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Editorial Introduction by Captain Stephen Court

Greetings in Jesus' name. I trust the battle progresses well on your front.

Welcome to issue 39. We're excited to introduce some new contributors to JAC this issue, as well as welcome back some old faithfuls.

Major Richard Munn leads off with his survey article, *Married Officer Leadership: For Such A Time As This* (an excerpt from a forthcoming book, *FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS*). Munn, a champion of Biblical Equality, taught at The War College recently and left some of our number reeling.

Male dominance was exposed as result of the curse. Helpmeet was unpacked as possibly superior (used of God elsewhere in OT). Headship was explained as source. Learning in reverence and submission was revealed to be the privileged position of disciple (student to rabbi- enormous promotion to women of the day). And the lack of a married woman general was blamed as sin.

It was a joy to sit under a confident, passionate expositor in red trim who lives with integrity the convictions he expressed.

But now it is time to fight. If you're a guy who thinks it your role to lead the family or lead in the Body and to dominate and to keep women from preaching and leading, you're not alone. But I'm convinced you've missed the Biblical boat on this massively important issue. It is likely because we've not taught nor lived, widely, Biblical equality, even though it is in our DNA. We unthinkingly accept what the broader church assumes.

But it is time to move on. First up, read this article. Check out [cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org) to get the ball rolling. You might want to graduate to *FEMALE MINISTRY: Women's Right to Preach the Gospel*, by Catherine Booth (<http://www.indiana.edu/~letrs/vwwp/booth/ministry.html> for the whole text or SA201). Then you could move into something a little more recent, like *BEYOND THE CURSE* by Aida Besancon Spencer, or *WHY NOT WOMEN?* by Loren Cunningham and David Hamilton. You may even work up the courage to tackle Gilbert Bilezikian (e.g. in the Priscilla Papers at <http://66.102.7.104/search?q=cache:xRyrAf5HoYkJ:www.cbeinternational.org/new/publications/ppindex6.pdf+bilezikian+women+theology&hl=en&client=safari>).

Next act. It may be that some women need to step up to the plate and walk out their callings and commissioning and appointments and anointings. It is likely that most of us men need to drastically modify worldviews, behaviours, attitudes, strategies, and tactics.

From there, who knows? I suspect that Munn's suggestive allusions about widow and orphan, fetus and other oppressed human beings, marriages and church leadership might all be re-aligned under this universal theory of Biblical Equality and prove a means of God bringing about an answer to our famous request, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!'

Whew! Don't worry. I won't midrash like that on every article!

Commissioner Harris follows with a WAKE UP call to us all. One interesting bit comes to us from Booth's disciple, through his disciple's disciple Harris, on the secret to William Booth's success: "He believed in hell." Wow. Now, I'm as orthodox as the next Salvo, and I believed in hell. But I know some Salvos who don't. Hmm.

Major JoAnn Shade blesses us with two shorter articles this issue. Caring Women and Millstones are her topics and targets of choice and are guaranteed to open up your perspectives.

Major Bruce Power, Old Testament guru, presented a paper recently at an urban ethics conference and it is printed here as Babel and Zion: The City as Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible. There is a lot of meat here, enough for you to chew on for the life of this issue.

If you can handle Power, try Major Geoff Ryan. He throws us a challenge on The Salvation Army as a Prophetic Movement. I expect that this paper, first presented as Miller Lecture Series sermon, will also provoke much thought and some prayer.

Captain K. Kendall Matthews offers us You've Got Mail, a small collection of notes to officers from Jesus. If you're not an officer, enjoy, and then pass them on.

Michelle Kay brings some great stuff in Worship Priority in The Salvation Army. She unpacks Heart to God and Hand to Man in a convincing manner. Read it.

Patricia King offers a to-part Bible Study on prayer in crisis. More meat for the hungry! Her new book, LIGHT BELONGS IN THE DARKNESS, informs this subject (available at armybarmy.com).

Aaron White offers us an excerpt from his book REVOLUTION, called 'The Revolutionary Jesus'. It might morph your view of the gentle Jesus, meek and mild. This book is also available at armybarmy.com.

John McAlister tries to ring something practical to the revolutionary rhetoric that is pouring out of salvo websites these days. It is a check on hypocrisy.

This is another thick issue. There is enough for the two months. If you read fast, do check out the [armybarmy](http://armybarmy.com) blog, consistent daily. Oh, and tell your friends about this wonderful secret (don't forget the archives!).

Married Officer Leadership – For Such A Time As This

by Major Richard Munn

The Salvation Army has the highest percentage of dual clergy couples in the church. With 85% of our congregations headed by married officer teams no other denomination even comes close. Suffice it to say, the married officer couple is an intrinsic facet of the culture and organizational framework of our movement. It is interesting to note that the marital satisfaction rates of married officer couples identically reflects dual clergy couple data from other denominations. Married officers report high rates of marital satisfaction and relate positively to the sense of shared vocation and calling. Married officers do not shy away from itemizing the marital and familial challenges associated with Salvation Army ministry, but they also reliably attest to the inherent rewards. The relatively low annual attrition rate of married officer terminations provides some evidence of this vocational fulfillment.

This legacy positions The Salvation Army to speak with some authority on the subject of dual clergy couples. We have had to wrestle with the pragmatic considerations of implementing dual clergy couple leadership for well over a century. As a result the movement is well qualified to share its experiential reflections. The Salvation Army has hundreds of experienced married officer couples that can offer counsel and insight to other denominations only now considering the matter.

Missionally, The Salvation Army is effectively poised to engage a culture that is increasingly facing the familial and marital ramifications of 2 employed parents. Structurally, we are positioned to attract the increasing numbers of graduating married seminary couples looking for ministry opportunities together. Ecclesiologically, we can authoritatively contribute towards the increasing church dialogue concerning couples in ministry.

The quandary:

However, while purporting egalitarian leadership and advocating shared formal authority for men and women the married officer leadership model often functions along quite traditional gender roles. Externally this is expressed through denominational polity with men consistently holding the dominant leadership positions. Internally it is expressed with the majority of officer couples indicating that the man is the 'spiritual head of the family.' Thus, while demonstrating much strength, the unique contribution of the married officer leadership model may not be fully maximized. The matter might be deficient theology.

Egalitarian Theology:

The perfection of the original creation depicts one man and one woman living in intimate relationship with each other and with God. In this idyllic relationship man and woman are together commanded by God to subdue the earth and rule over all other living creatures. The emphasis is joint leadership. Just as man and woman jointly

share in the image of God, they also jointly rule over the earth.

The sin of Adam and Eve catastrophically breaks this ideal relationship. For man, the punishment is toil of the earth. (Genesis 3:17) For woman, the punishment is increased pain in childbearing and a “desire” for her husband that will be instead reciprocated with his “rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16) Man now masters woman, just as the earth now masters man. As death and the toil of the earth - absent in Eden to this point - result from sin, so too is the pain of childbirth and the dominance of man over woman. Thus, both male dominance and death are antithetical to God’s original intent in creation. “He shall rule over you” is not God’s will any more than death may be regarded as God’s will for humans. (Gilbert Bilezikian)

One subtly important function for dual clergy couples is demonstrating the marital and vocational intimacy originally intended for husbands and wives. While every marriage can be a potential witness to this truth, the public nature of married officership is particularly effective to this end. Married officers can both enrich an understanding of God and provide a role model for marriages within the congregation.

A Biblical Model:

Priscilla and Aquila stand as the quintessential dual clergy couple. Their ministry provides the perfect model. Their most notable scriptural distinction is that they are always mentioned together. There is no reference to either one individually. Secondly, in 4 of their 6 references Priscilla is mentioned first. This egalitarian literary structure communicates much about their force as a couple, and their own relationship.

Several distinguishing principles of their ministry clearly emerge. They are together in ministry and as a working couple – tent-making. They have a sense of mission that entails relocation for the gospel and yet use their home as a place of ministry. This is both as a venue of hospitality and a house of worship. They have a teaching ministry - most notably to Apollos - and work closely with the apostle Paul who calls them “fellow workers.”

Priscilla and Aquila stand in the background of the New Testament church, and yet their influence is important. As a biblical example this husband and wife team provides strong evidence that dual clergy couples can have a unique and significant ministry for the gospel. It is tempting to speculate that they are included in scripture as precisely a witness to this fact. It is the force of their ministry as ‘a couple’ that distinguishes their contribution to the early church.

The Challenge:

The married officer leadership model is a long-standing and unique strength of The Salvation Army. As dual career marriages become more normative the married officer leadership model is becoming increasingly strategic as a point of cultural

connection. The days of male dominated institutions are steadily disappearing. Salvation Army ethos inherently positions us to insert married officer leaders into a culture that is more open to such leadership than ever before. We seem unusually primed 'for such a time as this.'

Wake up

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

I was boy in the United Kingdom during the Second World War when sometimes the nights were made hideous by the wailing of sirens, the roar of anti-aircraft guns and the thud of bombs. My father was an Air Raid Warden and wearing his steel helmet and with a gas mask at the ready he would patrol our neighbourhood watching for incendiary bombs and giving assistance to people in distress.

One night he returned to our house to urge the family to dive into the air raid shelter built in our back garden. He rushed into my bedroom and urged me to wake up and then went back on to the streets. A little while later he came again and dragged me out of bed on to a mat where again I fell asleep. Shortly afterward he returned and hauled me downstairs, still half asleep. A few minutes passed then a large piece of shrapnel crashed through the window and landed on the mat where I had been lying!

I owe my life to my father's repeated wake up calls and determined efforts to get me to a place of safety.

Spiritually, as well as physically, waking up is sometimes more a process than an event, and if no-one cares people will be lost We need to be jolted out of our hazy complacency and in turn we need to give a wake up call to many around us who remain unaware of the moral and spiritual dangers which are at hand.

Generally speaking, one of the differences between early day Salvationists and ourselves is that we often lack their sense of urgency. They would be amazed at the way in which we often close a meeting with a perfunctory nod towards the Mercy Seat, and a passing reference to the possibility of someone kneeling at it. Perhaps we too easily assume that there are no unconverted people in the hall. Our forebears in the faith used language that had the ring of urgency. They spoke of prayer battles and taking prisoners and saving the lost. The unsaved were in dire danger unless they became awake and aware of their spiritual condition. Early day Salvationists took the eleventh of our Articles of Faith seriously. Do we?

When I was a young officer one of my mentors was Commissioner George Jolliffe who was at one time private secretary to William Booth and even lived in his house at one stage. I asked him what was the secret of the Founder's drive and he replied, surprisingly, 'It was his belief in hell!' That was what led him to challenge the cabby or the engine driver or the donor about their soul's salvation.

He saw people starkly in danger of a lost eternity unless someone could awaken them to their need of a Saviour. There was no time to lose. With a similar urgency he sought to shake sleepy Salvationists into spiritual consciousness. What if he was let loose among us today? Would he not disturb us also and even cause ripples of resentment among some?

Paul cried, 'Wake up, O sleeper' (Ephesians 5.14). The wake up call may be for the Army as well as for the world.

Millstone

by Major JoAnn Shade

The headline in the local newspaper was powerful: Convicted, then evicted: Canton crusades to keep out communes of sexual predators. Canton is a Midwest Ohio city of about 70,000, but its concern over what to do with sexual predators is not unique to its location. As states enact legislation that labels and attempts to control the behaviors of those who have committed crimes of a sexual nature, these men and women are quickly becoming the lepers of the twenty-first century.

Take Neil for example. After twenty-three years in state prison, with three squares and a bed guaranteed, Neil was released into a system that has no place for him or others like him. Employers are unwilling to hire him, sympathetic landlords rent to him but are then pressured to revoke the agreement, and parole officers are most concerned with threatening a return to prison if the individual is non-compliant, homeless, or without a job. The mayor is sympathetic, but “cannot tolerate this type of activity in a neighborhood because these people made a bad choice” (Canton Repository, August 15, 2004).

Was Neil’s attack on a five-year-old girl heinous? Absolutely. Would I ask him to babysit in the church nursery? Absolutely not. (Nor would he be willing to). But as a Salvation Army officer, I must ask myself, what is my role in promoting healing and recovery? What do I truly believe about grace and forgiveness? How does William Booth’s great charge, “while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, I’ll fight,” impact how we, as The Salvation Army, address this festering problem in communities across the country. Dare we ignore it, hoping it will go away?

In my wrestling with this, I turned to the scriptures for guidance. My first thought is that Jesus clearly addressed this, but when I turn to the parallel passages in Matthew 18, Mark 9 and Luke 17, I find that Jesus put a different spin on his words than I initially thought. “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Mt. 18:6). I had thought that the verse had described Jesus’ reaction to anyone who hurt or injured a child, but that’s not exactly what the text says. Is it a stretch to put child sexual abusers in the stumbling block category?

For the sake of argument, let me do just that, but then follow Jesus’ words to their logical end. “It would be better for you,” says Jesus, “that you be drowned in the depth of the sea.” Although I haven’t asked him specifically, I would guess that there are days in which Neil agrees. He will forever carry the guilt, shame and sorrow of what he did to that little girl. His picture will remain on the Internet until the day he dies, and he will always wear the scarlet letters, PREDATOR, on his forehead. As William Barclay suggests, “there’s nothing in this world more terrible than to destroy someone’s innocence . . . there is nothing which will haunt (a man) more.” Was Jesus prescribing what should happen, or describing the consequences?

And what about the millstone? Might this speak to the community's pain? This millstone was not the small one that each woman kept in her kitchen. No, this particular word describes the town's millstone, one that required a donkey to move it. If a community's millstone were to be thrown into the depths of the sea, there would be implications to the health of that town as far as its food supply was concerned. It would impact everyone living there. No one would be untouched.

Jesus goes on to talk about the lost sheep, and then about forgiveness, and this is where this gets messy. For isn't Neil just as much of a lost sheep as I am – or more so, because I number myself among the ninety-nine? (18:10-14) Is he not my brother whom I am to forgive? (18:21-22) Isn't he a person created in the image of God? As a human being, doesn't he deserve to have a place to sleep and food to eat? And what about the log in my own eye? Surely, I too have caused a little one to stumble, if not in the same behavior, still in the same spirit.

So what do we do, Church? Crusade to keep out the communes, or work in community to find safe housing, effective treatment, appropriate accountability, and a spirit of costly grace toward those who have fallen, while still providing protection to the children of our neighborhoods? Crusades or compassion? What would Jesus do?

Babel and Zion - City as Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible

by Major Bruce Power

'Babel and Zion. City as Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible,' (originally published as Doing Church in the City: Incarnation and Transformation. Theological Symposium and Urban Mission Forum. Papers Presented June 13-15, 2005. The Salvation Army Southern Territory, Atlanta, June 2005.

“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7).¹

So writes Jeremiah to the deportees, those captives taken for resettlement in Babylon after the first exile of the elite from Jerusalem.² This stunning message about the future drafts a new direction, and shapes a new reality for those who saw their future disintegrate in defeat and deportation. Where is hope to be found? Not where you might expect. Few would perceive the key stakeholders in a renewed future to be the elite deportees whose policies and practices led to the invasion of the Babylonian army and the decimation of the state. But the prophet declares, the future is not to be found with those who remain behind to re-establish Jerusalem, for they continue on a collision course with death. Far from finding a solution that will result in redemption and hope for the beleaguered city, the new elite will replicate decisions that have embraced disaster. Their forays into the realm of political intrigue will prove them as woefully inadequate leaders as their predecessors in power, stretching the patience of their Babylonian overlords to a breaking point. Thinking themselves wise, they will carefully choose the path of death, and will be shocked and awed by the outcome of their decision-making prowess. The city will fall, the temple will be desecrated and burned, and those fortunate enough to survive such troubled times will be marched into captivity.

Here two worlds collide, symbolized by urban realities. Babylon the oppressor becomes a place of hope and restoration, while Jerusalem, the place associated with the very presence of Yahweh, is a cauldron of disaster. Not that a reversal of fortunes is impossible, but the restoration of Israel will not be immediate. And as it is framed in the following chapters of Jeremiah, homecoming is for a future generation to experience. Yet simultaneous to the instruction to seek the welfare of Babylon and its residents, at another level hope for a future return to Jerusalem is to be held closely. Such hope is to be transformative for the people of God in the present:

“I have loved you with an everlasting love,
I have drawn you with loving kindness.
I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel.
Again you will take up your tambourines
and go out to dance with the joyful.

¹ Biblical references are NIV.

² Reference to “Babylon” typically invokes the imperial capital, its environs, and other major centres in its orbit. Both the number of exiles and their roles after relocation are difficult to assess.

Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria,³
the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.
There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim,
'Come let us go up to Zion,
to the LORD our God'" (Jeremiah 31:3-6).

In these chapters the tension between the real and the ideal confront one another. Jerusalem falls, but more than the restoration of rule in Jerusalem is needed in order that the future does not simply replicate the past. While the prophet Jeremiah remains in Judah he recognizes that ultimately a new future for the city will come from the place of exile, from marginalization in the environs of an ancient capital whose very name intones the antithesis of all Jerusalem is to be. But what is hoped for is not the mere rebuilding of the city and its institutions. The prophet poet invokes a deeper, more profound restoration, signalled by the hymnic language of Zion. Zion, city of God, the place where the heavenly and the earthly intersect, the dwelling place of Yahweh will appear anew in the land. The very presence of God in the midst of his people will transform adulterous Israel into a virginal state.

