

JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

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Editorial Introduction

by Major Stephen Court

Welcome to JAC85.

When you pump these JAC issues out every two months since the last millennium the embarrassment of riches from contributors new and old sometimes cascades into a joyous blur.

This is such a time.

We've got an absolutely ridiculous edition of Journal of Aggressive Christianity for you.

We'll start with a big hat tip to Captain W.W. Winchell, who was promoted to Glory a long time ago. We reckon that very few if any readers have heard of let alone read ONE HUNDRED YEARS HENCE, a fascinating prophetic study by Winchell in 1884 in which he imagines the world a century later (1994). It is provocative, disturbing, challenging, and thrilling, in turn. Read it, share it, study it, apply it. We'll likely be blogging on its contents for awhile...

Colonel Janet Munn started a series in the most recent JAC and she hasn't left us hanging, building on her DISCIPLESHIP teaching here with part 2.

Commissioner Wesley Harris discusses THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE.

Major Bruce Power teaches us about ENCOUNTERING JESUS.

Captain Scott Strissel, a USC officer, contributes a reflection AT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE.

This issue's JAC exclusive interview is with Soldier Stephanie Parker Chagas.

There is a brand new evangelistic book making waves through North America called BOUNDLESS: Living life in overflow. Major Danielle Strickland and her co-author contribute an excerpt.

Your founding editor briefly exhorts all readers to QUIT CHURCH.

And finally, Commissioner Harris comes back for another kick at the can by assuring us that DREAMS CAN COME TRUE.

We are aiming to provoke, encourage, stimulate, challenge readers toward aggressive Christianity in our warfighting to see Jesus reign in every continent, country, region, city, neighbour, home, and heart. May God use it toward that end.

One Hundred Years Hence

by Captain W.W.Winchell

We reckon that very few if any readers have heard of, let alone read One Hundred Years Hence, a fascinating prophetic study by Winchell in 1884 in which he imagines the world a century later (1994). Tyler Boenecke, USA National Archives of The Salvation Army, along with Jessica Bryant, graduate of the Vancouver War College transcribed the original (low quality) pdf file. It is provocative, disturbing, challenging, and thrilling, in turn. Read it, share it, study it, apply it. We'll likely be blogging on its contents for awhile...

To the Morning Edition of the "War Cry" - Chicago, Dec 23, 1994 A.D.

Dear Editor: Last evening I took from my library an old musty book. It treated upon the history of reformation. I looked at the title page, and found the date of it's publication to be in 1885 A.D. From some thoughts suggested in the perusal of this book, I hardly think I could select a more appropriate subject for a New Year's article to our great daily (with it's morning circulation of 12,500,000 in Chicago alone) than this:

"A Retrospect of the past century"

I find it was just 100 years ago our dear old Army Father, General William Booth, celebrated his year of Jubilee in the service of his Master. As my mind reflected back to those days of yore, how I longed that I might have been there to receive inspiration from his tongue of fire and had the privilege to shaking heads with that grandeur of old men! I sometimes wish I could have lived in those days to fight under his leadership and helped to win those victories that give us those happy days of God's universal grace.

His trip to America and those six months made up of days and nights of toil and travel, would have broken down many strong men in the prime of life, especially (in that) he was compelled to travel in those cumbersome old steamships across the Atlantic, and then to travel between meetings by the old Pullman's sleeper, with all its inconveniences. Then too, there were attached to that trip on the old fashioned steam railroads all the dangers caused by an awkward system and perilous times. But he braved this journey for his Master's sake, even at the age of sixty-six.

It meant a great stroke for the salvation of the race and the ushering in of this golden age in which we now live when that aged veteran, whose bent and worn frame, toward about by ... many hard-ships, did this. That little Salvation Army, with it's field officers, numbering then only 11,000, assisted by only 2,000,000 soldiers scattered about the earth, would seem to us as only a mere dot on the face of the earth, but in spite of them, the so-called men of that day were just opening their eyes to the fact that that little, dispersed Army had in it the nucleus of a great social and spiritual reformation. Little did they dream that the reformation meant revolution, that it was destined to turn the world upside down and right side up; let it figuratively speaking stand on its feet, instead of its head, where the devil had put it. As one write describes: "Society was a pyramid poised

on its apex. All the gravitations of human nature were constantly tending to topple it over, and it could hardly be maintained upright – or rather, upwrong- by an elaborate system of constantly renewing props, buttresses and guys in the form of laws. Thank God society now rests upon its base and is in as little need of artificial support as the everlasting hills!

It was these principles derived from the word of God, guarded by the Holy Spirit and taught and exercised and fought out, by our early revolutionary Salvation sires that put the world properly on the Rock of Ages in its right attitude to God. At the time the General made his trip to America, The Salvation Army was menaced by the subtle powers that have overthrown or weakened great spiritual movements, as those of the first century, of Luther, of Fox, of Wesley, General Booth saw those dangers. As Christ fought the devil to the wilderness, no the mountain and pinnacle, so, unchangingly, fought them.

Moreover, he fashioned his religious military organization after such a form that it would ever be progressive and aggressive. That wise and executive administration which was at that time the marvel of the age, has been preserved, amended and improved, until it is considered a second declaration of independence, and a new constitution, by Salvation America. Truly Father Booth is the Abraham of modern times! The seed of his faith in Mile End Waste, in 1865, has made his posterity as the sands of the seashore for multitude, for today “the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas.” Had these provisions not been made, the organization would have drifted into the formalism, pride and rationalism that stripped the churches in that day of their strength. The poor world would have gone to ruin.

We cannot, in these happy days, conceive how depraved were the majority of those nineteenth century people. There were diverse powers then existing in society that would of themselves formed the whirlwind of their own destruction. Can I describe that age of midnight horrors? How could they boast of civilization and prosperity, when there was such brutalism, poverty and misery existing, brought about by the sin of the time? Greed and selfishness were among the rich; hatred and revenge among the poor.

When we consider our times, and appreciate the fact that we are in the very beginning of the glorious millennium, we have cause to rejoice.

It has not been material progress that has brought about these results. True, all men are now equal- no extremely rich or poor – and that every family in the world now has a home superior to the aristocrats for comfort and convenience. The great majority of the population was quartered in tenements, graduating to the filthy diseased slums. There again, it has not been the reconstruction of society and government - the paternal – modelled after the bible times, and practiced by General Booth, in his early Army – I say it has not been these improvements, although they have helped. The great power, as we are all aware, is the fact that the people are saved and cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus. This is the power that has brought this reign of unselfishness and love

among all the people of the earth. This is the reason why the entire world speaks the same language, and the word “foreigner” is about obsolete.

Right here, I might remark, that one of the great drawbacks to that age was the large number of false preachers and reformers, some might have been sincere, but were ignorant and unsaved. These reformers tried to cure society by outward application of their salve to the inward disease of sin in the heart. They were too wise in their own conceits. They were to themselves more intelligent than God, or the teachings of the Bible. Anyway, this is the way they acted. They said: “God was too slow, and that by the enacting of new laws or regulations they would put the world where it belonged.” But God says of these: “They healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there was no peace.” Some of them vehemently denounced General Booth for introducing the “religious”, while other opposed him for pushing the Social operations, but he was conscious that God led him.

