

Joseph Marsh's Doctrinal Development and Conflicts with Christadelphianism

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What exactly is the historical connection between the Church of God (Abrahamic Faith) and Christadelphianism? The early camaraderie between John Thomas and the Wilsons is common knowledge, but there is much more to the story.

Over the last year we have striven to understand what went on between prominent Church of God pioneer Joseph Marsh, Advent Christian Nathaniel Field, and Christadelphian founder John Thomas. It seemed to us that the connections between these men, going all the way back to the 1840's, were significant for Thomas' doctrinal development and rebaptism in 1847.¹ However, more extensive research has revealed that Thomas understood the doctrine of the premillennial Kingdom of God (along with the restoration of national Israel in the flesh) as early as the 1830's, when he was editor of *The Apostolic Advocate*.² In addition,

¹Cf. Janet Stilson, David Graham, and Mark Mattison, "A Brief History of the Formation of the Church of God General Conference," *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*, Fall 1991, Vol. 1, No. 1, 47 and Janet Stilson, "Historical Newsletter Goes International," *Church of God General Conference History Newsletter*, Summer 1992, Vol. 5, No. 1, 7.

²John Thomas' article "On the Names of our Periodicals" (*The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, January 1851, Vol. 1, No. 1) was quoted out of context in *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*. It was not belief in the doctrine of the Kingdom that led to Thomas' rebaptism in 1847, but his conviction that belief in the premillennial Kingdom (complete with the restoration of Israel) is necessary for salvation and must precede baptism.

Thomas' rebaptism took place in March of 1847, months before he had even met Joseph Marsh.³

We are left, then, with a host of questions. What were the connections between Joseph Marsh and John Thomas? Did one influence the other? If so, to what degree? What was the doctrinal development of Marsh and Thomas? About what had they been in agreement, and what was the cause of their falling out? Only a thorough examination of the "bigger picture" can yield some answers.

I. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

By the beginning of the 19th century, postmillennialism was the prevailing eschatological view of Christendom. Born of the optimism of Western civilization, postmillennialism posited a conversion of the world to Christianity, i.e., the establishment of the millennial Kingdom prior to the return of Christ. The doctrine of the restoration of Israel was virtually unheard of; few would teach such a thing.

Some voices began to herald the message of Israel's millennial destiny, however. In the first decade of the nineteenth century in America, Elias Smith, co-founder of the revivalistic, nonsectarian Christian Connection,⁴ preached extensively about the restoration of national Israel according to the flesh. In the United Kingdom, many eschatological issues were clarified by such men as Henry Drummond and Edward Irving in the Albury Park Conferences (1826-1830).

A man named James McMillan, born in Scotland in 1799, followed Irving's teachings closely. After he was expelled from the Presbyterian Church for rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, McMillan came to America and settled in Rochester, New York, in 1836.⁵ We shall return to McMillan shortly.

Dr. John Thomas was born in 1805 in London, England, the son of a minister. He migrated to America in 1832. That same year he was baptized by Walter Scott into the Campbellite movement.

³Thus the chronological chart in the *COG: GC History Newsletter*, October/November, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2, is misleading in its assertion that in 1843 "John Thomas studies aspects of Kingdom of God with N. Field, Indiana, and is rebaptized. Works with Age-to-Come evangelists until Thomas split in 1848."

⁴It should be noted that the Christians (or Christyans, not to be confused with the Campbellites) generally repudiated Trinitarian dogma (Smith himself was an Arian) and the immortality of the soul.

⁵Tim Ryan, correspondence.

In 1834, Thomas began editing his first serial publication, the *Apostolic Advocate*. In this journal he affirmed the premillennial return of Christ for the purpose of restoring the Kingdom to Israel and taught that through faith the Gentiles could participate in those promises.

II. JOSEPH MARSH AND THE MILLERITE MILLENNIUM

Joseph Marsh was born in Vermont in 1802. Early in Marsh's life his family moved to New York, where his parents were disfellowshipped by the Methodist Episcopal Church for rejecting the Trinity. Not long afterward, Marsh's mother died.

At the age of 16, Marsh walked to Rochester to live with his brother James. A few years later, in 1823, Marsh was baptized into the Christian Connection. The following year he entered the ministry.⁶

In 1839 Marsh became the editor of the *The Christian Palladium*. In this journal he vigorously defended premillennial doctrine against the prevailing postmillennial theory. However, he was equally vigorous in denying the millennial restoration of Israel in the flesh.⁷ This was entirely consistent with Millerite doctrine.

Marsh had finally become a Millerite in 1842. With William Miller and others, Marsh began to proclaim that Christ was going to return sometime in 1843. He defended this doctrine in the *Palladium*, as well as the Millerite theory of the millennium.

The Millerites, or Adventists, could be distinguished from the "millenarians" by their belief that "the descent of the New Jerusalem will be at the beginning of the thousand years."⁸ Simply put, the Millerites regarded Revelation 21 as a restatement of Revelation 20. The New Heavens and New Earth were the millennial restoration. The destruction by fire of 2 Peter 3:10-12 was premillennial, not postmillennial.

For the Millerite, there was no room for a "probation" period whereby mortals could enter the millennium in natural bodies. Only resurrected saints would inherit the Kingdom. The Jews would indeed be restored to their land, but not in their mortal bodies; only those Jews who accepted Christ prior to his return would rule in the Kingdom, and then as immortal

⁶David Graham, "Church of God Connection & Review," *Wisdom & Power*, July 1991, Vol. 5, No. 4, 20ff.

⁷Cf. e.g. "Inferential Evidence," *The Christian Palladium*, August 2, 1843.

⁸"The Rise and Progress of Adventism," *The Advent Shield and Review*, ed. by Joshua Himes, 1844, Vol. 1, 47.

saints, just as the immortalized saints of all the kingdoms of the earth would retain their national distinctiveness.

Marsh still held onto these views when he began his own paper in 1844, a Millerite journal entitled *The Voice of Truth & Glad Tidings of the Kingdom at Hand*. Though explaining that he had been wrong about the coming of Christ in 1843, Marsh wrote that:

We have *not* been mistaken in our faith relative to the second personal advent of Christ. — The evidences that he will come again have not been in the least invalidated by any mistakes of ours.

We have *not* been mistaken in our faith in the premillennial advent of Christ. The evidences that his coming precedes the millennial glory are conclusive.

Nor have we been mistaken in our views on the return of the Jews according to the flesh, to the land of Canaan; the more critically the question has been investigated, the more satisfactory have the evidences appeared, that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but inwardly, one who is Christ's, and that such only will be gathered into the land promised to their father Abraham, the heavenly country.⁹

Marsh published several articles by such Millerite writers as Josiah Litch and J.B. Cook defending these doctrines extensively.