Jeremiah draws on the mythic language associated with Zion to make this claim. This is the language used to celebrate the rule of God that appears, at best, in shadowy substance in the capital city and its leaders.⁴ But the heavenly reality that the city should replicate is remembered over and over in the liturgy:

"Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise,
in the city of God, his holy mountain.
It is beautiful in its loftiness,
the joy of the whole earth.
Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion,
the city of the Great King.
God is in her citadels,
he has shown himself to be her fortress" (Psalm 48:1-3).

"Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers,
consider her ramparts, view her citadels,
that you may tell of them to the next generation.
For this God is our God for ever and ever,
he will be our guide even to the end" (Psalm 48:12-14).

In this hymnic language Jerusalem is transformed from what is into what should be. At its best, the city with the temple at its centre celebrates the rule of Yahweh. Zion, this most holy centre of order and fertility is daringly juxtaposed with the flawed reality

³ The references to Samaria and Ephraim in tandem with Zion express promise of the complete restoration of the kingdom established by David, which subsequently divided following the reign of Solomon. At another level these references also invoke the gift of land to Abraham.

⁴ As Levenson observes: "... what we see on earth in Jerusalem is simply the earthly manifestation of the heavenly Temple, which is beyond localization ... The real Temple is the one to which it points, the one in 'heaven,' which cannot be distinguished sharply from its earthly manifestation" Jon Levenson. *Sinai and Zion. An Entry Into the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis: Winston, 1985, 140.

of Jerusalem. Yet the language that symbolized and connected Jerusalem with the heavenly realities, with Zion, the palace where God is enthroned, continued to call Israel forth to a deeper truth, to live a transformed existence. Jerusalem is to live in the reality that the universe is ordered because God's rule is eternal. When Israel or Judah understand this essential truth and strive to mirror the faithful obedience of the heavenly entourage, the state and its institutions emulate the values of the divine world. The human king rules as God's designated one. The *Torah*, God's instruction for life is embodied by human subjects. The call is for incarnational living, in the sense that the values of Yahweh are to be embraced in day-to-day life, with the elaborate cultic system ensuring ongoing intimacy with the sovereign of the universe — the sort of intimacy expressed in the creation account's portrait of the garden of God.

From such an understanding another exilic poet draws together images to address the continuing reality that the kingdom of God encounters the threatening forces of de-creation, chaos in all its manifestations, human and individual, temporal, spiritual and corporate. But the poet sees beyond what appears to what is:

"The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty;

the LORD is robed in majesty
and is armed with strength.

The world is firmly established;

it cannot be moved.

Your throne was established long ago;

you are from all eternity.

The seas have lifted up, O LORD,

the seas have lifted up their voice;

the seas have lifted up their pounding waves" (Psalm 93:1-3).

At first glance it would appear that the rising forces of chaos are a credible enemy, but soon the poet reduces the power of the seas to sound and fury,⁵ a force that cannot break through the boundaries set by the sovereign of the universe:

"Mightier than the thunder of the great waters,

mightier than the breakers of the sea—

the LORD on high is mighty" (Psalms 93:4).

Beyond this articulation that the terrors of chaos are to the creator God but splashing and noise, the final declaration stretches our perceptions of the real yet further:

"Your statutes stand firm;

holiness adorns your house

for endless days, O LORD" (Psalm 93:5).

⁵ "... a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" Macbeth V. v. 17.

To a generation in exile, when all that seems foundational to life appears to have crumbled, the poet reiterates primary truths. God is sovereign over his universe. Past, present and future events are not indicative of a world out of control, but are reflective of the fundamental truth that God's statutes remain authoritative, despite appearances. When everything would seem overwhelmed by chaos and confusion, in the midst of despair and hopelessness, this truth must be embraced at the centre of life.

And so Jeremiah's declaration of a future invitation to return to Zion is a call to return to Jerusalem, but not a return to the old ways. Kingship as it had been embodied in Judah and Israel has been a failure.⁶ The ways of imperialism have prevailed. The culture of pharaoh with its oppressive anonymity and continual abuse of power dominated the people freed from bondage.⁷ Israel's kings have been enticed by power and prestige and have lost their way. For David, stable rule unravels when he 'sees,' 'desires,' and 'takes' Bathsheba.⁸ That Solomon embraces both pharaoh's daughter and pharaoh's ways is marked by the fact that to build the temple to the God who delivers from bondage, Solomon conscripts an Israelite labor force.⁹ The future is not to be found in another round of the game of empire building with a new roster of players. Both Jeremiah and his contemporary Ezekiel call for a transformed people marked by a new heart and a new spirit (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27). These prophets whose proclamations from Yahweh are voiced while they witness the death throes of the state of Judah see the only hope for its future in re-creation.

The new era is envisioned in a variety of ways, but the transformation is a return to the core values of creation and relationship described in Genesis 2, when life is celebrated in an ordered world, a royal garden.¹⁰ "In those days Judah will be saved

⁶ That Kings begins with David's impotence and ends in exile is surely intended to set the theological agenda for the overall evaluation of both Israel and Judah's monarchies.

⁷ In the bulk of traditions relating to Egypt pharaoh remains anonymous and functions as a cipher for oppressive culture.

⁸ David's ascent in Samuel culminates in the military conquests of 2 Samuel 10, and stability wanes beginning with the events in chapter 11.

⁹ In the story of the temple's construction, significant reference is made to Israel's coming "out of Egypt." In 1 Kings 6:1, the launch of temple construction is connected to the date of the Exodus, and Solomon's prayer of dedication notes four times that Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (8:16, 21, 51, 53). References to forced labor frame the account of the temple's building and dedication (5:13-14; 9:15) though a belated note in 9:22 disassociates Israelites from "slavery."

¹⁰ The Persian loan word which is used in the Greek translation of Genesis has entered our theological vocabulary as "paradise." The image in Genesis is not a pristine natural world, but a garden, as the text clearly indicates. Protected by garden walls it is an ordered world, the domain of pleasure associated with the ancient palace, and as such, symbolic of the rule of the sovereign over the entirety of the world. Evaluations which suggest that the biblical story "begins in a garden and ends in a city" have missed this nuancing of the story (The phrase is from Grabbe's summary of Blenkinsopp, 'Cityscape to Landscape: The 'Back to Nature' Theme in Isaiah 1-35,' 35-44) Grabbe 'Introduction and Overview,' 15-34 in Grabbe and Haak, 18).

William Brown argues: "the Yahwist's cultural suspicion is aimed primarily at the city. Enoch, Babel, Sodom, Pithom, and Rameses are all, in the Yahwist's mind, urban centers founded on collective ambition and oppression in various degrees. Once an agriculturalist, the condemned Cain was forced

and Jerusalem will live in safety,” the prophet declares. “This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness” (Jeremiah 33:16).¹¹

When Jeremiah’s contemporary Ezekiel, one of the deportees of that first wave of exiles to Babylon, views these two centres Jerusalem and Babylon, he too reverses the assumptions concerning obedience to the divine will. Jerusalem will certainly fall. Yahweh is vacating his city (cf. Ezekiel 8-11). If Jerusalem has any claim to being Zion, Yahweh’s visible entry into the Jerusalem temple at its dedication is a key element. Now Ezekiel describes the glory’s visible departure from temple, city and region (Ezekiel 10:3-5, 18-19; 11:22-23). The prophet, like his predecessor Isaiah is ushered into the divine throneroom, but Ezekiel stands, not in the Jerusalem temple but by an irrigation canal in Babylon. Hope for Israel is not invested with those who remain in Jerusalem, who do not even notice Yahweh’s departure. The future state will result from a work of God in which a resurrected people (Ezekiel 37) are reunited, repopulate the land, and live in absolute faith in their deity in un-walled cities (Ezekiel 38-39). The only defence they need or want will be their God. This new world finds its centre in the temple of Yahweh, the source of life for the world (Ezekiel 47:1-12). The end of the world’s story as Ezekiel conceives it mirrors the beginning, but in this new act of creation people with a transformed heart and spirit will live in relationship with God.

The Isaiah material from the exilic period shares this dream of a transformed world. In a homecoming in which the desert will bloom, a processional way will appear creating the path from exile. A ceremonial road will lead through the desert to the temple, the palace of God, situated on the mountain of God. This will be at the heart of a new creation:

“In the desert prepare the way for the LORD;
make straight in the wilderness
a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all mankind together will see it.

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 40:3-5).

The heralds are to climb to the mountaintops to announce to the towns of Judah: “Here is your God!” (40:9)

to become an urban culturist. More than any other social context, the city poses the prospect of transgressing the divinely ordained limits established for the flourishing of human life, the result of which is death or scattering. Admittedly, the garden, too, is not immune to such transgression. Human conduct is the crux” William Brown. *The Ethos of the Cosmos. The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, 218-219.

¹¹ Carroll. Jeremiah “The significance of the phrase ... probably refers as much to the reconstruction of land and city, as much as the re-emergence of the Davidic dynasty” 637.

In the introduction to the Isaiah collection the “daughter of Zion,” left decimated by two successive empires is compared to Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:8-9)¹². There it is made clear that the only claim to a future is the intervention of God in an act of unmerited redemption. Jerusalem had no entitlement to God’s favour, having embodied the values of Sodom and Gomorrah, its leaders being addressed as such (Isaiah 1:8-10). Yet in a great reversal of the very elements described as destroying the people in Isaiah of Jerusalem’s call — “be ever hearing but never understanding, be ever seeing, but never perceiving” (6:9) — the exilic poet conceives of a new truth: “Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf” (43:8). Now the God of “new things” declares: “I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland” (43:19).

The captives will receive a summons to freedom:
“They will feed beside the roads
and find pasture on every barren hill.
They will neither hunger nor thirst,
nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them.
He who has compassion on them will guide them
and lead them beside springs of water.
I will turn all my mountains into roads,
and my highways will be raised up.
See, they will come from afar —
some from the north, some from the west,
some from the region of Aswan” (49:9-12).

In the past the instruction of God has been ignored. Now the deity declares:
“This is what the LORD says—
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
‘I am the LORD your God,
who teaches what is best for you,
who directs you in the way you should go.
If only you had paid attention to my commands,
your peace would have been like a river,
your righteousness like the waves of the sea.
Your descendants would have been like the sand,
your children like its numerous grains;
their name would never be cut off
nor destroyed from before me” (48:17-19).

When Israel emerges as a state around the first millennium BCE, it is a newcomer in an already urbanized environment. But this urbanization is different than our modern social distinctions between city and country, rural and urban. Through the entire period under consideration there are not sharp distinctions between these two realms

¹² Here I am reading Isaiah 1 as introductory to the entire work, envisioning successive invasions of Assyrian and Babylonian forces.

that would favour one over the other. Life is an integrated whole in which mutual dependence characterized the relationship between the two.

“The original function of the city was to serve as a protected settlement for families engaged in agriculture.”¹³ Expansion of this role included the state protection of borders, travel and trade routes, and the protection of supplies and harvest. Of course, the urban centre became a focal point for the administration of the realm, the development of craft guilds and other specialized skills, the manufacture of luxury goods, and the worship of the deity. The city in itself is neither to be understood as good or evil. It simply exists. When the city is idealized, at the extremes are two paradigms. Zion is the heavenly city where God is enthroned as the centre of life and being. In Zion the great king is Yahweh himself. It is the realm of divine blessing, the garden of delights, the place of relationship. Eden is the garden of God, the paradise attached to the palace, a place bursting with life and order, a locus for relationship to be enjoyed. The language and metaphors of imperialism are transformed. In Yahweh is to be found life in all its fullness. The sprouting of the seed and the opening of the womb are gifts of his grace, the sun and the rain subject to his control. At his command the world is ordered, thus justice, safety, purpose and provision are provided. Blessings pour forth from the divine throneroom. Yahweh’s rule brings life to the whole world.

Kings embrace this theology and seek to identify Jerusalem and Zion (1 Kings 8:1; 2 Kings 19:21, 31; Ps 51:18; 102:21; 128:5) or Samaria and Zion (Amos 6:1). At their best, kings broker the blessings of the deity, ensuring that justice and mercy are characteristic of the society, celebrating Yahweh as the source of life, piously seeking to honor God so the blessings of the deity will be forthcoming. The king is to model mercy and justice, to bring safety and security to the land and its inhabitants.

Israelite traditions reveal two ideologies of kingship that stand in tension with one another. The first articulates a kingship in which the king is a “first among equals,” the head of an egalitarian state. The theology of kingship in this vision is summarized in the “instruction for the king” in Deuteronomy 17. In tension with this is the model of rule that will eventually give birth to the much later doctrine of the “divine right of kings.” In such a model all rights have been given to the king who is accountable only to God. The king is the owner of all the land, and all that he chooses to do is his prerogative. The tension between these ideals — the land as gift from God and land as possession of the king — create the background for the story of Naboth and Ahab and the struggle over a vineyard.¹⁴

Babel provides another model (Genesis 11:1-9). It exalts human achievement, and sees in the quest for the heavens and the usurping of divine prerogatives the path to life and security.¹⁵ But this is fallacious. All states which embrace such ideology

¹³ Otto 58.

¹⁴ 1 Kings 21.

¹⁵ Babel’s tower is probably to be associated with the ziggurat Etemenanki, “the house that is the foundation of heaven and earth,” which formed part of the complex of temples to Marduk in Babylon.

broker destruction into the world. Hubris is at the heart of de-creation, the unravelling of the good God intends for the world. And the city, as symbol of state, kingly power and status is often identified with such values. Pharaoh is said to believe his own propaganda, and thinks himself a god in both the Exodus account,¹⁶ and in Ezekiel's time (Ezekiel 29:1-5). As such, he is under the judgment of Yahweh. The king of Tyre is likewise denounced because, "In the pride of your heart you say, 'I am a god'," a misapprehension the prophet corrects: "But you are a man and not a god" (Ezekiel 28:2).¹⁷ The king of Babylon will also be called to account on the same charge: "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God' ... But you are brought down to the grave" (Isaiah 14:13, 15).

The ideological tension between the extremes can be plotted as ideal types. At one extreme is exploitation, at the other empowerment. The holy stands in tension with the wanton. Egalitarian possession of the land contrasts with imperialism. Most urban centres are neither of these extremes, but are often represented as such. Stories demonstrate the tension. In Jonah, the oppressive capital of the mighty Assyrian empire is to be confronted by the prophet. His message when finally delivered offers no real theological content: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned" (Jonah 3:4). Against all expectations "The Ninevites believed God" (Jonah 3:5). The terse text tells us that the people declared a fast, which the king both responds to and endorses by royal decree. Unlike the sailors who after questioning Jonah are able to worship Yahweh (Jonah 1:14-16), no such information is offered the Ninevites. Left to their own devices, with a prophet waiting to witness their destruction, the inhabitants of the foremost city of the empire are described as turning to God, and their lives are spared.

This outcome stands in tension within the Book of the Twelve. Two books later, Nahum announces the destruction of Nineveh, though in most of the text the city's name is strangely absent, and the truths announced could as easily be directed toward Jerusalem.

"Woe to the city of blood,
full of lies,
full of plunder,
never without victims!" (Nahum 3:1).¹⁸

By linking Babel with this ancient structure Genesis interprets Mesopotamian religion as wilful defiance of the sole sovereignty of Yahweh. Babel is thus the antithesis of Zion.

¹⁶ The power of the Exodus account becomes apparent when we not only identify pharaoh with the forces of de-creation, but also understand the ideological world of Egyptian kingship. There, pharaoh is understood to be a living god, and as such is designated by the pantheon of Egypt to broker their power for the benefit of the state. Thus the challenge of pharaoh, "Who is Yahweh, that I should obey him and let Israel go?" contributes to the major theological theme of Yahweh's self-disclosure by staging a battle of divine claimants.

¹⁷ In the third oracle denouncing the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28, the prophet describes the monarch as a resident of Eden, driven "in disgrace from the mount of God" (28:16). Clearly privilege and status bring increased responsibility to all.

¹⁸ In Isaiah's song of the vineyard, the conclusion lays the following charge:
"The vineyard of the LORD Almighty

The following description of an invading army might in another context be a force invading Israel or Judah. Between these two alternative views of Nineveh, the prophet Micah explores what Yahweh desires from an obedient people:

“With what shall I come before the LORD
 and bow down before the exalted God?
 Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
 with calves a year old?
 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
 with ten thousand rivers of oil?
 Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
 the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
 He has showed you, O man (*adam*), what is good.
 And what does the LORD require of you?
 To act justly and to love mercy
 and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:6-8).

In Micah both Israel and Judah are condemned as well as the Assyrians. In a text addressing the northern kingdom we are told Israel has violated the covenant and invoked the curse clauses by its behaviour.¹⁹ But while they have violated the *torah*, Israel is said to have conformed to the dissolute ways of Ahab and Omri.

