearers to personally and experimentally check themselves. Thus they begin soundly, but when they have gained the confidence of their hearers, they seek to turn them against their former churches and pastors and bring them into the 'true church' (i.e. TWT). Of course, when the Gospel is faithfully preached, it will always bring some measure of division - this much is true. But there is a difference between those who openly proclaim the truth to unbelievers and those who creep into established churches and under pretence of brotherhood actually labour to form a splinter group. Thus the representatives of TWT present themselves as orthodox and trustworthy. They often emphasise that TWT is a ministry and not a church denomination and that they wish only to 'deposit the reformed doctrines' and move on. In reality, they target promising acolytes (typically young men who are spiritually zealous and intellectually capable) and make them disciples of Elijah Chacko. Once a disciple of Elijah Chacko, there is no room for any other authority: separation from church and even family is virtually inevitable. The missionaries find it easier to target small, isolated congregations rather than established denominations in which there is a good knowledge of Bible, creed and church history. While I do not doubt that many of ETC's distinctives are necessary and true, and also that ETC and his missionaries are able to expose many of the modern heresies, yet on closer scrutiny there is a poison at work, the end of which is spiritual bondage and the worship of man. Therefore, if you meet representatives of TWT, I urge you: be wary, test their doctrine and practices thoroughly (in deed and not just word) and do not give them opportunity to preach or conduct Bible studies in the absence of strong, discerning leaders.

For myself, I am now seeking to find fellowship in and eventually membership of a properly constituted church in Kent. I have brought my family under the spell of Elijah Chacko and hope against hope to bring them out. Please pray for us.