On January 29, 1847, a Charles Beecher of Fort Wayne, Iowa, wrote a personal letter challenging Marsh on his view of Israel's restoration. The letter was published, along with a response, on March 17, 1847.¹⁰ Beecher was also a premillennialist, but he was not an Adventist. In fact, he was generally very hard on the Adventists.¹¹

Beecher accused Marsh of spiritualizing the prophecies in much the same fashion as the postmillennialists; Marsh responded that in fact his denial of the restoration of Israel in the flesh was based on a literal interpretation of Scripture. Following the brief exchange, Marsh published a series of articles by Beecher on the millennium. He continued to allow Beecher to express his views after he renamed the paper *The Advent Harbinger* later in the same year. Commenting on one of Beecher's articles, Marsh wrote:

⁹"Mistakes Explained," *The Voice of Truth*, May 27, 1846, Vol. 10, Nos. 8 & 9, 66.

¹⁰*Voice of Truth*, Vol. 13, No. 12, 92.

¹¹Cf. *The Advent Harbinger*, August 3, 1847, Vol. 15, No. 6; August 31, 1847, Vol. 15, No. 10; September 21, 1847, Vol. 15, No. 13. Beecher also believed in the deity of Christ and the immortality of the soul.

Mr. Beecher's article in this day's paper we cannot fully endorse, yet it contains some valuable truths which we cheerfully present to our readers. The point from which we are constrained by the word of the Lord to dissent is, the doctrine of probation of a thousand years after the second advent of Christ. We design, the Lord willing, as soon as convenient, to give this question a thorough examination. Let others do the same in the light of the gospel and they will be guided in their investigations to a just conclusion of this matter.¹²

Gone was the firm conviction that the issue had been adequately explored by the Adventist movement; now the issue was one which he was going to examine more closely when he had the opportunity.

In the meantime, he continued to support the Millerite theory, publishing articles which confused Revelation 21 with Revelation 20. Marsh was to cling to this Millerite tradition for another two years.

III. JOHN THOMAS AND JOSEPH MARSH

In the meantime, John Thomas had come to the conclusion that his baptism by Walter Scott was invalid. The same month that Marsh published Charles Beecher's letter, Thomas was rebaptized. He wrote of the experience:

If such an immersed man come to understand and believe the truth after his immersion in his ignorance, let not such an one deceive himself by supposing his immersion is any better than a Jewish ablution. It is no better. It is utterly worthless; and being convinced of this, we were immersed a second time by one who had been re-immersed, and who declared to us he believed the gospel of the kingdom we desired to obey. We permitted him to do nothing but pronounce the words of Christ, and, having put us under the water, to raise us up again. We confessed to God before we went down into the water, and with our own voice called upon his name. We accepted neither prayer nor exhortation from him; but confined him strictly to the act defined. It is certain, for many reasons, he will never dispense to us in any form or shape again. He is in the hands of him who will deal with him according to his deeds; and there we leave him, being well assured that whatever may become of him, truth will be vindicated, and malice put to shame.¹³

¹²*Advent Harbinger*, July 6, 1847, Vol. 15, No. 2, 13.

¹³"Elpis Israel's Wandering Star," *Herald*, January 1853, Vol. 3, No. 1, 18, 19.

Here we learn that Thomas' unnamed rebaptizer 1) had himself been re-immersed, 2) claimed to be in doctrinal agreement with Thomas, and 3) had since fallen into disrepute with Thomas. Neither Nathaniel Field nor Joseph Marsh could have been this rebaptizer, for neither of them believed in re-immersion and neither of them believed in the restoration of Israel according to the flesh¹⁴ (though Marsh was soon to accept this doctrine); furthermore, Thomas was not to meet Marsh for several months.

Later that same year, a Brother Heyes told Marsh about Thomas' paper, *The Herald of the Future Age*. Marsh sent a copy of the *Harbinger* to Thomas and requested an exchange.¹⁵ Of the *Herald*, Marsh wrote:

"Herald of the Future Age."—We have just entered this monthly periodical upon our exchange list. It is published by John Thomas, M.D., in Richmond, Va. Though we cannot see that the editor is correct in his opinions, relative to the gathering, to the land of Palestine, of the Jews according to the flesh, yet we most heartily agree with him in several other important positions he has taken. As soon as we can find room, we shall give some extracts from this work.¹⁶

Prior to this time Thomas had been in fellowship with Nathaniel Field. Thomas wrote:

In the days of our ignorance of the Gospel of the Kingdom¹⁷ we were in denominational fraternity with Nathaniel Field, M.D.; but with Joseph Marsh, as a Christyan, Millerite, or ought else, we have had no ecclesiastical relation. In March, 1847, we left friend Nathaniel in fellowship with all the sentiments (though in the following September he renounced "the Reformation" of A[lexander] C[ampbell]); for at that time we publicly

¹⁴For Field's views on the restoration of Israel and rebaptism, cf. Sarah Roxanna Wince, "The Story of a Happy Christian Life.—No. 60," *The Restitution*, Sept. 2, 1908, Vol. 57, No. 33: "But the doctor never could grasp the return of Israel—smart as he was, and many an argument did Sister Russell's parents have with him on the subject.

"When Bros. Reed and Stephenson held a two week's meeting in Jeffersonville, they convinced their hearers that Israel would return to their own land, and Dr. Field had to listen to it all. Many were re-immersed, among the number being quite a body of Campbellites—some of the leading members, and as the Doctor would persist in taking in people from other churches without re-immersion many of the older members withdrew. . . ."

¹⁵Editorial note appended to an article by Nathaniel Field, "Thomasism, No. 3," *The Prophetic Expositor and Bible Advocate*, May 15, 1859, Vol. 29, No. 24, 665.

¹⁶*Advent Harbinger*, August 17, 1847, Vol. 15, No. 8, 64.

¹⁷I.e., that accurate doctrinal understanding must precede baptism.

renounced all fellowship with “Christendom,” and its names and denominations, one and all. Friend Joseph [Marsh] was then floundering in Millerism, and contending with “the saints” above named [Joshua Himes, George Storrs, etc.], and against the items of what he called “carnal judaism,” wherever they chanced to show themselves. . . .

While he was in this condition, that is, in Sept. 1847, we wrote to him from Buffalo, N.Y., saying, “perceiving from the *Advent Harbinger* that you are a man of progress, that is to say, one who believes that it is possible, and even probable, that there is more truth in the Word of God than you may have yet discovered, I have concluded that, upon the principle of ‘hearing all things, and holding fast to that which is good,’ you would not only have no objection, but desire to hear if any light was with me more than you have already seen, I have already thought it would be well, therefore, to let you know that I would, if agreeable, speak in Rochester on the Gospel, or Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God. If this meet your approbation and that of the friends, please drop me a line upon the subject, and informing me at what place I shall make my appearance.” Being invited after this, we submitted things which they said “interested them more than they expected,” and into which they said they would examine.¹⁸

In retrospect, Marsh became more candid about his initial impressions of the *Herald* and described Thomas’ subsequent visits:

On the receipt of the doctor’s sheet, we found it chiefly filled with cutting sarcasm on A. Campbell and others, with whom the doctor appeared to be at war. The paper was poorly printed, on poor paper, and we subsequently learned from the doctor’s own lips, it had a subscription-list some short of 400 subscribers. Hence his supporters and sympathizers were then few in number.¹⁹

Finding some good things in the doctor’s paper, especially on the theme of life and death, and perceiving the doctor to be a man of talent, we introduced *him* and his *paper* to our brethren. We made frequent extracts from his paper, spoke favorably of it, and its editor, and finally invited the doctor to attend a conference in this city, where he became acquainted with many of our brethren, and at other similar meetings amongst us, which he attended, and where he disposed of his books, obtained subscribers to his paper, and received *liberally* of the contributions of our brethren. He spent, on one of these visits, nearly a week in our family, took part in family devotions, communed with us and others. . . .²⁰

¹⁸“Historical Reminiscences,” *Herald*, 1859, 65.

