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Editorial Introduction

by Major Stephen Court, Editor

Welcome to JAC93 – the 93rd issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity. What a blessing it promises to those who read and share and apply its lessons. Savour the testimony, reflect on the teaching, respond to the exhortation. It could change eternity.

We're grateful, as always, for the contributors who come this issue from six territories and include some officers (lieutenants, captains, majors, and commissioner) and other soldiers writing on justice and theology and mission and integrity and strategy and covenant and the Bible – all great subjects for study and application. Here is JAC93:

Commissioner Wesley Harris: Volunteers. The Commissioner starts at the birth of The Salvation Army and fast forwards through a century and more of blessings provided by volunteers helping The Salvation Army and provided to volunteers helping The Salvation Army.

Captain Andrew S. Miller: Suffering In William Booth's Ecclesiology. Here is an academic take on the role of suffering in Salvation Army ecclesiology. This reprint from the original Wesleyan Theological Society presentation will provide a handy reference for readers around the world.

Major Danielle Strickland: Do Not Tiptoe. Strickland describes the biblical kind of 'knock 'em out, take one for the team' love that contrasts starkly with all of your worst stereotypes of God, the Bible, women, and their role among the people of God.

Captain Scott Strissel: Dear Salvation Army: 4 Sins No One Is Talking About. Strissel is running an ongoing series called Dear Salvation Army in the salvosphere and we're highlighting one of those segments here. Be prepared for an unusual list that might get a little too close for comfort.

Major Robert Evans: Blessing In Fellowship. While authentic Christian community is not the goal, it is an important means of accomplish the goal, and Evans shows, from the Sermon on the Mount, that blessings accompany fellowship.

Captain Catherine Fitzgerald: Scripture Art. What do fairly obscure 15th century Flemish painters have to do with Aggressive Christianity? Captain Fitzgerald, first time contributor from USA Central Territory, teaches us about how to read the Bible by teaching us how to look at art.

Jonathan Evans Cracked Pots: Give us sincere hearts. This is Evans's contribution to the new book festschrift in honour of Commissioner Kay Rader and General Paul Rader called TSUNAMI OF THE SPIRIT: Come roll over me. Evans teaches here on the treasures we have and the jars of clay we are.

Lieutenant Matt Kean: *The Blight of Liberal Theology*. Kean tackles the encroachment of this theology into The Salvation Army, contrasting it with Salvationist theology, and noting the dangers of its widespread adoption in the ranks.

Lieutenant Olivia Munn: *Back to School?* This is back-to-school season in the northern hemisphere (and readers in the southern can bookmark it for the appropriate time coming soon). Munn offers some vulnerable testimony as context for a pep talk and primer for high school.

Aaron White: *Communicating the Gospel in a Post-modern world*. This is an academic paper by White that addresses posture and strategy for the salvation war through the experience of the corps he leads, 614 Vancouver.

You can read all of these articles as well as the articles from the first 92 issues right here for free. We're hoping that more and more people will encounter the heat and light in these journals.

To God be the glory. Much grace.

Volunteers

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

THE story of the birth of The Salvation Army has often been told. William Booth, our Founder, was recovering from a bout of influenza but was nonetheless having a planning meeting in his bedroom with his son Bramwell and his faithful aide, George Scott Railton. They were considering a report on the Christian Mission and a statement that it was "a volunteer army". At the time in Britain the volunteers were a part-time citizens army – perhaps a bit like the modern TV series in the UK called Dad's Army, and a butt of cartoonists and comedians.

Possibly with that connotation in mind it was not surprising that Bramwell protested, "I'm not a volunteer. I'm a regular or nothing." Whereupon the Founder crossed out the word "volunteer" and substituted the word "salvation". At that Bramwell and Railton leapt out of their chairs and cried, "Thank God for that." The Salvation Army was born!

It may be ironic in view of Bramwell's protest that a major element of the Army birthed was volunteerism, the widespread involvement of people who felt compelled to give their service and even make great sacrifices without any prospect of monetary payment.

Through a lifetime of service as an officer I have valued highly the voluntary service of thousands of people who have undertaken all kinds of tasks and done so out of love. I recently attended an appreciation dinner for a hall full of volunteers – young and older – who keep very busy giving time and effort in order to further the work of our corps.

Nowadays we have increasing numbers of people who are paid employees and we couldn't do without them and their expertise particularly with the government requirements of us which exist in many countries. Some may see their work as a job but many see it as a vocation which gives an extra plus to what they contribute.

Still, the need for volunteers remains. Without them our administration costs would escalate, wise counsel would be lacking and local knowledge would be missed. As a Territorial Commander I made a point of writing to a huge number of people who volunteered to help us. I thanked them for their assistance but many thanked the Army for the opportunity we had given them. Clearly the best way to help some people is to give them the chance to help in a worthwhile cause. The Duke of Edinburgh said that voluntary service was good for the soul and that is often the case.

Suffering In William Booth's Ecclesiology

by Captain Andy Miller III
Corps Officer – Lawrenceville, GA

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On a given Sunday a visitor might walk into a Salvation Army worship service and hear the congregation confidently singing to the accompaniment of a brass band one of their battle choruses: "I'll go in the strength of the Lord / To conflicts which faith will require / His grace as my shield and reward / My courage and zeal shall inspire / Since he gives the word of command / To meet and encounter the foe / With his sword of truth in my hand / To suffer and triumph I'll go."¹ The content of this song reflects the ecclesiological self-understanding of Salvationists who, as members of the universal church, are actively involved in the mission of God. Proclaiming this dangerously boisterous message is the ecclesiological heritage of the Salvation Army. The early Army and its leader, William Booth, embraced an eschatologically flavored ecclesiology that specifically called its soldiers to be prepared to suffer in the dire districts of life as soldiers of the cross. William Booth explained that Jesus Christ's missional mandate to go into all the world meant suffering for and to Christ.

Though it is not likely that Salvationists around the world are explicitly concerned with ecclesiology as a study, the Salvation Army is implicitly acting on its doctrine of the church, which is rooted in mission. Consequently, ecclesiological reflection within the Salvation Army must always consider missional aspects when evaluating its ecclesiology. Systematic theologian Jürgen Moltmann suggests, "What we have to learn from them [missional movements] is not that the church 'has' a mission, but the very reverse: that the mission of Christ creates its own church. Mission does not come from the church; it is from mission and in the light of mission that the church has to be understood."² It is this missional direction which unites Booth's bold "bass drum" ecclesiology with his eschatology. "Marching to war" for the "salvation of the world" is seen in the context of the holistic and universal mission of God. The influence of eschatology on ecclesiology is pivotal for how we understand the mission of William Booth and for how that mission can be interpreted today. How one views the end dramatically informs the way one theologically understands the church and its missional relationship to that end.

William Booth's Eschatological Ecclesiology

The particular approach to ecclesiology demonstrated in William Booth's theological praxis necessarily mingles with his personal and universal eschatology. He fervently desired the eternal salvation of souls and the world's eternal salvation represented in

¹ Edward Turney, "I'll Go in the Strength of the Lord," *The Song Book of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1987), 202.

² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 10.

his millennialism. To say that William Booth had an eschatological ecclesiology is to state that his ecclesiology is formulated on the basis of his desire to redeem individual persons and the world for eternity, whatever the cost.

Pertinent to discussion about the ecclesiology observed in William Booth's theology is the question of whether an ecclesiology can exist implicitly. Can there be a doctrine of the church if there is no explicit and official articulation of the same? If an ecclesiology is unmistakably developed theologically, is it more faithful than an implied ecclesiology? Such systems might be so active in "being the church" that these movements do not take time to formulate an official ecclesiology.³ Through church history the unarticulated ecclesiological systems have often changed the direction of the church, systems like Pietism, Moravianism, early Methodism, along with Salvationism.

Every ecclesiology is at least partially prompted by its eschatology.⁴ This statement assumes a teleological model that dictates that the church is living in response to the way it understands the end. The church is the visible sign of the present and coming kingdom of God. When eschatology is connected to ecclesiology, the church can see the future victory of God as a reality impacting the here and now.

During the formative years of the Salvation Army, its ecclesiology was (as most areas of its development) extremely practical. Salvation Army theologian R. David Rightmire explains, "Booth had a functional ecclesiology, conceiving the church as 'act' rather than 'substance.'"⁵ The importance of personal eschatology, expressed in Booth's desire to save souls, was lodged in the concept of the Army's universal mission to save the world. This mission was the "greatest good" of Booth's utilitarian-like ethic.

"The good time coming"⁶ was the way that William Booth often referred to the approaching millennial kingdom, a kingdom for which the Salvation Army was pragmatically and theologically established. William Booth was a person referred to in today's terminology as a post-millennialist. His eschatological views of the kingdom of God were never more clearly stated than in the title of his August, 1890, article "The Millennium; or, The Ultimate Triumph of Salvation Army Principles."⁷ In this article Booth asserts:

A genuine Salvationist is a true reformer of men. He alone is a real socialist, because he is the advocate of the only true principles by which the reformation of society can be effected. His confidence for the future is not based alone on the theories he holds. . .but

³ Such ecclesiologies then come close to what Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon urge the church to pursue in their landmark book *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), where they challenge the church to be an alternative community to the world that embodies what being the church truly means. They challenge the Christian community to "serve the world by showing it something that it is not, namely, a place where God is forming a family out of strangers." *Resident Aliens*, 83.

⁴ This is a debated point. Some churches seem to be motivated by nothing but maintaining the *status quo*. A state church ecclesiologies are often motivated by an eschatological system that might seek to maintain or justify the *status quo*. This might reflect a realized eschatology. A realized eschatology views the first coming of Jesus Christ as inaugurating his kingdom. This kingdom is merely a spiritual or existential reality within the hearts of the believers or the church.

⁵ R. David Rightmire, *Sacraments and the Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations* (The Scarecrow Press, 1990), 79.

⁶ William Booth, "The Millennium; or, The Ultimate Triumph of Salvation Army Principles." *All The World* 6 (August, 1890), 337.

⁷ William Booth, "The Millennium," 337-343.

in that Millennial heaven. . .to him, the millennium is already, in a measure, an accomplished fact.⁸

William Booth was working to realize the kingdom of God on earth. He was a man motivated by the possibility of the redemption of the world. This motivation was based in large measure on his understanding of eschatology, which to him was measured on a global scale with a global mandate.

When ontologically defining Salvationist self-understanding and its millennial task, Booth explains, "Salvationism means simply the overcoming and banishing from the earth of wickedness, inward and outward, from the heart and life of man, and the establishment of the principles of purity and goodness instead."⁹ He understood the millennium in terms of global harmony; the means of arriving at such a state was through the agency of soldiers in the great salvation war. Booth commanded, "Soldiers! You are to do this! [fulfill the prophecies that will bring universal peace].... There is but one way to reach this millennium of peace and good will. . .there is but one way to the world's deliverance, and that is by fighting."¹⁰ Fighting for Booth clearly meant human agents escorting the millennium into reality.