The year previous to our Army Father’s Jubilee, history, I believe, mentions an Exposition held in this city in honour of the 400th birthday of the discoverer of the New World. Truly, the buildings erected on the occasion were to them grand and stupendous! There was once significant fact about the White City of the World’s Fair of 1893. It was prophetic of the age – went up in a day – passed away in a day. So with their fictitious civilization and so-called science. It was erected without prayer, or faith in God. Like the tower of Babel, it could not endure. Less than a year after the winding up of that Exposition, the White City was nothing but twisted iron and charred ruins. So with their moral fabric, built on pride and conceit, not erected on the Book, it fell, and great was its fall. This proves that nothing can prosper without God.

Within a few months after this universal display of the nineteenth century genius, followed a reign of universal poverty and distress. A spirit of distress prevailed everywhere. Armies of paupers marched through the land begging for work at the seat of government. A great strike paralyzed that business world. Starvation began at the very shadow of the Columbian Exposition grounds at palatial Pullman, and stalked through the world, bring want and destitution everywhere. The hearts of the rich hardened and waxed fat. Crime held high carnival. Representatives in Congress and high society filled the air with scandal. Theologians were given over to the discussion of profitless questions. Cruel competition aroused selfishness and hatred and dishonesty among all the business world. “Let me live if all others die” seemed to be the spirit of those times. How different now when every man lives to help and bless everybody else: Then every morning the newspapers were filled with harrowing details of dark, diabolical crimes, or of Godless sporting and amusement notes. The mark of Cain was branded upon most of America’s thousands, and “verily all were dwelling in the land of Ishmael, where every man’s hand was lifted against his neighbours.”

If we could go back to that day, and visit their wretched neighbourhoods we could find tenements reeking with filth; haggard mothers and starving children; while bloated-face fathers blasted the air with their drunken oaths; girls, once innocent, selling their souls and bodies in shame for bread. Truly this was a world under a curse! Humanity was

bleeding on a real cross. Did they say: "No man cared for my soul!" Nay, brave women left homes of luxury, and went among them doing good, and lifting up in their very midst the spotless Lamb, who bled for their redemption. Yes, we adore this bleeding Lamb, who has brought redemption to the whole race in the latter part of the twentieth century in which we live.

It was upon the debris of that social ruin that The Salvation Army built up a grander civilization- one which honoured and served God. It had been just twenty-nine years since the Rev. Will. Booth stood alone on Mile End Waste. Those were years of abuse and slander and misunderstanding. In the throes of those early days there was developed a people that could face any opposition the devil could bring against them.

A new foe was facing the Army, more subtle and artful than ever before. The good work of The Army was being recognized by the great and rich of the world. Popularity has destroyed more than one good work. The General recognized this, and as he marshalled his troops in council he warned them, and laid down the provisions to forever thwart this evil. He urged them to see popularity for construction rather than destruction to the organization. He more than ever promised the principles of self-denial and hard, aggressive, systematic work in saving souls. It was from the impetus given The Army during the year of Jubilee that it went forward as never before to conquer the entire world for God.

We might mention a few dangers that threatened them then, but which they overcame, viz:

1. Compromise – Being applauded by the world to listen to its advice; to please men at the sacrifice of Jesus.

2. Relaxation– To be satisfied with past victories, and become less aggressive. The General taught them that the future could not be improved without disturbing the present.

3. The pecuniary – Depending upon money guaranteed, and forgetting to exercise the faith and trust in God that helped in days of hardship.

4. The numerical – Anxiety for quantity and ignoring quality; counting more on numbers of soldiers than the value of the blessing of clean hearts.

5. Settling down – Although with all the advantage that their young organization offered to avoid this, some of those officers (thank God the number was few) rested contented in just living to fill up reports and satisfied with little or no success, consoling themselves they were suffering hardship for Jesus, when all the time it was God's will for them to get up and do something that would show real results.

6. Nationalism or localism – Some of the officers of that day did not get a look at the whole world; their interests were too much centered on the nation or locality in which they lived and were somewhat unwilling to go to distant pr heathen lands. This, of course, was diametrically opposed to the Salvation principles.

These were a few evils that the General overthrew in those days. Had he not, it would have been a defeated Army, and the world would have been lost. General Booth set the example himself by making that phenomenal trip of hardship and toil beside carrying the

burden of the Army of the entire world. History tells that he spoke on an average of four or five hours a day, often holding three or four meetings per day.

The field officers that lived in the days of General Booth were very slow in taking advantage of many opportunities offered them of saving the world. Many of them if they could not see immediate profit on a new departure were unwilling to spend their time or strength in undertaking it. But one great burden was upon the heart of the General, and one which he was determined, in spite of all discouragements, to thoroughly organize and make a success in his life – it was the juniors' salvation. If the children of the nineteenth century were saved, then the salvation of the entire world could be easily accompanied in the twentieth century. The greatest fight of The Army leaders of that day was against the indifference and lack of faith and love for the work on the part of many officers. Why it should have so we cannot understand. At that time in the world's history it is true that millions of children were brought up in the Sabbath schools of the churches, and although taught a thorough understanding of the Bible and of Christian principles, yet the work was not deep enough – too many were allowed to pass with morality, and not obtain the great salvation through the Blood of Jesus.

Then again, history tell us that in many of the large cities regardless had gained such ascendancy that more children were sent to saloons for beer and other intoxicating drinks on the Sabbath morning than the number that attended any place of worship: hence there was a mighty need for the same desperate action for salvation and organization of the juniors as had been put forth to save their Godless fathers and mothers. When the Junior War was thoroughly started (about 1896) it went like wildfire. Young men and women from every direction were fired with a great love for this branch of the Army operations. Local officers were organized and junior schools started in every neighbourhood. Some places the work was trying to the extreme, but the results were grand. Thirty thousand field officers of the right quality were raised up to help in the conquest of the world by the year 1910. This resulted mainly through the Junior War. What was required to be taught cadets in Training Garrisons in 1894 had already (and much more) been taught in the junior schools. Cadets in 1910 understood as much of Army spirit, method and teaching as the staff officers did in 1894. The great principles of self-sacrifice and love for souls were the spirits that increased as the years rolled on. Had General Booth not undertaken the Junior War that world might have been lost forever!

From this wonderful year began the greatest struggle which lasted for fifty years in the conquest of the world. Thy dying love of Jesus was the great power that won, but great care was taken in the selection and training of officers. Greater desperation was made for the salvation of souls. Advances were made into countries hitherto unreached buy Christian effort. Spain, China, Russia, Austria, Turkey – the land of Mohammed – and Northern Africa were taken by the Spirit's irresistible force. Many of these consecrated officers endured untold suffering and even death. They had unquenchable faith. Defeat was impossible. There were a few unfaithful, but it is overcome by the loyalty of the majority. Of course saved, consecrated men and women of all churches helped to bring these victories.

Great tracts of land were taken for the Social Work. The denizens of the great cities (and from many smaller cities) of Darkest Europe and America emigrated and settled under The Army's jurisdiction. They sought salvation and were happy. Slums were entirely vacated. Salvation ships were crowded in their voyages to "over the sea" colonies.