¹⁹By contrast, Marsh had around 2,000 subscribers.

²⁰*Expositor and Advocate*, May 15, 1859, Vol. 29, No. 24, 665.

Little did Marsh know that this friendship would have disastrous consequences for the Rochester church.

After providing Marsh and several members of the Rochester congregation with subscriptions to the *Herald*, Thomas left for England in June of 1848.

In 1849, while in England, Thomas published his influential book *Elpis Israel*. Marsh also published a book that year, *The Bible Doctrine or True Gospel Faith*. *The Bible Doctrine* was a Millerite book; in it Marsh outlined the view of the millennium which he had held for so many years and had expressed in all of his previous journals. He still regarded Revelation 21 as a restatement of Revelation 20 and denied that Israel would be restored in the flesh; only immortalized saints would inherit the millennial New Heavens and New Earth.

By January 5th, 1850, however, Marsh finally fulfilled his promise to his readers and Charles Beecher, having reexamined the issue of Israel’s restoration. He wrote:

There is much darkness in the church relative to the character of the age to come. And many advent believers, who make the prophecies their study, are greatly confused on this important subject. It is true, that they have seen the absurdity of the popular faith of the church relative to the character of the Millenium [*sic*], or age to come [postmillennialism], but at the same time have been unable to give a consistent view of its character, in harmony with the very many prophecies which evidently relate to that glorious period.

We have heard a number of labored discourses on the millenium [*sic*] of Rev. xx., in which a harmony of events predicted in that and the following chapter, was attempted in accordance of the views generally entertained among us, but every such effort, to us, has been a failure; consequently we have never adopted those views, but, at the same time, we have confessed our ignorance relative to the true harmony of the events named in those chapters. We have frequently remarked in reference to this matter that there was great darkness among us about the real character of the millenium [*sic*], or age to come, and that the order of events of that period was not understood by us. But we now say with strong assurance, that we have the true light on this important matter, which we with much satisfaction endeavor to impart to others.²¹

This was the beginning of his next book, *The Age to Come, or Glorious Restitution of All Things Spoken of by the Mouth of All the Holy Prophets Since the World Began*, which was published in 1851. In this book, he

²¹“The Age to Come,” *Advent Harbinger*, January 5, 1850.

repudiated the Millerite view of the millennium and explained his new understanding that the New Heavens, New Earth, and New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 were to follow chronologically after the millennium of Revelation 20. Having moved the New Heavens and New Earth back a thousand years, Marsh now had room for that probation period during which mortal Jews and Gentiles could enter into the millennial Kingdom. A Jewish remnant would repent at Christ's return and enter the millennium in their mortal bodies.

This doctrinal shift probably represents the most crucial point in Marsh's career; it was at this point that the doctrine of the Age to Come as we believe it today crystallized in Marsh's mind.

Of course Marsh had not come to these conclusions in a vacuum. Augustus Sintzenick, who had been Marsh's printer for nearly ten years, in 1860 wrote in a biased and sarcastic tone:

The most intelligent and honest of the sub-divisions of Millerism, is that represented by the *Prophetic Expositor*, published in this city by Joseph Marsh, with whom, and his dishonest and sophistical course the last few years the readers of the *Herald* are somewhat acquainted. By continual reading of some of the more celebrated English authors and writers on sacred prophecy; and the frequent and earnest testimony to the truth by one of its most able and consistent teachers in this city,²² the editor, several years ago, was induced to give up many of the most nonsensical and absurd crochets of Millerism, and enter upon a more consistent method of interpreting scripture. This may be seen in a pamphlet published by him at this time, denominated "The Age to Come,"—which, though full of doctrinal and grammatical blunders, was a great advance on the previous positions of the editor. The author, though entirely ignorant that the Gospel of the Kingdom was identical with the sum and substance of *the Gospel* [i.e., that a perfect doctrinal understanding must precede baptism], nevertheless brought out, for the first time by Millerite authority, the doctrine of the restitution of all things—the Millennial reign of Jesus for 1000 years—the restoration of Israel to their land. . . . In the dissemination of correct views of prophecy, the *Expositor* was in the main indebted to English writers and to the *Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, from whom Marsh early copied and patterned. To them, and the early and consistent advocate of the one faith in this city, whom the Expositorial chief often had "the privilege" to hear, Joseph Marsh is mainly indebted to his knowledge of truth.²³

²²Christadelphian historian Tim Ryan identifies this teacher as James McMillan, of page 34.

²³"Rochester, N.Y., and some of its Religious Vagaries," *Herald*, 1860, 226.

Though Sintzenick may have overestimated Marsh's "indebtedness" to Thomas,²⁴ it is true that the combined influence of Beecher, McMillan, Thomas, the English literalists and others, as well as his own study and reflection, led Marsh to affirm the millennial restoration of Israel in the flesh.

Thomas was delighted that Marsh had come around on this point, and upon his return from England in 1850 resumed his correspondence with Marsh. They were mutually encouraged by their doctrinal similarities, and Thomas even advertised the *Age to Come* in the *Herald*. Thomas wrote that after his return to America:

we relanded in New York, and upon inquiring after Joseph, found that he had progressed. He has been in the receipt of all our writings to the present time, and we have been to Rochester expounding the Word. He has been gradually approaching our position, assumed for the first time in March, 1847, when we put off "all the sentiments," and put on Christ in baptism. He got so far as to be ashamed of the name "Adventist," and to propose a union of his periodical with the *Herald of the Kingdom!* He no longer liked to be called an Adventist, and has therefore changed his paper's title from "*Advent Harbinger*" to "*Prophetic Expositor*." But, as to uniting our periodicals, we begged to be excused.²⁵

Thomas explained to Marsh that their diverging views on what constituted a valid baptism would prevent a successful merger between the two papers. Marsh replied that he did not think there would be any problem; Thomas answered that there would, but invited Marsh to continue reprinting articles from the *Herald*.

Herein lay the seed of the destruction of their friendship and mutual cooperation. Thomas was being patient with Marsh, believing that since he had revised his millennial position he had only to be baptized (his previous baptism being defective). But Marsh did not believe, and had never believed, in re-immersion.

IV. THE EMBRYO OF CONFLICT

As time went on and Marsh did not agree to be rebaptized, Thomas grew impatient. In the April 1852 issue of the *Herald*, Thomas wrote:

²⁴" . . . as our Expositorial friend lately expressed himself, 'Dr. Thomas was undertaking to be a leader,' and though Joseph was indebted for much of his new light to the Dr. in question [*sic*], still it was not desirable [*sic*] to the *Expositor* editor that this indebtedness should be in any way manifest." *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁵"Historical Reminiscences," *Herald*, 1859, 66.