As the Salvation Army grew, so did the need for the institutionalization of its mission and practices. Hence, the Army eventually became its own ecclesial body, but the core missional direction still reigned in the Army.

Suffering and the Army

The ecclesiology of the early Salvation Army is one that called its soldiers to the world and to a fight against the evil therein. "Suffering" can be defined as undergoing pain, distress, injury, or loss. Suffering is something that happens beyond the norm of human comfort. It is not a surprise then that William Booth called his Army to suffer for the expansion of Christ's kingdom. This theme of suffering is uniquely tied to the Salvation Army's Wesleyan understanding of holiness.

When Metaphor Becomes Reality. In 1865 William Booth found his destiny while preaching in London's East End, when he formed The East London Christian Revival Society.¹¹ Later known as the Christian Mission, this group was motivated to preach the gospel to the poor of London's East End, a segment of the population that was generally neglected by the church in the Victorian era. During these thirteen years the Christian Mission grew to include 75 preaching stations and 120 evangelists throughout Britain. The eschatological perspective that accompanied this fledgling mission was dominated by personal eschatology.

⁸ William Booth, "The Millennium," 343.

⁹ William Booth, "Fight!", *All The World* 1 (May 1885):112-114, 111.

¹⁰ William Booth, "Universal Peace. A Christmas Address." *The War Cry* 2 (December 1881), 4.

¹¹ Also referred to as The East London Christian Revival Union or East London Christian Mission. These names appeared interchangeably in the formative years of the movements. See Rightmire, 28-29n. and John R Rhemick, *A New People of God: A Study in Salvationism* (Des Plaines, ILL: The Salvation Army, 1993), 17.

In 1878 the Christian Mission changed its name to the Salvation Army. This change of identity is the first clear indication of a personal shift in William Booth's theology, which adjusted from personal redemptive categories to institutional redemptive categories.¹² This new theology is made clear in a popular (and often quoted) article by William Booth entitled "Our New Name—The Salvationist" in *The Salvationist*¹³ from January 1, 1879:

We are a salvation people—this is our specialty.... Our work is salvation. We believe in salvation and we have salvation....We aim at salvation. We want this and nothing short of this and we want this right off. My brethren, my comrades, soul saving is our avocation, the great purpose and business of our lives. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God, let us be Salvationist indeed.¹⁴

The alteration is most obviously seen in the pragmatic shift to transform the structure of the Christian Mission to the military structure of the Salvation Army. When the military metaphor was adopted, every area of Booth's movement was affected: preaching stations became corps, evangelists became corps officers, members became soldiers, and its leader became the General. An autocratic form of leadership emerged and, like a conquering Army, the fingers of the Salvation Army were stretched around the world. Roger J. Green explains that at this time Booth's theology began to move from individual categories to institutional categories. Indeed, William Booth saw his Salvation Army as institutionally sanctified to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth.¹⁵

It is at this juncture that the universal eschatology of William Booth sharpened into focus. His Salvation Army was, in his mind, the vehicle that would facilitate the coming millennium. Within eight years of the 1878 name change, the Salvation Army exploded to include 1,749 corps and 4,129 officers.¹⁶ Indicative of this time is Booth's commissioning of a corporate eschatological task: "Go to them all. The whole fourteen hundred millions [sic]. Don't despair. *It can be done*. It SHALL BE DONE. God has sent The Salvation Army on the task. If every saint on earth would do his duty, it *could* be done effectually in the next ten years. If the Salvation Army will be true to God, it *will* be done during the next fifty" [emphasis Booth's].¹⁷

12 That is to say that the Salvation Army was viewed by William Booth as institutionally sanctified to bring redemption to the world. Roger Green explains that these "institutional" categories were "sustained by his [Booth's] belief that The Salvation Army was divinely ordained, and that it was a renewal in the nineteenth century and twentieth century of the Church of the New Testament, the early Church, the Reformation Church, and the Wesleyan revival." *War on Two Fronts: The Redemptive Theology of William Booth* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army, 1989), 54-55.

13 It should be noted that this was written in connection with the change of name of the Army's journal from *The Christian Mission Magazine* to *The Salvationist*.

14 William Booth, "Our New Name—The Salvationist," found in *The Founder Speaks Again: A Selection of the Writings of William Booth* (London: The Salvation Army, 1960), 45-48.

15 See William Booth's article "The Millennium," 341. In this article Booth paints a picture of the coming millennial kingdom that envisions London as the New Jerusalem.

16 Robert Sandal, *The History of The Salvation Army*. 7 vols. (London: The Salvation Army, 1947-1966, vols. 1-3 by Sandal, vols. 4-5 by Arch Wiggins, vol. 6 by Fredrick Coutts, vol. 7 by Henry Gariepy), 2:338.

17 William Booth, "Go!" *All the World* (November, 1884) found in *The General's Letters, 1885* (London: International Headquarters, 1890), 7. This demonstrates an amazing parallel between Booth and Charles

Battle images were rigorously employed as the Salvation Army sought to identify itself along the lines of an army. The Salvation Army was, as one author has said, a group of “soldiers without swords,”¹⁸ whose mission had a singular focus of winning the world for Christ. Did the military metaphor create its own reality as a result of the way that its adherents adopted its mission? Booth and his Army saw themselves in a fight with a supreme purpose. Within the realm of historical theology it is easy to conclude that the Salvation Army’s militarism developed an eschatological ecclesiology that rearticulated what God’s people were to be about in this world. The metaphor of an army “marching through the land” created new ways to express the mission of God. William Booth could challenge his troops the same way a military general would. Concepts such as suffering could be explored within the military metaphor in a way that traditional churches could not.

Calling its members to risk their lives for the gospel of Jesus Christ could be swallowed within the metaphoric Army. For Booth joining the Army as a soldier meant a risk; it meant that in the great salvation war one might sacrifice his or her own self interest for the greatest good of winning the world for Christ. In an article titled, “The War Spirit” Booth challenged his soldiers to consider “the destiny of millions. . . [that] is hanging in the balance—depending to an awful extent on the enthusiastic, skillful, and self-sacrificing, [sic] conduct, and maintenance of this war.... Let us go back to the example of our Great *Commander-in-Chief*. . .and follow him.... Yours for the thick of the fight, William Booth.”¹⁹ Around such battle cries of its General, the Army went to war. Suffering in the battle was further understood in light of eschatological rewards. Suffering is often accompanied by themes of eternal victory. An example of this is the song quoted earlier, which proclaims that the soldier is to go “to suffer *and triumph*” (emphasis mine).

Suffering for Christ. William Booth often described the activity and mission of the Army, and implicitly its rich ecclesiological tradition, as “the fight.”²⁰ What did he mean by fighting? He explains that “A good soldier is always a fighting man.... Fighting means hardship and labour, and hunger, and wounds, and suffering, and life-sorrow and death.”²¹ The suffering in the throws of the fight for the Salvationist is “for” Christ. The “fight” was a service for the Lord, and for early Salvationists anything done on behalf of Christ’s kingdom was worth earthly pain.

Booth was very clear about the perils involved in the salvation war. In his article “The Risks,” he challenges soldiers to “Come out and place yourselves, with every power you

G. Finney, particularly Finney’s claim in 1835 that if the church does its job the millennium could come in three years.

18 Herbert Andrew Wisby, *Soldiers without Swords* (New York: Macmillan, 1955).

19 William Booth, *The General’s Letter*, 73.

20 References to this claim are abounding. See his statement in the *Salvation Soldier*, 53; The Article entitled “Fight!” *All The World* 1 (May 1885): 112-114.

21 Booth, *Salvation Soldier: A Series of Addresses on the Requirements of Jesus Christ’s Service* (London: The Salvation Army, 1889), 53.

possess for doing or suffering at the Master's feet."²² This statement shows that suffering is done for Christ; suffering is something sacrificed for Jesus Christ himself. Often, Booth and early Army writers compared suffering for Christ to the sufferings of Christ on the cross. An early leader in the Salvation Army, George Scott Railton, who officially led the Army's expansion to the United States, challenged: "Let cowards seek an easier way / And win the praise of men / Cross bearing, dying day by day / Is still the Master's plan."²³ William Booth's son-in-law, Fredrick Booth-Tucker, wrote a hymn published in the *War Cry* on August 14, 1897, that is still sung today when new officers are commissioned: "They say the fighting is too hard / My strength of small avail / When foes beset and friends are fled / My faith must surely fail / But, O how can I quit my post / While millions sin-bound lie? / I cannot leave the dear old flag / 'Twere better far to die."²⁴

Suffering for Christ also had an evangelistic aim. The risks of suffering in the fight can help to achieve the goal of others being drawn to the Gospel. Booth explained, "Whenever men suffer for Christ's sake, not only does God draw near to bless, but men draw near to enquire."²⁵ The eschatological focus of William Booth's theology was accompanied by his understanding that Christians should give of themselves (i.e., suffer) to bring the world to Jesus Christ. When comparing the relationship of suffering to the eschatological task, Booth explained, "Suffering and saving are terms of almost the same significance in the Christian's career. If he suffers for Christ he saves, and if he saves he suffers. These men [the apostles] suffered for Christ, and saved with a vengeance. If they had dodged the suffering they would have never saved at all."²⁶

Suffering to Christ. A theology of suffering was articulated in 1884 by William Booth in an article simply titled, "Go!" This article appeared in the Salvation Army's international periodical *All the World*. Booth explains that it is the task of all Christians, as expressed in Mark 16:15, to "Go into all the world." He explains that "Going meant suffering to Christ: it meant this to the Apostles. They went to the world: this meant going to scorn, poverty, stripes, imprisonment, death—cruel deaths. If you go, you will have to suffer; there is no other way of going."²⁷ What is implied by the three words "suffering to Christ"?

In this quote William Booth explains that intrinsic to Christian life is suffering. When Christ called his followers to "go," he expected that they would suffer because of their going. Hence, Jesus thought going into the world meant suffering for the person who answered the call. Just as going meant suffering to the disciples, going meant suffering to Jesus. Booth demonstrates how the apostles followed this call and Salvationists

²² Booth, *The General's Letters, 1885* (London: International Headquarters, 1890), 20.

²³ Quoted in Allen Satterlee, *Notable Quotables: A Compendium of Gems from Salvation Army Literature* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army, 1985), 211.

²⁴ Fredrick Booth-Tucker, "They Bid Me Choose an Easier Path," *The Song Book of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1987), 215.

²⁵ Booth, *Salvation Soldierly*, 44.