Prisons and slumhouses were becoming desolate and falling into ruins as the years rolled on. Saloons and dives closed as there was no patronage. The rich of the world were joining the Auxiliary League. Many were sworn in as soldiers and wore the uniform. Kings and rulers of different nations made investigations and forced their governments after the "paternal idea" of The Army. Some kings got converted and wore red-banded caps instead of a crown, while queens and duchesses wore poke bonnets. Many of the aristocrats saw the blessing of self-denial forsook all and have their wealth for the social and spiritual benefit of The Army. Governments granted large tracts of land for colonization. War became a thing of the past. The thorn-platted, reed-sceptred King of the Jews was gradually becoming the monarch of the whole earth. In 1940 a Jubilee was held by The Army celebrating the fact that the lost brethren temple in China was captured and turned into a barracks, and above which floated the blood-and-fire flag. Spiritual wickedness in high places, religious pride, formalism and bigotry were the last foes to give way. The blessing of holiness of heart and life was the great object of the human race. Theatre-going and horse-racing were amusements practiced by the ungodly with great tenacity until the great tide of humanity was turned to that salvation that afforded a greater joy and pleasure. We now look at their opera as they at that time looked back upon the cruel exhibitions in the Coliseum in ancient Rome, where Christians were torn by wild beasts in the arena. Theatres became more and more unpopular during the decade of 1930 and 1940, and passed entirely out of practice, for they had no patronage – the people were enjoying the glory of God – but the great buildings erected for theatres were used afternoons for holiness meetings and evenings for great salvation meetings which were thronged with immense crowds seeking Christ.

The Lord was with His Army; as He promised (Joel 2:11). In the year 1900 A.D. The Salvation Army numbered 20,000 field officers, in 1925 A.D., 2000,000, when every city, village, and hamlet had corps in the entire world. Whole cities had been converted. By this time every other subject discussed by newspapers had sunk into insignificance. In 1950 the world was about conquered, and the devil so discouraged that he gave up the fight. When the great multitudes were flocking to the mercy seat, the question of the old prophet seemed to be answered: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?"

Everybody now lives to make everybody else happy. The grandest exposition the world ever knew will begin in 1996 A.D., to continue until 2000A.D. in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The advantages of our rapid electro serial transit, that has just been improved, will greatly facilitate the transportation of two billion Salvationists. Would it not be grand for those officers and soldiers who suffered such untold hardships, and self-denial, and death, to be present on this occasion and see as, their children and children's children,

gathered in sects as immeasurable company for worshiping their Saviour just two thousand years after His advent to the earth and the Babe of Bethlehem! Hundreds of thousands of Chinese, Russians, Turks, Syrians, Africans, Eskimos, Irishmen, Germans, Italians all speaking the same language, will join one great family of God, giving Him praise and honour.

I think we are living in those days that the prophets speak of. Their language of description is grand, but it fails to describe our joy and prosperity, for verily the Spirit of God is upon all people. Micah, speaking of the past century, says; "and he shall judge among man's people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not live up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore... for we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever"

Isaiah speaks of our times in many places in the 11th chapter he says: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord"

I am yours in faith, hope and love,
Captain Thankfulness
In command of Corps No. 21,700, of
the city of Chicago

NOTE – In writing this letter from an imaginary future date, I wish to state that I have simply tried to show:

1. The importance to future generations of our holding to the principles taught by the General on his trip this year to America.

2. What may be possible to see, even in our own times, if we claim the Holy Ghost, do our duty and rise up to the opportunity. The revival of Apostolic time is truly upon us, and by faith the salvation of the world can be accomplished in fifty or seventy five years.

3. It will be more credit to God's people to see the salvation of the world than its destruction, which some people are always talking about. Even though God has threatened to bring it to an end by fire, will He not show His mercy and save it if it repents! Will He not listen to us or reason with us as He did with Abraham concerning Sodom, or turn away His anger as He did with the repenting Ninevehites!

The devil must be downed! And all the people say "Amen!"

*Very faithfully yours,
Staff Captain W.W. Winchell*

Discipleship – Part Two

by Colonel Janet Munn

[This is the second article of the three-part series on discipleship.]

What is discipleship? How did Jesus make disciples? How can I become a disciple? How can I be a disciple-maker? Why should I prioritise discipleship? How can I be disciplined in The Salvation Army?

If you are asking these questions, you are not the only one. In fact, I think you would find many, who are asking the exact same questions. This three-part series of articles contains some insights into discipleship.

“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”
— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Four Essential Components Evident in Jesus’ Life and Leadership Relationship! Relationship! Relationship! Relationship!

Mentoring and Role Models

People grow through relationships. Therefore, leadership must be relational for maximum influence.

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. (Matthew 9:9-10)

Consider this:

Jesus chose to be available, accessible and vulnerable to a wide variety of individuals; in one-on-one conversations and interactions. In fact, He was the ultimate mentor. He taught thousands on hillsides but was superb in one-on-one situations. He invested in the individual – regardless of age, status, gender – from the rich young ruler to the Samaritan woman to Nicodemus the Pharisee to the haemorrhaging woman to the thief on the cross.

Jesus also deeply invested in the three among the twelve disciples – Peter, James and John – with whom there are more recorded mentoring dialogues in the gospels than any other individuals.

Consider the impact of these three on following through on the Great Commission.

Small Group Participation

People grow through participation in a small group community of like-minded people, who share a common passion. In a small group there is vulnerability and acceptance and a chance to give and receive prayer

Jesus and his twelve disciples can be seen as a small group:

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,² and he began to teach them. (Matthew 5:1-2)

Jesus' primary model for disciple-making was that of a small group, the twelve. That was the context he used for investing deeply in developing the first generation of Christian disciples. Jesus certainly had alone time, sought out solitude to pray and commune with God, but he developed disciples in community.

Consider this:

Jesus chose to be a member of a small group. In fact, He was the ultimate small-group leader. He taught thousands on hillsides and was superb in one-on-one situations, but when it came time to pour His life into the people He knew would be the most critical to the spread of the gospel, He chose to invest a huge portion of His time and discipling efforts into the lives of just twelve (young) people.

In other words, the incarnate Son of God began his strategy to reach the world with the love of God by starting a ragtag youth group.

Personal Spiritual Ministry

– giving and receiving personal ministry (i.e. prayer ministry, preaching/teaching, etc.)

People grow through giving and receiving personal ministry:

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:1-5)

Consider this:

Jesus chose to not only give but also receive personal ministry. In fact, He was the ultimate in ministering through prayer and Scripture. He integrated Scripture and prayer into his lifestyle and relationships. He preached and taught the Word to large and small groups, as well as to individuals. He drove out demons and healed the sick. In Jesus' own time of need, as he approached the crucifixion, he requested prayer for himself

from his friends. He received the ministry of the “sinful woman” as she anointed him “for burial” and blessed her for it.

Mission Opportunities

People grow by going out in mission together:

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2)

Consider this:

Jesus was a missional man. In fact, He was the ultimate missionary. He taught his disciples to be and to do the same. When the popular thing to do was to respond to the demands of the multitudes, Jesus remained clear on his life’s mission and “steadfastly set his face” toward the cross – his mission focus. (Luke 9:51)

All Four Necessary

All four discipleship components mentioned in this article are necessary for maximum effectiveness in growing disciples into maturity in Christ – giving evidence of holy living and perseverance long term.

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

For Personal Reflection

Go through these questions and consider your own journey in a life of discipleship.

A. Mentoring

1. Who was or is your mentor? Someone who influenced you personally for the better, as a significant formational influence in your life in Christ.
2. Mentoring – Who are you currently mentoring? What young person are you influencing and investing in now?

B. Small Groups

1. What small group community impacted your life significantly?
2. What small group are you now part of that continues to nourish your soul?

C. Personal Spiritual Ministry

1. Describe an experience when you received significant benefit from a ministry time such as – a sermon, someone praying for you in person, an encounter with the Lord, or a revelation – that changed your spiritual journey.

2. How do you approach ministry to others? How do you lead ministry times in prayer these days?

D. Mission Opportunities

1. What mission experience changed you spiritually?
2. What are the mission opportunities currently available to you that strengthen your life in Christ?

