

Epie Log

*A short story by James “Jamie” Arthur Johnson
written in honor of the 30th Anniversary of
The Beacon Deacon Web Site (January 7, 2026),
reflecting his work “APO STAHL JOHNTHREE AND
THE SALONIANS”*

DESTINY

My mother and father – or stewards as they were called back then – raised me in a community sponsored by The Unity. Both were Overseers who opened each day of the respective cropping communities to which they were assigned to make sure things went as they should. I was destined to follow in their footsteps.

I grew up in training with peers who were to become Overseers, cogs in the machine of The Unity. We were to focus on what The Unity called facts – not feelings, not free thought (as adverse consequences awaited those who practiced such things). Day in and day out, I was in a classroom learning about The Unity. We reviewed the Law of The Unity, the first being, "There is no law but the Law of the Unity." I learned, memorized and recited the Law repeatedly. I learned all that was expected of me.

I had various tasks as I progressed through the program. I – and others like me – received the best The Unity could offer. I remember the day when I was chosen from my class to be an Apprentice Overseer. This was at Community P at M05. In time, I achieved the title of Overseer. I was beginning the journey to fulfill my destiny.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Every day was usually the same. I looked out from my balcony over the workers of Community P at M05. I had them review the Law of the Unity, looking with an eagle eye to see if they were reciting the Law, particularly "There is no law but the Law of the Unity." If anyone did not conform or recite, then there would be consequences. I would tend to interview the perpetrator as this would hone my training further while also keeping me aware of what was happening in the community.

Today was not the same. I noticed one of the workers stopped speaking during the recitations. I called two guards to obtain the perpetrator, to obtain *him*. I awaited in an air-conditioned white room out of the heat and sat at a table. The guards informed me that his name was Stahl.

The perpetrator arrived. I was thinking of imposing no meals for the day. I always had my trusty tablet with me. I made notes and looked up information on it using my finger in the air above it. Stahl looked curiously as my actions with the tablet mesmerized him.

I spoke, "Stahl, why did you not say the Law?"

He answered, "Overseer, can I attend to two rows in the field at once?"

I responded, "I ask the questions here! What do you mean by that?"

He replied, "The Law had me on one line of thought, but I have another line of thought on other things."

I asked, "What other things?"

He asked, "Where is Salonia?"

Not wanting to admit that I didn't know, I said, "I will get an answer for you so you can recite the Law like a good citizen."

"Thank you," he replied.

I said, "Now may your work produce the fruit for your table."

"Thank you," he replied.

Stahl was to spend the day working. Everyone turned in their crops at the end of the day to the guards. They took some and divided it among those who were deemed good citizens. Those deemed bad citizens learned their lesson by going without for that day.

BAD CITIZEN

A new day. I watched the workers recite the Law, and I especially made sure Stahl did so. I wasn't worried about his question. He did his duty. I did mine. And he would eat that night.

The next day, however, Stahl did not recite the Law. I had him brought to me. I said, "You are capable of reciting the Law. You are capable of being a good citizen. Do your duty."

He said, "I know, but I don't know where Salonia is."

I said, "There is no place called Salonia. Only The Unity."

He told me he had seen it written.

I asked him what else he had seen written. He hesitated. Then, he asked me if I knew anything about the Althengs or who Theegud or Johnthree was. I gave him the same line as the other day about getting answers. I had no idea what those words even meant.

He replied, "But you didn't get one for Salonia."

I firmly pressed into the table and said, "I did. I told you there is no place called Salonia. I checked for myself. There never was such a place."

"Is it even a real word?" he asked.

I looked at him squarely and said, "Yes, but not a place."

He excitedly exclaimed, "Then a who! Who is Salonia? Wait! That doesn't make sense! What I read said, 'Salonians' implying a place or group or something. Were they named for someone named Salonia?"

I was incredulous at his pondering! *Emotions in check*. I then narrowed my eyes and said, "Did you read something?"

"Yes, I did," he uttered.

I said, "What did you read?"

He said, "I read on a piece of paper."

"Where was this paper and what did it say?" I asked.

He shared what it said: "First, the Salonians -- five to one -- test Althengs and hold fast to Theegud."

"Interesting, Is that 521 as in a number?" I said as I made motions above my tablet. "I will check with the Biblions on this."

Like a child, his questions continued. He asked, "Who are the Biblions?"

Knowing children were to have questioning trained out of them, I said, "Too many questions. They are the ones with the answers."

He said, "I want to be a Biblion."

That's amusing, I thought. He's broken the law! I laughed and said, "First, you have to be a good citizen."