²⁶ Booth, *The General's Letters*, 5.

²⁷ William Booth, *The General's Letters*, 5.

should expect to find the same suffering along their way. The metaphor of a Salvation Army enabled the reader to understand the seriousness of Jesus' call.

Another way to understand William Booth's challenge in this article is through Booth's social theology that valued all of humanity as created in the image of God. "Going" then means serving Christ in the form of hurting individuals. If the Spirit of Christ resides in individual Salvationists, then Christ suffers with these individuals. Conversely, if the people the Army serves in the "slums" cause soldiers to suffer, then their suffering is to Christ. Booth saw his service not only *for* Christ, but *to* Christ as well. When Christian soldiers are serving their neighbors, they are serving Christ. For such a mandate consider Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40, "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (NRSV). Catherine Booth, who has been called the "cofounder"²⁸ of the Salvation Army, also recognized the significance of suffering with the poor: "Oh, for grace always to see Him where He is to be seen, for verily, flesh and blood doth not reveal this unto us! Well ... I keep seeing Him risen again in the forms of drunkards and ruffians of all descriptions."²⁹

In the same way, Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) redefines the way that humanity looks at "neighbors." William Booth recognized the importance of this passage for early Salvation Army hospitality ministries as he framed this pericope in sacramental terms, (which is somewhat ironic for a non-practicing-sacramental denomination), by urging soldiers "to observe continually the sacrament of the Good Samaritan."³⁰

Such an incarnational perspective shaped a distinct missional ecclesiology. Similarly, Bramwell Booth illustrated:

When I see the poor, shivering creatures gathered in the warmth and comfort of our Shelters, and the famished ones in the Food Depots, and the workless hard at work, and the lost and lonely in the bright helpfulness of the Women's and Children Homes, and the prisoners—set in happy families in our Harbours of Refuge, my heart sings for joy, and I say, "*Is not this the Christ come again?*" If he came now to London and Boston and New York and Melbourne and Tokio [sic], as He came to Jerusalem and Nazareth and Caesarea, would He not want to do exactly this? I believe He would!³¹

"Suffering to Christ" is a theme that encapsulates William Booth's ecclesiology in a unique and powerful way. Suffering was an intrinsic aspect of the identity of Salvationists. Booth saw this as a call of Christ, and his incarnational Army saw the need of seeing Christ in those whom they served. If one was merely called to suffer "for"

²⁸ See Roger J. Green, *Catherine Booth: Cofounder of the Salvation Army* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

²⁹ Catherine Booth, quoted in Bramwell Booth, *These Fifty Years* (London: Cassel, 1929), 45-46.

³⁰ William Booth, quoted in Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army*, 3:59; Fairbank, *Booth's Boots: Social Service Beginnings in The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army, 1983), 184; Philip Needham, "Towards A Re-Integration of the Salvationist Mission," in *Creed and Deed: Toward a Christian Theology of Social Services in The Salvation Army*, ed. Waldron (Oakville, Ontario: The Salvation Army, 1986), 14.

³¹ Bramwell Booth: *Papers on Life and Religion* (London: The Salvation Army, 1920), 125.

Christ, then obligation might overcast a call that is vital to the Salvationist's identity. Instead, Salvationists suffered because they were Christians; they suffered because they served others as if they were Christ himself. [2014 retrospect-This interpretation arose because I misread this article and its awkward grammar, still it did provide a way to understand how early Salvationist utilized passages like Matthew 25:40.]

Suffering Salvationists. The stark change that occurred in the lives of sinners who joined the ranks of the Salvation Army had an impact on social and economic factors of many given areas. The business of bars and pubs dropped drastically with the absence of their best customers who were now abstaining soldiers.³² There are many incidents in the Army's history of mobs forming to combat its open-air meetings. In the 1880s, opposition groups were organized and often called *Skeleton Armies*.³³ Often the *Skeleton* constituents were the bar managers and brewers of a given town. In one case the *Skeletons* were a full fledged copy of the Salvation Army soldiers with their own uniforms, flags, and bass drums. In 1882, at the height of the Army's expansion, the Army officially noted that 669 soldiers and officers had been "knocked down, kicked, or otherwise brutally assaulted," forty percent of these people being women and children.³⁴

The salvation war produced two persons promoted to glory, two martyrs, Captain Sarah Broadbent and Captain Susan Beaty. In 1884, while serving in Worthing, Broadbent decided to hold a prayer meeting instead of an open air meeting since the open airs had caused pandemonium in her town. That evening the mobs were surprised not to find the local corps in the streets. Sandall described tragic events that followed: "[The opposition group] marched to Showham [the location of the corps in the town], smashed all the windows of the corps hall there, and in the course of the rioting the officer in charge (Captain Sarah J. Broadbent) received her death-blow from a flying stone."³⁵ Beaty's promotion was more gradual. In the midst of a mob attack in Hastings, she was repeatedly kicked; her death in 1889 was said to have been caused by internal injuries from the incident.³⁶ Throughout the next several years Salvationists sustained multiple injuries in the heat of the battle--from Samuel Logan Brengle, who was sidelined for being hit in the head by a brick, to Major Euguen Nsingaini who in 1998, during his country's civil war, was gunned down in the Congo because of his participation in a peace initiative.³⁷

If there is any theological way of understanding this commitment to the battle, it is through the Salvation Army's Wesleyan roots. The passionate way that Salvationists

³² See Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army*, 2:170-198.

³³ For more information on these groups, see Glen K. Horridge, *The Salvation Army Origins and Early Days: 1865-1900* (Surrey: Ammonite, 1993), 92-100. He explains that an opposition group in Whitechapel called themselves the *Unconverted Salvation Army*. Similarly in Guildford, a group called itself the "Red (-Nose) Army."

³⁴ Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army*, 2:181. Sandall explains that these numbers are likely incomplete.

³⁵ Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army*, 2:180-181.

³⁶ See Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 224-227.

³⁷ *The Officer* (December, 1998).

lived and proclaimed the doctrine of holiness sustained them during the fight. The Army took the torch from John Wesley, who had understood that holiness was social and personal. Totally loving God and neighbor was possible only through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Brengle appropriately underscores a Salvationist ecclesiology of suffering when he said the Lord's "greatest servants have often been the greatest sufferers. They have gathered up in themselves and endured all the pains and woes, sorrows and agonies, fierce and cruel martyrdoms of humanity, and so have been able to minister to all its vast and pitiful needs, and comfort its voiceless sorrow."³⁸

Evaluating the Army's Ecclesiology

William Booth's ecclesiology was one that dramatically called the church to consider its call to mission and expect to suffer while going about that mission. Such an ecclesiological understanding was developed as the eschatologically focused Army understood itself to be in a battle to save the world. The kingdom of Christ and the gospel of that kingdom found a new expression in Booth's Salvation Army. When looking critically at the life of William Booth, it is easy to see that he was an imperfect man. His autocratic leadership was a weakness that expressed itself in poor relationships with three of his children who left the ministry of the Salvation Army. Another weakness is that at times his eschatology verged on viewing the Army as the sole agent for bringing in the millennium.

Theologically, there are many ways that Booth was "rough around the edges." One area, however, where he was theologically on target was his ecclesiology. His doctrine of the church incorporated the place of the church as a restoring agent in the world. This eschatologically motivated ecclesiology, which called people to suffer for Christ, is a rich theological heritage that the contemporary Army has inherited. Evaluating William Booth's ecclesiology today is a task that is of great significance for the contemporary Salvation Army as it seeks an historically informed mission. Scholars of the Salvation Army often assume that, because Booth's ecclesiology was conditioned by his eschatology, his ecclesiology was insufficient. This study is a call for a revision of the Salvation Army's historiography.

Contemporary scholars do not always view the impact of William Booth's eschatology in a positive light. Some assume that his eschatology, particularly his understanding of the millennium, created a deficient ecclesiology. Such a position is taken by Salvation Army scholar Roger Green³⁹ who concludes that the contemporary Salvation Army has inherited a "weak ecclesiology."⁴⁰ He asserts that Booth's ecclesiology was weak for two reasons: his postmillennialism and the distancing of the Army from the institutional church after the failed merger with the Church of England. The latter claim is not being

³⁸ Samuel Logan Brengle, quoted in Sally Chesham, *Peace Like a River* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army, 1981), 123.

³⁹ The scholarship of Roger Green has been very important to me. Many Salvationists around the world are the beneficiaries of his research. The discussion that follows does not reduce my admiration for his scholarship.

⁴⁰ Roger J. Green, "Facing History: Our Way Ahead for a Salvationist Theology." *Word and Deed* 1:2 (May, 1999): 23-39, 29.

challenged here; rather, the question is Green's claim that Booth's postmillennialism contributed to a weak ecclesiology. Green states: "Postmillennial theology does not comport well with a strong ecclesiology, especially when one's doctrine of the Church is seen primarily through Army lenses."⁴¹

A definition is needed for the term "weak." It appears that Green is suggesting that "weak" is a lack of strength. His argument that the contemporary Army has inherited a weak ecclesiology seems to have two points of contention. His first argument is that postmillennialism does not create a lasting ecclesiology because it supposedly did not plan for the future. His second argument is that Booth was ecclesiastically inconsistent in his definitions of the Army's *raison d'être*. Green's second claim demands a distinction between ecclesiastical structures and ecclesiology. Booth was inconsistent when speaking ecclesiastically. His unpredictable ecclesiastic language refers more to the organization of the movement, whereas, suggesting that Booth possessed a "weak ecclesiology" is proposing that he had an incomplete doctrine of the church. Green's final point of argument is that Booth's ecclesiology is weak because it de-emphasized ecclesiastical structures. In fact, Booth was proposing an alternative structure that was far more effective than the ecclesiastical structures of his day.

The pragmatically-minded William Booth saw a great eschatological goal. That goal was saving the world. Despite Green's claim that postmillennialism does not comport well with a sturdy ecclesiology, the opposite can be seen in the denominations that were birthed as a result of the nineteenth-century holiness revival.⁴² For instance, the Wesleyan and Free Methodist churches were born out of desire to see ecclesiology matched with mission in the world. These denominations are noted for their stands against slavery.

William Booth was continually defining the early Army, his letters and sermons giving regular emphasis (sometimes *overemphasis*) to what it meant to be a Salvationist. This provided an ecclesial self-understanding for the young Army. An implicit ecclesiology that lacks classical formulation does not necessarily mean a "weak" ecclesiology. Booth's writings are saturated with ecclesiological statements concerning the mission and aims of the Army. What is implicit is direct theological definition about ecclesiology. His inconsistent ecclesiastical jargon does not negate the content and missional purpose of those statements.