[In the third and last article we will explore how discipleship is unfolded in The Salvation Army.]

Colonel Janet Munn

Secretary for Spiritual Life Development

International Centre for Spiritual Life Development

The Challenge of Change

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

CHANGE is part of life and has been with us from time immemorial but in our generation it has accelerated in many ways. Technology seems to affect an increasing part of life. A small hand-held instrument can gather information from around the world and send messages far and wide. This is now commonplace. In what may seem like a reversal of roles grandchildren can instruct their grandparents about constant new technological developments.

Changes can affect The Salvation Army helping in many ways but sometimes confusing in others. Change takes many forms and is not always welcomed by all. For example, I have a fellow worshipper who, almost on principle, rejects modern choruses and purses his lips when any are introduced in meetings. On the other hand there are those who have little use for the long-loved old hymns of the Church and a majority, including myself, able to find blessing in a "spiritual smorgasbord" of items both ancient and modern.

There is no doubt that the Army is changing and in some ways this is not only inevitable but for the best. For example, in the part of the world where I live most corps are into various forms of community service much more than they were a few years ago. Then there were halls little used during the week except perhaps for band and songster practices. Now they have full programmes of service for young children right through to seniors. I rejoice in that because having people cross the threshold of our buildings could lead to their salvation. But I observe that in many cases that doesn't happen. Sometimes the mercy seat is still empty despite the very earnest efforts of officers and their soldiers...

Does it mean that there has been a change in our emphases and that spiritual issues are not raised to the fore as once was the case? May be not. There could be many other reasons. But are some of us so frightened of saying the wrong thing and turning people off that we never get around to saying the right thing – that is the word of grace which may go to the deeper needs of people? Have we lost our evangelical edge"? I put that question to myself as well as to others. Have we changed so that we are less like the founding fathers who under God started our movement?

Many changes should be embraced – adopted and adapted to the great purpose which brought us into being, but wisely aggressive Christianity is not something due for a change. It is what we are all about and the idea God had in mind from the beginning.

Encountering Jesus Glimpses of Characterization in the Gospel of John

by Major Bruce Power

Part I - Jesus, Nicodemus and a bucketful of ambiguity

This short series will briefly examine a major feature of John's story concerning the life and teaching of Jesus — the manner in which individuals come into contact with Jesus and make decisions about the direction a future relationship will take.

John's gospel presents the story of Jesus in a manner quite different from what we read in the synoptic tradition (Matthew, Mark and Luke). An important aspect of this presentation involves protracted accounts of Jesus' meetings with individual figures. These become paradigms for the overall concern of the account which is, what will the reader decide about Jesus?

The familiarity of these stories to many of us can make them difficult to see with fresh eyes. We have to look beyond what we think the stories say, and what we've heard they are about to what the text actually states.

In John 3, Nicodemus, a leader among his people, comes to meet with Jesus. "Teacher," he states, "we know that you are sent from God" (John 3:2). But before we read this statement, John has told us some interesting things about this encounter. The man has arrived at night to meet with Jesus. Why has he chosen this time of day? Are the affairs of state too pressing to allow a daytime meeting? Does he come representing the ruling council, are they the "we" spoken of in his statement? Or has he come through the city's shadows to meet with Jesus in secret? John chooses not to tell us. But in his introduction to the story of Jesus he has already used light and darkness as symbols of response to the coming of God into our midst. There are those who see and acknowledge "the light [which] shines in darkness" (1:5ff.) and those who do not.

Nicodemus' arrival at night suggests many things. But it clearly implies that Nicodemus comes seeking truth. His own statement declares "we know you are a teacher sent from God." So far, so good.

Jesus invites Nicodemus into a spiritual encounter and speaks to him of birth by the life giving power of God, but Nicodemus is stuck in his ideas about how and when and why God will be at work in his world. He cannot seem to break through to embrace the possibilities of God's rule in his life, even as a path is stretched out before him. Jesus speaks of being reborn, Nicodemus imagines him to declare a physical rather than a spiritual reality. Jesus is stunned by Nicodemus' inabilities. Nicodemus is a religious and a political leader, trained and seasoned in the traditions of his people, but his background, rather than preparing him to embrace the new work of God in the present, seems to have crippled him from imagining new potentials and possibilities.

“God so loved the world ...” Jesus tells him, but Nicodemus has left the building. Perhaps not physically at this point, but John indicates his complete disappearance from comprehension by having Nicodemus, the character who initiates the scene, simply gone by the end. What happened to him? At what point does he ‘check out’ and go home? Does he leave as Jesus speaks of God’s love for the world, hearing only echoes of his voice as he returns to the shadows to find his way home in the night?

“You need to experience a new birth, a birth of the Spirit,” Jesus tells him. But Nicodemus seems incapable of embracing this startling and challenging truth. He cannot set aside the security of past and present to embrace the new things God is doing.

Nicodemus’ story is not finished however. Nicodemus appears two further times in the account. John 7 describes Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem for an important religious festival where his teaching and actions create a great controversy regarding his role and identity. Just who is this man? Is he a prophet or a troublemaker? The expected and anticipated leader sent from God or a wacko? The leaders of the people have had enough and send the temple guard to arrest Jesus, but they return empty handed. Questioned as to their dereliction of duty, they simply respond “No one ever spoke the way this man does” (7:46).

As the tirade about the situation continues, Nicodemus, a member of the leadership group, speaks up to pose a question. “Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?”

Hardly a ringing endorsement of Jesus and his role as one sent from God. But simply posing the question in this context is enough for Nicodemus to be on the receiving end of a snide comment. “Are you from Galilee, too?” (7:52). In other words, are you an uneducated, unsophisticated moron from some village in the middle of nowhere? Obviously, the leaders feel themselves to have a handle on the truth.

Once again we have no idea about Nicodemus. Has he embraced the things Jesus had spoken of? Or is he simply to be understood as a good, and fair, and essentially just man? And is that enough? How many good, and fair, and essentially just people does it take to make a difference in the face of injustice, evil and hatred? And is that enough? Jesus has told Nicodemus it is not. But has Nicodemus moved beyond this state?

Our final encounter with Nicodemus takes place near the end of the story. Once again it is important to note carefully what John actually says: “Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple, but secretly because he feared the Jews. [This is John’s short form for the leadership and those associated with them who seek Jesus’ death]. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who had earlier visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs” (19:38-40). John then goes on to tell us how Jesus was entombed.

Clearly Nicodemus has brought a burial gift fit for a king. He has emerged from the shadows to 'do the right thing' and assist Joseph with Jesus' burial. But has he embraced the life from God about which Jesus had spoken so clearly? John could have called the duo 'secret disciples,' but only Joseph is so named. What has Nicodemus done with the claims of Jesus? Has he embraced them? Or merely considered and been challenged by them? And what will you do with those same claims?

Part II - Jesus' encounters in unexpected places

Encountering Jesus. Glimpses of characterization in the Gospel of John

When Jesus decides to pass through Samaria he decides to stop at a site with historic and practical significance – Jacob's well. The well symbolized a unity of the people of God that had once been, when all the elements of the people of Israel had lived in community and anticipated the work of God in their future. But as Jesus stops at the well, John notes times have changed, in his day "Jews do not associate with Samaritans" (4:9). This seems an unlikely place for a life-changing encounter. After all, the dialogue with Nicodemus had not gone well, and he was a leader among his people, yet somehow unable or unwilling to discuss spiritual values.