“Listen! The LORD is calling to the city—
 and to fear your name is wisdom—
 ‘Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.
 Am I still to forget, O wicked house,
 your ill-gotten treasures
 and the short ephah, which is accursed?
 Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales,
 with a bag of false weights?
 Her rich men are violent;
 her people are liars
 and their tongues speak deceitfully.
 Therefore, I have begun to destroy you,
 to ruin you because of your sins.
 You will eat and not be satisfied;
 your stomach will still be empty.
 You will store up but save nothing,
 because what you save I will give to the sword.

is the house of Israel,
 and the men of Judah
 are the garden of his delight.
 And he looked for justice but saw bloodshed;
 for righteousness but heard cries of distress” (Isaiah 5:7).

Ezekiel repeatedly describes Jerusalem as a city of bloodshed: 7:23; 9:9; 22:2-3; 24:6,9. Cf. Hab 2:12.

¹⁹ The curses are reminiscent of the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28.

You will plant but not harvest;
 you will press but not use the oil on yourselves,
 you will crush grapes but not drink the wine.
You have observed the statutes of Omri
 and all the practices of Ahab's house,
 and you have followed their traditions.
Therefore I will give you over to ruin
 and your people to derision;
 you will bear the scorn of the nations" (Micah 6:9-16).

This text helps us to break through several assumptions often brought to the text. A conflict between rural and urban culture is often read into the text, based on later sociological categorizations. Wealth and power in the ancient city was most often derived from extensive landholdings and the powerful had rural as well as urban residences.²⁰ Most centres were dependent on the surrounding agricultural lands as the basis of the economy. Cities like Tyre in which trade was the major commerce were unusual.²¹ And the imperial centres of the great Mesopotamian empires in which tribute and taxes flowed into the capital from vast territories might be emulated by the likes of a Solomon or Omri, but ultimately, the ancient city remained closely linked to nearby agricultural endeavours.

Yet at the core of the texts it is not the city or its rulers that is the focal point. It is the human response to God. The prophet Isaiah understands this and uses the cipher Adam to indicate the horror he observes: "You have abandoned your people," he cries out to God. Having cast Yahweh aside in the pursuit of idols, the populace of Israel have rejected life (Isaiah 2:6-8). As a result of this choice:

"Adam will be brought low and mankind humbled —
 do not forgive them.

Go into the rocks,
 hide in the ground
 from dread of the LORD
 and the splendor of his majesty!

The eyes of arrogant adam will be humbled
 and the pride of men brought low;
 the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

The LORD Almighty has a day in store
 for all the proud and lofty,
 for all that is exalted ...

The arrogance of the adam will be brought low
 and the pride of men humbled;
 the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,
 and the idols will totally disappear.

²⁰ Grabbe 'Introduction and Overview,' 15-34 in Grabbe and Haak, 32.

²¹ Ezekiel's description of the sinking of the ship "Tyre" remains a vital source describing ancient trade (cf. Ezekiel 27).

Men will flee to caves in the rocks
 and to holes in the ground
 from dread of the LORD
 and the splendour of his majesty,
 when he rises to shake the earth.
 In that day adam will throw away
 to the rodents and bats
 their idols of silver and idols of gold,
 which they made to worship ...
 Stop trusting in adam,
 who has but a breath in his nostrils.
 Of what account is he? (Isaiah 2:9-22).²²

While we have only examined a few of the texts associated with the city in the Hebrew Bible, it becomes clear that there is no simple cluster of ideas focussed on the city. Within a single text, the creative use of city as symbol mitigates against a simplistic view. For example, Carroll draws this conclusion concerning Isaiah: "The dialectic or double helix of city-discourses in the scroll of Isaiah seems to move back and forward between motifs and tropes of the destruction or dismantling of lofty, powerful cities, leaving them abandoned as places where animals now roam (27:10-11; cf. 5.17) and figures of re-established cities, rebuilt and reinhabited (cf. Cyrus in 44.26; 45.13; see also 33.20). In other words, the scroll of Isaiah *looks like* a palimpsest of multiple discourses about *the history, life, times and opinions of the city [of Jerusalem?]* put together over many centuries."²³

So what are we to make of the city? Is there a difference between Sodom and Samaria? Jerusalem and Jericho? While the very names of cities can evoke an instinctive response — Sodom, Gomorrah, Babel — there is no indication the urban centre is by nature evil.²⁴ Are cities that are named in stories of rebellion against God — Nineveh, Tyre, Babylon — any better or worse than Jerusalem? Or Zion, when the name ceases to indicate the dwelling place of God and is used as a term of endorsement of Judean political power? In the final analysis the city itself is neutral, neither by nature evil or good.²⁵

And what is a city? Should population density or the range of economic activities determine what is or is not an urban centre? Is a list of so-called essential attributes to be used to decide what does or does not constitute a city? Should we describe the

²² Here I have used the text of the NIV, substituting adam for man where it occurs in Hebrew. It is not capitalized to indicate that it is not to be simply associated with the figure in Genesis 2-3.

²³ Robert Carroll. 'City of Chaos, City of Stone, City of Flesh: Urbanscapes in Prophetic Discourses,' 45-61 in Grabbe and Haak, 48, italics original.

²⁴ "In the Bible *there is only one city*, but it has multitudinous representations, manifestations and instantiations. Of course in topographical terms there are hundreds and thousands of cities in the Bible (cf. Isa. 25.3 'cities of ruthless nations'), but in *the symbolic geography of the Book* we may see each and every city as *one* aspect of the *city* of humankind" Carroll 'City of Chaos ...' 56.

²⁵ "Certainly the particular socio-religious forms of the city were, in the long run, immaterial to the fulfillment of God's purpose for Israel" Frick 230.

city as a cultural icon comprised of various structures — temple, palace, walls, streets, courts, storehouses, water systems and so forth? Or do we measure against sociological and anthropological lists of criteria?

On the one hand, the argument has been made that there are no cities in Israel and Judah other than Jerusalem and Samaria. For example, in one of the Lachish inscriptions reference is made to “the city,” and Jerusalem is clearly intended.²⁶ My choice has been to pursue the metaphorical meaning of the city in this discussion, and it is appropriate to take a last look at Jerusalem from this perspective. Jerusalem is, ideologically, at times a centre of faith and faithfulness, in other contexts it is the rebellious, recalcitrant antithesis to all Zion represents. A veritable Babel. Jerusalem can be the locus of wisdom or folly as its king and populace decide which they will choose. “Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares, at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech,” (Proverbs 1:20-21) “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (9:10). It is not by chance that this is an urban picture. Nor is it incidental that out of the shadows comes Folly in search of her victims, calling them to the grave (Proverbs 7:6-26; 9:13-18).

The city is enticing, and can be a place of empowerment and safety, justice and protection, or a place where exploitation and danger, injustice and oppression dominate. While on the one hand urban culture offers creativity and sophistication, community and commerce, it can also be a place of danger and abuse. “When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Deuteronomy 6:10-12).²⁷ Israel is to always remember that all it possesses is gift. To forget this truth is to begin to assemble the bricks for Babel, to erect a tower of self-aggrandizement.

The poet’s cry recognizes society can be securely built on a single foundation:

“Unless the LORD builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city
the watchmen stand guard in vain” (Psalm 127:1).

²⁶ Lachish 4, line 7.

²⁷ “The city is an integral feature of the theological topography of the promised land, no less than God’s gift to Israel. Indeed, one particular city is singled out for divine election: ‘You shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there’ ([Deuteronomy] 12:5). Jerusalem is chosen as the unique place to commemorate YHWH’s name. While God’s very self does not take up residence in any earthly abode, God’s name ‘lodges’ in a particular sanctuary, an urban sanctuary, as a manifestation of divine presence. In this respect, much of Deuteronomy is comparable to a city charter. The city serves as the definitive setting for the intricate series of laws and statutes, or torah (Deut 4:44-45), promulgated by the book.” William P. Brown and John T. Carroll, ‘The Garden and the Plaza. Biblical Images of the City,’ *Int* 54 (2000) 3-11, 7.

Whether Babylon or Jerusalem, the primary truth remains:

“When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices;
when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.

Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted,
but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed” (Proverbs 11:10-11).

The day longed for is celebrated in the dreams of the prophets, in visions of a future transformed:

“In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

We have a strong city;
God makes salvation
its walls and ramparts.

Open the gates
that the righteous nation may enter,
the nation that keeps faith.

You will keep in perfect peace
him whose mind is steadfast,
because he trusts in you.

Trust in the LORD forever,
for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

He humbles those who dwell on high,
he lays the lofty city low;
he levels it to the ground
and casts it down to the dust” (Isaiah 26:1-6).

At the centre of the new world will be the temple of Yahweh, the source of life (Ezekiel 47:1-12). It will be at the centre of a new city. “And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE” (48:35).

The whole city will become the holy place: “On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty ...” (Zechariah 14:20-21).²⁸

The goal is a return to the intimacy of Eden, the paradise where the sovereignty of Yahweh over city, state and world is celebrated. The image transforms the metaphor of the imperial garden associated with the palace of the great king, representative of human power and rule and authority. This metaphor of human empire is transformed so it no longer symbolizes human rule, or of the endorsement of a human sovereign by a pantheon of deities, but signals a place of relationship between Yahweh and his creation.²⁹

²⁸ Ezekiel’s vision of the temple at the centre of the world, and Zechariah’s view of the city as temple are further transformed in Revelation when the “Holy City, the new Jerusalem” is lowered from heaven. Its description as a perfect cube identifies it with the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple.

²⁹ “The equation of Temple mount and paradise, then, did not begin with Ezekiel. The two have common roots in the mythopoetic mind of the ancient Near East. After all, like the Temple, paradise is

What visions do our cities represent? In our social, political, economic, cultural, architectural and religious structures what message is being conveyed? And how do the community of exiles become a voice in the city? As we “seek the welfare of the city” and work for the good of its inhabitants we become a counter-cultural presence for divine purpose. In a world where the rule of God has been displaced, “exiles” are called to participate in the life of the city, to embody the values of the divine sovereign’s rule, and to work to create Zion in the midst of Babel. We can do no other.

a place in which God/the gods are forever present in an intensely palpable sense, a place therefore of beatific existence, of perfection” Levenson. *Sinai and Zion*. 131-132.

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The Salvation Army as a Prophetic Movement?

by Captain Geoff Ryan

What does prophetic ministry really mean?

The terms “prophet” and “prophetic” are loaded terms. They are loaded with meaning often far removed from their original intention and divested of much depth and nuance and occasionally even integrity. They have become blunt instruments in the hands - or mouths - of whoever wants to use them. It is therefore important to clarify terms of reference right from the beginning.

I would like to suggest that there are two main ways by which “prophetic” is used in Christian circles these days. One is favoured by conservative evangelicals, particularly Charismatic/Pentecostal Christians and one favoured by the more mainline, what might be considered “liberal”, branches of the Church.

One conservative, evangelical view on the prophetic is that of the prophet as a future-teller, often reduced to the role of a fortune-teller. In such an understanding, the prophet is much concerned with the future and things to come, the end times and apocalyptic visions. The prophetic ministry is primarily concerned with what is to come to pass, what will be and what has not yet happened. The present is a concern only in so far as it impacts what is to come in the future, distant or close at hand.

Certainly there are aspects of “future telling” in the prophetic role, however, as Walter Brueggemann points out in *The Prophetic Imagination*: “While one would not want to deny totally those facets of the practice of prophecy, there tends to be a kind of reductionism that is mechanical and therefore untenable. While prophets are in a way future-tellers, they are concerned with the future as it impinges upon the present.” (p. 13)

In this conservative understanding of the prophetic ministry, value is placed on the impartation of power - the prophet is “gifted” by God with special insight usually termed a “word from the Lord”. As Steve Thompson writes in his book, *You May All Prophecy!* “When I use the word prophesy in this book, I am describing receiving and giving a specific “word” to a person or group of people.”(p. 9)

This understanding of prophetic ministry concentrates power in the hands of the prophet. With such insight from God, the prophet’s direct access to God provides a mandate to speak into anyone’s life and situation with impunity. Validation of authentic insight, or “second sight”, is largely subjective and often not held to the same standards of discernment that the Church has traditionally applied to such gifting.

While such a view of the prophetic does contain aspects of biblical prophetic ministry, there is an inherent danger, which lies in all branches of intense

charismatic Christianity. Highly emotionally motivated and often accepting only of experiential validation, the Christian life can be reduced to the realm of feelings (“the worship was anointed today” or “God showed up”) and personal experience (“God told me...”). A high level of subjectivity is tolerated, in which people are loathe to challenge those in authority (those anointed as prophets) lest they are considered un-spiritual. The most troubling result of such an understanding of the prophetic is that issues that traditionally and biblically concerned the prophets, such as social justice, the poor and marginalized, economic inequity, etc. are not deemed priorities. To be “prophetic” takes on a new meaning and purpose that is almost entirely “spiritualized”, the majority of the time concerning itself with issues of personal piety and private sinning.

Meanwhile, the liberals “settled for a focus on the present.” (Brueggemann: p.13). The concept of the “prophetic” is reduced almost exclusively to righteous indignation at societal injustice and therefore, a response through social action. To be prophetic means to be a critical thinker, pointing out what is “not working” and what is “wrong”.

This understanding of the prophetic also contains aspects of biblical prophetic ministry - however concerns itself primarily with criticizing and attacking and tearing down, rather than shifting perceptions. It is about revolution rather than revival. The great danger here lies in replacing a holy God’s concern for justice with human-centred social justice, good works and even social engineering. The destructive ideologies that characterized the twentieth century were all utopianisms that sought to improve the world through means that were justified by end results. This view of the prophetic flies dangerously close to this flame. True prophets also address the internal spiritual condition of people and not only the external social conditions of the society. They are grounded in God and his word and not political thought systems.

So, what does it mean to be a prophet and to have a prophetic ministry? How is this distinct or different in any way from priests and the priestly function? Why should it matter to Salvationists in the 21st century, living in an era long after the advent of Jesus, who resolved within himself this tension, by being both prophet and high priest?

In one very simple definition, a priest is someone who talks to God on behalf of the people; a prophet is one who speaks to the people (society, culture, the church) on behalf of God. *In The Prophetic Imagination*, Brueggemann defines prophetic ministry in the following manner:

“The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us” (p. 13).

“It is the task of prophetic ministry to bring the claims of the tradition and the

situation of enculturation into an effective interface. That is, the prophet is called to be a child of the tradition, one who has taken it seriously in the shaping of his or her own field of perception and system of language, who is so at home in that memory that the points of contact and incongruity with the situation of the church in culture can be discerned and articulated with proper urgency” (p. 12).

Brueggemann’s definitions will be our basic construct for this discussion of the prophetic and its relevance to us today. I want to state at the outset that I believe The Salvation Army was raised up by God to serve a prophetic role in culture and in the Church. However first we need to look at the prophetic tradition in the Bible, commencing in the Old Testament, in order to give ourselves some background understanding and context.

The Prophetic Tradition in the Bible

As far as anyone can tell from the Scriptures, the first record of God endorsing “religion” is found in the book of Exodus (starting at chapter 19 until the end of the book and continuing on into Leviticus). Not long after Moses has led the people out of Egypt, he is summoned to Mount Sinai by God to receive the Ten Commandments, as well as a host of instructions regulating the separate life of God’s chosen people. While Moses is gone, the people, tiring of waiting and dealing with an abstract God that only their leader had access to, collected all their jewellery and, in imitation of the surrounding peoples, fashioned an idol and declared it their god (Exodus 32).

Up to this point, Israel had no formal religion. What they did have was a man who approached God on their behalf and approached them on God’s behalf. No rituals or traditions, no teaching, no system of observance - no religion, in short. This was in stark contrast to the surrounding cultures among whom they moved, the Egyptians and the other peoples they encountered as they fled Egypt. In these cultures, the gods had “incarnated” themselves in forms and rituals that gave structure and meaning to their adherents’ lives. Dealing with the pure abstract for any sustained period of time is virtually impossible for humans. We serve a God who is Spirit (ergo abstract) yet who defines himself relationally in reference to us as his creations. However, our need to codify things in concrete terms is too strong to deny. God acknowledges this right at the beginning in Exodus by providing a complex and all encompassing religious system in order to satisfy this need in his people and to provide a concrete way through which they can maintain a relationship with him and deal with their sins. God’s ultimate acknowledgement of this need in his creation is Christ’s incarnation several thousand years later. It began however with Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai.

God instituted all this for the benefit of his people. It was about us, not him. God is self-sufficient and self-contained and needs nothing outside of himself- he never lived in that golden box known as the Ark of the Covenant. These were all symbols

whose function was to serve our needs until the time when the fulfillment of these symbols arrived.