Sociologically this creates difficulties in identifying the Salvation Army as a "church" or "sect" along the lines of the typology of Ernst Troeltsch and others. Sociological difficulties do not, however, necessitate theological deficiency.⁴³ At the forefront of Roger Green's argument is his desire to see the Army move toward church-like

⁴¹ Roger Green, "Facing History: Our Way Ahead for a Salvationist Theology," 29.

⁴² See Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1976).

⁴³ See Roland Robertson's helpful study of the Salvation Army using this typology in "The Salvation Army: the Persistence of Sectarianism," in Brian R. Wilson, ed. *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1967), 49-105; Andrew Mark Eason, "The Salvation Army in Late-Victorian Britain: The Convergence of Church and Sect," *Word and Deed* 5:2 (May 2003): 29-50.

categories. Green notes, "I have long been convinced that the only way to approach a correct historical analysis that leads to a truthful institutional self-understanding is to impose the sect/church distinctions developed in the discipline of sociology upon ourselves."⁴⁴ He then encourages Salvationists to accept the "historical fact" that the Army has moved from being a sect to a church and should hence evaluate what sectarian distinctives should be maintained.⁴⁵

In contrast to Green, I assert the following. Missionally-directed movements are not governed by sociology; they are motivated by God's word, which challenges them to be an active body "preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and meeting human needs in his name without discrimination."⁴⁶ When mission directs the church, it forms an alternative ecclesiology that is often more in tune with Scripture than the sociologically classified "church" or "denomination."

To criticize William Booth's ecclesiology as "weak" is to force his missionally-directed movement into a box of intellectual abstractions. Booth's ecclesiology was missional. He was unconcerned with theological abstractions and discussions. Philip Needham's book *Community in Mission* rightly places a Salvationist ecclesiology in the context of mission. The ecclesiological thesis of this work is that "a Salvationist ecclesiology stands as a reminder to the Church that its mission in the world is primary and that the life of the Church ought largely to be shaped by a basic commitment to mission."⁴⁷ A missional ecclesiology is exactly where the Army should be if it is to be at all true to its historical and theological heritage.

Because Green uses the term "weak," it is difficult to distinguish what ecclesiology he is assuming to be adequate for the contemporary Salvation Army. He maintains that the Salvation Army must embrace a view of history that is different from Booth's postmillennialism.⁴⁸ He proposes that the Army shed any trace of postmillennialism and suggests that Salvationists embrace the biblical language of the Kingdom of God when looking at history. This proposal is warmly welcomed, for such language is indeed something that the contemporary Army should embrace, but the spirit of William Booth's millennialism is not to be set against this language. When moving toward the future, the Army must evaluate its heritage in order to progress with historically directed confidence. It seems that the ecclesiological heritage that William Booth fashioned for his Army is something that should be maintained. Why? Because this ecclesiology keeps the Salvation Army focused on mission and keeps alive and inter-related the themes of suffering and holiness.

⁴⁴ Green, "Facing History," 29.

⁴⁵ The chief sectarian distinction Green opposes is postmillennialism. He maintains that the Army should retain wearing the uniform as a symbol of the sacramental life. See Green, "Facing History," 30-31.

⁴⁶ *The Salvation Army 2004 Year Book* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 2004), iii.

⁴⁷ Philip Needham, *Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army Supplies, 1987), 4-5.

⁴⁸ Green illustrates, "The postmillennial theology of the Booth's simply will not do here [when trying to posit an understanding of the future]." "Facing History," 36.

Conclusion

William Booth's functional, biblically based, missional ecclesiology was formed alongside the metaphor of an Army. This metaphor created new ways for the mission of God to be expressed in the world, particularly as it related to suffering. Booth called the Salvation Army to suffer as it lived out its ecclesiology; suffering went hand in hand with being a soldier. The pulse of this ecclesiology was William Booth's eschatology. His impassioned desire to win the world for Jesus produced a missional ecclesiology. He saw the church as necessarily active, commenting: "...there can be no question that it is of God that those who are on the Lord's side should aim at this great and godlike purpose [defeat the devil and deliver souls from hell], and direct and devote all their energies to its accomplishment."⁴⁹ The question is not whether the Army has a "weak" or "strong" ecclesiology, but whether it is faithful to Jesus and the gospel of his kingdom and whether it is functional today. The contemporary Salvation Army has inherited an ecclesiology from William Booth that is faithful in these things—this legacy is worthy of the Army's time and celebration.

⁴⁹ William Booth, "A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ," *The Founder Speaks Again* (London: The Salvation Army, 1960), 49.

Why Living Like Jesus Means Justice For Women

by Major Danielle Strickland

Women's role in church is often a hot topic for debate. But Danielle Strickland argues that this isn't just an academic issue, it's a question of justice.

The Church is made up of people who follow Jesus. They are supposed to represent God on the earth, which is an amazing opportunity because what I know about God is awesome.

This wasn't always the case of course. I used to think that God and his followers were small minded, rule-based, hypocrites out to destroy everybody's fun. But then I had an encounter with Jesus and it changed everything. I realised that God is love.

Not just a sappy 'holds your hand and wipes your tears' sort of love but a 'knocks 'em out, takes it for the team' kind of liberating love that empowers people. The kind of love that kicks at the darkness until it bleeds daylight.

So, representing that kind of a God is an awesome opportunity. The trouble is we often get it wrong. We are so established in our own culture that we represent our own interests and our own ideas instead of representing God. It's easy to do. How we value women in the church is a great example of that.

The Bible kicks off with the incredible story of creation. How we were made. This matters. It speaks into our value as human beings. It speaks deeply into our hearts about who we are, what makes us unique, and why we are even here on this planet. It tells us of the nature of God who created humanity in his image – 'male and female he created them'. God made women and men together as a representation of himself on the earth. Then he gave them the job of taking care of the earth together.

What's so amazing about this grounding story of our purpose and value is that when that story was written women were not even considered people, let alone equal to men. Second class through and through.

See, society has always told its own story about our value and worth, but God tells a different story – a true story – one that sets us free. Women were and are made equal with men and all of us are made in God's image. This is the very first revelation of God in the Bible; that's how important this is.

So, the Church really needs to represent God well in its modeling of women's equality. But it often fails to do this. Often, the Church models the exact opposite by continuing to teach and encourage the inequality of women through limited roles, narrow theology, and a lack of concern about the treatment of those outside its own walls.

I've listened to some awful stories recently about how women have been treated by people who say they represent God. What a false representation; definitely not what God intended.

When Jesus showed up on earth, people were doing just that. When he arrived, he found a culture where women were treated as property, had limited access to education, had no leadership possibilities in the community, and were often the receivers of abuse and exploitation at the hands of 'God's people'. Jesus chose to confront this terrible misrepresentation of God by living a different reality.

Jesus was a feminist. He treated women with equality and honour in a culture that dismissed and abused them. He called them to be disciples and leaders, givers and evangelists, apostles and teachers and preachers – he healed, empowered and involved women in his 'Kingdom come' strategy on the earth. The Early Church was filled with women and they tried to model God to the people around them. No one had any special status, whatever their race, tribe, background, wealth and gender. These were nonissues in their new community, this community called Church.

So what happened?

In a word – sin. Sin isn't something pleasurable that God doesn't want you to do. It's that deep thing inside all of us that is broken. It's the selfish, greedy thing that wants to be better than others – to push ourselves forward even at other people's expense. Sin doesn't just play out in individual's lives, but in society too. We craft our cultures around our sin, and exclusion is one of ways we see it. Around the world, women remain excluded from education, resources, opportunities, freedom, and equality. In the Church they are often excluded from leadership, opportunities to use their gifts, influence or freedom.

The root of the inequality and exclusion experienced by women in the Church is the same as in society at large. Many, many women around the globe suffer terrible abuses because of the deep inequality that runs through the heart of all suffering in the world and sadly, many women in the Church have to fight against the inequality that limits their potential. Such injustice is sin. And sin will always deeply misrepresent God.

How do we spark change?

The best way I've discovered to change things is this: live like Jesus. Live a life that is free from having to prove yourself. Live a life that celebrates freedom and empowers others. Live a life of beauty and healing and hope. Live a life that loves no matter what the culture, gender, background or reputation of the people you are with.

That, my friends, is the best way to represent God on the earth. And what it looks like is equality – for everyone. That's good news for women. But it's also good news for anyone suffering from injustice. It's the news that the Church has been called to preach

to the entire earth – the good news of the gospel – that God is love and it's a fierce, wild love that will rid the earth of injustice and set the captives free.

Let's start living that way today.

Do you agree with Danielle? Carry on the conversation with friends or in your youth group!

Want to read more? Danielle suggests:

- Half The Sky
by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn
- The Liberating Truth: how Jesus empowers women
by Danielle Strickland
- Christians for Biblical Equality
cbeinternational.org
- Why Not Women?
by Loren Cunningham and David Hamilton
- The Blue Parakeet
by Scot McKnight

Dear Salvation Army: 4 Sins No One Is Talking About

by Captain Scott Strissel

We must be very diligent in our understanding of sin. Sin is not to be trifled with.

At the same time judgment is certainly not ours either. Although we are not ultimate judges over sin, we are called to live a life worthy of our calling. (Eph. 4:1)

I do not wish to sound 'holier than thou' in this article. Please don't take it that way. These are struggles that I face and I know others do too.

In the army we wage a daily battle on the front lines and we seek to help pull people up out of the raging waters of sin and death. As soldiers for God we must be alert and careful that while we pull souls from these depths that we do not get pulled back into those dangerous riptides ourselves. Sin and the temptation of sin still makes us vulnerable to falling away from the fellowship of God! This should make us more aware of the trappings of sin in our lives both as an individual soldier as well as a collective army.

That being said, I would like to explore 4 sins no one seems to be talking about much these days. I am sure someone out there will be eager to point out that *they* have been talking about these, but by and large these specific sins seem to go unspoken, unnoticed, or perhaps ignored...we can't ignore these anymore. Please also note that I am not pointing fingers here either, for to do so would also indite me and I would merely seek to cast light on these four topics as we prayerful and even personally address them in our own lives.

4 Sins No One Is Talking About:

1. Complacency -



"We shall have no better conditions in the future if we are satisfied with all those which we have at present." – Thomas Edison

Perhaps we've never looked at it this way before, but complacency can be a sin if it impedes us in the present and the future! Is the mission of our army, not just internationally but most importantly locally, frustrated by complacency as we hang our laurels on what we have already accomplished? Complacency has a way of producing tunnel vision that blinds us from present needs of souls at our doors and in our communities. Forgive me for sounding calloused but we cannot expect the lost, poor, hurting and spiritually in need to simply come to our doors.

No! We must go to them. We must go to them with love, compassion, care and support. We must go to them and employ present evangelical, relevant/relational tools.