On the Lord's day evening we spoke at the College Hall in Crosby street, on the question, "*What is the gospel?*" This is the most important inquiry that can be mooted in these times; and one which it is absolutely necessary our Advent friends should take into their most serious consideration. If a man be right on all other scripture subjects, but wrong in this, he cannot be saved; for it is "he that believes (the gospel) and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 15,16). . . . Let our friends who believe in the personal return of King Jesus from afar, and in the existence of his kingdom in Palestine in all the Age to Come (and with whom we have a sincere and abiding sympathy)—look into this matter. . . .

In dismissing this subject for the present, we would propound the following question to our friends—If the "kingdom to be restored to Israel" (Acts i.6; Matt. xix.28; Luke xxii.29,30) is to be set up by the God of heaven in their land, (Jer. xxxiii.15,17; Mic. iv.8) and it be the subject matter of the gospel, as it unquestionably can be proved to be; (Matt. xxiv.14) and if the Twelve Tribes of the natural Israel are to be its *subjects*, (Exo. xix.5,6; Isa. li.4) and the spiritual brethren of Jesus its *rulers*, as is also demonstrable (Rev. ii.26,27; iii.21; xx.4; xxi.24,26)—how can a man who, before and long after his immersion, believed that the gospel kingdom is beyond the skies; that the Twelve Tribes were not its subjects and would never be restored; that the nations would all be destroyed at the coming of the Lord; and that there was no Age to Come of a thousand years duration, during which nations in the flesh will live under their own vines and fig-trees blessed in Abraham's Seed—how can such a man, we earnestly and respectfully inquire, have believed and obeyed the Gospel of the Kingdom? We submit this question to the calm and deliberate examination of our friends, especially of the editor of the *Advent Harbinger*, who is the most liberal and candid conductor of a paper we know.²⁶

Marsh responded to Thomas' earnest question, as requested:

We readily admit that the question, "*What is the gospel?*" is one of vast importance, and but imperfectly understood by the great mass of professed believers in it; but to say unqualifiedly that those who are "right on all other scripture subjects, but wrong in this, he cannot be saved," is more than we can do; for if we understand the genius of the teachings of Christ, he makes provision for the imperfections in knowledge of his disciples. The very name, *disciple* implies this; for a disciple is a *learner*, and a learner is not perfect in knowledge. If the editor of the *Herald* means to be understood that a man cannot be saved who is imperfect in knowledge, or is partially wrong, we differ from him.²⁷

²⁶Quoted in the *Advent Harbinger*, May 29, 1852.

²⁷*Advent Harbinger*, May 29, 1852.

Marsh went on to explain why he did not believe in re-immersion. First, as the apostles baptized people immediately upon their profession of faith in Christ, the baptisands must have had incomplete knowledge. Baptism comes first; greater understanding comes later. Second, neither Christ nor the apostles rebaptized people who had grown in knowledge of the truth. Third, as baptism is a symbol of Christ's death and resurrection, affirmation of that doctrine is sufficient to qualify one for the act. Fourth, the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized after professing faith in Christ as the Son of God, and a "heartily profession of the same faith, is all that the Scriptures authorize us to require of candidates for baptism." Fifth, the apostles were not rebaptized, even after Christ had risen from the dead. "Hence," he wrote, "we conclude that a person who believed the gospel, though ignorant relative to many things pertaining to it, was considered a fit subject for baptism, by Christ and his apostles, without being required to have baptism repeated, as his knowledge should increase."

Besides, Marsh went on, most of those who have been baptized *do* believe in God, Jesus, and a resurrection to immortality in the Kingdom. Why should these be rebaptized because of some imperfectly understood details? "Some have advanced further than others in the science of the gospel, but no one (the Editor of the *Herald* not excepted,) we apprehend, is *perfect* in knowledge, or has completed his studies in the school of Christ. Then, shall we say that no one's baptism is valid? We cannot."

The point of difference between Thomas and Marsh can be simply stated: Must affirmation of the premillennial Kingdom and restoration of Israel precede baptism? Thomas took the affirmative position and Marsh the negative, though they both agreed on the doctrine itself. Yet as far as Thomas was concerned, until Marsh was baptized with this new understanding he was living in disobedience to the gospel. However, there was still time for Marsh to change his mind; their relationship was still cordial.

That is why Marsh was pleased to announce that Thomas was going to deliver a series of lectures at the June 1853 conference in Rochester.²⁸ At the conference, Thomas convinced four people of his position and rebaptized them. James McMillan was among the baptisands.

Marsh and his colleagues were still unconcerned. J.B. Cook later wrote that in spite of the minor doctrinal differences, he found the conference to be one of the best. The millennium, the reign of the Messiah and the saints, the restoration of Israel, and the New Heavens and New

²⁸*Advent Harbinger*, April 16, 1853.

Earth had all been discussed, and he felt strengthened in the faith of Christ's coming Kingdom.

V. CHURCH SPLIT

Trouble visited the Rochester Church of God in 1856 when Marsh decided not to publish an article by H.L. Hastings. Believing that he was acting in accordance with the Church discipline described in Matthew 18, Hastings reprovved Marsh, and when Marsh did not acquiesce, Hastings drew others into the conflict. The political struggle led to a trial in the Rochester church in 1857, at which time Marsh was exonerated. Displeased at the outcome, J.B. Cook and others left the church. But this was only the beginning of Marsh's troubles.

VI. FULL-BLOWN CONFLICT OVER RE-IMMERSION

The year 1858 brought with it the full-blown conflict over rebaptism. In April of that year, Mark Allen wrote an article for the *Expositor* entitled "Pre-requisites to Immersion," in which he argued that a proper understanding of the Kingdom must precede immersion. Marsh responded that "All can understandingly believe in the death and resurrection of the Son of God, and represent the same by baptism. To require *perfection in degree* in the whole, or the full gospel of the kingdom, on the part of all, before or subsequent to baptism, is requiring an *impossibility* which God demands of no one."²⁹

J.M. Stephenson debated the topic with Marsh through the pages of the *Expositor* at some length. Augustus Sintzenick, the printer of the *Expositor* and initially a sympathizer with Marsh's position, would eventually be swayed by this discussion.³⁰

In the *Herald* of May 1858, Thomas happily reported "A Gospel Crisis in Rochester, N.Y." He wrote:

Bro. Chase from Michigan has recently been preaching at "*Chapel Hall*" in Rochester. His last discourse was on Baptism. He is said to have laid the subject fairly and faithfully before his audience, in the judgement

²⁹Cf. "Trials in the Church in Rochester, N.Y.—Decision of Council, &c.," *Expositor and Advocate*, September 15, 1857, 211ff.