I next came near to him and looked right into his eyes. I paused for a moment to keep emotions in check. I am an Overseer. I am a representative of The Unity. There is no law but the Law of the Unity. I looked back into his eyes and said, "You can do that now, can't you? You're capable of being a good citizen. I have seen it. Still, you have not recited the Law today and so you are deemed a bad citizen for this day. Guards, take him away!"

Since I deemed Stahl a "Bad Citizen", he still had to work, but he would not eat that night.

RAISED HAND

Weeks passed and I did as I had done before. I went to the site and the workers recited the law.

One day seemed usual, except Stahl raised his hand as he recited. I notified the guards to bring him to me again.

"How are you?" he asked.

I tried to conceal the look on my face. I wasn't used to anyone asking me how I was doing. Without further thought, I said, "That is a question I don't usually get from anyone. We are all well under The Unity." I regretted the initial part of my statement, though I meant it. I saved it with the latter part of the statement, pointing back to The Unity.

I was going to ask him about his hand-raising, but he quickly asked, "Is five two one a number?"

I wanted to get back on topic and asked, "Is this why you raised your hand? To ask more questions?"

He said, "I still have no answers. I am being a good citizen. You have seen it."

I responded, "While you have been saying the Law, good citizens conform. They don't raise their hands. And if you haven't noticed, this is the third time you have come to me with questions. Good citizens do. They do not ask."

He said, "I want to learn."

I reminded him: "Good citizens know what they need to know."

He said, "Biblions know more than fields."

I re-doubled the focus: "Continue to be a good citizen."

He brazenly said, "I want to be a good citizen and Biblion."

I sought to put an end to his pushing and said, "Biblions are chosen by The Unity, not by the citizen."

"Choose me," he pleaded.

He was begging *me*. I didn't have *that* kind of power. I was shocked at feeling some pity for him and I responded with "The Unity chooses. I don't."

I had him returned to the fields and allowed him to eat well. Yes, pity was an emotion, but I chose to overlook his hand-raising, at least *this* time.

SMILE

More weeks, even months, passed and the routine continued. Another morning. The workers recited the Law, but this time, *he* smiled at me as he did so. Usually, people were stoic as they recited and looked at no one. I wanted to converse. What was this emotion? Why was he doing that? I had to ask.

Again, I had the guards escort Stahl to me.

I asked, "Stahl, why are you smiling at me?"

He said, "I want to talk with you."

I said, "Well, this is the fourth time. And I am here to work and so are you."

He replied, "You are working. That's why I'm meeting with you."

So, he wanted to talk. Why? I had my questions, but I didn't want his. So, I said, "No questions?"

He said, "If you deem it appropriate, please let me know if asking a question is acceptable."

I said, "You have been a good citizen for quite some time now. You may ask a question."

He asked, "What is your name?"

My name? My *name*. I looked up. Rarely did anyone want to know *my* name. I was just seen as an Overseer of The Unity, or in this case, the Overseer of Community P at M05. I began to say, "The Unity..." but then I thought about this being an unusual opportunity. I wasn't just a cog in The Unity. I was *someone*. So, I decided to just tell him: "Epis Kope, though those who know me call me Epie."

"Thank you," he said.

"That is all?" I asked.

"Only if you deem it as so," he replied.

He thanked me and respected me. I wanted to see where this would go. "Proceed," I said.

"Do you want to know why I want to talk with you?" he asked.

That had a logical response. He had questions. "For answers," I replied.

He responded with "Partly, but I really enjoy talking with you."

Enjoy? That's an emotion. *Keep it together Epie!* I controlled my face, but I could feel. I could feel my mouth slightly upturned and a softness in my eyes. I was enjoyed. And I enjoyed it.

The least I could do in return was to talk to Biblions in Unicity about Stahl. It wasn't that I felt compelled. I *wanted* to. And that's what I did.

While there, much came to light as I learned more about what they do.

CHOSEN

As the days passed, I watched the routine play out with the workers reciting the Law. I particularly watched *him*. I ensured he was a good citizen and he must have known since we made eye contact. He didn't smile every time, and he certainly didn't raise his hand. However, when he did smile, I felt *something*. I felt a softness in my eyes. I felt a softness in my heart. I *felt*.

One day, I prompted the guards to escort Stahl to me. And soon enough, there he was again across the table from me.

I said, "Stahl, you have been a good citizen. You have worked hard. You have done as instructed. You have been compliant. I have talked to some persons in Unicity. The Bibles have agreed to train you in their ways."

I could see in Stahl's face that something awoke within him. He smiled. His eyes were enlarged and kind.

Excitedly, he said, "Thank you!" multiple times.

I couldn't help but smile as I said, "I usually don't say this, but you're welcome." However, I cautioned him: "I must advise you, though, do not give your family name."

Stahl seemed vexed. I could tell he didn't understand. So, I clarified: "You cannot give them your last name as it will raise suspicion."