Complacency can render us impotent in mission. Complacency can, if we are not careful, lead to apathy in relation to others. Complacency is a sin when it prevents us from fulfilling our calling to the Lord because we cannot train our eyes on the present when they are fixed on the past.

2. Exclusivity -



This is a very real sin that can enter our corps and offices in seemingly innocuous ways. We find commonality with friends, family and others that we share common interests, but what happens when someone does not look like us? What happens when someone has different viewpoints or hobbies or even biblical understandings? Do we ostracize them or do we include them regardless of many differences?

Being “exclusive” is the opposite of “inclusive”, it takes the form in our corps that separates “Us” from “Them” just because people do not look like us, or because they don’t talk like us, or

even live like “we” think they should.

As an Army, we began as “the Christian Mission” in order to reach those who were not welcome in the church of the day. In part, we began because exclusivity was a real issue in Victorian England...has exclusivity entered our Army today? How do we combat this sin? Yes, I believe it to be a sin because it can prevent others from joining our fellowship of believers on the basis of appearance, present lifestyle, or other things which are not like “us”.

We must be ever aware of the temptation of separation from “those” people. Jesus died for the whosoever, not just the select few, the “holy” few, those that look like “us”...be careful dear soldier for this sin has a very slippery slope.

3. Coveting



We understand what “coveting” is, but do we know that it can exist in our Army? Soldiers can covet what other corps have that they do not. Officers can covet appointments that seem better than where they are now. We run the risk of spending so much time peering over the fence at what others

have that we lose our way and our effectiveness in our present mission field.

Coveting can deprive us from appreciating what we do have in our corps and in our ministries. We can lose our gratefulness and appreciation to a Mighty God who provides for the faithful. Coveting is a sin in our hearts and in our ministries if we allow it to take root and fester. Be very aware so as to not fall into begrudging what we do not have and what others might possess. Faithfulness to God and to His ministry here and now requires us to look away from what others have and are doing and refocus on what He has appointed us to do right here and right now!

4. Gluttony



"Gluttony is an emotional escape, a sign something is eating us." - Peter De Vries

I might be scratching a personal itch that might hurt...sorry. This is personal to me as well. Why do so many Army events (at least in the Western world) focus on food, even to the point of fixation? Another component to this is that the life of a soldier and officer can be stressful and can consume many hours of the day. So following a long day we rush out to the closest fast-food establishment and pig out on the comfort foods that help us to drown our sorrows. I am sorry if that hit a little too close to home...it did for me.

Many lives have been shortened because of this issue. Dare I call it an often sub consciousness sin issue. We eat our troubles away. We eat the unhealthy foods because they are the quickest and most affordable to us. We consume foods to make us happy when things are anything but happy.

I recognize that there are those who struggle with depression, eating disorders and other physical/psychological struggles that can lead to over-consumption. We must be gracious and careful not to judge those who endure trials unknown to us. Personally, I have struggled with this sin issue in my life (yes I call it a sin issue). I don't have some of the above physical/psychological issues but I have, at times, been a glutton.

Two reasons gluttony is a sin in our army and should be address:

- 1) it can shorten the lifespan of soldiers and officers who over-indulge, and cause multiple health problems and issues which can be avoidable.
- 2) Our testimony and witness to others: I am not saying that being overweight or indulging in some comfort food now and then can hurt your testimony, but long term evidence of gluttony can. If we cannot abstain through controlled self-denial now and then how can we preach and teach about self-control and discipline to others?

Wrapping up these sins...

I understand some of these might be hot button topics, or perhaps a scab was just picked...sorry. Again, it is not my place or anyone else's place to judge. I simply write this out of my own personal convictions and certain struggles I have faced while a soldier and officer in this army. Dare I even add Gossip is another huge sin that we often talk about (pun intended) but seldom truly confront and uproot the problem. There are other such struggles that we face as a body of believers and as individual soldiers. We should be prudent, prayer and diligent in listening to the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us one person at a time.

"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." 1 John 5:4

Something more for our army world to ponder today, to God be the glory!

Blessing In Fellowship

by Major Robert Evans

While reading one of my text books for this semester of study I stumbled across a very interesting context for the word "blessing." The author asserts that, "Blessing in the Bible is something that unites men and women with God and each other and brings them into a permanent fellowship" (Paul E. Pierson, The Dynamics of Christian Mission).

In this context, the meaning implies that blessing has little to do with individual "divine favour and protection" (as defined in the Oxford dictionary) and more to do with divine communion that fosters unity and intimacy between God and His people - "*I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - I in them and you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity*" (John 17:22-23). Immediately after reading this I began to wonder how this definition of blessing would apply to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12 where being 'blessed' is the central theme...

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The blessing of the *kingdom of heaven* is fellowship within God's community.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

The blessing of *comfort* is fellowship with God's Spirit

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

The blessing of *inheritance* is fellowship in God's kingdom

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

The blessing of *abundance* is fellowship at God's table

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

The blessing of *mercy* is fellowship with God's heart

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

The blessing of *intimacy* is fellowship in God's glory

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

The blessing of *adoption* is fellowship in God's family

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The blessing of the *kingdom of heaven* is fellowship within God's community

Blessed are those who live in complete unity with God and His people, who are embraced by the love of the Father, who experience the grace of Jesus Christ and who enjoy fellowship with Holy Spirit!

- See more at: <http://ephesiansfour12.blogspot.ca/#sthash.a04samg6.dpuf>

Scripture Art

by Captain Catherine Fitzgerald



Perhaps you've seen this piece of artwork before. This is by Jan Van Eyck, a Flemish painter from the 15th century. For me, when I look at this picture I see two nice, young adults. I notice her heavy dress and the man's funny hat. I see the cute dog and the weird shoes. By the time I've noticed these things and I'm nearly ready to move on to the next piece in the gallery.

This is how most of us look at scripture. We read it and we get the gist of the story and we think we understand it all. We assume we can intuitively know where the story is going and what the application is for our 21st century lives. But have you ever considered that scripture demands a significantly deeper look than just getting the gist of it? A casual glance may limit what God really wants to reveal to us.

Reading scripture is a lot like looking a piece of art. I know very little about art. In fact, everything I know about art I learned in an art appreciation class 13 years ago. When I took that class, I realized how much more depth and meaning a piece of art could hold when looked at with a master artist. The master artist noticed so much more. They soaked in the whole painting and not just the central figures. They noticed the depth of colors and the way light reflected through the picture. They noticed the texture of the floorboards and the perspective that the artist chose. When looking at this picture above have you ever noticed where their eyes are fixed and wondered why? Have you ever considered why they are standing in a bedroom? Did you notice what the weather is like and what that could mean for the painting? Did you ever ask, "Why did the artist choose to paint this?" If I were a master artist, I could keep taking you deeper and deeper, but I'm not.

I have, however, gained some mastery of Biblical hermeneutics and I've come to appreciate more and more its shared qualities with art. How often do we look at scripture and notice just the main story without ever noticing the details the author includes? How often have we missed the greater context in which the story is placed? Are we really asking enough questions of the text to get sufficiently deep that we can even begin to assume we might be able to know what God wants from us in the 21st century? We know the main characters and the main events. But how do we begin to look at it deeper? Without a master theologian right next to us, we need to learn to be the master interpreters. For me, I want to be that key that unlocks the depth and beauty of scripture for someone else.

There are many different tools that can be used to help you as you study scripture. You might find out more about precept ministry or inductive Bible study. These type of

studies will give you the tools you need to discover the truths of scripture for yourself and notice every detail, some significant and some insignificant. The problem with skipping over the insignificant details for the significant ones are that you don't know which are which until you considered them all. This process can be tedious and time consuming but is ultimately hugely rewarding and absolutely necessary if we are going to truly understand what we believe and why we believe it.

Take time with your scripture. Soak it in and examine it. Take it out and look at it from every angle. Put it back in and see where it falls in the life of the main character and in the greater story of scripture. Learn as much as you can about the author and consider why he would write these words. Only after we have done all of that can we begin to know what the scripture might mean. Pray fervently that the Holy Spirit will guide you to understanding.

Without a trained eye, I could easily glance at this painting and never notice it's a masterpiece but a trained eye will know immediately that it is a masterpiece and then spend hours learning from the artist by gazing at his work. In this picture, if you look long and close enough, you may notice that you can learn something about the artist himself in the mirror in the background. As we gaze into scripture may we look close enough and long enough to see with clarity the truth that God reveals to us.

Cracked Pots: Give us sincere hearts

by Jonathan Evans

"I Would Be True"

I bring thee, dear Jesus, my all, Nor hold back from thee any part; Obedient to thy welcome call. I yield thee the whole of my heart.

O speak, O speak while before thee I pray! And, O Lord, just what seemeth thee good Reveal, and my heart shall obey.

Perverse, stubborn once was my will. My feet ran in self-chosen ways; Thy pleasure henceforth to fulfill, I'll spend all the rest of my days.

The doubts that have darkened my soul, The shame and the fears that I hate, O banish, and bid me be whole, A clean heart within me create

O give me a heart that is true, Unspotted and pure in thy sight, A love that would anything do, A life given up to the fight! (SASB, 422)

The word sincere comes from the Latin, *sincerus*. The prefix *sin* means without while *cere* means wax. Pottery, as ubiquitous as plastic in our day, during biblical times was a major trade. Potters who made imperfect pots with cracks or rough edges would fill in these imperfections with wax to pass them off as high craftsmanship. However, careful potters utilizing the finest clay and techniques would scribe *sincerus* on the bottom to distinguish the vessel as perfect. To test the quality of the vessel a pot could be held to a flame where the heat and radiance of the fire would melt the wax and expose any imperfection. *εἰλικρινής* (*eilikrinēs*) is the Greek word Paul uses in Philippians 1:10 to denote a pure or sincere heart,

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be **pure** and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11, ESV).

εἰλικρινής connotes that which is examined in the sunlight is determined to be pure and clear. In light of this I propose these questions: Do we Salvationists cultivate a life in the light of Jesus to be pure and blameless? And what difference does this mean for us?