The Samaritans were regarded as outcasts, those who had broken faith with their traditions, had married outsiders and been corrupted and turned from the true faith. While Jesus waits for his disciples to go into the town to buy food, Jesus sits beside this well associated with the father of Israel. Does Jesus reflect on Jacob's wrestling with God, and his change of name to Israel (Genesis 32:28)? We don't know. John doesn't tell us. But he does tell us "it was about the sixth hour" (4:6) when Jesus sits by the well to rest. And as he rests a Samaritan woman comes alone to the well to draw water. Jesus asks for a drink.

Nicodemus encountered Jesus in the dark of night and remains in the dark as he leaves the scene. In contrast, the meeting with the woman takes place at high noon. But is there any hope? How can Jesus find a willing and open heart in the midst of a people understood to be estranged from the purposes of God? And if a religious leader, raised in the traditions of Israel cannot embrace the teaching of Jesus, and comprehend spiritual values, how can we expect a woman identified as an outsider to make such a leap?

But things go very differently in this dialogue than they had with Nicodemus. Jesus initiates a spiritual conversation and the woman does not get lost, or abandon the discussion. Unlike Nicodemus who simply disappears from the story, this woman remains to hear Jesus declare himself to be the "I am." The woman has a transforming encounter with Jesus, the one the prologue to the gospel declares to be "the Word [which] was with God, and was God" (1:1), "the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us." In this prologue, the introduction to his story of Jesus, John tells us that "all who received him, those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (1:12). The woman becomes a child of God.

What does the woman do with this new experience of God? She drops everything to hurry back to the town to tell everyone to come and experience this transforming relationship themselves. The contrast with Nicodemus is stark and telling. The woman, usually read as an outcast within a society of outcasts, would not be expected to be open to deep spiritual truth, or even able to comprehend it. But her spirit is open to the teaching of Jesus. She is willing to listen, to question, to evaluate, to embrace the new possibilities God is offering to her. Her response overflows into her daily living, she can't imagine doing other than telling all who will listen about her encounter with this man Jesus. And though she cannot articulate every aspect of who and what he is, her heart knows her life has been changed and this is not something to be kept hidden.

“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

“‘They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world’” (4:39-42).

When Jesus leaves the Samaritan town to return to Galilee, at some point he returns to Cana. There “a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum” (4:46) seeks him out. He asks Jesus to heal his son. Jesus puts him off with a remark about people needing to see signs and wonders to believe, but the man is doggedly determined. His son is dying and he is desperate for help. Jesus tells him he can go, his son will live. “The man took Jesus at his word and departed” (4:50). As he is journeying home the man's servants meet him with joyous news – his son is well. The fever left him “at the seventh hour.”

“Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, ‘Your son will live.’ So he and all his household believed” (4:53).

John has framed three significant encounters within a section of his gospel marked by two stories that take place at Cana of Galilee. The first of these is the familiar story of Jesus at a wedding, where he turns water into wine. Working in the background, without the knowledge of the bride or bridegroom, or the master of the banquet — what we would call today the best man — Jesus' mother draws attention to a potential disaster, a long-term embarrassment for this couple in their village and before their family. She asks Jesus to help, and he launches his ministry with this miracle, which “reveals his glory” and enables his disciples to “put their faith in him” (2:11).

In the stories of Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, and the most likely Gentile royal official, we see a variety of responses to Jesus. Nicodemus encounters Jesus in the dark, and remains in the dark, though he should have the most potential to “put his faith in” Jesus. His status at the end of the encounter, and indeed, at the end of the gospel, is unclear. The woman meets Jesus at high noon, the brightest point of the day. It is clear

that she is transformed by her faith. The royal official's encounter is described as taking place an hour later in the day than that of the Samaritan woman. His response is life changing as well. He comes to faith, and that faith extends to his household as well. Both of these characters "see the light" while Nicodemus remains "in the dark."

What is John's point in all this? An encounter with Jesus has the potential to be life transforming. But it also requires a response on our part. As you read over this section of the gospel (chapters 2-4), can you see the different responses to Jesus? What does this have to say to us about how people encounter Jesus? Do you see the same variety of responses today? Have you come to see the glory of God through an encounter with Jesus?

Part III - Time for a change – but does it take?

Encountering Jesus. Glimpses of characterization in the Gospel of John

By anyone's measure thirty-eight years is a long time. As Jesus is traveling through the city of Jerusalem on his way to a festival, he passes by a site filled with numerous sick persons. Out of the crowd who live their lives around this pool associated with occasional occurrences of healing, Jesus singles out an individual man. John tells us he has been an invalid for thirty-eight years. Does this represent his whole life? Has he been here since childhood? Or was his life tragically impacted and a normal existence transformed to this waiting and hoping, but finally losing all hope?

Jesus learns he has been there for a long time and asks the question, the central question in this moment: "Do you want to get well?" It seems a simple enough question, but time and circumstance take a toll on the human spirit, and we can get to the place that the present circumstances, no matter how horrific are at least known. We understand that we can somehow cope with this, but the unknown represents an equation we cannot calculate, a potential danger that may take us beyond the breaking point. The man does not answer the question. Perhaps he does not know if he wants to get well.

"Sir ... I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me" (5:7). This response is redirects the question and appears to be a statement of resignation. "I've tried. It hasn't worked. I'm stuck in these circumstances and there is no escape. So what's the point?" It would seem hope is too painful to consider.

Jesus takes him by surprise. "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked" (5:8-9).

It turns out that the day this all happened was a Sabbath, and so controversy arises over the legitimacy and godliness of such a healing. It doesn't start out as a fuss about healing, but rather over the fact that the man is carrying a mat. He is not supposed to be doing so.

Religious scruples have determined this to be an affront to God and the man is challenged about his actions. In his defense the man replies that his healer had told him to carry the mat.

“So they asked him, ‘Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?’” (5:12). Now they are sure evil is afoot. Mat transporting and healing on a Sabbath! But surely if they examined the situation more carefully they would see the work of God in these events, after all, a man had been healed after almost a lifetime of being crippled. Instead, it appears they conclude that surely, after thirty-eight years of waiting, adding another day to the tally would not be an unrealistic burden. Surely “this fellow” could have returned the next day to proffer healing ... or at the very least, the man could have waited until the next day to pick up his mat and test out his new found abilities!

But though interrogated, the man doesn't know who has healed him! Astonishing. And Jesus had slipped away into the crowd. In fact, John tells us, it is only when Jesus later “found him” at the temple that he is able to go and make a report to the authorities regarding the identity of his healer (5:14-15).

Sometimes the story has been read carelessly as an account of a man who comes to faith in Jesus. But is that really the case? We are provided with a critical clue to the contrary in the scene when Jesus seeks out the man in the temple. “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (5:14).

A careful reading of the story indicates that the man has actually done nothing other than obey when Jesus tells him to take up his mat and walk. But is such compliance the stuff of life-changing transformation? Clearly it is enough belief to follow through with a simple action, but is it the sort of faith that changes a life?

There are plenty of clues that this encounter never really gets off the ground, though the man does. His life is a powerful witness to the power of God to heal and change and transform a person in the most dire of circumstances, but it does not seem to have gotten through to the man himself. The woman at the well is told of her past and how God can transform lives and she responds with a faith that changes her life. The official hears a word of hope and healing and believes. The result is a life that is altered. This man's life is changed in that he can walk, and resume normal activities in the community, but at a more profound level he is still crippled. His grip on sin is firm, as is its grip on him. He has not embraced the new life afforded to him in the moment. As the story ends, there is no indication that he gets the point of his encounter with Jesus.