Stahl reminded me he didn't have a last name, but I knew more. My tablet tapped into the information.

I told him that he did have a last name and turned my tablet to him and said, "Here it is on my tablet: Stahl Johnthree. Make no mention of Johnthree as they know your family history, or the history of the Johnthree line. Tell them that you are simply Stahl from Community P at M05. That may be enough."

Stahl looked inquisitive as his eyebrow raised over one eye and a wrinkle appeared on his forehead. I could tell he wanted to ask more.

I said he needed to pack up and leave while the fields were worked and that it would be best if he just left without saying anything to anyone. So, he quietly gathered his few belongings, and the guards and I escorted him out of the community.

BIBLION

We took Stahl to Unicity, the capital of the region where The Unity reigned. He was enrapt in the sight of it all. I took for granted what he was seeing for the first time.

The guards were elsewhere on the transport. Stahl and I conversed about more things. It was easier to talk to Stahl alone when others weren't around. I *liked* talking with him. And the conversation flowed effortlessly. There was *something* about him.

After some time, the transport came to a halt, and the guards took Stahl from the transport. He looked at me and said, "Will I ever talk with you again?" I could feel my eyes moisten, but I was careful to show no other emotion with the guards around. As Stahl and the guards exited the transport, I wept on the inside. When they were out of sight, I wept visibly. This was new for me.

And I know it was all new for *him* – for Stahl. He was becoming a Biblion. He was starting a new life.

The days and months followed. I returned to my routines as Overseer at Community P at M05. Things seemed to progress the same way as they had, but they weren't the same.

I wondered to myself *still* how Stahl was doing. What if they found out about *who* he was?

JOHNTHREE

The day started like many others: recitation of the Law, workers in the field, rote exercise. I knew that sometimes an Overseer for a community would go to Bibles with questions to dispute or settle, but none came from the community. And it seemed somewhat painful to think about it. I hadn't seen Stahl for such a long time. What if they knew he was Stahl Johnthree, son of "Apo" Stahl Johnthree? That is a forbidden topic. My tablet had told me that much. After all, Stahl's father was an "Apo" – an apostate of The Unity – son of the defector Stahl John II. The Bibles must know it. It was their business to know. Persons such as those men were eliminated from the community. I knew the Bibles didn't delve much into the crop-world or other material harvest communities unless a dispute arose. And in those cases, I – or other Overseers – brought it to their attention. I hoped Stahl wouldn't ask too many questions. I made sure the record for Stahl Johnthree showed he was still working in the fields. It was one way I could protect him.

NUMBERS AND ANSWERS

The next day, I was thinking about Stahl after the morning recitation. I researched on my tablet: "Apo Stahl 'Saintjay' Johnthree 16." There he was, Stahl's father, with what some workers used to denote rebellion – "Apo" and the suffix 16. It had below it a linkable note about this being forbidden. I saw numbers – three and 16. And I wanted answers. I pointed my finger at the link, and there it appeared: "Origin: Apostahl John III 16, originally Apostle John 3:16, as in the Bible."

The text "John 3:16" was linkable. So, I reached out my finger and proceeded. I read it: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Love. Gift. Son. Not perish. Everlasting life. Was I loved? Was that gift for me?

My mind was racing as I thought about *him*. I thought about prior conversations. I remember his bringing up the number 521 and asking about Althengs and Theegud. They were words I had not known, sounding like "all things" and "the good." I was well-read. What had 521 in it that talked about... What had he said? "First, the Salonians -- five to one -- test Althengs and hold fast to Theegud." Or more like, "First, the Salonians -- 521 -- test all things and hold fast to the good." There was something to all of this. There was *something* to him. There was *something* about him.

Much time had passed, but I was hopeful that Stahl was finding answers.

QUESTIONING

Days went by and each one I couldn't help but think about Stahl. I was glad I granted his wish of becoming a Biblion. Yes, I was glad for him. Yes, I *felt* glad for him. I wished I could talk to him again. I wondered what he was learning.

I had been a good Overseer, consistently doing what was required of me each day. Yet, I had conversed, I had felt, and those things made me feel alive. I *felt* alive when I did those things with *him*. It went against my training. I tried to hide it, but my inside carried it with me. I couldn't escape what I took with me.

The Unity had always said that I was to comply, not question. I was to know what I know and nothing more.

"What if The Unity is wrong?" I thought.

This was borderline treasonous thinking! Part of me screamed inside. I clasped my hands over my ears as my head churned through thoughts and my heart spun. Whom could I tell? I felt alone.

TRUTH

Days passed. I kept it all to myself. I thought of Stahl. I wished that I could talk with him about what I was experiencing. There was no one to talk to. Could I talk to the Bibles about myself? There was one Bible. I could talk to Stahl if he were here.