A senior officer tells about meeting with his Divisional Commander at officer's camp. Another obscure and seemingly simple officer happened to walk by. "There is a man in whom there is no deceit!" exclaimed the DC. Intentionally echoing Jesus' one time observation of Nathanael in John's gospel,^[1] the DC was pointing out this seemingly insignificant comrade had something in him that would escape human perceptions. Like Nathanael, this officer was a character who "tells it like it is." Nathanael seems

everything but innocent at first, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46)^[2]. However, Jesus sees something more in him,

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” (John 1:47-48, ESV)

As Nathanael is held up to the glory of Jesus in this gospel it appears that Jesus has a favourable accommodation for him linked to his examination “under the fig tree.” What exactly is the connection? Every religious Hebrew would desire to be described in this way:

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (Psalm 32:1-2, ESV)

It would be exactly under the fig tree where Nathanael would be seen before Yahweh, reading Torah.^[3] Jesus’ word of knowledge highlighting Nathanael’s whereabouts during a specific and memorable encounter demonstrates that Jesus himself is God. Nathanael again is encountering Yahweh, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:49, *ESV*). Nathanael was invited to “Come and See” (John 1:46) only to find that Jesus had seen him and invites him to greater encounters, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (John 1:51). Just as Jacob at Bethel encountered Yahweh where angels “were ascending and descending” (cf. Gen 28:12), Nathanael will discover “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” And “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Gen 28:16 – 17). Sincerity begins and ends not with moralism but with encountering God. Indeed Jesus is “the gate of heaven,” and “the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Nathanael’s sincere heart is a result of his devotion and encounter with the One who sees all and forgives all. In the light of Jesus our imperfections and sins will be stripped away. In encountering the consuming fire of God our imperfections are clearly seen and we are left as clear, sincere pots: vulnerable, exposed but not burned.

The Salvation Army has a deep tradition of encountering Jesus in humility and personal searching, one that General and Commissioner Rader advanced in the genesis of the Spiritual Life Commission. John Wesley was adamant that the grace of God is continually experienced and transformative in the Christian’s life:

And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: there is a *real* as well as a *relative* change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel “the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto

us”; producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money, together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."^[4]

The experience of God's grace is a yearning within to experience and participate in the love of God over pleasures of sin. It is no wonder then that Wesleyans cultivate a strict observance of self-examination. We do not encounter Christ with cowardice and shame but in the light and hope of being renewed into the image of God. Wesley and William Booth encouraged their people to pour over self-examination questions.^[5] The pure and blameless life is not one without error, ignorance or fault. Rather the Christian life is a continual trajectory to experience the love and grace of Christ. The necessary means of grace in pursuit of holiness is drawn into our soldier's covenant:

I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service and the reading of the Bible. I will make the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard for my life.^[6]

By daily setting time for spiritual disciplines soldiers will be held up in the light of Christ. It is in this humble position that we realize our dependence upon his grace and our fellow soldiers. Wesley was sure that salvation worked beyond the individual. He emphasized the communal nature of this journey, "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness. 'Faith working by love' is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection."^[7] James too emphasizes the discipline of confession, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (James 5:16, ESV). Where is the place for this in our corps meetings and discipleship programs? After our personal reflection do we have a "holy club" like Wesley; with fellow soldiers who can encourage and pray for us that we may be healed? Proper Christian living incorporates the whole person. Howard Snyder observes that the healing motif broadens a static protestant view of salvation:^[8]

Salvation-as-healing makes it clear that God is intimately concerned with every aspect of our lives; yet, biblically understood, it also makes clear that the healing we most fundamentally need is spiritual: Our relationship to God. Biblically grounded (and as Wesley understood it), the salvation-as-healing motif is no concession to pop psychology; it is an affirmation of who God is, what it means to be created in God's image, and what it takes for that image to be restored in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.^[9]

Paul's self-defense in 2 Corinthians 4 stands against Christian allusions of a triumphant Christian over the world. Paul's treasured gospel capitalizes the gracious nature that God forgives, sustains and empowers the Christian in the midst of suffering in the world:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Corinthians 4:7-12, ESV)

We ultimately are cracked pots and God doesn't want us to hide our inadequacies or faults. There is tremendous power that is exclusive to Christianity in the forgiveness of sins and fellowship in the Holy Spirit that are only evident when the weak fallibility of our mortality is admitted and God's life-giving and regenerating power is evident in us. So may we be sincere about our true selves, not hiding our weaknesses but in courageous faith holding our lives up to the light of Christ so that his healing power may be revealed.

Test for Self Examination

(The Salvation Army Orders and Regulations for Soldiers)

1. Am I habitually guilty of any known sin? Do I practise or allow myself in any thought, word, or deed which I know to be wrong?
2. Am I so the master of my bodily appetites as to have no condemnation? Do I allow myself in any indulgence that is injurious to my holiness, growth in knowledge, obedience, and usefulness?
3. Are my thoughts and feelings such that I should not be ashamed to hear them published before God?
4. Does the influence of the world cause me to act, feel, or say things that are unlike Christ?
5. Do my tempers cause me to act, or feel or say things that I see afterward are contrary to that love which I ought to bear always to those about me?
6. Am I doing all in my power for the salvation of sinners? Do I feel concern about their danger and pray and work for their salvation as if they were my children?
7. Am I fulfilling the vows I have made to God in my acts of consecration or at the Penitent Form?
8. Is my example in harmony with my profession?
9. Am I conscious of any pride or haughtiness in my manner or bearing?
10. Do I conform to the fashions and customs of this world or do I show that I despise them?
11. Am I in danger of being carried away with worldly desires to be rich or admired?

These are the 22 questions members of John Wesley's HOLY CLUB asked themselves each day during their private rations over 200 years ago.^[10]

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?

3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisee who despised the publican?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?

[1] Nathanael is also listed with the disciples in John 21:2.

[2] Notably, Nathanael is correct. Hebrews would know the Messiah was to emerge from Bethlehem not Nazareth. It is his generalization and obvious prejudice that are on display.

[3] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*. Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 358.

[4] Wesley, Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols., CD-ROM edition (Franklin: Providence House, 1994), 2: 158.

[5] Included in the Appendix are both William Booth and John Wesleys recommended examinations.

[6] The General of The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, (London: Salvation Books, 2010), 321.

[7] Wesley, *Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739) Works*. (Jackson) 14:321.

[8] Albert Outler agrees that the linkage between sola fides and sanctification is unprecedented in Protestantism. While the Reformers recognized the linkage, Wesley accounted for a regenerative process between justification and sanctification. Outler, *Wesleyan Spirit*, 39.

[9] Howard Snyder, "What is Unique About a Wesleyan Theology of Mission?" accessed July 28, 2011, available from http://www.wineskins.net/pdf/wesleyan_mission.pdf

[10] John D. Michael Henderson, *Wesley's Class Meetings: a Model for Making Disciples*, (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 118-19.

The Blight of liberal Theology

by Lieutenant Matt Kean

I have no doubt that some of my words will meet a degree of discomfort and perhaps reproof from within our organisation, but I am convinced it is important to say them. Besides that, they burn from a deep conviction and even if I kept quiet I'm inclined to think the stones might cry out.

The subject I want to address is a theological one, but I want to emphasize that it worries me most because I see its negative influence within The Salvation Army. I'm speaking of the very liberal theology which has been permitted to slither into the ranks of the army over the last few decades. It has allowed a succession of compromises to degrade the necessary black and white nature of Christ's gospel.

I use the word liberal intentionally without a capital 'L' simply because I only want to show how such a theology, by definition alone, has no place within a movement whose focal point is the salvation of souls. This kind of theology as it stands does not allow for the hard object lines of orthodox doctrine or any conservative interpretation of the Bible and has the strange ability to vilify the militant holiness ideology of our movement. I will leave its definition here, but I will go on to describe its character and substance. Again, please understand that I do not wish to single out any particular group, ministry, or method. My aim is to expose a specific theology (the liberal one) because of its direct contrast to Salvationism, that is all.

I recently read an excerpt from Begbie's "The Life of General William Booth – Vol. 2" which brought me to a sobering epiphany. In it Booth clearly marks out the brutal reality that every officer must embrace in order to even qualify as Salvationists:

Every officer must realise that men are perpetually perishing; that every moment of his life, when he wakes and when he sleeps, some soul somewhere passes into eternity. He should see that those who reject God's mercy are driven away in their wickedness – driven down to Hell. At death probation ends, the day of mercy closes, and there is no hope for evermore. They must perceive that in all this misery men apart from God are totally unable to help themselves, and that they get worse instead of better; that unless deliverance is obtained from outside themselves, they will perish. (p.150)

I petition every Salvationist, specifically my officer comrades, to truly consider the weight and severity of Booth's words and ask yourselves honestly, "Is the Army's theology still carrying this kind of urgency?" To be honest, I don't believe it is. In fact, I hear a very different kind of theology, a much milder, certainly much less frank theology too often being spoken and taught and written within much of the western Salvation Army, surely within my own territory. It prefers to soften, or belittle, the seriousness of our call to preach to the lost for their *salvation* – their eternal rescue from damnation and endless punishment! It's at the point now where even the term salvation must be clearly defined simply because liberal theology has been working so intentionally to try to redefine it. The same has been done to the word holiness. These two terms that

used to describe the bare bones of the Army are now so loosely defined that it's difficult to know what they mean to us anymore.

On the surface this liberal theology doesn't sound too bad, but underneath it holds the power to corrupt the very foundations of our devil-hating movement. You can bet your eyeballs that the corrosive liberal theology of which I am speaking will laud darling little terms like inclusivity and tolerance, distorting the love of God so that it allows for compromise. The severity of sin and its power to destroy the individual eternally is necessarily diminished, even ignored, because it makes the gospel too offensive and unpalatable to deliver. The salvation that is offered by this liberal theology is one that doesn't actually do anything to save the sinner. It merely allows the liberal Christian to remain in a false sense of spiritual accomplishment because the world has been able to see the gospel "made relevant", which is much more significant than *hearing* the truth.

I have witnessed this liberal theology personally, and I've seen it bring utter ruin to Salvation Army ministries, corps, certainly many social centres, sermons, soldiers, and officers. On top of that, it brings perhaps even a worse fate to the sinners that receive it. This liberal theology allows a drunk to remain a drunk, a prostitute to remain a prostitute, a thief to remain a thief, a doubter to remain a doubter, a sinner to remain a sinner, all the while encouraging them to profess that they are well saved and somehow changed within. Why? Well, one reason is because it places supreme value on an individual's sense of self-worth instead of on the cross of Christ and the righteousness of God. In other words, as long as a person realizes that there is a healthier way to live, that they have Salvation Army friends who support them, that God loves them and that they are especially valuable in His sight, then the gospel has been received into their heart successfully. The job is done. However, the New Testament gospel clearly shows this to be farcical.

Though this liberal theology (i.e. this theology of deception really) usually keeps up a pleasant façade, speaking constantly of the Christian's responsibility to *love* rather than judge, and frequently making strange inferences that God's grace and truth can be separated from one another, it ultimately forces Salvationists into believing a gospel of half-truths with all kinds of twists and distortions. The fact is that it's hardly more than an ideological merging of humanism and universalism. Basically, because there is a spark of good within humanity, which has been victimized by "that old devil in the garden", then we can encourage and prod all people to realise that they are worthy of God's redemptive plan in Christ, and furthermore, are already placed by His love safe within His family. They need only realise it! Sadly, almost every ministry endeavour that is fuelled by liberal theology begins from that erred premise – at best! When pushed to its logical end, this kind of theology presents the good heart of humanity as our starting point for the good news instead of the profound love and righteousness of God for a wicked, depraved, and rebellious race of selfish criminals. Certainly, nothing is farther from the profession of The Salvation Army's doctrinal position as well as the Bible (see TSA doctrine # 5, Rom. 3:10-18).