Sometimes we think things would be different for us if we had only had the opportunities afforded to the disciples and others who had opportunity to listen to Jesus teach and preach, observed his miracles or perhaps even been the recipient of his healing touch. This story reminds us that seeing is not believing.

Part IV - The blind leading the blind. If only that were the case...

Encountering Jesus. Glimpses of characterization in the Gospel of John

The final episode to be considered in this brief series is Jesus' encounter with a man blind from birth (John 9). In the thinking of the day such physical disabilities were the result of one of two things, the sin of the person, or the sin of the parents. When Jesus and his disciples see this man, and learn of his circumstances, the disciples pose the question of fault. Whose responsibility is it?

Now we might wonder how a person could sin in vitro, but this was a theological concern of enough significance that the topic was debated by religious specialists. Where would Jesus come down on the issue? After all, it had to be one or the other.

Jesus offers a third choice. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned ... but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" (9:3). Now this would be clue enough that such an encounter will be of profound significance to our understanding of Jesus, but John tells us that Jesus says even more. "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (9:4-5).

The careful reader of John's account should not miss the piling up of key terminology having to do with transformative faith. The work of God is going to be revealed in this man. The glory of God revealed. The categories of light and darkness invite consideration of key symbol clusters utilized throughout the gospel. What is Jesus going to do? What are we to learn from this experience?

When Jesus instructs the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, the man "went and washed, and came home seeing" (9:7). Asked to give an account of his healing, the man can only respond: "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see" (9:11). As in the story of the man who had been crippled for thirty-eight years, the day on which this restoration takes place is a Sabbath, which for some of the Pharisees makes the conclusion to be drawn obvious: "This man is not from God" (9:16). Others cannot comprehend, however, that a sinner could do such wonders, so they turn to the man who had been blind and ask him to draw a conclusion about Jesus. "He is a prophet," the man observes.

The response of the man, and the logic he uses to assess the situation causes the opponents of Jesus to speculate the man had not been blind at all. They seek out the man's parents in the hope that they may provide an explanation for the uncomfortable truth staring at them. The parents attest that their son was born blind, and contend that he would be better able to speak to the details of his healing. After all, he is an adult. And so the authorities summon the man for a second time: "Give glory to God," they begin. "We know this man is a sinner" (9:24). The implication is that it is time for the man to 'fess up' and finally tell the truth. But when he speaks the truth, telling them he is unable to declare whether or not Jesus is a sinner, but that he can attest to the fact that he had been blind, but could now see, they ask to have the tale of his healing repeated.

His astonishment at this request is obvious: "I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" (9:27).

The response enrages the inquisitors. Declaring the man who had been blind to be a disciple of Jesus, they claim their own allegiance to Moses: "We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from" (9:29).

The formerly blind man declares: "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing" (9:30-33).

The ironies in this dialogue are rich. Those who claim to be men of vision, in tune with the words and ways of God, are blind to the work of God in their midst. The man who has been marginalized all his life, now demonstrates that he not only possesses physical sight, but spiritual insight as well.

The conclusions he draws are, however, outrageous to those who 'know better.' When the man declares that Jesus must be from God they reject his conclusions, and him: "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" He is unceremoniously removed from their presence ... "they threw him out" (9:34).

Jesus seeks out the man, and asks: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (9:35), to which the man responds that he has no knowledge of who is so designated. But when Jesus declares himself to be from God, John tells us the man declared: "Lord, I believe,' and he worshipped him" (9:38).

For John, this story epitomizes a positive encounter with Jesus. Not only are circumstances changed on the surface, there is an inner transformation which results in the declaration of Jesus' deity, and a response of worship. This aligns with a climactic scene of the gospel in which Thomas worships Jesus, declaring him to be: "My Lord and my God!" (20:28). Following this declaration Jesus then states that those who "have not seen and yet believe" (20:29) are blessed. A few verses later, John confesses to his readers that his gospel is "written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).

In our short study we have seen that an encounter with Jesus, even a spiritual encounter does not always lead to transforming faith. We are not sure what decision Nicodemus makes about Jesus. John's comments encourage us to remain unsure. In contrast, we see the woman at the well readily embraces the truth, allowing her life to be changed. Likewise the royal official discovers a life-changing faith. The man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years regains his mobility, but does not find the freedom of a new life in relationship with Jesus. He neither becomes a disciple, nor confesses a desire to 'give up sinning' (5:14). In fact, challenged by Jesus to make such a radical choice, he seeks out the opponents of Jesus to report him. The man born blind, on the other hand, accepts the life Jesus offers.

John tells the story of Jesus to encourage his readers to come into a life-changing relationship with Jesus, to discover the fullness of life offered, and to confess “my Lord and my God!” What response have you chosen?

At The Construction Site

by Captain Scott Strissel

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV)

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

When I was a child I used to enjoy watching construction workers build things. I could sit for hours watching them work away at mixing concrete, hoisting support beams, laying rebar...it all fascinated me. I longed to see the finished product, a completed project that took hours, even days to complete. I would go by the construction site day after day on my way to school just to see how much progress they had made in the hours that I had been away. I was invested in witnessing the completed project, though it wasn't my house, I still wanted, I longed to see it finished.

By the time the construction of the remodeled home was completed, the workers there knew me by name. Why? Because I wasn't content in just watching, I wanted to know why and how they were doing any and every task. I was insanely curious...and so I asked a lot of questions. Luckily, the foreman (who must have had children of his own) was a patient man who didn't mind giving me an answer from time to time. He was competent and considerate of my age and so explained it as a parent would to a child; in simple terms. He explained why they put wire mesh in with the concrete or why rebar was there at all...it would make the structure stronger and would last longer. He also explained why the bubble on the level had to be in the middle so that the work they did would stand and not fall down because it was uneven. I asked many questions and thankfully that foreman answered most of them with the patience of a saint.

Why bring up this childhood experience? Why mention it? Am I just trying to relive my childhood? Perhaps...but it's more than that. It makes me think of what kind of foundation I am laying in my own spiritual with God. Many times in my life I have thought about those conversations with that foreman in the context of my spiritual journey with Christ. Am I living a balanced life? Have I continued to be firmly rooted in His word? Is the foundation of my life what it should be? Introspectively I have asked myself these questions many, many times. I don't say this in boasting by any means, but a right relationship with God is very important to me. Is it important to you?

I will never forget those lessons that I learned as a child by simply passing by a construction site day after day on my way to and from school.

How is your foundation? Has it been reinforced with the rebar of fellowship with other Christians? Are there cracks forming along the walls of your faith because of wear and tear and pressures of life? At our conversion we align ourselves with Christ. We accept His sacrifice on the cross for our sins and we essentially say God rebuild me. Tear down the old, remove the dirty and broken, and start again. In that process we gain new life, a new construction takes place and there is life on our spiritual property. But here's a big issue: Many remain at the altars of their lives professing Christ and declaring "I'm a Christian", but they never grow from there. God expects us to mature in our faith. He has provided us the best foundation in His son Jesus Christ, but we have to allow the Holy Spirit to begin the transformation within us. We can't remain baby Christians...or essentially just a foundation without a structure built on top. God's presence within us, which is the Holy Spirit, wants to develop in us a deeper, stable structure of maturity and faith.

If your life needs some renovation, some rebuilding...will you allow God to begin that in you today? He's the best foreman for the job and He can be trusted to finish that construction of holiness in you! The foundation is already firmly laid. But without a strong, stable structure on top, which is holiness and spiritual maturity, we are still vulnerable and unstable in the temptations and elements of our old lives.

