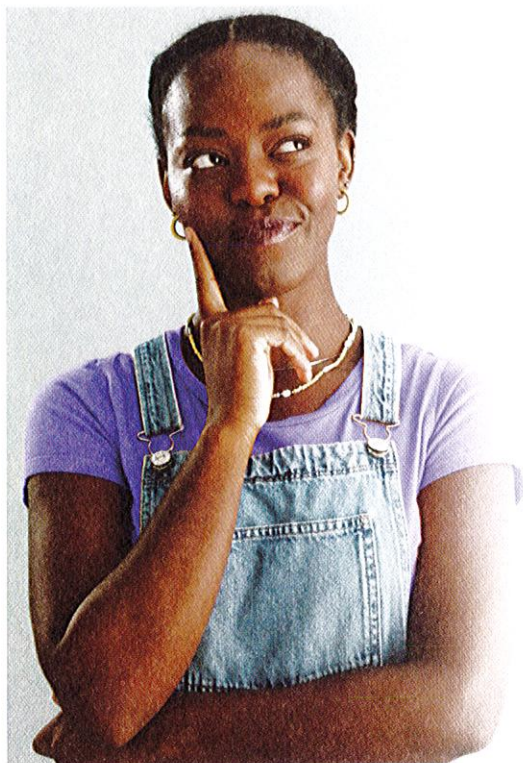


Connecting faith and daily life

A human way
of thinkingCaroline Hodgson *reflects on*
Colossians 2:6-15 [16-19]

In its heyday Colossae was a large, populous and prosperous city, although by Paul's time it had dwindled in size and significance and become known as a hub of "syncretism" – defined in the dictionary as "the amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought". In first-century Colossae this meant a mashup of Jewish, Gnostic and pagan ideas, including an angel cult in which the archangel Michael was venerated. It was what we'd now think of as an "alternative" kind of place.

We live in an age in which diversity, inclusiveness and individual choice are celebrated; in which people pick and choose the religious, ethical and moral frameworks for their lives according to personal choice

(although in reality their choices depend largely on background, upbringing, experience and the influence of those around them). Our lifestyle and ethical choices may change as we grow through life, and that's also celebrated.

Christians reading today's passage might feel uneasy, wondering whether we, in this age of fluid and flexible thinking, have become "captive through philosophy and empty deceit". Is this the "human way of thinking" that Paul warns against?

I love Paul's poetry, faithfulness, commitment and passion. But I don't agree with his way of setting "human tradition" against a life lived "according to Christ". I'm nothing if not human and I believe humans should celebrate their humanity. So, trying to keep the example and teaching of Christ above all in my sights, I say the opening verses of this passage as a personal prayer. 🙏

Lord God, as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord, may I continue to live my life in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as I was taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Amen.

Books of the Old Testament

Zechariah

by Georgina Byrne

Zechariah is regarded as the companion book to Haggai, which immediately precedes it. Indeed, they were written at the same time. But whereas Haggai is a call to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple, Zechariah's vision concerns the general restoration of Judah and the renewal of God's people.

Like Haggai, Zechariah speaks to those returning from exile in Babylon. He notes at the beginning that, whereas former prophets spoke of God's anger and

punishment, now the message is one of reconciliation: "Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you."

The book has two distinct parts, leading some to conclude it has two authors. The first half contains a series of visions, where Zechariah engages with angels or "men of God". God will comfort and protect Zion as a "wall of fire" around the city. Evil and falsehood will have no place and, once they are cast out, God's envoys, the four winds, will stand guard against them.

The second half contains two oracles, different in tone but echoing what has gone before. Again, there are words of comfort: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion..." 🙏

Ignatius of Loyola
(1491-1556)

by Caroline Hodgson

St Ignatius is commemorated in the Common Worship lectionary on Thursday. Caroline Hodgson considers his life and legacy.

He began his career as a soldier and experienced a spiritual awakening after being wounded in battle. The religious texts he read during his recovery inspired his deep Christian faith.

In 1534, he and six companions, including Francis Xavier, took a vow of poverty, chastity and obedience to the

Pope. This was the beginnings of the Roman Catholic religious order the Society of Jesus, often known as the Jesuits.

Ignatius wrote *Spiritual Exercises* – a compilation of prayers, meditations and contemplative practices. It remains a key text in Christian spiritual practice, enabling people to deepen their relationship with God. It is sometimes used as focus for a "retreat in daily life", or otherwise adapted to bring a spiritual element into daily life.

Ignatius died in Rome in 1556 and was canonised in 1622. His legacy lives on through Jesuit institutions worldwide. 🙏

“Teach me to serve you as you deserve: to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will.”

St Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), Basque priest and theologian