“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” (Colossians 2:16,17)

The Temple was built in Israel and a system of Temple worship instituted. The Temple became the focal point of the nation, the heart of the people - a permanent symbol of God’s accessibility. However, it was always intended to serve a symbolic function, as Solomon’s dedicatory prayer makes clear:

“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27)

Over time, however, Temple worship became corrupted. The priesthood, a religious order whom God had called into existence starting with Aaron, was to serve the function of regulating and maintaining the spiritual life of the nation through the faith system that God had ordained. However, what was meant to symbolically represent and concretely contextualize a spiritual (abstract) reality became itself the focal point of people’s devotion and worship. The Temple and the worship centred in it, were idolized and subsequently became corrupted - the “means” became the “end”. This is one of the inevitable outcomes of faith and religion divorcing. One of them, generally religion, is elevated above and beyond the other. The history of religion through human history is a sad litany of this imbalance. Nearly all of the more unsavoury chapters in the history of the Church can be traced to moments when true faith and its helpmate religion, become disconnected. Religion assumes the dominant role in place of faith and a vital relationship with a living God. Once this takes place, anything and everything can be justified in the name of God. The Crusades, the Inquisition, the Nazis marching into war with “God With Us” etched on their belt buckles and more modern-day examples such as the conflict in Northern Ireland.

To counter what had happened with the Temple worship and among the priesthood, God rose up a “second stream” or a second team - the prophets. Some of these men were themselves priests; many were not. To effect a “holy tension” in order to realign his people and refocus them on himself, God required that the prophets concentrate their message on areas neglected by the priests. The priests, perhaps inevitably, given our need for making the abstract tangible and our weakness for power, focused their efforts primarily on ritual and formalism, external observance and ceremonial religion. The prophets were tasked to go to the heart of things.

The prophets pretty much had one message: Get your heart right with God and everything else will follow. If the heart is not right, then everything else is becomes skewed and ultimately pointless in God’s eyes. If your relationship with God is not

sorted, then your programs are empty; if your heart is not right (internal) then your worship (external) is unacceptable. They spoke of relationship, with God and with others. God speaks to his people through their relationships with others and their love and devotion to God are to be expressed by serving those whom they are in relationship with. True worship and religious expression are validated by a social imperative, and a person's relationship to God is integrally linked to their relationship with others, in particular those whom God called "the least".

"Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moon, Sabbaths and convocations - I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:13-17)

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood." (Isaiah 58:6,7)

"This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go ahead, add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves! For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you." (Jeremiah 7:21-23)

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6)

"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your song! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream." (Amos 5:21-24)

"With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has

showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:6-8)”

The tension created by these two “streams” was intense. The prophets felt compelled to denounce the false sense of security that the people had gained by trusting in the Temple and its service. They were speaking an often unpopular message that made the people uncomfortable and that challenged the religious (ergo State) power system.

The prophets did strange things in order to get the people’s attention and to get God’s message across. They were the original sensationalists (revivalists) and “out-of-the-box” thinkers. Hosea was told to marry the town whore; Ezekiel lay on his side for 390 days and cooked bread using human waste as fuel; Jeremiah invested in real estate in a city on the verge of capture. Saints and sinners alike misunderstood the prophets and, though meeting with some success, most met the same fate: *“Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One.” (Acts 7:52)* Extreme counter-culturalism was met by death, more often than not.

As we enter into the New Testament period in Israel, the priests had truly triumphed. During and after the exile years, the prophetic voice slowly died out. The prophets, concerned as they were with issues of true faith in a God of justice and equity and the implications of these ethically and morally in society, were linked to the periods when Israel was sovereign and had her own kings. As Israel came under foreign domination and lost control over the life of the nation, the prophets fell silent. Some scholars speak of the 400 years of silence when no prophet was heard in Israel. By the time the Romans arrived, the national power was concentrated with the Sadducees (priests) and the Pharisees (religious legalists). There was no one exercising a prophetic ministry.

Then John the Baptist appears (John 1:19-23), a prophet in the classic Old Testament mode, and speaking much the same message. John was followed by Jesus:

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied. “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” (Matthew 16:13,14).

In their mission, both John and Jesus were firmly in the prophetic line, at odds with the religious establishment, in tension with the priests and seemingly dismissive of ritual convention. Both met the same fate as the other prophets.

Jesus’ most quoted Old Testament verse was *Hosea 6:6: “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”* A key passage to the understanding of Jesus as prophet is his encounter with the Samaritan

woman in John 4:1-38. In this encounter, as with pretty much all his encounters with people, he drew them toward the centre, the essence of the law. He summed up the Ten Commandments, the heart of the Old Testament law, in a succinct way:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second one (commandment) is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no greater commandment than these two.” (Mark 12:29).

Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees and teachers of the law in Mark 7:1-23 is paradigmatic, a pivotal encounter between the prophetic focus on the essential heart of things and the priestly obsession with ceremonialism. *“You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men,” asserted Jesus. “Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean’, he later states, clearing drawing the lines of perspective.*

Jesus, however, was also a priest - the great high priest (Hebrews 4:14-16; 5: 1-10, 7:1-28; 8:1-6; 10:1-18). This tension between the inward and the outward, between relationship and ceremony, symbol and reality, shadow and substance, priest and prophet runs throughout the Bible, from the foot of Mount Sinai until the coming of Jesus who ushered in the new order (Hebrews 9:10) and who combined perfectly these two aspects of true faith and mission.

The Prophetic Tradition and The Salvation Army

God raised The Salvation Army up as a prophetic movement. Theologically and culturally we were positioned prophetically in contradistinction to the dominant culture, both culturally and religiously.

Our early theological convictions ranging from our non-observance of the sacraments (communion and water baptism), empowerment of women for ministry, our bias toward the poor, our use of non-sacred music and even our choice of venues in which to hold meetings (music halls, etc) can all be understood as prophetic in the context that has been defined here.

From early on, The Salvation Army viewed itself as a prophetic movement. The first Officers Training College in London was called “The School of the Prophets”. Booth was known as the “Prophet of the Poor” (the title of a 1905 biography by Thomas Coates). Samuel Logan Brengle’s official biography is titled “Portrait of a Prophet”. Booth’s favourite Scripture passage was Isaiah 58 - he referred to it as “The Charter of The Salvation Army”.

Our relationship to the other, established churches was initially one of great tension which, even though it has eased considerably through the years as The

Salvation Army grew and established credibility, was defined by the prophetic stance we adopted in relation to the perceptions and practices of the other churches. We felt that we had something to say to the wider church; something to remind them about (the poor); something about which to bear witness (ritualism and the sacraments); areas needing challenging (female ministry). One could say that we viewed our Christian brothers and sisters as primarily priests, and ourselves as primarily prophets.

In time, though, we settled down. We “came in from the hills” and built Temples of our own. We hankered after the status of priests and the certainty of established ritual. Most denominations still tend to hold the Army at arm’s length, mainly due to our theological understanding of sacraments, and refuse to grant us the ecclesiastical legitimacy that many feel is important. Yet we continue to strive hard to establish ourselves as priests and, in fact, to function as priests. We have worked hard to throw off the “prophetic mantle” of our early years.

I believe that God called The Salvation Army into being for a prophetic purpose and that this is who we are - it is in our DNA. If the Army is to now to emerge into robust adulthood as a movement, 140 years after our birth, having moved from a glorious (and rambunctious) infancy and through an awkward adolescence, then we need to understand, accept and embrace our true identity as a prophetic movement.

But how is this to be expressed today, in the post-modern milieu of the early 21st century? What does God want us to say to his people?

I hold two convictions that shape my thinking theologically and my actions missiologically. One conviction is about the prophetic role of the Church in culture and society, and the other is more particularly about The Salvation Army’s prophetic voice within Church culture. Both, I believe, are convictions that strive to “evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.”

Speaking prophetically in the world

I have a conviction that there is only one credible message left for the church to speak in the world today. That is, there is only one message that might capture the attention of the world, one message that the world might possibly listen to. That message can be encapsulated by combining Galatians 3:26-28 and Colossians 3:11:

“Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Everything that the church has historically done, every good work, in order to make the Gospel attractive and to lend weight and credibility to our faith (which is

dead without actions, as James said) can be, and has been, replicated by the world. Hospitals, schools, various expressions of social service and assistance ranging from shelter beds to counselling to addiction programs to youth centres - all such initiatives have their genesis in the Church.

Before governments realized their responsibility in these areas, before private charities and non-profits emerged, it was only the Church that educated children, took care of the sick, and helped the fallen. While the church continues to do this (in particular The Salvation Army) and should continue to do such things, as expressions of Christ's love, it's capacity to enhance the Good News and it's usefulness in giving credence to our mission, are diminished greatly from the time when we were "the only game in town". The "competition", for lack of a better term, is so intense in these areas that that the uniquely Christian aspect of practical, charitable service is all but lost.

Paradoxically, words have become increasingly emptied of meaning as well. The Internet and E-mail, globalized mass media and mass culture are all expressions of a world in which there is simply too much information for people to process. Too many words, in fact. The straightforward and unadorned proclamation of the Good News has never had it so bad. A post-modern, media and technology-savvy generation requires that in any presentation, content has to fight for attention against image and sensation. Experientially based, sensation driven theologies are a better draw than the dry, intellectualism of the rationalistic Christianity of the recent past. In the wider cultural sphere, anyone can say anything these days, with equal credence, given the context of a tolerant, pluralistic culture committed to moral relativism and ethical subjectivity. Words are cheap.

So what we say - even if it is heard - will likely not be listened to. And if what we do - even if it is noticed - will not be linked with our message, what is left? What remains that is uniquely Christian, that the world cannot replicate and that no one else is saying with any degree of validation? I believe it is that message of reconciliation that Jesus left with the church:

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

In a world that is fractured along a thousand fault lines of ethnicity, religion, racial and tribal loyalties, nationalism and economics; where in a thousand villages and cities around the globe the juggernaut of Globalism meets the backlash of Tribalism; where skin colour, tribal affiliation, religious practice or geographical happenstance are determining factors in whether or not a person will live to their 21st birthday; where over thirty wars are raging at present globally, each because

of seemingly non-reconcilable issues of race, religion or economics - what is the message that needs to be spoken prophetically into such a world?

I like to think that a typical Sunday service at my corps 614, in Regent Park, Toronto, implicitly embodies something of this message of reconciliation. Our neighbourhood, our "parish", is the rough part of our city - challenged economically, struggling with social problems and crime and containing about 100 nationalities within a 15-minute walking radius. Regent Park itself, the oldest and largest housing project in Canada, covers 69 acres - about one square mile. Running east to west, is Dundas Street, the only through street in the whole neighbourhood. It divides north Regent from south Regent, or "Northside" from "Southside".

In the spring of last year, a young man was shot and killed on a Friday evening, a half a block north of where we hold our Sunday services. The family had an Army connection through an uncle in another city so I was asked to conduct the funeral. At the uncle's request this was a private family affair, with no friends or acquaintances from "the Park" invited. However, we were asked to organize a memorial service to which his friends from the neighbourhood could be invited and so we planned one for the following Saturday. The only building we had available to hold the memorial service was the city-owned community centre that we rent each week for our Sunday meetings (we have no building of our own). The community centre is situated half a block south from the site of the shooting.

The boy was shot about 3 yards north of Dundas Street, just inside north Regent. He was a "Northside" boy, as the tattoo emblazoned on his lower stomach proudly proclaimed. The community centre we use is situated half a block away from where he was gunned down, about 20 yards south of Dundas Street, just inside south Regent. Nobody showed up for the memorial. It seems that we had disrespected the memory of this boy by holding a memorial for him on the Southside. This situation would seem ridiculous if it had not involved the death of a young man.

In such a context, add to the mixing pot of ethnicities in our community, who often continue to grind their tribal and political axes here in their new home, the pressure from the increasingly gentrified adjacent communities, where a trendy, upscale housing market has emerged from the ruins of the old slum community, and the potential for conflict and the need for reconciliation quickly becomes obvious. Our neighbourhood is, in many ways, a microcosm of the larger world.

Yet, each Sunday evening at 4:30 p.m. our mongrel of a church meets and worships and fellowships. One hundred plus people of all ages and different skin colour. It is a veritable polyglot of racial backgrounds, all babbling different languages and dialects and representing all strata of society from wealthy professionals through middle-class and petit bourgeois to working poor, welfare Moms and the homeless. Straight and gay, addicted and abstinent, profane and

pious – I am convinced that Sunday church at 614 Toronto represents the most disparate and eclectic group of people gathering anywhere in our city.

And so it should be. Commissioner Phil Needham, explaining of true community, true church, writes in his book, “Community in Mission”:

“The Church is not a grouping of individual Christians; it is a community in which Christians share in one another’s struggles and hopes. In the fellowship of believers, Christians bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), weep together, rejoice together (Romans 12:15), lift one another up in prayer (Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 9:14; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 4:2; etc), and love one another as Christ loved them (John 13:34). There is togetherness in this fellowship that goes far deeper than mere camaraderie. The pledge which the Spirit empowers the Church to carry out is the pledge of members of the community of faith to be with one another in every circumstance.” (p. 15)

This was the message of the early church. This, I believe, lay at the heart of what Jesus was getting at during the Last Supper, Passover meal. This is why Paul was compelled to traverse the ancient world planting churches and instituting “Love Feasts” in order to get the message across about the reconciliation that Jesus had effected through his crucifixion.

In reconciling man to God and man to man, Jesus reversed the effects of the Fall, the moment when our relationship with God was severed (Genesis 3:1-24) and the subsequent murder of Abel by Cain (Genesis 4:1-16). When relationship with God is ruptured, then we cannot sustain relationship with each other because the two are inexplicably linked. Jesus’ last command to his church was intentionally this: *“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” (John 13:34,35)*

If The Salvation Army is called to be a prophetic presence in the world, then this starts with the recognition that our world - both our individual Monday-to-Friday-to Sunday-morning worlds as well as the larger global family – is profoundly conflicted and deeply divided. From this starting point, we must speak and act a biblical reconciliation that transcends the boundaries and barriers that not only plague the world, but those also bind us in the church.

One American preacher remarked that 11 am on Sunday mornings is the most segregated hour in American life. Though we live in apartment buildings with people of different race and ride elevators with people of colour and work in workplaces with people of various ethnicities, every Sunday morning when we go to worship God, people divide into their own particular racial groupings. We build black churches, Hispanic churches, Chinese churches, churches for the wealthy, churches for youth - all sorts of mono-cultural churches, some ethnically based, other based on age or interests or income and status. By so doing, we model ourselves after a world in which people only associate with people “like

themselves” and we fail to model the Kingdom of God, an inclusive Kingdom of the whosoever, where differences are cause for celebration, not division. In today’s world, the mission statement of every Christian faith community should be: *“Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

For example, here in Kentucky we are on the edge of the American south, a place where the black-white issue has never been truly resolved, either in society or within the church. In spite of the great strides made by the Civil Rights movement over three decades ago, the tensions run deep and hard. In the words of a friend of mine who is a Salvation Army officer born, raised and presently serving in the Southern Territory, the “spell has never been broken”. Look around the room at your fellow Salvationist students. Racially and economically do you reflect the cities and towns where you are from? Or do we reflect that statistic that says that less than 1% of churches in North America are reaching people “unlike themselves.”

If the church - the church “large C” and the “small C” local congregation - is meant to be an outpost of the Kingdom of God, reflecting what heaven is like, then what vision of heaven are we speaking of? What vision will capture the imagination of a weary and divided world unable to rise above its irreconcilable differences? The book of Revelation gives us a vision worth striving for: *“I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.”* (Revelation 7:9).

The Salvation Army is complicit, both at national and international levels, of not speaking this message clearly or distinctly enough. We need to change and strive to “encircle the world with our arms”, in the words of William Booth, and challenge the Church to do the same. As we have entered the new millennium, the witness of the church is lost in the babble, one voice among a myriad, all speaking much the same thing, as far as Joe Public is concerned - one great choir of cacophony.

Can we sing a different song, though? Can we sing a new song in this strange land of the 21st century even though we are a church in exile? Apart from the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army is virtually the only truly international church that benefits from a centralized authority. Can our voice sound in the halls of ecclesiastical authority? Can the witness of our internationalism be used of God to speak prophetically to the Church and the world beyond our church walls? We are, after all, an Army that numerically (statistically) is overwhelmingly brown and yellow and not white, based on soldier and officer strength. We have a hope to offer and it is a realistic hope to counter the Bosnias and Rwandas and Middle East of the world. It is the hope that in Christ we can truly be reconciled with our Creator and his other creations. It is a message that the world should be able to come and see how this works every Sunday.

The last time I was at Asbury I heard the venerable John M. Perkins speak. He told a story of an Indian friend of his who is a Christian and a philosopher. Speaking of the church and its present fascination with power and experience, the friend told Dr. Perkins that anything that a Benny Hinn or an Oral Roberts or any other Christian miracle-worker can do, he can find a “Fakir” (a local Indian holy man) who can do the same thing. Pretty much everything - except one thing, that is. There is one thing the holy men cannot do. They cannot make a high-caste Indian love a low-caste Indian. That takes the power of the Gospel!