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, thank you for your Son who made it possible for me to be redeemed, I ask now that you would continue in me Your work. Transform me through the work of Your Holy Spirit, grant me the strength to address issues that still exist within my life that are yet remnants of my old ways. Allow me wisdom and discernment to study your word and to apply it in my living day by day. I want to be the creation you have intended for me. Deliver me from sin and from temptation, as I know I must avoid their trappings in order to mature and to grow in Your grace. May it be so in my life today. Amen.

Interview with Stephanie Parker Chagas

JAC: Tell us, who are you?

SPC: I am a mid-twenties brazilian/british daughter, sister, friend, soldier and servant on a life-long discovery of myself, others, the world. I'm compassionate, caring, sensitive, seeking to be at the heart of God's will, set apart for Him and his purposes...

JAC: How did you get saved?

SPC: Growing up in a family of Salvationists, my church has always been The Salvation Army. I feel that my personal encounter with Jesus and experience of the Holy Spirit happened when I was about 10 years old at the Children's Convention at the UK Territory's Roots Conference. There was an appeal and I felt the desire to stand up and go to the front. As I was doing so I felt my legs weak and a strong sense of fire within. I remember I couldn't speak much after that but just cry. That was an awakening moment for me. I felt the difference as I returned to school after that weekend and was excited to tell my friends about the time I'd had.

JAC: What have you been up to over the last few years?

SPC: I studied Journalism in Brazil and worked in the area in a couple of corporate firms. As much as I enjoyed my job I didn't find total fulfilment and wanted my work to have a longer lasting impact upon people. I soon moved cities and had the opportunity to work for The Salvation Army in the communications department of the Thrift Store Programme. To cut a long story short, one day out of the blue God called me, took me out of Brazil and placed me in London at the International College for Officers and Centre for Spiritual Life Development where I've been for the past two and a half years nearly helping to create spiritual life resources, promote the Global Call to 24-7 Prayer, support events on and off campus, network with Salvationists worldwide, develop my own relationship with Him...

JAC: What has been the impact on you of this experience?

SPC: I'm still trying to take it all in. It's been amazing. I have learnt so much in these past two years about God's provision, timing, guidance. I have learnt how to better nurture my relationship with him, understand myself better to be able to serve Him better, see God at work in the lives of other people from all around the world. I have been truly blessed.

JAC: How has your work with the Centre for Spiritual Life Development affected the world?

SPC: I often sit in my little office on the outskirts of London and think how effective the CSLD truly is. However, in these five years of it's history, I feel that through the participation in events on and off site all around the world, the resources that are available online and also sent to the different S.A. territories, contact with hundreds of officers through the International College for Officers, networking with Salvation Army personnel in this role from different territories, the start of the Global Call to 24-7 Prayer and hearing testimonies of what's happening is encouraging. The CSLD is inevitably transitioning at the moment and I do feel quite excited to see what will happen. I know

there is so much more for me to do and learn and there is so much more for the CSLD to do, but I am confident for the future.

JAC: How can the CSLD benefit salvationists and corps around the world? (SPC - maybe suggest resources...)

SPC: I think firstly, Salvationists can benefit through the resources on the website – www.salvationarmy.org/csld. There is a diverse range of Bible studies, spiritual formation and prayer resources; articles related to justice issues; weekly online devotional and video news updates; audio prayer tracks and the CSLD's monthly newsletter along with specific content related to the Vision and links to other useful resources and websites. Salvationists can benefit by reading the book *Army on Its Knees* (Major Stephen Court and Colonel Janet Munn), a great resource on prayer and spiritual disciplines. They can 'Like' the CSLD and Global Call's facebook and twitter pages to receive daily news and resources about what's happening. They can take part in the Global Call to 24-7 Prayer – a day and night cry for justice, create a place of prayer in their corps, social centres, divisions etc. The CSLD is also available to help with teaching and providing resources at events.

JAC: How has discipleship - both being disciplined and discipling - influenced your life and war fighting?

SPC: I'll always be grateful to the people who took time to invest in me as a child and who first called me to help out with Sunday School. I have no idea what they saw in that extremely shy, introverted, self-conscious thirteen year old, but as I grew, those times I spent with the children teaching and helping them were sometimes the best moments of my week. I am grateful that today, some of those children who are now adolescents remain firm in their Corps back in Brazil. This was an open door to me in terms of having the confidence to discover my own ministry and gifts in other areas and being able to use them for the sake of the kingdom. In my youth I felt the need to have someone more present helping me at a personal level in my spiritual growth. More recently I feel this need has been better met and I am more aware of what to look for in a discipler and how to be one myself. Presently, there are a few people, near and far, who I try and be a role model too, simply listening, trying to make myself available and helping them in their spiritual journey.

JAC: What has God been teaching you about prayer?

SPC: One thing I have learnt is to identify the different rhythms of prayer in my own life and to try and understand what God is saying and what he wants me to do for him through prayer. There are times when my prayer life seems dry, other times where I find myself praying all the time, there are times when I rejoice in prayer, times when I weep constantly in prayer, times when I feel immensely burdened in prayer. My constant prayer is that I may have faith to believe in prayer, for the small or the huge things and to be persistent as I do so.

JAC: What does the future look like for you?

SPC: I'm not too sure, but I think that's ok for now! My only desire is that my ears and eyes be open to know what the next step is.

JAC: What's your favourite move of God that you have experienced first-hand?

SPC: I feel that a personal favourite move of God happened while I was taking part in the mission team of Salvationists that came together during the Pan-American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2007. In just two weeks of teaching and mission on the streets, in parks, shanty towns etc. God truly opened my eyes to others and their needs. This was such a huge thing for me, something 'clicked' inside. Another move of God was the way he brought me to the U.K. His guidance has been so evident from and since then, it still amazes me every time I think about it. It's my Ebenezer stone that I always look back to for faith and reassurance for the future.

JAC: Does God often impact you through preaching and teaching? If so, what are some outstanding examples?

SPC: I am often impacted through preaching, teaching and simple observation of what people say and do. I learnt a lot through simply observing how my parents related to people, how they fully engaged themselves in everything they did and guided me in the right way. More recently, I have been impacted by the teaching and preaching of Colonel Janet Munn who I had the opportunity to work with closely. Her spiritual authority, biblical knowledge and general lifestyle, whether in the small mundane things or the big events would always challenge and inspire me.

JAC: What do you see as the great opportunities for The Salvation Army in coming years of the salvation war?

SPC: I feel society is reaching a point where people are realizing that having jobs, cars, technological gadgets, isn't really that fulfilling. With the economic crisis that has hit some countries in the past years things haven't turned out quite the way they were expected financially socially. I see these things as a great opportunity to reach out to those in need of a meaning, purpose, intimacy. At the same time, used wisely, I do think media and communications are a great tool to share the gospel all over the world and at a more rapid pace. It's a great way for people to be encouraged, connected and receive the Word in so many creative forms through videos, audios, websites etc.

JAC: If you could write a quick letter to salvationists around the world, what would you say?

SPC: There is always more than meets the eye. Do not fall into a position of contentment and complacency with the way things are in your life, with the things that are presented to you by the media, society etc. Seek. Take time to be holy. Try and fast at least once a week from things that can be overpowering your life, time and energy – food, facebook, phone...Set spiritual goals and ask someone to help keep you accountable to them. Be resolute in knowing who God is and who you are to Him. Find ways to relate to him according to the way he has created you – in solitude, in silence, through music, through dance, through writing, through spoken word, practical service – and use these tools. Live a lifestyle of worship, be conscience of God wherever you are

and in whatever you do, think and say. Don't be too hard on yourself, receive His love. Expect Him.