³⁰Mark Allen, "The Gospel of the Kingdom in Rochester, N.Y.," *Herald*, 1860, 131; Sintzenick, "Rochester, N.Y., and some of its Religious Vagaries," *Herald*, 1860, 228.

of the majority of the society meeting at that place. After he had finished, Bro. McMillan and Bro. Bradfield, two friends of the truth there, who have not only believed the Gospel of the Kingdom, but with scriptural intelligence obeyed it, rose up, and bore a faithful testimony to the truth also.³¹

He went on to relate that one of those present confessed his need for rebaptism, and that the following Sunday Marsh addressed Chase's position from James 1:25. Marsh's sermon was followed by a brief talk by Sintzenick reinforcing Marsh's position. (Thomas wrote that Sintzenick said "a great deal," but Sintzenick protested that the talk was not more than ten minutes long, and that Thomas had misquoted him³²). McMillan then protested against Marsh and Sintzenick that true belief must precede baptism, and exhorted both of them:

to retire home and learn the gospel the Samaritans received from Philip; and to be immersed for the name of Jesus Christ into remission of sins, as Peter also enjoined upon the Pentecostian First Fruits. This wholesome exhortation was publicly offered; and we doubt not, received as unpalatable exhortation sincerely and affectionately presented, is entitled to be. Afterwards a little more was added of the same sort. The Editor [Marsh] was told by his friend [McMillan] that he looked upon him as an unbaptized man, though now, indeed, believing the gospel.³³ He besought him to consider what he was doing, and not to stand in the way of others, of whom some had spoken to him of his position. Bro. Bradfield exhorted him also to the same end; and parted with him not without hope that he would become obedient to the righteousness of God testified by Moses and the prophets. . . .

³¹Page 109.

³²"A Correction," *Herald*, 1858, 154ff. In a lengthy review of Sintzenick's correction, Thomas argued that he had not misquoted him, but had quoted his informant's letter word-for-word; however, even if the informant had misquoted him, his "correction" was "in effect" the same as what the informant had said he said.

³³Thomas referred to this event again in "The Gospel of the Kingdom not One Idea, but the Manifold Wisdom of God," *Herald*, 1858, 131: "One of the members (an official member, we believe,) of the society in Rochester to which he [Marsh] belongs, and a very warm personal friend too, recently told the elder [Marsh] that although he had called him Brother, he looked upon him as an unbaptized man, yet now believing the gospel; and besought him to consider what he was doing, and not stand in the way of others. Now this official brother knows our friend, the editor, better than we do; neither he nor the reader, therefore, will deem us presumptuous or uncharitable in saying that we wait for proof that the editor of the *Expositor* is a brother in Christ at all; for in all our New Testament reading we never read of an unbaptized brother in Christ, or a Christian, weak or strong, since the day of Pentecost; and his official friend says he is unbaptized."

We are glad to hear that things have come to a head in Rochester, N. Y. No real good can be done in that city until what is there called "the church of God" become such in deed and truth by an intelligent obedience to the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. . . . They have had many doctrinal troubles in Rochester, which have had a winnowing effect. Our friend Cook and his faction have been fanned out; and others scattered off elsewhere. All this was necessary, that the approved might be made manifest.³⁴

In the *Expositor*, Marsh wrote that the so-called "Gospel crisis" was in effect a dialogue, not an argument. It was true that Brother Chase had preached in Rochester on baptism, and McMillan and Bradfield had spoken "in approbation of his discourses," and another worthy brother had expressed doubts about the validity of his baptism. It was also true that Marsh had preached the following Sunday from James 1:25, but it was *not* true that his sermon was preached in response to Chase. In fact, he had not even discussed the topic of baptism. He goes on:

At the close of our discourse, in harmony with usual custom, we gave liberty for others to speak. Several brethren spoke, and baptism was one of the various topics of their conversation, some of which was rather heated, but no more so than is occasionally witnessed among good and conscientious brethren where different sentiments are entertained, and freedom of speech is tolerated. Instead of a "crisis" being the result, as is represented by the *Herald*, we have rented our place of worship for another year, and notwithstanding the same differences in sentiment on baptism still exist, as before, we have not made this difference a sufficient cause for breach of Christian fellowship among us, and we sincerely hope we never shall.

Why does the editor of the *Herald* seem eagerly to grasp at every occasion to bring *us* into disrepute before his readers? What have we done to merit these frequent and unprovoked personal attacks? He once adopted a very different course, associated with us as a fellow laborer, and brother, at the family altar and table of the Lord.—Our sentiments on his favorite topic, baptism, are the *same now*, as *then*—of which fact he was not, and is not, ignorant. We have not withdrawn our fellowship from him; and know not why he has treated us as an "apostate," in our "sins," being baptized in "the faith of devils," &c., unless it be, that we have exercised the right to do as he has done, viz: to freely express our sentiments on baptism!³⁵

³⁴"A Gospel Crisis in Rochester, N. Y.," *Herald*, 1858, 110, 111.

³⁵*Expositor and Advocate*, May 15, 1858, 660.

Thomas and his supporters were increasing their efforts to win converts from the Age to Come movement which Marsh had been leading in the wake of Millerism. In the same month that Thomas had reported Rochester's "Gospel crisis," a Mr. S. Williams reported a successful missionary trip to one such Age to Come Church of God in Port Perry, Canada:

There is a church there of between twenty and thirty members, calling themselves "the church of God;" and believing in the Age to Come, restoration of the Jews, reappearance of Christ, and the establishment of his Kingdom in the Covenanted land. But I found that they lacked one thing, viz., *the obedience of the faith*. The most of them there take "*The Expositor*;" in which I am sorry to see friend Marsh take such a sophistical stand against that enlightened obedience which the one faith demands [rebaptism], seeing that he is the means of keeping back many honest hearts from "obeying the truth," as many of them look up to him as their oracle. How glad should I be to see him obey the truth; as I think that through "*The Expositor*" he is operating as a stumbling-block to some who would otherwise obey; and his conversion would move it out of the way.³⁶

Williams reports that after delivering nineteen more lectures on his visit, "six who had been previously immersed into the theological sonship, and world-burning theory of Antichrist [i.e., the Millerite doctrine of the millennium], came forward and were baptized into the one faith. In the whole I baptized fourteen into the Name of the Holy One, who are now rejoicing in hope of the glory of God."³⁷

Yet, as the following incident will illustrate, Marsh still believed that he could work with those who sided with Thomas on the issue of rebaptism.

Two months later, a prophetic conference was held at Port Perry. One of the speakers was someone who called himself "John Williams." After Williams had consented to speak at the conference, he "found through the *Expositor* that Friend Marsh and Elder Sweet were also to be there."³⁸

On the first morning of the conference, Marsh asked Williams if he would be willing to become an evangelist (even though he knew Williams' position on baptism). Williams agreed. It was proposed and

³⁶"The Clerical Son of a Ghost in Skyana Rejected, and the Jesus Paul Preached Obeyed," *Herald*, 1858, 159.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 160.

³⁸"A Canadian Conference, and the Doings Thereat," *Herald*, 1858, 228.

seconded that Williams should become an evangelist, and one hundred dollars were immediately pledged to him. Marsh planned to raise more funds for Williams through the *Expositor*.

In one of his sermons, Williams “invited them to examine their relationship to Abraham, in the light of God’s word, by first believing ‘the great and precious promises,’ then baptism; not baptism, then faith.”³⁹ In his presentations, Williams consistently took Marsh and his colleagues to task. Commenting on the conference in the *Herald*, he rhetorically asked Marsh and Sweet, “Why do you preach the kingdom at all, if it is unnecessary for faith? Why? Because you are with a people that believe it, and from whom you obtain ‘the almighty dollar.’”⁴⁰

Three days after Williams’ appointment as an evangelist, Marsh and Sweet took Williams aside and asked him about a letter of his which had been published in the July *Herald*. Why would Williams not call Marsh “Brother,” but only “Friend”? Williams answered that he could not acknowledge Marsh as a brother in Christ, for he had not yet been baptized. Marsh protested that by that statement, Williams had “unchristianized” him. Williams answered that a Christian not only believes the Word, but obeys it. Marsh said though he had used his influence to get Williams into the field as an evangelist, he would have to bring this matter to his brethren if Williams did not retract his statement. Williams refused.