Speaking prophetically in the church

I have a conviction that the other main reason God had in raising up The Salvation Army was as a prophetic voice within the church - to live and speak as constant reminders to the Church of Jesus Christ not to forget the poor. I believe that the only true theological distinctive of The Salvation Army is our calling to the poor. From the outset of our history, this was the motivation for our mission and today it is the only *raison d'être* for our continued existence. William Booth's personal convictions on this matter are quite clear.

“God shall have all there is of me. There have been men with greater brains than I, even with greater opportunities, but from that day when I got the poor of London on my heart and caught a vision of what Jesus Christ could do to change them and me, on that day, I made up my mind that God should have all of William Booth that there was.”

“To help the poor, to minister to them in their slums, to sympathize with them in their poverty, afflictions, and irreligion, was the natural outcome that came to my soul through believing in Jesus Christ.”

Why was God moved to rise up The Salvation Army? There were two main determining factors. The state of society (the world) and the positioning of the churches relative to society. Booth was shown a London where a full one-tenth of the population was “submerged” in poverty, vice and sin. His subsequent efforts through mission stations and corps and social endeavours ranging from the “Cab Horse Charter” to his treatise “In Darkest England and the Way Out”, focused on this submerged tenth. The churches of the day had no interest in reaching them and left to themselves, they would never darken the door of any place of worship. This was Booth's world. The question for us is that 140 years later what, if anything, has changed?

I want to quote last year's Miller Lecture speaker, Dr. Jonathan Raymond, from an article that ran in “Word & Deed” in 2002 entitled: “Creating Christian Community in a Fragmented World.”

Throughout the twentieth century...War, civil strife, genocide seemed ubiquitous

and normative simultaneously... Today, the asset of 358 people (billionaires) in the world is greater than the combined income of 45% (2.6 billion) of the world's people. The share of the global income of the poorest 20% of the world's population has dropped from 2.3% to 1.4% since the late 1960's. Booth's "submerged tenth" is now nearer a thirtieth."

Submerged tenth to a submerged thirtieth - hardly an improvement! If the needs of the poor and marginalized, locally and globally, are greater now than they were in Booth times, what about the "positioning" of the churches? By this I mean, the Church's capacity and willingness to engage with the poor?

A quick perusal of any Christian (evangelical) bookstore will reveal that the vast majority of resources on offer in the areas of evangelism, mission, church planting, church models, children's ministry etc are not dedicated toward ministry with the poor and marginalized, urban or otherwise. Browse the web and research the major conferences to be held this coming year in "evangelicaldom" and note their subject matter and the demographic they appeal to. Who are our "heroes" in the realm of Christian leaders? Which churches do we read up on and seek to imitate as models of ministry? What do you think the percentage split is among Salvation Army officers who, in the past five years have visited either Saddleback or Willow Creek Community Churches versus those who have checked out the Sojourners Community in Washington or JPUSA in Chicago? Apart from a few Catholic orders and independent missions, I cannot name one evangelical, protestant church that is focused on and committed to reaching the poor.

I have two quotes on the wall of my office at 614, and they serve as constant reminders to me of the mission of the church as I understand it:

"Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves on the town garbage-heap; at a crossroads so cosmopolitan that they had to write His title in Hebrew, Latin and Greek; at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where He died and that is what He died about that is where the church should be and what the church should be about." (George MacLeod)

"Meanwhile our churches, like secular associations, are concerned with fund-raising, beautiful buildings, large numbers, comforting sermons from highly qualified preachers, while they display indifference to the poor, and to the pariahs of society – drunks, whores, homosexuals, the poor, the insane, and the lonely. Jesus himself would find no place in our all-too-respectable churches, for he did not come to help the righteous but to bring sinners to repentance. Our churches are not equipped to do that sort of thing." (John White)

The "dominant culture" of the protestant church in North America is one inextricably linked to wealth and power. The gospel of prosperity, preached so explicitly on TV screens, is ubiquitously present throughout modern-day North

American evangelicalism. For years evangelicals have lauded Paul (David) Yongi Cho for having the largest church in the world (Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, Korea). We read his books and invite him to speak at mainstream, evangelical conferences. Yet Yongi Cho is a proponent of this theology. We all sing songs from the Hill Song conglomerate out of Australia and read books by Darlene Zschech, the high profile worship leader of Hill Song. The Hill Song organizations are proponents of the prosperity gospel. Even Bruce Wilkenson's "Prayer of Jabez" that swept through the evangelical world like wild fire a few years ago, is essentially implicit prosperity teaching - asking for God's blessing, something most easily quantified in material terms.

This has always been an underlying dynamic in North American Protestantism, woven into the fabric of the stories of our culture - the "great American dream", driven by the Protestant work ethic, singing as we worked: "I've got a mansion just over the hilltop / In that bright land where we'll never grow old / And some day yonder we will never more wander / But walk on streets that are purest gold". (Ira Stamphill)

Implicit in the assumptions of our model churches (such as Bill Hybel's Willow Creek Community Church or Rick Warren's Saddleback Community Church) are a corporate ethos that views the pastor as CEO (there is a book on the market by a Laurie Beth Jones entitled "Jesus CEO") and that elevates success indicators such as rapid growth and size, quantifying "success" in the same way, and using the same terms, as any corporate structure. The Church Growth Movement and more lately, the Natural Church Development method, are examples of business tools, backed by sociological methods, applied to the Church. The meta-narrative, told countless times, is of a small group of friends who gathered together to start a new kind of church, usually in someone's living room and within eight years it has grown to several thousand members and... The narrative is interchangeable with Apple or Microsoft or any number of the dot.com enterprises that sprung up starting in the 1990's.

According to the Brueggemann: "The contemporary (American) church is so largely acculturated to the American ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or act...our consciousness has been claimed by false fields of perception and idolatrous systems of language and rhetoric" (p.11).

Not long after returning from almost a decade of service in Russia, while holidaying at a Salvation Army facility, I overheard some friends talking about a Corps Sergeant-Major in a local corps who drove a new Mercedes-Benz. I joined in the conversation by asking why would a Christian be driving a Mercedes? Further, I wondered why would a Salvationist Christian be driving a Mercedes? My question was met with a combination of annoyance, anger and eye-rolling sufferance at the recently returned, self-righteous missionary. You see this local officer was seen as an example of success. He held a relatively powerful position in a relatively powerful corps in the city. He came from a well-known Army family.

His possession of a luxury car such as a Mercedes-Benz was somehow seen as a validation of The Army and a kudo for the corps that he attended. I viewed the situation as incongruous with my understanding of the Gospel and more particularly, the calling of The Salvation Army, but I was alone in holding this opinion.

Wealth and power go hand in hand. Attending a Christian conference in the southern United States last year, I was struck by how many of the songs used in the contemporary worship had the motif of Jesus as King. Along with this, the lyrics were rife with allusions to war, battle and conquering. They seemed full of imperialistic imagery. Many of the prayers offered up were those in which we were “taking back what is ours” and “claiming places that we could put our foot on”. As an aside at the end of one fervent prayer, a friend leaned over and remarked that in the course of the weekend he had heard more references to Satan than he had over the past year. Intentional and deliberate? I do not believe it was. If anything is to be read into it, it possibly represents an unconscious reaction to the ethos of projected power, connected with the war that the United States is presently engaged in - a war that has been couched in theological language and rooted in deeply religious worldviews.

If nothing else, 9/11 has put religion firmly back on the map in the increasingly secular West. An act of terrorism that was profoundly religiously motivated was met and matched with a theological rhetoric (examine President Bush’s speeches immediately before and after 9/11) and two action-orientated responses: a military action and an urging for us all to “go shopping” to help stimulate the economy.

In their attacks, Al Quaeda targeted political (military) and financial symbols. The White House, the Pentagon, and the World Trade Centre. The effects of what happened on that day continue to reverberate in The Salvation Army. A financial crisis was precipitated in all the American Territories and in my home Territory of Canada and Bermuda. In the few short years since 9/11, we have been plunged into a financial crises that has so far seen the amalgamation of six Divisions, the closing of one of our Training Colleges, the selling of three Divisional camps, budget cuts across all Divisional and Territorial Headquarters Departments by up to 30%, the closing of numerous corps, and it is not finished yet.

In a church that is strives for success, hungers after power and can never get enough money, what happens to the poor, to the “last, the lost, the least”? There is an adage that that “terrorism is the war of the poor and war is the terrorism of the rich”. The “wretched of the earth” (Franz Fanon) seem to be aligned with Al Quaeda, the PLO, and the popular people’s movements. The church seems to be aligned with the globalism, capitalism, consumerism, materialism and military might. Something is very wrong.

In their book *Political Holiness: A Spirituality of Liberation*, Pedro Casaldaliga and

Jose-Maria Vigil, make the following case for an alternative view of the mission of the church:

“In Jesus, God emptied himself in kenosis. God did not become generically human, but specifically poor, ‘taking the form of a slave.’ (Philippians 2:7). He ‘lived among us’ (John 1:14), among the poor. He did not come into the world in general - which would itself have been an ‘emptying’ - but into the world of outcasts. He chose that social level: on the margins, among the oppressed, with the poor. The kenosis of the ‘in-carnation’ did not consist simply in taking on ‘flesh’... but also in taking on ‘poverty’, the poverty of humankind.

The church, as a whole, if it wished to be increasingly evangelical and more effectively evangelizing, will have to go through this exodus and into this emptying process. It will have to insert itself - with its human and material resources and all its institutional weight - into the social situation of the poor majorities, among the greatest needs of the poor, on the periphery of this human world divided into rich and poor. The mystical body of Christ has to be where the historical body of Christ was.”

Conclusion

Brueggemann concludes that the church’s loss of identity through the abandonment of the faith tradition is the internal cause for our enculturation and acquiescence in the face of opposing values of the world. Consumer culture is “organized against history...there is a depreciation of memory and a ridicule of hope, which means everything must be held in the now, either an urgent now or an eternal now.” Any community that is “rooted in energizing memories and summoned by radical hopes is a curiosity and a threat in such a culture”. The Salvation Army is definitely a curiosity, but are we a threat? “When we suffer from amnesia, every form of serious authority for faith is in question, and we live unauthorized lives of faith and practice unauthorized ministries,” concludes Brueggemann.

The question is are we as a people of God living “unauthorized lives of faith” with reference to the life of faith and the journey of mission that God planned for us? Are we practicing “unauthorized ministries”, away from the poor, in ghettos of our own sociological and cultural comfort zones - playing at being priests, when we should be shouting as prophets?

Do we, within our ranks of missionaries, “nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us”, or do we acquiesce and sing the songs scripted for others in the church and not our own songs, even in exile?

Do we truly understand who we are as a people, and whom we are called to as a church? Are we truly children of the tradition in the Army who have taken seriously

the prophetic calling of our movement in the shaping of our own fields of perception and system of language? Can we, with proper urgency, discern and articulate the points of incongruity of our church in the culture of society and the culture of the wider church, regardless of the cost?

I believe that if the Salvation Army is not willing to re-engage the world prophetically and speak prophetically within the Church, then there is no practical use for us as a distinct people of God and no compelling reason for our continued existence.

May we heed the words of the Spirit to the Churches in Ephesus and Sardis:
“You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first...I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.” (Revelation 2:4,5; 3:2)

May God challenge The Salvation Army to live up to our founding vision as prophets!

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Doors and Thresholds: Invitations to Faith - Caring Women

by Major JoAnn Shade

If the mission of The Salvation Army is to save souls, grow saints, and serve suffering humanity, how can that mission be accomplished in the lives of the stereo-typical “welfare mom”? Let me reframe the question by considering the kinds of Bible women who cross the threshold of our facilities (though not always the threshold of our chapels). Have you met Hagar, whose story is told in Genesis 16 and 21? She’s not married to her baby’s father, and she’s running away from her house, which had become intolerable due to harsh treatment. Poor, enslaved, an ethnic minority, she’s stopping by the well of refreshment that she is hoping to find at the Salvation Army.

Or have you met the unnamed woman described in Judges 19? The concubine of a Levite, without the benefit of a wedding ring on her finger, she too runs away, back to her family of origin, only to be tracked down and apparently forced to go back with her “husband,” who loved her so much that he gave her to be raped and left for dead on the doorstep by the men of Gibeah. Perhaps your contemporary concubine has been able to drag herself off the doorstep and into your lobby, desperate for safety.

Two other possibilities, both from John’s gospel. There’s the woman who came to the well at midday (John 4), avoiding the catty gossip of the other village women, ashamed of the revolving door of men parading through her life. Discarded by one husband after another, she is astounded when drawn into conversation with a stranger to the village. And then there is the woman in John 8, “taken in adultery,” bearing the sin and shame of an act that, the last I knew, required two people. Branded with a scarlet letter and threatened with death, she, too, finds herself confronted by grace.

Do you know any of these women? I do. I’ve known them as they were when they first came stumbling through the door, and I’ve known them as they’ve come to faith, wrestling with its implications for their lives, and as they have been “served” by the Army, with varying degrees of both respect and success. And I’ve learned a few things from them about what they need.

From the beginning, I know that getting involved in the life of one of these women is going to be messy. There often is a chaos that surrounds them, keeping them distracted from the pain they would feel if they were to stop and sit in stillness for a time. Often, there have been a number of men, in and out, who have taken what they have wanted and then left, for another woman, a prison cell, or the streets.

The first gift that we can offer is the ability for them to give voice to their stories. Even in a simple intake interview, there can be time for a few minutes of listening, beginning the process of allowing the woman to find her voice, and taking her words seriously. Over time, a woman can begin to awaken to an awareness of emptiness that so often rests inches below her skin. We all have a place within us that is

designed to be filled by the Spirit of God, and it is in giving voice to our pain and fear that we begin to find that place.

Women need to hear the stories of Jesus. They need to hear these stories in the same way that the songwriter pleads, “Tell me the stories of Jesus, I love to hear, Things I would ask him to tell me if he were here.” (reference). Some of the young women we meet did hear these stories at their mother’s knee or in the pew, but need to be reminded of their meaning in the context of their adult lives. Others have never heard the stories, and sit in awe as they first hear about the way in which Jesus interacted with women who were so much like them. Seeing themselves in the gospel narratives is a profoundly moving experience, and it happens as the Word of God speaks with power. And don’t forget the Old Testament reminders, as Hagar was seen by God, Vashti said no, Esther was courageous, and Abigail was given wisdom in her relationship with a cruel man.

Much current thinking in the field of social work involves the concept of naming and building upon strengths. Poor, marginalized women begin to believe that they have no assets, and as such, all too often fall into the trap of being a perpetual victim. In teaching and modeling the basic truths of the gospel, that lie can be exposed as the Spirit begins to reveal the giftedness of each one. The image Paul uses of the body is very powerful (I Corinthians 12), and these young women can be encouraged to see themselves as a valuable part of the body, be it a congregation, neighborhood, or support group at the corps.

In this same vein, the young women can be helped to develop counterstories, defined by Nelson as a “story that contributes to the moral self-definition of its teller by undermining a dominant story, undoing it and retelling it in such a way as to invite new interpretations and conclusions.” Practically, this can be done by the development of lifebooks (not scrapbooks), that contain photos, drawings, family mottos, and other parts of the story that can be woven into a whole. In doing so, the story continues to belong to the woman, but the helper can reframe it in such a way that life-giving truths can be received from the story.

Perhaps the most powerful gift we can give to these young mothers is to love their children. These are babies that were not aborted. These women chose to give their children life (the counterstory), and although they may not always show that in their behavior toward them, it is a truth we must remember and respect. They want what is best for their children, and in most cases, they want a different life for them than they have experienced. We have the ability to show the way for that life, and Jesus can make that way for them.

We need a final reminder. These women and their families have often gotten into some very complicated life patterns, and it will take much time, patience, and appropriately boundaried caring to impact those patterns. At times God moves very quickly to miraculously turn a life around, but at other times, it is a much longer

process. Set-backs may occur – a financial crisis, a new boyfriend, or an addictions relapse. Be ready with the reminder that Jesus understands.

Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” There are many women, standing on the threshold, both of our facilities and of the door of faith. As we who serve in the Salvation Army continue to do so to meet human needs, we can also turn the doorknob for these women to open the door to the Saviour.

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You've Got Mail

by Captain K. Kendall Mathews

"...so this is my Word that goes out from my month: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."
Isaiah 55:11

Imagine for a moment that your mailbox began to fill with letters from the Lord-written by the very hand of God Himself. What would He say to you, and how would you react to His letter?

Maybe He would remind you of His eternal love...of His strength to help you in your time of trouble as you serve His people... of His joy at your success as an Army officer...or of His readiness to forgive your shortcomings.

In a very real sense, every officer have received a love letter from God-His Holy Word, the Bible. Here are three love letters will serve as a practical reminder God's reassuring thoughts He has for you as you continue to offer a hand of service to those under your care. Think of Him as a loving Father, offering comforting words to you, His child. I pray that you will find peace and encouragement as you read through these letters from the Lord written just for you.