Boundless: Living Life in Overflow

by Danielle Strickland and Stephen Court

Book excerpt

Monarch Books, Lion Hudson Publisher, 2013

It took me about eight different tattoo parlours before I found the guy who would be willing to come with me to a large youth conference and give me a tattoo on stage. Actually, even that guy I had to coax to come. I was speaking, together with Stephen, to a crowd of teenagers about living life in a way we were meant to. On this day we were getting to covenant... this is living in promise – living with a purpose – living for something and someone larger than ourselves... and we were trying to communicate it to a generation that had been labeled selfish, fickle, and loose.

Tattoos can be a big deal. They are forever. They are painful. They are obvious – and did I mention painful? So, in front of all these young people and many surprised older leaders I sat in the middle of the stage as my new tattooist friend started up his gun and began the work. My husband broke down the scriptural significance of living for something bigger than your own life and I endured the pain, publicly and embraced being forever marked with a song. The tattoo I chose was a song – it is the musical theme of our evangelistic campaign, with words that a man named William Booth penned over a century ago. It was about an idea that has completely changed the world. It wasn't Booth's idea – he just wrote about it and lived it out. It was God's idea – from the very beginning.

The world was meant to be good. Actually, when God created it He said it was beautiful. But something happened... With our power came great responsibility (think 'Spiderman') and we blew it. We gave over the power to destruction. And we started to get smaller. So did the world. Marred, broken... is there any more accurate way to view our world today? But God had a plan for even that inevitability.

Salvation

This is a fancy way of saying that you and I need fixing. But that's not hard to see – we all need fixing. Individually and collectively. If we are going to be fixed it's going to take an idea that is larger than our problems. And that brings me back to the tattoo.

See, the tattoo is a song all about this – a boundless salvation - because Boundless is bigger than our curse. God's plan to save us is more than a personal path to happiness or success or even peace. It's so much bigger than that. God's plan is to put right everything that's been broken in the world. Everyone of his children. God's plan of salvation is a plan for the entire world – it's, well, boundless.

I remember hearing Bono asked about becoming a politician. He said he had thought about it but then remembered that when a politician gives a speech, he gives it once – maybe if it's really good people listen to it twice. But when you write a song, it becomes part of you. You feel the song. You live the song. You sing the song.

And I got Boundless tattooed on my arm because I want to live the song. I want my life to be immersed in the message of this salvation – that is larger than me. I want it visible. I want to embrace the pain. I want to live the promise. You know what I mean? I want to believe with everything that I am and everything that I've got that there is a better way to live - That my life matters more than the small drama of my own feelings, family, and gifts.

The Boundless Evangelistic Campaign isn't about 'steps' or 'doctrine'; it's not even trying to convince you of something that will make your life happy. It's about a song - A song big enough to tattoo on your body. But even more than that, it's a song that can get inside of you and become a new way to live. That melody is beautiful – I pray that you'll hear it – and embrace it as you live.

Our campaign is fairly simple. If you don't experience this boundless salvation, then read and pray through the book BOUNDLESS: Living life in overflow. If you do, then think of some friends who don't. Pray for them daily for a month. Present them with a copy of the book. And then follow up with them a fortnight later. Simple. Easy. But the effects could be boundless.

The campaign and the book are based on William Booth's famous song (he wrote back in 1893), called O Boundless Salvation. In seven verses, he develops a story of a person who grows from a limited, stunted existence into a boundless life. It's captivating! Here are the words. We're crafting the Boundless Evangelistic Campaign around his story.

Boundless Salvation

- 1. O boundless salvation! deep ocean of love,
O fulness of mercy, Christ brought from above.
The whole world redeeming, so rich and so free,
Now flowing for all men, come, roll over me!*

- 2. My sins they are many, their stains are so deep.
And bitter the tears of remorse that I weep;
But useless is weeping; thou great crimson sea,
Thy waters can cleanse me, come, roll over me!*

- 3. My tempers are fitful, my passions are strong,
They bind my poor soul and they force me to wrong;
Beneath thy blest billows deliverance I see,
O come, mighty ocean, and roll over me!*

4. *Now tossed with temptation, then haunted with fears,
My life has been joyless and useless for years;
I feel something better most surely would be
If once thy pure waters would roll over me.*

5. *O ocean of mercy, oft longing I've stood
On the brink of thy wonderful, life-giving flood!
Once more I have reached this soul-cleansing sea,
I will not go back till it rolls over me.*

6. *The tide is now flowing, I'm touching the wave,
I hear the loud call of the Mighty to Save;
My faith's growing bolder, delivered I'll be;
I plunge 'neath the waters, they roll over me.*

7. *And now, hallelujah! the rest of my days
Shall gladly be spent in promoting His praise
Who opened His bosom to pour out this sea
Of boundless salvation for you and for me.*

William Booth (1829-1912)

Quit Church

by Major Stephen Court

Church, noun

a building used for public Christian worship

ORIGIN Old English cir(i)ce, cyr(i)ce, related to Dutch kerk and German Kirche, based on medieval Greek kurikon, from Greek kuriakon (dōma) 'Lord's (house),' from kurios 'master or lord.' ----

Many of the largest churches in the world don't even have a 'building' or a dedicated 'house' to meet in so it doesn't make sense to call them churches.

Wait, you say, 'we are the church'. That is, 'church is the gathering of God's people'.

But if you are the church even when you don't gather, calling yourself 'the Lord's House' (origin of the word, above) either doesn't make sense or is at best a metaphor.

Why that metaphor among others?

Flock? Bride? Body? Etc.

You could easily argue that each of these is a much better metaphor than 'church' because none carries the heavily negative connotations that church carries (since most people reject church as evidenced by their absence from it). Plus, the metaphor of flock, which is mobile, is much more accurate than 'the Lord's House', which isn't...

Better yet, you can quit 'church' and all other metaphors and go with the real thing! You can actually call it a biblical term that isn't metaphor but reality – ARMY.

Why not try it out today? You might be surprised by the effects.

Dreams Can Come True by Commissioner Wesley Harris

WILLIAM BOOTH had a practical mind but he was also a dreamer. What is more, unlike some of us, he publicized many of his dreams even when they may have appeared outlandish like putting a roof on London's Hyde Park and having continuous meetings in that large area! Less 'way out' was the dream of having a special class of officers 'strongly resembling officers with whom he was familiar but in other respects appearing strangely dissimilar'.

This 'order' of officers would be known as 'Brothers of Salvation' or 'Companions of the Cross of Christ'. They seemed a 'dare devil lot' but always ready to strengthen and earnestly comfort each other. They were happy to wear their uniforms and proud to show their colours,

Now, as far as I know, the Founder never officially caused that dream to come true but unofficially it has done so. There have been officers who have performed their ordinary work in an extraordinary way but have been pacemakers for others to follow. They may not have sought to influence the actions of their comrades but they have done so for all that. Their example has been more powerful than precepts and any divisional or territorial commander should be grateful if they have officers whose effective innovations inspire others to follow suit.

I had better 'fess up' and admit that some successful ideas I was able to adopt and adapt in active service were not originally mine at all. They were inspired by the example of comrades. On my shelf I have a book with the intriguing title, 'Ideas have legs'. That title is true and ideas that begin as dreams may finish up as Kingdom facts.