The next morning Marsh asked Williams to reconsider, but he would not. As Marsh had promised, he brought the matter before the church, reading extracts from the letter. Adding that the issue of rebaptism should not be made into a test of fellowship, Marsh turned to Williams and asked, “Can you fellowship me as a *Brother* in Christ?” Williams responded, “I cannot fellowship you as a brother in Christ, for I know your position.”⁴¹

Many at the conference disapproved of the spirit of Williams’ letter, and it was decided that Williams would not be supported and paid as an evangelist.

Three years later, “Williams” was exposed as a bigamist whose real name was Mr. Shillibeer.⁴²

³⁹*Ibid.*, 229.

⁴⁰“A Canadian Conference, and the Doings Thereat (Concluded),” *Herald*, 1858, 254.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 256.

⁴²*Herald*, 1861, 144.

VII. THOMAS VS. MARSH AND FIELD

This conflict over re-immersion, however, is nowhere more apparent than in the flood of letters and rebuttles in both the *Herald* and the *Expositor* from 1858 to 1860. In February of 1858, Marsh wrote an article called “The Test of Baptism,” which Thomas took to task in a series of articles entitled “The Gospel of the Kingdom not One Idea, but the Manifold Wisdom of God.” How could Marsh’s first baptism have been valid since he had not understood the doctrine of the restoration of Israel? As a Millerite, Thomas argued, Marsh had treated God as a liar by denying the restoration of Israel in the flesh. The attacks were becoming less theological and more personal.

In “Inconsistencies of Dr. J. Thomas,” Marsh wrote that it was inconsistent:

to judge others, as he has, as “sinners,” “apostates,” &c., because under the excitement of 1843, they embraced some erroneous doctrines which since then they have renounced and confessed their mistake, when at the same time greater *sins* lie unconfessed at his door.⁴³

The “unconfessed sins” to which Marsh alluded were explained by Nathaniel Field. In about the year 1840, Field explained, Alexander Campbell had asked Thomas to stop publishing his views on certain topics. It was resolved and agreed upon that “certain things believed and propagated by Dr. Thomas, in relation to the mortality of man, the resurrection of the dead, and the final destiny of the wicked” would no longer be discussed by Thomas, as they were of no practical benefit. In compliance with this agreement, Thomas stopped publishing the *Apostolic Advocate*, but broke his covenant two years later when he began publishing the *Investigator*. “The reason why Mr. Campbell refuses to notice him,” Field wrote, “is, that he [Thomas] acted in bad faith, and violated his promise to hold the discussion of his views in abeyance.”⁴⁴

Thomas did not take this article lightly. It formed the basis for several articles, the first of which was entitled “The Dilemma and its Horns.”⁴⁵ Thomas protested the personal attack and wrote of “the ocean of all Christendom’s sentiments, where Messrs. Marsh and Field are floundering like dying fish harpooned of Galilee, and all for the waves of

⁴³*Expositor and Advocate*, Nov. 15, 1858.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Herald*, February 1859, 34-39.

unrighteousness after 'the way of Balaam son of Bosor!' ”⁴⁶ Thomas caricatured Marsh's and Field's argument:

Dr. Thomas sinned against the Supervisor of a Sect twenty years ago, and has some inconsistencies even now; therefore the immersion of an ignoramus—one piously ignorant of the gospel—is a valid baptism! Blessed and beautiful logic, in what thicket or copse of Paradise hast thou hid thyself! “Common sense!” where art thou? Away on the wings of light to EXPOSITORIA, and visit these men!⁴⁷

Thomas then proceeded to slander Marsh's and Field's Millerite background once more, repeating the popular myth that the Millerites sold “ascension robes”:

What then, would he [Paul] have said to Expositorial Joseph and Nathaniel had they been in Galatia with their phrenologies literally crammed (as they must be considering the things contained) with “the sentiments of all Christendom,” capped off with world burning and dry-goods ascension robes for an aerial flight in 1843!⁴⁸

Thomas went on to depict Marsh as caught on one of two horns of a dilemma. Since Marsh had once believed in the Millerite doctrine of the millennium and denied the restoration of Israel in the flesh, then he had either apostatized since his conversion in 1828 (the year was actually 1823), in which case he could not return to the faith, or he had never actually been converted. Thomas “charitably” opted to tell Marsh that he had not yet been converted, for then he still had hope. “An ignorant man might very honestly and sincerely become a Millerite, Mormon, Moham-medan, Jew, Papist, Infidel, or anything else; but a man once enlightened by God's knowledge—no, never sir, never!”⁴⁹ Marsh was either ignorant or a dishonest, wicked apostate. These were the only two options.

Responding to this article, Marsh wrote that:

These fearful threatenings are used by Dr. Thomas to justify him in judging all *true Christians* as worthy and sure of eternal damnation, who embraced the errors of “Millerism.” The only hope of salvation he offers to them, and of course to all others who may at any other time have embraced any other error is, that they were not Christians previous to falling into their errors, but were ignorant of the “one faith,” and were

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

“accursed” “sinners”! . . . To say that all professed Christians sustain the character either of “an accursed sinner,” or of “an accursed apostate,” who have embraced or entertain some errors in faith, as Dr. T. teaches, is unchristianizing all, with the exception perhaps of a few inspired persons, who ever bore the name of Christ, the doctor not excepted; for all have been more or less defective in their knowledge of, and faith in the gospel.⁵⁰

In “Historical Reminiscences,”⁵¹ Thomas reiterated his point that ex-Millerites could not become Christians without seeking baptism into the proper doctrine of the Kingdom. He then defended himself against Field's charges that he had broken his treaty with Campbell.

In 1834, Thomas explained, he had begun to question whether a person destitute of the “One Faith” previous to his immersion could be the subject of the “One Baptism.” He had also begun to question whether man was immortal by nature. These questions disturbed the Campbellites. He had never agreed not to discuss them, however; he had agreed not to discuss *certain things* about them. “Certain things” was a vague term; Thomas agreed to the contract with no intention of ceasing to teach the mortality of man, but intending to avoid the topic of the non-resurrection of infants, idiots and pagans, “things” which were related to the topic of man's mortality.

Thomas explained that it was in 1838, not 1840, that Campbell had visited Richmond, Virginia. Thomas was neither residing nor editing a paper there, as Field had alleged; rather, he was residing and editing his paper forty miles away from Richmond. Thomas went to Richmond to hear him preach; Campbell preached “at” him and “against” him in a two-hour discourse, but a friend encouraged him not to reply on the spot, as they were in the midst of enemies.