LETTER ONE

My Dear Army Officer,

Obedience is better than sacrifice. Be still. Be silent. Stand and see My salvation. I am freeing you from all bondages. You will feel the release. There will be nothing standing between you and Me. I will take control of your body and spirit. It is no longer you that lives, but I am living in you. Yield your spirit to Me daily. I will fill you with My Spirit as you yield yourself to Me. I will manifest My power through you. Listen. I will speak clearly. My burden is light. Trust Me to use you at the right time and in the right place. Rest in Me. Enter into the rest I have for you. Stand still. You will hear Me. You will obey. It is no longer you but I who is living in you.
"Walk in Love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us."
Ephesians 3:2

Faithfully,
GOD Your Father

LETTER TWO

My Dear Army Officer,

It is no longer you that lives, but it is I living in you. You are Mine. You are My vessel. I am using you. Yield yourself to Me daily. Seek Me with your whole heart. I am in you. Be still and know that I am God. I will manifest My power through you as you yield your body to Me. I will love through you. My love will flow through you to others. I am giving you the words to speak. Your compassion is My compassion is My compassion. Your burdens are My burdens. Your desires are My desires. I will give you the desires of your heart as you delight in Me. I love you. I am giving you joy. I am giving you peace. I am giving you love. *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me.” Psalm 23:4*

Forever,
GOD Your Father

LETTER THREE

My Dear Army Officer,

I give you My peace. I give you My peace that passes all understanding. Rest. Enter into the rest I have for you. In quietness and in confidence I will be your strength. I will give you peace as you obey My words, I have come to give you joy. Rejoice and be glad. I have you safely in the palm of My hand. I will never let you go. I will take all fear from you. You have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind. Stay filled with My Spirit. My Spirit fills you with My love. My Spirit fills you with My joy. My Spirit fills you with My peace. I give you My peace. There is no peace in the world except through me. You have My peace in your heart. Stay close to Me and I will stay close to you. I will never leave you. Seek Me with your whole heart. *“So, do not fear, you are more valuable than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:31*

Fearlessly,
GOD Your Father

Have you heard from me yet? Do you understand what I have said to you through these letters? Understanding comes from reading and hearing my Word, and living by it through faith. My letters of love have the power to change, and keep your life on track. Always know my dear Salvation Army officer that I love you very much. I want the best for you as you serve me, and encourage others to know, I am the route to restoration, the truth during trails, and the light that brighten the darkness of our land around the world. So, check your spiritual mailbox today, because **YOU'VE GOT MAIL!**

The Salvation Army: Worship of God: Priority one?

by Michelle Kay

I love the article written by Don McMinn in his teaching book "A heart Aflame"

In it he poses a question regarding the priority of the church, and lists a variety of important priorities: serving, teaching, worship, and evangelism to name a few. He then suggests the scenario of asking this 'priority question' to a number of pastors, seeing what they believe to be the most important from the given list, and states his opinion that they would be varied in response regarding the first priority of the church.

I decided to put this to a test some time last year, during a speaking engagement on the topic of worship. I asked the congregation- not pastors, but a fairly typical Salvation Army crowd of close to 200 people, what they believed from the list was the most important priority of the church. They were in fact divided. And not divided between just two of the answers either- but divided across the entire range of options.

Now none of the answers are bad mind you- all very good answers, intended to challenge, and to get us thinking, but hopefully with the result of aligning with priority one that God lists, and demonstrates in His word.

I went on to explain the concept as Don McMinn had taught in his book...and indeed God teaches in His word; that anything or anyone that is given a higher priority than God is in fact an idol...we might not think of it as that, we might not have it fashioned out of stone or metal, but our hearts are inclined elsewhere as priority one.

"... The bible is very clear on the issue.
The first priority of the church must be...GOD..."

...Our programs designed to promote the kingdom must not take precedence over the king. And the king's friends and enemies must not receive more attention than the king himself.

Likewise our heart's affection must not be just on the bible, but on the author of the bible as well, because all that He is cannot be contained in just printed form. And we must not devote ourselves more to those He came to save than we do to the saviour himself...."¹.

This came as a huge shock to many in the particular congregation in question- even though it made sense to them when explained....

They were amazed that they didn't know this. They were dumbfounded, and some, seemingly a little embarrassed, that they could be in this position.

This, along with numerous worship leading experiences started me thinking....
How did we get to this point?

This congregation is no different to the 'average' Salvation Army congregation-
why would they not know and experience worship and adoration of God as a first
priority in their lives? How did we get so far from the main thing: of worship, priority
one?

After much deliberation I have come up with the following two reasons as potential
answers to these questions:

- *A Lack of understanding of corporate and personal identity*
- *The Continued embracing of the peripheral issues rather than the heart of the matter*

Lack of understanding of corporate and personal identity

What do I mean by this?

Well, it is no secret in Salvation Army circles that 'the army' in the western world at
very least has been struggling with its' identity for some time.

With a nationwide NCLS (National church life survey) report of a 7% annual
decline in Australia specifically, questions need to be answered about this less
than 'growing church', and the reason people are leaving; let alone the lack of
attraction for newcomers.

Some prefer to place their heads in the proverbial sand, doing things the way they
have always been done, not thinking too much about the consequences; whilst
others take the bull by the horns, dealing with whatever the issues are, once they
find them, to gain some clarity, and then seek improvement.

Identity... from the past

Over recent years, at various conferences and gatherings, many issue-raisers
within and external to the ranks, have been quoting history; particularly words of
the founder William Booth, in an attempt to remind others of the hew from which
we were sown, and the foundational values associated with that history.

William Booth has been quoted so much that one would think he is the current
spokesperson for the Salvation Army, rather than one who left this world over 200
years ago.

Perhaps even more disturbing though is the amount of times Booth is quoted in
comparison to Jesus!

I heard someone recently ask somewhat pointedly but very appropriately:
'Who was more important; William Booth, or Jesus...in terms of our future, and our reference point...?'

Whilst the answer should be disturbingly evident, it is not always clear, as people grapple with the past, and its relationship to the present. Some would hold William Booth up on such a high pedestal that he himself becomes an object of idolatry.

Such are the issues of identity that one needs to go a long way back in time in order to "remember" who we are...

'Remembering', mind you is not a bad thing.

I recall the numerous stories that have encouraged me in my personal walk, about the forgetful Israelites, regarding the faithfulness and character of God. Their 'remembrance' of God brought their deliverance, healing, restoration etc. for a time... before they would 'forget' again...

'Forgetful' is often who we are as humans.... especially in the light of God...

That is life, and in fact unfortunately 'normal', however, in the calling to mind, it must be the God-featured, God breathed, God driven things we remember and return to, rather than other things of lesser importance that creep in, and unwittingly become the foundation.

Franchisees

Another identity issue has definitely become the lack of 'franchise' identity that the Salvation Army once had.

Even as recently as 20 years ago, one would be able to walk into a London, New York and Australian Salvation army hall and expect a similar "serving"

These days, things are very different to that- with corps widely varied within Sydney, let alone across the globe.

This obviously and quite painfully in many instances has impacted upon worship, and the worship expression within the walls. Where once a Salvation Army songbook and songster brigade would be the "norm" accompanied by the brass band, these days these three feature to a far lesser extent. Where they do, there is generally an 'alternative' expression as part of the meeting which often for the most part does not 'work' well...

The resultant "blend" is often at best more about tolerance than harmonious mix, which itself does not set the church up for the "unity commanding a blessing" portion of scripture in Psalm 133. In actual, very sad fact, it often does quite the opposite.

Corporate identity...now

Perhaps the greatest, most fundamental issue regarding the lack of identity, and its impact upon the priority of worship, is the very nature of the “movement” itself.

A movement, not a church, could be the very core issue regarding worship for the Salvation Army.

William Booth, beloved founder, was clear and decisive about the Salvation Army being a movement, rather than a church. He did this from my understanding for two main reasons:

- 1. He wanted a movable force that was not stagnant but advancing. He did not want them sitting still, but on the go, always advancing the kingdom of God. He wanted passionate, soldiers fighting the war against sin, injustice and the enemy of God, and as such ‘movement’ was more appropriate than church.*
- 2. He did not want any passengers or ‘pew warmers’ that he had witnessed in earlier years, and from other denominations.*

Now, I don’t for a minute believe that William Booth was not a worshiper.

At the “Colour Your world” Sydney women’s conference of 2004, Darlene Zschech used William Booth as one of her extreme examples of “worship first”, stating that in her view, he was one of the greatest ‘worship first’ people of God.

Matt Redman also, in his book “Face down” quotes William Booth as an example of extreme worship:

“One of the best examples I’ve come across of a man who sang his worship passionately and backed up his songs with a life of devotion was the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth. With a heart set on mission and mercy, Booth lived out his love for God through a life of serving the poor- a life so fruitful that we still feel its repercussions all over the world today...Booth himself knew the key to his fruitfulness in ministry- it was worship with a price...The most meaningful and powerful worship always comes at a price- the whole of our lives placed on His altar.”²

It is this essence of worship first, and the international Salvation Army slogan, “Heart to God- hand to man” that is one of my personal hobbyhorses. In other words, heart, affection and worship of God as priority number one, and heart and help to Man secondary. It is where service, charity and other issues take precedence over our first priority of God, that we get ourselves into great strife.

And it is still this “movement” issue that needs clarification in this era; as corporate worship (often a style argument however) is often badly mistaken and misunderstood, with people arguing; “we are not a church” therefore we do not need to look like other churches-whatever they mean by that.

On one hand in our country, there is some degree of advertising in our nation-newspapers, Billboards, etc, saying things like – ‘The Salvation Army- a church, not just a helping hand...’ “The salvation Army- A place to worship” whilst on the

other, there is strong, even vehement resistance from within, to the very use of the word 'church'.

No wonder there are misconceptions and problems regarding worship and its' priority within corporate structure, when we do not know as a whole what our structure is, and who we are supposed to be.

The point is though when it all boils down, that **any** Christian movement or people that fails to recognize its first call- the heart of God, (whether or not its mission is to reach others for that very heart of God) borders on idolatry, because any movement that places anything above God himself, commits idolatry. Now I am sure that God loves the intentional missional heart and attractional thought behind the original premise of the Salvation Army, but never at the expense of Himself or His relationship with the missional members.

History always repeats itself...and repeats itself...

It seems to me as though the Salvation Army borders on the Israelite cyclic slump some of the time...

Having experienced the favour and deliverance of God, she takes her eyes off the saviour, and 'head of the ranks', and enjoys the favour of the people, the surroundings, and begins to take on their culture, their priorities rather than cleaving to the commands given to her by the King. The Israelites began by looking to other people first, which then naturally flowed into accepting their beliefs and values, and then married into their culture, thus angering the King, and potentially even losing His favour.

Sometimes I wonder where we sit with all of that. An easy trap to fall into...

The Salvation Army began, (after a vision by God) in hostility (rather than the nationwide community acceptance that it enjoys today), being the target of 'the people' yet advancing the kingdom of God. It was not supported by government; not popularized as the helping hand of the community, and not reliant upon huge corporate and individual donations to keep its charity arm afloat...yet it advanced the kingdom of God, and had the favour of God upon it.

It was led by a man who was devoted wholeheartedly to God, and His purposes for the earth.

I question **that** culture and determination **now**.

It knew who it was. It knew its' calling- as did those who embraced its culture and belief.

They were strong enough to trust their God, regardless of the popular people, and to tear down the 'asherah poles' of religion, history, and structured political and social class systems. They were willing to be unpopular in their 'set apart-ness' and to follow the King for the Christ-mandate that was upon them.

I want to be able to place God's word above the word of history and 1950's tradition, and remain in the Army fighting for the right cause, rather than the ridiculous middle class infighting scuffles of style, culture, and red tape. That is not the priority...or in fact any priority- it is not important at all...

In response to the 'identity issue', I believe that worship and 'movement' can go hand in hand. Worship should be the paramount priority of any Christian gathering, Christian life, and Christian full stop. That is who we are, it is who we were created to be, and whatever our name is, should be evident in our character. **We** are the church, when all is said and done. Personally, there is no option, or argument in my opinion.

Regardless of whether we find ourselves part of a movement, church, association, conglomeration, girl guides, rotary club, school council, etc we are created in God's image for his purpose, and as the Westminster catechism states: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever"³

Continued embracing of the peripheral issues rather than the heart of the matter

Peripheral issues have always been a problem when it comes to worship. The repetition of history is something we humans are very good at, and I suppose the Salvation Army being no different to the rest of humanity from that perspective, gives us some degree of comfort...comfort, yes, excuse no...

God has always had to remind us that man looks on outward appearance, but His focus is the heart- always has been, and always will be.

From the Pharisees themselves to the legacy of Pharisaical nature that so many 'religions' and individuals find so easy, peripheral issues have always had their place, or perhaps even their thrones, if the 'sacred cow' truth were told.

When it comes to 'sacred cow' peripheral issues regarding worship within Salvation Army circles, I put forward that the source of the problem, and root of the various debates predominantly in the western world again concerns the confusion of identity.

"What is 'Salvation Army' and what is not? "

Of recent years there have been many articles about worship published in Salvation Army magazines throughout Australia. A few writers attempt to grapple with the topic, and through their often subjective viewpoints, endeavour to come to an understanding of what worship is "for the Salvation Army". The focus occasionally shifts backward, gazing at history, often without a complete contextual framework, and sometimes, though not as often, includes some biblical perspective information.

More often than I care to think about, there is some pointed comment about the importance of the Salvation Army's 'difference', and the exhortation given to readers against embracing other churches' worship styles and features, in order to retain the identity of the army.

My instinctive reaction is generally to question what they mean by the 'worship identity', that they talk about, and cringe when I realize that too often they mean that the brass band cannot be lost, as THAT is one of the few major factors that is a uniquely Salvation Army worship expression. THAT is one genuine difference to other churches- a feature they purport we need to maintain.

When and how did that become the case? Is it relevant I ask?

If we are to look historically across the board, then we must conclude that the brass band came into being because it was 'the contemporary' at the time. Many factories and organizations in the late 1800's had brass bands. The Salvation Army simply followed suit- absolutely ingenious in reaching people within the popular/ cultural framework.

200 years later, it is the form that has been transferred across the generations, and not the principle, which inspired the form.

What a massive, unfortunate and restricting change in vision.

It must also be remembered that another genius act was the use of the popular song for sacred rather than secular purposes. Booth would cleverly take current songs of the music hall era in which he lived, worked and ministered, and alter the lyrics to bring the Christian message to the people.

Whilst copyright will not allow that to occur these days, it seems to me that again the vision was clear, and method relevant. The historians seemingly remember only partial history regarding cultural worship expressions in an attempt to protect a dying breed. Never would any of the brass band advocates also be encouraging the use of contemporary songs today. In fact those of us who support the moving forward, contemporary expression view for the Salvation Army would have difficulty, keeping pace with the rapid change in our society- such is the rate and breadth of diversity.

Ironically, the Salvation Army songbook- again, a sacred cow...began as simply a collection of songs from origins such as these. These songs, combined with songs written by Salvationist writers, and others from 'the other churches' were published together in one book, becoming the 'verified' source for corporate choral expression...

It is this same book- which is hotly contended and lamented over today- as contributing to losing our identity if lost!

How easily they forget, (or perhaps were never told).... that many of these songs were never 'ours' in the first place....

So peripheral style issues aside, lately rather than 'difference', the current buzzword in the articles has been "distinctives", and I have been greatly interested to read what the writers felt these distinctives were.

Some suggest that worship is "Salvation Army" if there is an emphasis on holiness; others, if there is a place for the mercy seat, or altar; and others, if there is always time for open testimony allowing people to talk of their transformation by Jesus.

Whilst none of these are bad things, in fact, they are all positive, healthy things for a church to share in, I question why we feel the need to be separate, and own these as 'ours'- needing to be different, and 'distinctive' in our outward expression?

Why are we very close to saying...'Thank God I am not like those over there...'so loudly?

I am quite loathed to read another thing about worship in Salvation Army magazines because I am convinced that they just don't 'get it'. I feel guilty saying that, and don't wish to verge on the judgmental, however when I hear more about the past than I hear about the future, and read about the outer expression rather than the inner heart importance, I wonder what the motivation is to write such articles in the first place.

Surely when we consider worship, and write about the 'distinctives' of it for the good of others, it is to encourage each other to a place of UPWARD focus.

Too long we have focused on each other, and what each other is doing in our worship settings. Too often we have compared, contrasted, critiqued, rather than being captivated...

I think that for many within the Salvation Army, other than not actually knowing who we are, the essence of the problem is one word- FEAR: Fear of losing the past; perhaps the comfortable, the thing we grew up with...and Fear of the unknown

The problem with fear- is that it keeps us in a place of looking in the wrong direction.

Firstly we are in a place of looking behind rather than pressing on to what is ahead.

And we are certainly not looking UP when we continue to be afraid of losing what we have. We are in maintenance/protection mode, rather than offensive, taking new ground mode. I know which one I would rather be.

With much talk of spiritual renewal, and the true meaning of worship it is much easier to criticize that which you do not understand and have not experienced, rather than admit there is something more to learn and 'know' for oneself. That is unfortunately a very comfortable position for many within the Salvation Army...

I am careful to add at this point, that in no way have I 'arrived'. In fact the more I learn, the more I realize how much more there is to learn.