Having said this, I realize that to lump every theological deviation into the same pile would be silly. The truth is that not every Salvationist who questions or explores beyond the boundaries of conservative and traditional doctrinal interpretation has embraced this liberal theology and a compromised belief. Many are perhaps honestly searching for a deeper understanding of how the gospel of Christ can be implemented most effectively, and truly want those who are outside the family of God to come to Him for pardon. From this honest desire these Salvationists may choose to put less emphasis on some of the harder, more abrasive truths of Scripture (i.e. judgment, sin, punishment, etc.), perhaps allowing them to sit in the background, so to speak, in order to better illuminate the invitation of God offered to all people in Christ. I can understand that. That is not an example of the liberal theology that I am addressing. It might be argued that it isn't as militant as Booth's Salvationism, but it is nonetheless still Salvationism because it holds fast to the gospel's chief aim to win the sinful lost for the Lord and to convert them to saints eternally. In such cases, even though there is a softer presentation of the gospel, the harder truths remain uncompromised.

The liberal theology that is blighting The Salvation Army is far more wayward and seedy, and it is quite distinct. It's not just a passing stage of questioning that sparks some abstract thought for a while, but it is a settled belief that coddles doubt in the heart of the Salvationist rather than desires clarity. In its most blatant form it can be easily recognised by its unwillingness to attribute any definitive authority to the Bible and in turn gives utmost authority to the judgments of one's own intellect as well as to the intellect of other settled doubters. Although it claims the opposite, this kind of theology seems to have no desire for the absolute truth of Christ's gospel, but with a hungry fanaticism pursues any theological justification for one's doubt and/or lack of spiritual experience.

It's not very difficult to see why this is so detrimental in an organisation where one of the most significant priorities is to draw attention to the dire heart-condition of the human race in light of God's word. According to Scripture, the words of Christ in fact, humanity is condemned by its sin and preference toward darkness (John 3:19). It is only the authority of Scripture wielded by the heavily convicting hand of the Holy Spirit that could inspire anyone to accept something so dreadful. Every theology that will not give Scripture judging/discerning authority, especially in matters of the spirit and Spirit, sin and conscience, is inevitably left to construct its own conditions and definitions for such vital terms as truth, salvation, and holiness. Think about the consequences of that!

It can also be seen how this liberal theology is strangely opposed to deeming what is ungodly or wicked. Whether it be out of fear or just apathy, it is completely destructive when a Salvationist is unable to clarify *why* an individual needs to be saved by Jesus Christ from a sound Scriptural standpoint. The liberal theology to which I'm referring allows the gospel to be preached (not the real gospel of course) as a person's way to experience freedom and deliverance from the hells of this physical world, or maybe even healing from the scars of the past, but never explains that a person needs freedom and deliverance from their personal and inherent sin, as well as their own selfish desire to be their own God, which hold dreadful eternal consequences! Such immovable

Scriptural pillars like the Holy Spirit's conviction, genuine heartfelt repentance, and regeneration in a life of holiness are necessarily neglected by the theology that insists the sinner can be 'repaired' – the theology of Jesus Christ was one of new life which cannot come by any way other than death of the old life. The Salvation Army's theology has never been one that permits a repaired life, or a better life, but a *new* life! Our doctrines insist that we believe it is vital to salvation (TSA Doctrine # 7).

I firmly believe that if the leadership of The Salvation Army does not begin publically condemning this corrupt and Biblically heretical theology where it is evidenced, deliberately removing the veil of doctrinal ambiguity within our ranks, then this movement is in the same kind of danger as the House of Eli (1 Samuel 3:13-14). This Salvation war is too severe for us to be toying with any kind of message that bears no power to redeem. It is the New Testament gospel that is the power of God unto salvation for all who will believe (Romans 1:16) and unless we cling to it tightly with all our grit and heart, we hold nothing in our hands but chaff; it is *all* the power of God to save. Doves of sinners continue to die in chains of darkness and vice, my friends, going without hope and help into Hell's torment, but the Master has given us the One Key to their absolute freedom... and we must cling to it!

We are an army that has one supreme agenda: win as many sinners to Christ as we possibly can so that they will be prepared for the imminent Day of Judgment. Any theology that makes this mandate less intense or diminishes its urgency even slightly is nothing less than a rot and decay within our movement. It is a recipe for disaster! It is an act of treason; a resignation of our efforts to the kingdom of Satan. If Salvationists are not strong enough to refuse to entertain the corrosion of our original (and might I add, God-given) theology, then the army itself is doomed to suffer the fate of the people of Israel after the exile – a laughing stock to their enemies. I pray by God's glorious grace and truth that we as an Army will wise up to the seriousness of laying down our ruthless soul-saving theology and begin to embrace again what it means to be Salvationists so that we might once more be the cause of much fear in Hell.

Praise the Lord Jesus!

Back to School?

by Lieutenant Olivia Munn

So you're going back to school.
I don't envy you.

I remember that invigorating feeling – a combination of the fear of the unknown, and the unmistakable freshness of new shoes and a new year.
If you're moving to a new school, those feelings are multiplied.

This could be the best year of your life. This could be the year where you finally discover just the right group of friends, or finally figure out who you want to be.
Or this year could devastate you with pain you never anticipated.
Or, almost worse yet, this year could be just the same as any other. This year you might continue to feel the impossible pressure to fit in alongside the subtle pressure to just be yourself.

To be honest,
I wasn't strong enough for it.

There came a point in my teenage years when I told my mom, "I can't do it anymore."

I quit.
I dropped out of high school and my best friend's mother and father homeschooled me instead.

The next few years saved my life. You see, I didn't drop out of school because of academics; I dropped out because of the social games that I just couldn't win.
I was newly in love with Jesus, and I had a fresh awareness of my own weakness. I knew that, for me, going back to school would be like spiritual suicide. I needed the protection, the safety of being surrounded by people who loved God.

But you -
You are about to walk onto the battle field. You probably have no other choice.

I may have discredited myself by sharing my journey with you, but you'll have to trust me when I tell you that I've learned some things since high school.

1) Life is short, and every season in life is just a blink.

Yes, I am reminding you that YOLO. You know this as a sentiment, but it's worth reflecting on. You will only go to high school for a brief season, no matter how many times you stay back. This season will end. You are already in it, so do high school in such a way that you have no regrets.
What if you lived this season like it mattered for the next (because it does)?

2) Most people are broken, lonely, and confused, even if they don't seem like it.

Speaking of the "awkward stage" – almost everyone around you feels insecure at some point, even the most confident person. People are broken.

What if you approached your social interactions as a chance to bring healing to another soul, rather than a desperate attempt to gain approval?

3) We are on the offensive side of this war, not the defensive.

Yeah, I called high school a battle field, and I don't think I'm being dramatic by calling it that. But you are not a vulnerable child, huddled in fear of danger during this war.

You are a warrior.

Don't fear. If you are saved, then GOD lives inside of you.

You have an opportunity before you that I surrendered. You have an opportunity to infiltrate the lives of your classmates and friends, and to preach the gospel to them. You are in guerrilla warfare, undercover, and you wage war with love.

What if you captured a vision of your high school in love with Jesus, rather than fearing rejection for loving Him yourself?

"Pray that I may proclaim it (the gospel) clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."
(Colossians 4:4-6)

Communicating the Gospel in a Postmodern World

by Aaron White

The Church is called to communicate the gospel message into the postmodern world. This mission requires an understanding of the nature of culture, a dedication to the gospel, and a commitment to the Church's essential call to evangelism, social action and reconciliation. Since 2004 my wife and I have led *614 Vancouver*, a missional, incarnational, and activist-oriented Salvation Army Corps in a city that is on the cutting edge of postmodernity. We witness to the gospel in a neighbourhood that is shaped by poverty and pain, but which is also influenced by the larger cultural trends of early 21st century North America. The question of how the Church lives and speaks the gospel into this world directly impacts upon our daily lives.

Culture

To convey the gospel in the language of postmodernism, the Church must understand culture as "the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another."^[1] This includes history, language, media, beliefs and stories, which are transmitted by carriers such as education, industry, and government.^[2] Cultures are human creations, adaptable and unique to their times and places. The Church's mission is to present and challenge each unique culture with the gospel, as no worldly constructs are perfect, but neither are any impervious to the gospel. There are aspects of any culture that the Church must reject, others that it may use and fulfill, and still others that it actually creates.^[3]

The Church must further understand how Western culture developed historically. Christianity began as an oft-persecuted minority faith within a dominant pagan culture, trying to honour the law while challenging the truth claims, religious syncretism and immorality of pre-Constantinian Rome. The ascent of Emperor Constantine in 325 AD signaled the transition into the age of Christendom, which saw the union of Church and State power. When Rome fell, the Church continued shaping the emerging culture, eventually holding enormous temporal and spiritual power throughout the world. Late eighteenth century revolutions and Enlightenment thinking gave rise to modernism, a reaction to Christendom that elevated logic, reason, and science as the basis for all objective truth in the public realm, and relegated religion to the subjective private sphere.^[4] The Church's acquiescence to the plausibility structures of modernism led to fragmentation, the growth of theological rationalism, the waning of belief in revelation and miracles, the systematising of preaching, doctrine and organisation, and the acceptance of the privatisation of faith.^[5]

Postmodernism emerged from modernism in the late 20th century, introducing significant challenges and opportunities for the Church. Much of modernism's emphasis on technology, consumerism and individual sovereignty has been retained, but the prevailing belief in progress was shattered by the devastating wars, political crises and social inequalities of the twentieth century.^[6] There is a growing awareness that science and reason, while useful, cannot answer many of humanity's most important questions.

We are in a time of unprecedented depression, isolation, broken families, suicide, drug abuse, and therapy. Postmoderns, desperate for authentic meaning, are more open to public spirituality than were moderns. They are more willing to look to their feelings for wisdom, to try new experiences, and to tolerate beliefs that fall outside of scientific materialism, so long as they do not claim to be universally true.^[7]

This does not, however, mean that postmodern culture is Christian, or even religious. There are sharp distinctions made between religion and spirituality. Institutional religion is considered the preserve of dogma, authoritarianism, and control through totalising structures and stories. Spirituality, alternatively, is thought of as free, unbound to doctrinal or hierarchical organisation, drawing from whatever tradition suits the individual, and emphasising local stories. Postmoderns eschew modernity's standardisations in the areas of truth, art, education, commerce, relationships, and religion in favour of more eclectic and tailored approaches. Advertisers manipulate these postmodern trends by creating identity through customised consumerism and entertainment.^[8] The Church is therefore challenged to overcome serious biases against religion, but it also has the opportunity to bring genuine hope, good news, and spiritual fellowship to those who are suffering.