I was always told (and trained) "There is no truth but The Unity. Truth is relative."

If The Unity claimed to be the truth, then, according to *their* own claims, The Unity was relative. I had already questioned The Unity in my mind. Was I questioning the truth or seeking it? If The Unity was relative, then sometimes it was false and not always true. Yet, truth was true. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called the truth. So, The Unity was subject to the truth. I was seeking the truth.

As the days went by, I pondered further about the truth, about the Bible verse, about Stahl.

CANDIDATE

After some time passed, I was in another day, which started as they usually do. My mind accepted that there was a greater absolute Truth to which The Unity was subject. My mind pondered as I kept silently asking questions and finding what I could from “forbidden” topics on my tablet.

As I dug through the research, I wondered if this was what Bibles did, what Stahl did. It had been so long since I had contact with him.

My days of routine continued as such, but the routine had now consistently involved questions and research, and more so, thinking about Stahl.

Then, I received a correspondence. It was from Unicity. I wondered if they knew of my research and were cautioning me about it. I read further that the correspondence was from The Unity and the Bibles. And here... we ... go. “You have been selected for candidacy for the office of Bible. Please respond....”

What?! I was used to seeing correspondences, approving, acknowledging, acting thereof, but I could’ve screamed in excitement. That feeling alive came over me again. Bible?! I realized that I could ask questions and get answers. I could move beyond the rote overseeing. I could talk with *him* again.

STAHL

The day came! Later that month, I arrived as a Biblion! I freely smiled when I saw Stahl. We conversed privately each day, and I often shared how refreshing it was to converse freely, not as Overseer and subject and not under the eyes of guards. I no longer had to keep so much of my heart and mind in check. That had exhausted me (even if I had been good at it at one point). Rather, I felt free amid Stahl's warm and charming demeanor. I had enjoyed talking with him before, but this was rejuvenating, a breath of fresh air. Before, it was just good to talk. Now we really *talked*. We talked about life and real things, not just Biblion topics. I told Stahl how he was one of the few who expressed interest in me as a person, treated me as such, and he desired to spend time with me, even back in the days at Community P at M05. Sure, it was only a few times, but it impacted him and impacted me. And so, we talked about things of the heart. I shared about my disillusionment with The Unity. And he shared his delving into the truth. He even shared his faith from the Bible. I think he was anticipating a gasp, but this did not surprise me. I was free to think and speak with him as he was with me.

I joined the subset of Bblions who spent time with Stahl as we looked at the Bible each day. Yes, I wanted to know more about the Bible, but I also wanted more time with Stahl. We discussed many things over the months that followed and Stahl and I became close friends. What a joy it was to have him as a neighbor and friend. Meeting Stahl changed me. Yet, something was stirring change within me.

One night, Stahl was studying at one of the Library tables in the cylindrical common area. I approached him and shared with him that I had embraced the truth of the Bible, that Jesus is God in the flesh who lived a perfect life and paid the penalty at the cross for my sin, was buried and rose again offering me hope of new life. Stahl hugged me. We prayed. We conversed.

EPIE LOG

Time proceeded and Stahl grew in his faith, and so did I. Also, the other Biblions who had joined the Bible studies grew in the faith. We referred to ourselves as the Salonians -- once slaves who were now free. The effects were seen in settling disputes as they resulted in increasingly merciful outcomes from the Biblion group. More and more Biblions joined the truth, but not all. Those who joined learned of Stahl's heritage and gave him the title *Apo*, and while it meant to be separate, it implied to be set apart as in sanctified by God. Stahl let us all know that in Christ, we all had that title.

Upon hearing of this, one of the Biblions who hadn't joined asked, "Stahl, you are named for a traitor to The Unity. Are you going to start a revolution? Is it time for me to report you? Be wary my friend. I have respected your scholarship and work, but this is going too far."

Stahl replied, "I am named for my grandfather, and I don't intend to start a revolution or use force. I will work quietly and ethically to accomplish the research and settling of disputes according to the truth."

The Biblion seemed satisfied with that answer. And since the majority of Biblions and Stahl were likeminded, even our research and use of information was used in better ways. The Unity was less able to bring destruction on those deemed rebels simply because they were seeking truth or asking questions. Guards were being impacted as were those crop-workers or other material harvesters in the communities, slowly but surely.

And during this time, I grew to love Stahl and he grew to love me. We later married under the Law, but had a ceremony privately led by the Salonians in accordance with our faith. We were beginning a movement, which was small but effective. Over time, it grew and as it grew, the effects grew. This was only the beginning.

I am Epis "Epie" Kope Johnthree 17, wife of Apo Stahl Johnthree 17. I added the suffix 17 as John 3:17 states, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."