But I know what it is to venture in worship with God in a personal, passionate, deep, meaningful, spirit filled way- always with freshness, and personal relationship. I also know that there is way more to experience and know and share about God...and I do not plan to give up now.

But if I had not experienced richness in worship, I wouldn't (and didn't for many years) know what it was to lack it...when I had not experienced LIFE and transformation by the Holy Spirit, but continued to travel the traditional road, I had no means, or desire to venture on another path. And when I was comfortable with the status quo, I did not wish to rock the boat, or worse, step out of it...as some were doing at the time.

This is the mentality I had, in what I affectionately term my 'former life' and in no way would I go back.

There is great quote I have heard on my worship journey:

“Worship minus relationship equals religion”

This is so very disturbingly true...and often in our churches, so very true...Disturbingly!

I am not at all interested in religion. I try not to be religious...I figure if it was a good enough position for Jesus, then it is good enough for me.

A humorous, yet sadly, ironically true religious story, told as part of the Alpha course illustrates this point:

The speaker introduces an article they read in the newspaper that week...

“Title: God to leave the church:

Following the precedent of several leading clergy, God has indicated that He is set to leave the church.

Friends of God believe the issue of “contemporary verses traditional worship styles” is behind the Almighty's decision to go.

According to sources close to God He's been unhappy for some time about the general direction the church has been taking and has had enough.

A spokesperson for the church said, "Losing God has been a bit of a blow, but its something we're going to have to live with".⁴

How sad, yet how often is this a reality?

Yet it is this religious attitude that is the problem for us in worship...doing what has always been done, the way it has always been...regardless of God, regardless of God's presence, blessing, etc... We forget that it is FOR HIM in the first place. Priority ONE.

This is the stuff that 'distinctives' should be made of in my book- GOD present worship. God inspired worship. God directed worship.

Anything else is a waste of time.

Anything else is potential idolatry.

Anything else is not worship at all...

I long to see us as a movement, church or whatever we are get back to the basics...seek after God with all of our heart soul, mind and strength.

I want God to be our first priority- and to know when He is not.

I long for: **Heart to God-** first, and then **hand to man.**

I believe that when this happens, that we will see the Salvation Army become the Army it was always intended to be. Hallelujah!

End Notes:

1. A Heart Aflame
Don McMinn
2. Face Down, p65
Matt Redman
3. Westminster Catechism
4. Alpha talk no 1

A Devotional Study - Praying in the Midst of Crisis

by Patricia King

STUDY INCLUDES:

- A. Prophetic Encouragement
- B. Devotional Teaching

A. PROPHETIC ENCOURAGEMENT

I have sensed that many believers are in critical places in their lives at this particular time. Some of the crisis is relational, other individuals are in financial and health crisis and yet others are in spiritual crisis. Recently I had a revelation of believers feeling like they were losing their footing with their faith and devotion to Christ. There are many types of crisis and none of them are pleasant. In the midst of crisis and turmoil, the Lord is with you and is well able to bring you through. His peace will keep you in the midst of the warfare and His promises will offer you solid ground to stand on.

B. DEVOTIONAL TEACHING

God has invited us into intimate fellowship with Him. Through Christ we have been granted an eternal, unbreakable covenant that promises victory in every situation. The main thing is that we posture ourselves for breakthrough. The following teaching will reveal principles for praying for breakthrough in the midst of crisis.

a) Is your heart right?

1. When we walk contrary to the ways of the Lord, we open up our lives for demonic oppression and assault. The same principles works for a church, a city, or a nation. All throughout the Bible, we note that when people walked away from God they came under curse and assault from the enemy. In Deuteronomy 28, the first 14 verses include a list of blessings that come from obedience, but the rest of the chapter is devoted to listing the curses that will come upon us if we disobey Him and His word. It is important to invite the Holy Spirit to convict us of any unconfessed sin. When we are aware of doing things that are displeasing to God, we must repent (turn away) and ask His forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins then He will hear, forgive and cleanse.

2. Do we desire breakthrough for clean motives? Let's examine our motives and make sure they are pleasing to the Lord. James 4:3 teaches us: You ask, and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may consume it upon your lusts.

b) Are you standing on the promises?

God's promises are yes and Amen and the scripture says that we must pray according to God's will. 1 John 5:14,15 "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us; and if He hears us we know that we have the requests that we desire of Him."

c) Are you standing in faith?

1. Mark 11:24 “ Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them , and ye shall have them . Notice that this portion says, “ when you pray, believe that you receive.” This means that even before you see the manifestation, you receive by faith and secure the promise.

2. Mark 10:27 “ And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible”.

d) Are you enduring?

1. Many things can try to hinder our faith when we are standing for a breakthrough. The truth of the promise of God is of the eternal realm but the facts are of the temporal realm (that which is within time). The eternal promises will not decay or diminish but the temporal realm will pass away. We must endure on the promises that are eternal and keep an eternal perspective even in the midst of assault and what looks like failure. During crisis our faith will be tested, but true faith will stand on the eternal promises even if the manifestation of the promise does not appear within the realm of time. Galatians 6:9 says, “ And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

2. The Great Cloud of Witnesses as recorded in Hebrews 11 kept the faith in the promises. Let's walk in their example.

3. Stay in prayer until you have a strong release of faith. Sometimes we do not pray long enough. Jesus asked His disciples to pray with Him for one hour when He was in the midst of crisis. Sometimes I have needed to pray every day for months until the breakthrough came.

4. Sometimes, as we are enduring, fasting and prayer together will help usher in the breakthrough. In Matthew 4, we find Jesus fasting and praying for 40 days as He resisted the enemy. Following this time, powerful miraculous power accompanied His ministry.

e) Praise until the breakthrough comes.

1. Praise is also an aspect of prayer. When we praise, we are focused on the victory. Just like Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:22-26) praised in the midst of a very contrary situation, so also can we. As a result of their praise focus, all the prison doors opened and everyone's chains fell off. Glory to God!

2. Many times in a crisis, we tend to think on negative things. In Philippians 4:4-8 , we are taught to rejoice in the Lord always (especially in the midst of crisis) and to keep our mind focused on positive things.

f) Expect a testimony.

Every attack will bring forth a victory, which will bring forth a testimony for the Lord's glory and honor. Expect a great testimony. Let the devil know he will be sorry he ever tried! You are promised the victory! 2 Corinthians 2:14

g) Give God the Glory.

When your victory comes, don't forget to give God the glory and offer thanksgiving to Him. Too often, like the ten lepers who got cleansed and only one returned to thank the Lord, we likewise forget. All glory, honor, power and wisdom belong to Him! Revelation 4 & 5.

And Remember

God loves you with an everlasting love!

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A Devotional Study - Praying in the Midst of Crisis - Part Two

by Patricia King

STUDY INCLUDES:

- A. Prophetic Encouragement
- B. Devotional Teaching

A. PROPHETIC ENCOURAGEMENT

Last month, our devotional study was primarily targeting personal crisis and how to overcome. This month we will be studying how to overcome in the midst of crisis on more of a regional or national level. Prophetically, we need to discern that we are living in days of great turmoil. The consequence of sin is visiting mankind. The enemy is taking the legal license that has been given him through mankind's sin and is holding individuals and regions in captivity as a result. He is also aggressively warring against righteousness. In addition to all of this, the judgments of God are being released into the earth. We need to stand firm in this hour and receive instruction on how to live and pray in the midst of calamity, warfare, and judgment.

In this type of season, all our peace and prosperity can, and will be, assaulted. We need to know how to stand firm in the "evil day". The church will become more defined and victorious in this hour. The complacency that has plagued the Body of Christ in the west shall be challenged and good things will come forth. These days will separate the sheep from the goats and a great revival and harvest potentially awaits us. Our light is made to shine in the darkness. This will be our greatest hour!

B. DEVOTIONAL TEACHING

A right posture before God is the key to living victoriously in this hour. A posture of humility, absolute dependency and pure devotion and faith is required. A nation can be turned to God by just a few people who are obedient to the Lord. In Nineveh's day, the region had turned away from God and they were about to be judged. After Jonah chose to obey his prophetic mandate to spark revival, he heralded the warning concerning the coming judgment. As a result the entire region turned back to God and repented of their evil ways. Instead of judgment, there was revival. It all happened as a result of one man's obedience.

God visited Solomon in a dream and said, "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Then My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place (the temple)." 2 Chronicles 7:13-15

In the New Testament, we, the people of God, are that temple (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). If we humble ourselves, seek His face, turn from our wicked ways and make prayers on behalf of our nation in the midst of judgments, He will hear, forgive

and heal our land. His eyes are upon us and His ears are attentive to the prayers we make on behalf of our land.

The following are some insights for you as you prepare to stand in the gap for the Lord's purposes to be released in this hour.

1. Humble yourself before God. We need new levels of dependency upon the Lord. He is everything we need and desire. He is our strength, our life, our peace. Humble yourself by worshipping and adoring His greatness and excellence.

Humble yourself before man as well. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any ways that you walk in pride or condescending attitudes towards others. Ask Him to show you any areas where you pridefully esteem yourself as higher than another. As He reveals things to you, repent and receive cleansing and walk in a new way – a way of humility and servanthood.

2. Seek His face

We must not lean to our own understanding but instead, turn to Jesus, in hours of crisis. Do not allow distractions in your devotional times. Seek Him fervently. All things are possible in Him. He can turn any devastating circumstance around and work it together for good, but we must be focused on Him. Seek Him for counsel and instruction. Like Moses, let's daily enter the tent of meeting and soak in His glory, listening for Him to speak to our hearts.

3. Turn from your wicked ways

Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal any way that you personally are transgressing His love, law, and ways. Every time an individual sins, it gives license to the enemy – not only for the individual, but it influences the region and nation where the license has been given. Principalities feed off of sin, it is their breakfast food.

In Romans 6:16 the scripture teaches us that we become enslaved to whomever we obey. If we sin, we become sin's slave. Joshua led his troops into Ai and they experienced a terrible defeat because of one person who had violated the instructions of the Lord. Our individual walks are important for regional and national well-being. Let's take personal responsibility.

I was recently reading a newspaper article. President Bush had called for a national day of prayer to cover the victims of Hurricane Katrina and to ask for prayer for the government in the midst of the crisis. This decision was a wise choice to make. The article, however, quoted many Christian leaders who mocked and scorned the president, saying that he was too late to call for prayer and he should have done it much earlier. They went on to speak negatively of the government. Oh, my goodness! I couldn't believe this was coming from Christians. The sins of criticism and judgment through the church can devastate a nation. We must repent from our critical attitudes and especially towards government and those in authority. We are taught to pray for them, not judge them. The Body of Christ is full of critical judgment and this is wrong.

Along with criticalness, other sins such as unbelief, sexual immorality, complacency, dishonesty, perversion, hate and jealousy are also things that can fuel evil in a nation. If we are going to see a nation come into revival, we, the church, MUST repent from our own wicked ways.

1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins, then He is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He is a merciful God. Let's not take His mercy for granted. Let us fear Him.

We can also engage in identificational repentance like Daniel did. He repented for his own sins and for the sins of his people. Bring the sins of your region and/or nation before the Lord and ask forgiveness. Cry out for the land.

4. Pray

We have been given a wonderful privilege to pray. 1 John 5:14,15 says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."

The key here is to pray according to His will. This requires seeking Him for His wisdom and His plan. When we pray according His will, we know that it will be answered. He is a good God and desires everything to be brought into righteous alignment. We, His church, are to stand in the gap to see His will and purposes come into the earth.

God is eager to demonstrate His mercy and amazing goodness, but He needs a people to pray. He needs a landing strip. All things are possible with God if we will only pray. One of the greatest sins of the western church is our prayerlessness. In days of national crisis and pressure, prayer is so important. Individual and corporate prayer is a must.

The Chinese underground is one of the strongest and most rapid growing Body's of believers in the earth today. Their key? Prayer. Prayer. Prayer. We have the privilege to pray, so let's pray.

5. Fasting

Fasting is very beneficial as it causes us to deny our strongest carnal appetite and increases our spiritual appetite and focus. We at Extreme Prophetic begin a 40 day fast on October 1, 2005. It is completed on November 9, 2005. During this fasting and prayer time we are focusing on personal and national revival and harvest. You are welcome to join us and can receive an entire outline of Bible Reading and prayer directives on our website. Go to:

<http://www.extremeprophetic.com/archivesitem.php?art=336&c=0&id=11&style=> for details. Also, we are praying for personal and family revival for any who submit prayer requests to dunamisprayer@extremeprophetic.com. These requests will be prayed for every day of the fast as well as at the Dunamis conference by all the speakers and the corporate body in attendance.

For more information and to register for Dunamis, go to:
<http://www.extremeprophetic.com/content/BulletinItem.phtml?art=234>

And Remember

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Revolutionary Jesus

by Aaron White

Chairos: “When we were utterly helpless with no way of escape, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners who had no use for Him.” (Romans 5:6, Living New Testament)

The whole of Jesus’ life was a *chairos* moment, as he came at just the right time and place to fulfill the prophecies about the Messiah. In addition, 1st century Palestine was a hotbed of revolutionaries, and people were ready to follow a leader against the Roman occupation. Jesus brought a different kind of revolution than people were expecting, but his solution of radical love and self-sacrifice struck a chord in a world consumed by thoughts of violence and vengeance. The vast size of the Roman Empire also eventually helped get Jesus’ revolutionary message spread quickly around the known world.

Charisma: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19, Revised Standard)

There has never been a revolutionary so filled with the Spirit of God as Jesus. People were attracted to this Spirit, and it was by this Spirit that Jesus performed signs and wonders. It was also this Spirit that Jesus gave to his followers when he breathed on them before sending them out (John 20:21-22), and this Spirit is still available to his billions of followers today. Jesus’ teachings and example speak directly to the hearts and spirits of all who have ears to hear.

Conviction: “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’” (John 8:58, Revised Standard)

Jesus had an absolute conviction of who he was, even in the face of huge challenges. Nothing, not the direct temptation of the Devil, not the questioning of the High Priests or Herod or Pilate, not even torture and death could shake Jesus’ conviction that he had come to bring life and light where there was only death and darkness. The conviction of his followers was shaken, until they saw him risen from the dead. Their renewed and unshakeable conviction then took the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Cadre: “He told his disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this – that I am with you always, even to the end of the world.’” (Matthew 28:18-20, Living New Testament).

Jesus' disciples were mentored by him for three years and then sent out around the world to proclaim his message. It wasn't just the twelve of them either; in Luke 10 Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples on mission, and he prays in John 17 not just for his disciples but for anyone who comes to believe in him. Paul can also be counted as one of Jesus' cadre, and he was the most successful in extending the revolution to the far reaches of the world. Jesus promised his cadre that anyone who believed in him would do even greater things than he himself had done. (John 14:11-13)

Consequences: Jesus has, by his suffering and death, made an atonement for the whole world, so that whoever wants to will be saved. His revolution took the sting out of death, promised an end to suffering and disease, and liberated billions upon billions of people from slavery to self and sin. Virtually every humanitarian and social service institution in the last two thousand years has come about as a result of the work of Jesus' followers. All of creation is waiting in eager expectation for the children of Jesus' revolution to be fully revealed so that it can be released from its bondage. Pretty cool, yeah?

There have been attempts in the last century or so to understand Jesus as a very, very early communist agitator. This is not quite as bonkers as it first appears. After all, Jesus told stories about worker's rights (the parable of the vineyard), practiced gender equality (he taught both women and men), hung out with the working class (fishermen and prostitutes), spoke up for the poor and oppressed (the Sermon on the Mount), and had followers who held all their possessions in common (Acts 2:44-45).

But to suggest that Jesus is merely a first century version of Karl Marx, Che Guevara, or Chairman Mao is not only bad history, it is a gross misunderstanding of the type of revolution Jesus brought to the world. Jesus revealed to humanity a divine understanding of the story of creation, taught us how to see and treat our neighbours (including our enemies), and became the doorway into a powerful new intimacy with God.

There really is no comparing Jesus with any other revolutionary, not even from a practical standpoint. To use a quick example, Chairman Mao's book, *Quotations From Chairman Mao* (or "The Little Red Book") was required reading in every Chinese household during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Failure to own a copy could lead to imprisonment and torture. As a result, it is the second highest selling book of all time, coming in at 900 million sold. The Bible, about which it is said you can find the character of Jesus on every page, was the first book ever printed by printing press in 1451. It has been published in over 200 languages, and has sold an estimated 6 billion copies, though the total is almost certainly much higher. Is there any doubt about whose revolution has had a greater impact on world history?

There are probably more books on Jesus than any other person who ever lived, so his story is not unknown. But there are characteristics of his revolutionary life that we tend to forget about, choices Jesus made that show just how far he was willing to go

to transform the world. The thing is, there were many people calling for him to lead a revolution. Only they wanted the revolution to end up with Rome overthrown, Jesus on the throne, and the Promised Land as their own. Israel had been suffering and waiting for years the prophecies to come true and God's chosen one to rise up and release them from bondage. Jesus seemed to fulfill all the requirements to be the leader of this movement. But he just would not play ball. He refused to get into the power games people were playing, because he knew the real fight was taking place on a completely different level. The regime he was revolting against would not be defeated by the violent downfall of Rome. Jesus knew his revolutionary strategy could only be humility, suffering, and death, so that death and sin and the devil could be forever defeated.