A few days later Campbell went to Painesville, about eight miles from Thomas' home, to preach. Thomas went to hear him again. Campbell's clique, who hated Thomas, suggested that Campbell challenge Thomas to a debate on the immortality of the soul, thinking that Thomas would be caught off guard and trampled into the dust. Thomas agreed. The debate continued for three days, but without the result desired by Thomas' enemies. The debate was cut short, and each speaker was asked to talk for an hour on some unrelated topic. Thomas acquiesced, speaking on 1 Corinthians 12:3, but Campbell cheated and spoke on the immortality of

⁵⁰“Perfection of Faith in Degree,” *Expositor and Advocate*, 1858, 495.

⁵¹*Herald*, 1859, 64-67; 81-86.

the soul after all, stealing the opportunity to have the last word on the subject. Worse, Campbell did not want the debate to be published, as his other debates had been.

After the debate, Thomas agreed to avoid discussing those undefined “certain things” relating to the mortality of man, but that was because he was ignorant of the gospel. Besides, the agreement did not state that *he* regarded them of no practical benefit, but that those who drafted the document regarded them so.

To Field’s accusation that he, in obedience to Campbell, agreed that “the doctrine he is now teaching, and for not believing which, he now non-fellowships everybody, was of no practical benefit,” Thomas wrote:

Now, when Nathaniel, the gentile indeed, penned this, he doubtless gleefully thought he had cornered us up into a very tight place, indeed; but when he had done laughing and rubbing his hands, and about to eat us up like bread, he would find that we were not there.⁵²

Field was not willfully lying, Thomas explained, but was just ignorant or stupid, or both. Thomas had done “nothing ‘in obedience to the dictum of A.C.,’ for A.C. said nothing in the premises; *secondly*, the doctrine we are now teaching as the gospel and its obedience, we were ignorant of in 1838.”⁵³

Neither was it true that Thomas had abandoned publication of the *Advocate* in obedience to the dictum; on the contrary, he had continued to publish the *Advocate* for another year.

“Having thus annihilated Nathaniel of Indiana,” Thomas proceeded “to wipe out of controversial existence his brother Joseph, of Rochester, N.Y.”⁵⁴ Thomas’ involvement with Campbellism could not be styled as “great sins unconfessed,” because he, unlike Marsh, had not only confessed his error, but had obeyed the gospel by being baptized in 1847.

Marsh and Field were quick to respond in the *Expositor*. Marsh wrote that:

The controversy between us and Dr. Thomas on the pre-requisites to baptism, for some time at first was confined to the Scriptures. We met all of the doctor’s arguments, and as we think clearly showed that his position was unscriptural and unreasonable. We treated him, however,—with Christian courtesy, and felt no disposition to make a breach of Christian friendship between us, on account of a difference of sentiment. But he

⁵²*Ibid.*, 84.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 85.

manifested a different disposition, and commenced a *personal* attack upon us, Dr. N. Field, and others who sympathize with us in reference to these matters.⁵⁵

In the article that followed, Field caricatured Thomas’ belief:

All mankind are wrong in *everything* and cannot be saved unless they acknowledge themselves blockheads, and adopt the views of this second Solomon. . . . His *Elpis Israel* is the sum total of the Gospel, and the creed of his brethren. It may be called Thomasism, in contradistinction to all other isms. It is a wonderful production, and as great a discovery as the philosopher’s stone. No one who doubts it, is fit for the kingdom of heaven. It contains everything necessary to salvation, the three frogs [of Revelation] included. . . .

I am glad that he has found moorings at last, and is now satisfied. I like the doctor, and think he may do some good. . . . He claims originality in his discoveries, but I think the English literalists considerably in advance of him. That, however, is a matter of no importance, provided he is right. He publishes a neat and interesting periodical well worth the subscription price.⁵⁶

In the second installment of “Thomasism,”⁵⁷ Field promised to address Thomas’ views in a series of articles:

I hope he will not take it amiss, but keep in a good humor. If he will eat more sugar, it will neutralize some of the vinegar in his veins. He has lived too much on wormwood. I fear it has engorged his liver and made him a misanthrope. If he wants to reform the world he must exorcise himself of bitterness. Hard arguments and soft words will do more than the cat-o’-nine tails to convert men to his views. Joseph and Nathaniel have Nathaniel have [*sic*] disturbed his equanimity by publishing his Virginia compromise. Dates and places were not material to the fact. He admits that he did accede to it, but endeavors to explain it away by special pleading.

. . . His reply shows that all that I have said about the compromise is substantially true. I never refused to fellowship the doctor, but since his conversion to his present views he refuses to fellowship me. Very good; every man to his liking.⁵⁸

In the third installment,⁵⁹ Field refuted Thomas’ refutation of the charges that he had broken his treaty with the Campbellites:

⁵⁵“Dr. Thomas,” *Expositor and Advocate*, April 15, 1859, Vol. 29, No. 22, 605.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 605, 606.

⁵⁷*Expositor and Advocate*, May 1, 1859, Vol. 29, No. 23, 627, 628.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 628.

⁵⁹*Expositor and Advocate*, May 15, 1859, Vol. 29, No. 24.

In his "Historical Reminiscences," he admits every material fact in my report of the Virginia compromise. He merely quibbles about dates, places and constructions. It is a historical fact, that everybody in and out of Virginia, once thought that he, in that compromise, ceded away his right to teach the absolute mortality of man, the destruction of the wicked, and the non-resurrection of infants, idiots and Pagans. Years afterwards he confessed that he did wrong in agreeing "to hold discussion of these subjects in abeyance."

But now he says that he meant "the things in *relation* thereto"! What nonsense! . . . His play upon the phraseology of the compromise and the *sense* to which *he* accepted it, may go for what they are worth. Sensible men will construe it by the *sound*. It is a plain and intelligible document, which precluded the doctor from preaching on the mortality of man, destruction, and the non-resurrection of infants, idiots, and pagans.⁶⁰

Having said this, Field went on to chastise Thomas for being so unkind to Adventists:

The doctor is very hard on the Adventists, Millerism, and Storrism. I fear he is ungrateful. For had it not been for the Advent movement, I do not believe that this day, he would have a corporal's guard of followers. A broken down ex-Campbellite, he goes north to take advantage of the movement, and is now building on other men's foundation, and all the while exposing its rottenness! Such, at least, is my opinion of his course.

With all his ultraisms, I could have borne, and did bear with him, until he turned his back on his friends, because they could not subscribe to his views. He suddenly became intensely sectarian, and withdrew from all Christendom, myself included, and opened his batteries upon everybody and everything not exactly according to his notions.⁶¹

Commenting on the article, Marsh added that Thomas was "extremely inconsistent in his course, to say nothing of his manifest ingratitude to those who raised him from obscurity to his present notoriety among us. If he could fellowship us and others of our faith, which he well understood, *then*, unless we have changed, and we have not, he should do it *now*, or acknowledge that he erred *then*."⁶² To this Thomas would undoubtedly have answered that he had never really fellowshipped Marsh in the first place.⁶³

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 664.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 665.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 665, 666.

⁶³Cf. "Historical Reminiscences," *Herald*, 1859, 65: "with Joseph Marsh, as a Christian, Millerite, or ought else, we have had no ecclesiastical relation."