Jesus is the ultimate model for all of our children of the revolution, so we will look at six aspects of his life that show how counter-cultural he was and explain why so many people have identified with his message. Billions identify with this radical revolutionary because he first identified with them. The question is, do we identify with Jesus enough to follow his example?

1. Refugee Jesus

Jesus was a refugee.

A refugee is defined as one who has been displaced from their homes without hope of return, usually as a result of war, violence, and terror. How then was the Son of God a refugee?

Well, Jesus, already voluntarily "displaced" from heaven, was born a Jew in Galilee under Roman occupation. And almost the first thing we learn about the King of Heaven when he comes to earth is that he and his family must flee their homeland out of fear for their safety. Herod, the local thug in power, was engaged in a campaign of terror, the "slaughter of the innocents", which caused the young family to escape to Egypt.

It is a powerful reversal of an old theme. The people of God were once saved out of Egypt, but God himself in human form had to run there for refuge. Where Israel was once the Promised Land, she had now become like Egypt and Babylon, the oppressor. The passage in Matthew that describes the young family's exodus ends with a quote from Jeremiah 31:15, in which Rachel is weeping and mourning for her lost children. The reference concerns the Jewish people being led into captivity and slavery, with Rachel serving as the figurative mother. When Jesus comes to earth, we see how once again God's child is being turned out of his land.

But the Kingdom of God has a way of turning things upside down. Jesus chose to be displaced, vulnerable, discriminated against, traumatized, weak in the eyes of the world. And God uses "the foolish things of the world to shame the wise...the weak things of the world to shame the strong...the lowly things of the world and the

despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are..." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). By taking on the identity of the refugee, the exile, the weak, lowly and despised, Jesus is bringing salvation to the world.

What does it mean to the world that Jesus chose the way of the refugee? The plight of refugees in the world has never been more desperate. At the beginning of 2003, the UN identified over 20.6 million people worldwide who were refugees, asylum seekers, or in other ways suffering forced displacement from their homes. That equals roughly one in every 300 hundred people on this earth who could be considered a refugee. If any group of people can be considered the "least of these my brothers" in terms of social status, it is refugees. And if we claim that Jesus understands the human condition, it is vitally important that he understands the plight of such a huge number of people.

What can we take from this? If we are to be a light to the gentiles, to the ends of the earth, we must be following the light of Jesus (Phil 2:6-11). Perhaps this will take a renewal of our willingness to sacrifice. This means being prepared to lay down what we consider to be ours by right for the sake of others. This means becoming weak and vulnerable in the eyes of the world, and being displaced from our levels of cultural comfort. This means being able to see the personality of Jesus in the plight of the refugee.

The affluent West is now distinctly multicultural, the destination of millions of refugees throughout history and into the present day. God is calling us to shed the light of his love and salvation to the ends of the earth, and people from all ends of the earth are coming to our doorstep. The question is, are they welcomed in? Can we lay down our culture to actually Christ by including the refugee? Not just "minister" to the refugee, but actually include, learn from, and love?

Jesus' revolution is a multi-racial vision, a place where all are welcome, and where in particular those who are in a position of weakness should be made safe. Can we see the face of Christ in the face of the refugee?

2. Homeless Jesus

"It is impossible for a man who is warm to understand one who is cold." Alexander Solshenitzin, author.

Jesus was homeless.

A case can be made that Jesus was born homeless. His family was forced to leave their home, to become transient and to sleep (and give birth) rough for at least that one night.

But Jesus also chose the way of homelessness during his ministry. In Luke 9 a man says he will follow Jesus wherever he goes. Jesus responds by saying: "Foxes have

holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

In other words, Jesus told the man, “If you want to follow me, you will have to give up the comforts and security of home.” God’s revolution takes precedence over everything else, family and home included. The very things that we think are most important in this world must take a back seat according to Jesus.

But did Jesus really advocate homelessness? Did he really tell us to reject our families? That seems very irresponsible of him. Well, Jesus does urge his followers to take no thought of their life; he tells a wealthy man to sell everything and give it to the poor; and he makes some shocking demands of family disloyalty. But Jesus is talking about where people put their trust, where they find their security. Jesus was a man who had conquered fear, and did not need the security of an earthly home, because he knew exactly who he was and where his security lay. His home was the Kingdom of God, and the work of that Kingdom had an absolute pre-eminence in his life.

And this is what he called his followers to as well. His message denounced the love of money, and even warned against putting trust in “basic” things like a home and a family. This speaks directly to the great fear of the human condition without the security of the Kingdom of God. We store up our treasures on earth out of fear that things may fall through. We put our trust in tangible things, create contingency plans, and refuse to risk our reputations and our possessions because we fear what will happen to us if they are lost.

The question we must ask, and it is not a comfortable one, is this: where is our heart and our home? That is, where have we stored up our treasures? Where does our security lie? Does it rest in our families, our material wealth, our society? It is not enough to simply follow a path that the world deems safe. We need to find our home elsewhere, to fix our eyes on things that are eternal, and we need to live that out in our daily walk.

We can also see just how powerfully Jesus identified with the homeless, with the poor. He had nothing to fall back on, no social safety net, no place to call his own. The difference of course is that Jesus chose this way, and could walk this path without fear. Many in our world are homeless and they have had no choice in the matter. They are victims of a society in which money and possessions are simply more important than humanity. In a frightened world driven by materialism those without a home and without resources are completely disempowered.

Jesus’ identification with the poor and homeless is therefore a potential source of great strength for the homeless in our world today. But we who are his followers must be prepared to identify in the same way, to see ourselves as brothers and sisters of the destitute, to treat them not as objects of our pity, but as sharers in our love and community.

Jesus was homeless. It is too small a thing to say we follow Jesus but still cling tightly to our earthly security. Are we prepared to give up our “homes”? Are we prepared to see Jesus in the face of the homeless today?

3. Party Jesus

Jesus was a party animal.

This may not be exactly what you were taught in Sunday School, and it certainly isn't the popular view of Jesus. But who cares about being popular?

I mean, sure, you hear about Jesus turning water into wine. But this story is generally presented as such a mundane event that you would think Jesus had turned the water into a weak herbal tea that old people drink to help keep them “regular”. Jesus turned some vats of dirty water into vats of awesome party wine! I went to University, and a person who could do that would be highly sought after in the party scene. But we play it down, because we, like the Pharisees, are more than a little uncomfortable with the fact that Jesus lived life to the full. Jesus liked to eat and drink, and they called him a glutton and a drunkard (Matt 11:19). People around him thought he was acting inappropriately for a good “religious” man.

Another example of this is in the company Jesus chose to keep. If I had hung out with Jesus' crowd growing up, my parents would have freaked out. Tax collectors today are bad enough, but in Jesus' time, they were crooks and traitors. Then there were the prostitutes, or in some translations, the “women of loose morals.” I was generally discouraged from spending time with these women as a teen. But that's who Jesus made friends with. Tax collectors, prostitutes, foul-smelling fishermen, and “sinners.” Not, in these days, your typical Church crowd, though maybe it ought to be.

It seems Jesus knew how to enjoy life, and he wanted to share that with others around him. This does not mean he was unaware of the problems of the world - far from it. It just means that he knew better than anyone else that life was also good, that hope still existed, and that there was a very good reason to celebrate, particularly when he was around. God's creation was made to be enjoyed, and humanity was created to enjoy God. This is a revolutionary word to a depressed and despairing world.

Jesus also made it clear that “worship” was not confined to any particular sacred time or space, nor was it restricted to a certain group of people. Worship and celebration could, and should, happen around a dinner table, on a mountainside, in a public square, at a party, wherever you happen to find yourself. It should just be a part of who you are, your natural response to the awesomeness of God. And it is the privilege of everyone on this earth to be invited to that party.

All this is not to say that you should go out and get plastered drunk as an expression of your love for God. Jesus also called us to lives of discipline, and it is important to remember true and proper celebration comes out of a pure heart. But we shouldn't ever forget that life with Jesus is a full life, a joyful life, a good life, even when we're faced with pain and challenges. A genuinely revolutionary celebration of God's creation, God's people, and God's love is just not done enough in this world.

4. Criminal Jesus

Jesus was a criminal.

He was arrested, tried by the legal system of the day, deemed guilty by a selection of the public, and was tortured and executed by the state authority. That he was innocent, the victim of an unjust legal system, does not change the fact that he was a convicted and punished criminal. He suffered a criminal's death between two thieves. One of the criminals was promised a place with him in paradise that very day.

We have met more than a few prisoners in our time. Our jobs allow us to go down into the cells to visit prisoners awaiting trial, to take them messages from family and friends, to see what we can do to help them. Now, for those who have not been fortunate enough to visit a jail, let us tell you what you are missing. It stinks. Literally. It smells terribly of unwashed feet and bad gas and sweat and metal and antiseptic and fear. There are usually a lot of people in a very small amount of room, and everyone is nervous, even when they are pretending to be cool and calm. It is not a place we would choose to spend any amount of quality time.

There are certain prisoners who have been through the system before and know what to expect. Then there are those who are seeing life from behind the bars for the first time, and they are in a state of near panic. It is dangerous, scary, smelly, awful. The other prisoners are mean, the guards are mean, even the walls look mean, and let's not talk about the food. The criminal behind bars feels very vulnerable, and very alone.

We're not sure how deeply it has hit home that Jesus actually chose to identify fully with the criminal, with the prisoner. We talk of Jesus' incarnation - his putting on of human flesh - and we are all generally familiar with the story of his death, but have repeated hearings have dulled the brutal shock of it? The King of Kings did not just descend to earth to live a human life. He descended and became a criminal, rejected, humiliated, beaten, imprisoned, killed. And he chose that way, so that no one could ever scream out, "God doesn't understand!"

Jesus went through the worst and identified with those the rest of the world thought were just good enough to spit on. Even more than this, Jesus said that whenever we see a prisoner, we see him. Whenever we visit someone in prison, we are in fact visiting the Son of God. Through those bars, behind that plexiglass window, in the

face of the frightened, the convicted, we are somehow meant to see the face of our Lord. This is powerful grace. This is revolutionary.

Jesus' love did not stop at the edge of the prison cell. Where are the boundaries of our love?

5. Scandalous Jesus

Jesus was a scandal.

Have you ever been considered a scandal? Someone whose actions caused embarrassment or shame or anger in others?

If you have, was it because you did stand up for something good and noble? Or because you stuck your foot in your mouth or did something earth-shatteringly stupid?

Most of us, if we are scandalous at all, probably fit into the second category. Sure, some of us have been called "scandalous" because of the way we dress, or the colour of our hair, or the volume of our music (guilty). But these are, in the grand scope of things, pretty minor really.

We're talking about major scandal, the kind that requires the mayor of your town to formally apologise to the rest of the nation for your behaviour.

Jesus was that kind of scandalous.

Consider his birth. Unwed pregnant teenager, claiming to be a virgin. Scandalous enough today sure, but two thousand years ago in a traditional Jewish community? They threw rocks at people who did that.. Yet it was how Jesus chose to come into his world. Questions of his "legitimacy" dogged him throughout his life, and caused people to turn their noses up at him. Jesus did not have an easy start in life.

He grew up in Nazareth, which was not exactly well known for producing the finest of minds, or the finest of anything, really. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" was one of the disparaging remarks directed towards Jesus. To have a teacher, let alone a would-be Messiah, coming out of the hick town of Nazareth was a ludicrous proposal.

He stank of fish. Well, he must have, as he hung out with fishermen. He also hung out with tax collectors - who were reviled as traitors and thieves; zealots - who were considered extremist in the violent hatred for the Roman Empire; and worst of all, women.

He wouldn't kowtow to the authorities either. He wouldn't observe the special legalities they had put in place to order how people lived their lives and interacted

with their God. To say this made people upset would be roughly equivalent to saying the Atlantic Ocean is “moist.” He did not behave properly, he would not be controlled or categorised, and he was a menace to those whose power depended on the sanctity of certain rules, regulations, and structures. He would not be holy according to their narrow definition of “holiness.”

“You want to see sacred?” Jesus seemed to say. “I’ll show you what sacred looks like...”

He performed miracles when he wasn’t supposed to; he forgave people’s sins when only God has that right; he raised people from the dead when they should have stayed put in their tombs; he cleared the Temple with a whip when people were making a mockery out of it; he told stories with shocking, subversive endings; he claimed an intimacy with God that was blasphemous. He got the whole countryside in an uproar so scandalous that something had to be done about it.

Something was done about it. He died a scandalous death, falsely accused and convicted in a kangaroo court, whipped and beaten, a mocking crown pushed onto his head. He died a criminal’s death, a cursed death, a scandalous death, to befit a scandalous life. The cross is a stumbling block to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks, and a scandal to the world.

And the greatest scandal of all? He wouldn’t stay dead.

Jesus chose the way of scandal, and in so doing identified with everyone who has stood firm when the tide of opinion was against them, who has not been afraid to appear foolish in defence of the truth, who has understood that holiness is not a set of rules but a right way of relating to God and to your neighbour. Jesus was willing to risk absolutely everything, to be a scandal in front of his entire creation, so that he could communicate his scandalous, revolutionary love to us.

What will you risk?

To Infinity, and Beyond!

“The world for God! The world for God!” - Catherine Booth.

Jesus claimed to be the light of the world. Incredibly, he also calls his followers the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). We are called to shine the light of God in and through the entire world, but we have a part in this mission only because we have been made a part of something new. 1 Peter 2:9-12 tells us what the followers of Christ have been made into:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his

wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in this land, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits.

Jesus' first disciples would not have called Jesus their "personal Saviour." They didn't live in a self-centred society where the individual is all that matters. They were part of a group, a people, the nation of Israel, and that community came first. They were then given a new identity in Christ, wherein Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, men and women from the ends of the earth were united together as the people of the Light. These people of the Light have their feet on the earth, but have their true home and identity in Heaven.

We need a renewal in our identity. Jesus is not just *my* Saviour, he is the Saviour of the *world*. And I don't carry the light of his salvation all by my little lonesome either. We are a people of the Light, and that means we are connected to all the other light-bearers all around the world. This is not some localized movement we are part of. We are not called to be content with half-decent worship services on Sunday mornings. Jesus called his cadre to tag along with his Spirit all around the world until the revolution has taken root everywhere. Are we prepared to give up everything to follow this God who is so much bigger than our limited perspective could ever allow us to understand?

Jesus' revolution is global. Anything less than a total commitment on our part to bringing the light to the ends of the earth suggests we haven't really grasped why Jesus came, lived, and died.

A New Day — Make It So

by John McAlister

These are exciting times. I've been reading lots of blogs and have received many e-mails lately from people really pumped about the future of The Salvation Army.

It's cool these days to talk of mission and justice and living on the edge of Christianity. People are meeting in homes and coffee shops to discuss and debate and to inspire each other to live out the Christian life in a more authentic way.

So much passion, but how much action?

My dad often has sports radio playing in his car. When I'm travelling with him and forced (sorry Dad!) to listen to the call-in shows, I'm always amazed at the range of emotions that come from callers. Some are angry about a team's performance, some are excited about the prospects of a new trade, others reflect on the team's glory days and some offer expert advice for the coaches and management.

They may go to the games, they might watch them on TV, they probably follow the schedule in the newspaper and listen to the radio shows, but none of them are putting on the jerseys, lacing up the skates and playing the big games. They're armchair quarterbacks, the "experts" who watch from the sidelines with potbellies.

Friends, no matter how passionate these callers are about their sport, nothing they do or say really matters to the outcome of the game. They may be emotionally involved, and scarily enough their lives may even revolve around their sport, but they can't do much more for their team than cheer, boo and buy tickets and merchandise.

So we're cheering for our Army, and that's great, but are we willing to get out there and actually start doing something? To not just talk about how important our mission is, or to cheer or boo our favourite players, but to pull on our uniforms, join the team on the field and give it our all?

A few quick questions: What role are we playing in our communities? Who are we in relationship with? How are we sharing the love of Jesus Christ with those who do not know Him? What/who are we praying for on a regular basis? What are our priorities for a given week? Are we striving to fulfil the vision and mission God has given us?

At the end of the day, talking about being a different Army doesn't make us much different than we were before unless we're actually acting on our convictions.

There's something glamorous about the talk of this new Army. But when we really get down into the dirt, we'll realize that it's not always so fun. People we've reached out to won't always thank us, but will lash out at us and spit in our face. It's tough, it's hard. There are dark times. The rewards or victories aren't always obvious or frequent. But they do come. And the salvation of the world is a goal worth fighting for.

It's good to talk about things. To encourage and inspire each other to greater faith. But if there's more talk than action, we're all talk. It's that simple. Let's be an Army of action, not words.

I'm cheering for you. And I'm out there fighting with you, too. See you out on the field.