Two of Thomas' correspondents implored Thomas to retaliate. One of them, whose name is not given, wrote:

Drs. Field and Marsh are out as large as life in "*The Expositor*," and pouring the vials of their wrath on the devoted head of their victim; that is, upon yourself. Your last article upon their case evidently cut deep. Publishing the truth, and applying it to their individual cases, is too humiliating for their pride, and makes them squirm considerably. I fear that Marsh is now a hopeless case; for I perceive for some time back that he has been apparently retrograding, especially since he has set his face against the truth. I am sorry for this, as once I had some hope that he would fully obey the gospel.⁶⁴

In response to the second correspondent, who asked that Thomas comment on Field's latest article, Thomas wrote that he had too much important writing to do about other topics. He went on to write:

We have weathered during the past twenty odd years, intenser hurricanes than they can breeze up, though they might blow big guns till they have cracked their cheeks. Let them blow till their wind is exhausted.

. . .

We fear, too, that friend Marsh is a hopeless case. We commiserate his blindness, or perverseness, or whatever else it may be called, that prevents him from obeying the truth. . . . Whatever person or thing is adverse in principle or practice to the gospel of the kingdom, in its simple apostolic ministration, is Satan. Though they may assent to some of its principles, they mix these up with so much of their own foolishness, and the sentiments of the apostacy [*sic*], that as far as their influence goes, they destroy the gospel and pervert the people. In this they are of the Satan, and must be rebuked. . . .

As to the suggestion of "J.C." to correct some of their "assertions," we conceive that it would only be time and trouble thrown away. They will assert what they please, and what they think will best serve their unhallowed purpose. It is impossible for us to follow them through all the mazes of their circumlocution. . . .

Adieu, then, to Messrs. Marsh and Field, for the present. Time may come when they will acknowledge the truth in spite of "the sentiments of all Christendom;" and when they will deeply regret that they ever sought our destruction. There is a mine excavating under friend Marsh's feet, which when it explodes, will knock a hole into his hull that will founder him in the abyss profound. His efforts to sink us will not enable him to float. As for Dr. Field, his reckless impetuosity unfits him for successful strategy against the truth. Let him take care of his brains, or he will find them

⁶⁴"A Hopeless Case," *Herald*, 1859, 166.

scattered, and himself *hors de combat* among the things that were. . . . We like the doctor, *malgre* the flocks of sheep and windmills he charges with his spear; and have not yet been able to get angry with him. If we could only get the Don Quixotte out of him, and the truth into him, he is just the man to be all right. Well, this world will not stand still; so we will hope on that all will yet be well, even with friends Marsh and Field. Amen.⁶⁵

The conflict over rebaptism had now come to a head. Years had passed since Marsh had affirmed the restoration of Israel according to the flesh, yet he had never become obedient to that faith in Thomas' estimation, since he had never repudiated his former baptism. Though Marsh had desired to work with Thomas and those who were in sympathy with Thomas over the baptism issue, such a union could not be created. By 1859, Marsh's willingness to defend his view of baptism had degenerated into a willingness to join a mutual name-calling contest. Thomas harped on Marsh's and Field's Millerite past; Marsh and Field in turn harped on Thomas' Campbellite past. Marsh and Field were Satan, enemies of the gospel; Thomas was a bitter, broken-down ex-Campbellite. Marsh and Thomas were so near to each other, yet so far.

VIII. A CHURCH OF ONE

Though Thomas had bid Marsh adieu, he did not hesitate to publish the remarks of Mark Allen and Augustus Sintzenick in 1860. In "The Gospel of the Kingdom in Rochester, N. Y.,"⁶⁶ Allen joyfully reported that five more had been rebaptized in Rochester. Three of the baptisands were from Cook's congregation, and two of them from Marsh's. One of the converts from Marsh's church was Sintzenick, who had been Marsh's publisher for nearly ten years. Allen gloated:

It is now some three years since a fanatical preacher of Adventism from the east⁶⁷ succeeded in estranging from Mr. Marsh a part of his former friends, together with J.B. Cook. This caused a deadly breach in what was called "the Church of God," which breach has never been closed; but each of the two parties has claimed that itself was the true Church of God in Rochester, and the other not. . . .

But within a few months past a change for the better has taken place,

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 167.

⁶⁶*Herald*, 1860, 131, 132.

⁶⁷We believe H.L. Hastings is the preacher to whom Allen refers.

and that One Body, of which many looked upon Joseph Marsh as a head, has arrived at such a perfect state of unity that it can no longer be rent and divided, unless individuality itself be divided: for Joseph is not only head, but shoulders and front, and hands and feet, and all things in all things: for that body is now concentrated and consolidated in himself, as he now stands entirely alone in Rochester—an *Editor and Minister without any Church or congregation*—as that body, so often noticed in the *Expositor* as the Church of God, meeting in Chapel Hall, ceased to exist some months ago.

Similarly, Sintzenick rejoiced because Marsh and Cook "have pretty much left the field, and there is now a prospect that Millerism and its blighting influences are departed from our midst."⁶⁸

Not only had Marsh lost the respect and friendship of Thomas and those who shared Thomas' views on rebaptism; now he had lost his church as well.

IX. EPILOGUE

Marsh sold the *Expositor* to Thomas Newman in 1860. Newman took possession of it in August of that year. Marsh began publishing a brand new publication, *The Bible Teacher*. However, Marsh soon gave up the publication because of an apparent conflict of interests (both Newman and Marsh served the same subscribers). While editing *The Bible Teacher*, Marsh had begun working on his next book *The Light of Life*, but to the best of our knowledge it was never published.

Freed from his editorial responsibilities, Marsh made his Eastern and Northern evangelistic tours, but his deteriorating health began to hinder his efforts.⁶⁹ Before moving to Canada, Marsh gave his supply of the *Age to Come* (and his accompanying copies of the songbook entitled *The Millennial Harp*) to Newman for distribution. Evangelist R.V. Lyon described the *Age to Come* as having done "more good than any other work ever published on the subject in this country."

Marsh became a member of the Christian Church in Oshawa, Canada, periodically preaching. Within two years, he had grown restless, desiring to embark on another evangelistic tour. He began the tour, but died in Michigan in 1863 of typhoid fever.

⁶⁸"Rochester, N. Y., and some of its Religious Vagaries," *Herald*, 1860, 229.

⁶⁹"My Health and Designs," *Expositor and Advocate*, Nov. 28, 1860, Vol. 1, No. 13, 99.

His death was passed over in relative silence by much of the Church of God, particularly by leaders such as the Wilsons who shared Thomas' views on baptism. Other leaders continued to carry the torch, defending the doctrine of the Age to Come.

The equipment Marsh had used throughout the years he had been publishing was the same equipment that was used to publish the *Restitution* (begun in 1871) before it was ultimately destroyed in the Chicago fire. In that sense, Marsh was the founder of what became the *Restitution*,⁷⁰ though Church of God extremists (Thomasites like Huggins and some of the Wilsons) never publicly acknowledged that fact. In 1911 *The Restitution Herald* was founded, however, and it soon replaced the *Restitution* as the official magazine of the Church of God.

Notes

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⁷⁰*Restitution*, Vol. 56, No. 24.