Vancouver is a clear example of the postmodern combination of pluralistic spirituality, tolerance, commerce, entertainment and technology. It is called "the youngest city in the world", intentionally cut off from history as it blends a multitude of cultures into an urban experience dedicated to being cool, fun and prosperous. The situation of the Church in Vancouver is similar in many ways to that of pre-Constantinian Rome: a generally disliked minority within a prosperous pagan society that mixes many philosophies and ideas of spirituality. Our society has already been through the experience of Christendom and modernity, and this process has indelibly shaped people's attitudes towards Christianity in particular. Vancouver is thus a post-religious city, where it is assumed that Christians are intolerant, ignorant, guilty of past abuses, and still seeking socio-political privilege and power.

614 Vancouver has been exploring Vancouver's culture in an effort to better communicate the gospel, particularly within the impoverished Downtown Eastside where we live and minister. We do not reject or separate from the cultures around us, but to try to incarnate the gospel within them. We engaged in a project to "exegete" our neighbourhood, studying the history, commerce, and culture of each block, and also recently initiated a "Christ in Culture" series of talks and small groups. Our Corps is representative of our neighbourhood, so our approach is to learn the community's cultural languages from those who already know them, and to let our resident experts lead us into appropriate visitation, mercy work, evangelism and reconciliation. More informally, we have committed over the last decade to being loving neighbours who live in a noticeably different way. We hold to a scriptural lifestyle ethic, but this does not prevent us from being present to drug dealers, prostituted women, and neighbours in slum hotels, many of whom tell us that "light seems to shine" when our people visit.

Studying the development of postmodern culture has reinforced what we have learned through these efforts. We cannot assume that everyone is familiar with the Christian narrative. There is a foundation of Judeo-Christian faith and ethics in our society, but the pervasive cultural influence of Christianity passed with Christendom. We also know that the modernistic privatisation of faith leaves society incapable of addressing the problems of our culture. Logic and progress have no answer to a person whose soul has been crushed, who needs to experience love, trust, patience and hope. These are spiritual concerns, and there is room now to speak of them that did not exist in the dichotomised culture of modernity. Those who are speaking must take care, however, to know the language of the people they are addressing.

Gospel

It is clearly important to know the language of the culture in which we are embedded, but it is even more vital to have a firm grasp on the nature of the gospel to which we are giving witness. The gospel is not just about cultural relevance and good works. It is the *euangelion*, the good news of God's victory over sin through Jesus' life, ministry, sacrifice and resurrection.^[9] The good news is accessible, but it also challenges every culture it encounters. If this message is not at the centre of a Church's aspirations then the gospel is not being lived or preached, and the Church is not fulfilling its mission to be Christ's "witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."^[10]

The gospel is intimately concerned with the Kingdom of God. The theology of the Kingdom of God is developed in the Old Testament, as God establishes his rule on earth through his people. This is meant to create justice and peace in Israel and *through* Israel into the whole earth, and foreshadows the coming Messiah who would bring the Kingdom in its fullness.^[11] The New Testament is centered on the announcement and inauguration of this Kingdom through Jesus, who affirmed in Luke that this is why he was sent into the world.^[12] When John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus' response was to proclaim that the time had come, and the Kingdom of God was near.^[13] When John needed confirmation of Jesus' identity, Jesus pointed to the Kingdom signs of the sick being healed and the poor having the good news preached to them.^[14] Jesus' confrontations with Satan in the wilderness, unclean spirits, sickness and paralysis, and religious and political leaders can be understood as conflicts between Kingdoms. Jesus delegated Kingdom authority to his disciples when he sent them out as agents in this conflict, assigned to cast out demons, heal diseases and proclaim the Kingdom in the cities they visited.^[15] Van Gelder summarises the Kingdom as "God's redemptive reign...the sovereign rule of God as creator and sustainer of all life," which comes about through "the dynamic presence of God's redemptive power confronting the forces of evil and restoring life to its fullness."^[16] This work of restoration is ultimately accomplished through Jesus' death and resurrection, but it also anticipates the creation and participation of the Church. The preaching of Paul in the book of Acts demonstrates that the Kingdom of God is to be a central concern of the Church's message.^[17]

For the Church to live out the gospel, it has to embrace the reality that the Kingdom of God is both “now” and “not yet”.^[18] In the death and resurrection of Jesus, sin has been defeated for all time, and there will come a time when all of creation acknowledges the Lordship of Christ. In between those times, the Church is given the Holy Spirit as a down payment to help us obey the will of Christ the King and serve as visible evidence of God’s presence in the world.^[19] This means that the Kingdom of God must inhabit every aspect of the Church’s life, including its preaching, discipleship, evangelism, fellowship, mercy work, commitment to justice and reconciliation, financial practices, ethical stances, creation care, and interaction with the surrounding cultures. This comprehensive integrity is vital if the Church wishes communicate to a cynical postmodern world.

In *614 Vancouver* the Kingdom of God helps us understand what the gospel means and what it requires of us. We believe the King calls us to an all-encompassing faith, one that includes body, mind, spirit, sexuality, relationships, family, work, ethics, leisure, hospitality, and politics. So we preach the Kingdom of God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and try to embody God’s ruling presence as we share our homes, tables, resources and time with one another and with our neighbours. We offer a year-long course on Kingdom of God ethics, examining how to be consistent on issues such as war, racism, poverty, abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment. We take seriously the spiritually confrontational nature of the Kingdom, believing we are called to heal the sick and cast out demons as Jesus did and commanded. We commit to seasons of 24-7 Prayer in a space we call “The War Room”, and regularly go out onto the streets to pray with people for deliverance from pain, addiction, and demonic oppression, backing those prayers up with health care, recovery support, and faithful community. In emulation of the Church under pre-Constantinian Rome, we endeavour to honour the postmodern society we live in, but do not accept any truth claims that diminish the Lordship of Christ. Similarly, we are prepared to confront the powers of this world on issues of injustice, which has led us into acts of non-violent civil disobedience alongside our neighbours.

Church

The Church is the community of people being formed by the gospel, who have the responsibility to live and preach the Kingdom of God into world through evangelism, social concern and reconciliation. It is “called by God, redeemed by Christ, sanctified and empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to live for the glory of God.”^[20] It is a new family, comprised of people from every nation, tongue and walk of life, gathered for fellowship and worship. This new people are shaped by the forgiveness of Christ, told to emulate his suffering service in the world, and commissioned to spread the news of his resurrection and salvation into the world.^[21] The Church is the priesthood of all believers, all of whom are responsible for glorifying God and sharing his gospel. How the Church organises itself, and the way it fulfills its commission in the postmodern world, is meant to emerge out of this God-ordained nature.^[22]

This discussion of the nature of Church is extremely helpful for The Salvation Army, which began as a mission, and did not practice many typical Church functions such as ordination or the institutional sacraments. *614 Vancouver* therefore calls itself a missional community that is part of the larger Body of Christ. Our leaders are not ordained, and we emphasise the priesthood of all believers through cell groups, communal living, and everyday mission. When we do gather for worship we believe that our diverse community serves as a sign of God's Kingdom in the world.

The nature of the Church has not changed, but its activity in the world must adapt to communicate to changing cultures. Sider identifies evangelism as part of the Church's essential nature. A view of salvation that focuses on social, economic or political liberation, but does not address a person's need to be redeemed through a relationship with Jesus, is dangerously one-sided.^[23] Christ is the only hope for salvation, the only rescue from sin and death, and if we love our neighbours we cannot help but share this news. This is not a popular message in the postmodern era, but the Church must find ways to communicate it in the language of the culture, as the gospel is not complete without its inclusion.

At *614 Vancouver* we say that our success is gauged not by Church attendance, but by the number of people equipped and sent out in effective mission. To this end we seek to disciple everyone in our worshipping community through mentorship, spiritual recovery groups, and residential training programs. Our primary outreach activity is praying for individuals and then visiting them, in order to show embodied rather than theoretical love. Knowing that postmoderns are open to new spiritual experiences, we host "spiritual reading" tables on street corners, where we listen to the Lord together with anyone interested. We affirm that people formed by postmodernity, particularly if they have suffered pain and rejection from the Church, need to feel that they belong before they will believe the message of the gospel and behave according to God's commands. We are privileged to see many people receive Jesus as their personal saviour through evangelistic ministries at addictions treatment centres, teen camps, and women's retreats, where we first demonstrate that we love people as neighbours and friends before we share the gospel with them.

The Church's essential nature also calls it to social action, which Sider distinguishes into three types: relief, development, and structural change. All three, he says, are biblically mandated.^[24] Just as a view of salvation without evangelism is one-sided, so it is without social action, because "right at the heart of salvation is the new redeemed community," in which all social, political and economic relationships are transformed.^[25] This is an aspect of the Church's calling that is less understood in Evangelical circles, but it is also one that tends to be more appreciated by postmoderns. The Church therefore has the opportunity both to fulfill its mission and connect to the post-Christian culture around it in meaningful ways. The Church must be familiar with the surrounding culture however, in order to know what injustices need to be confronted.

At *614 Vancouver* we see evangelism and social action working together for the glory of God and the sharing of the gospel. Postmoderns are looking for active faith, the integrity

of beliefs and practices, so we occasionally replace worship meetings and with community service projects, inviting non-Christian friends along. We educate ourselves on the social and political problems in our neighborhood, and gather with other groups to speak truth to political power, often engaging in creative justice activities that are both fun and accessible. We host nightly community dinners in our homes, where people who might normally line up at soup kitchens instead eat a dignifying meal with a family. We believe this social care is commanded as an essential concern of the Kingdom of God, and gives credibility to speak the gospel with integrity into our postmodern culture.

Finally, the Church's essential nature calls it to the work of reconciliation. Christ has reconciled sinful humanity and all of creation to God, has reconciled humanity one with another, and has given the ministry of reconciliation to the Church.^[26] There is such need of reconciliation in this world, particularly as the postmodern culture is one of "alienation, dislocation, refugees, tribal warfare, unprecedented violence," and "the narrative of the contemporary, secular nation- state has little or no power to bring healing, restoration, or justice."^[27] The Church is uniquely empowered by the ministry of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit to be an agent of deep and lasting reconciliation in the world. This work speaks powerfully to the postmodern culture at a time when the language of salvation and conversion is rejected as intolerant.^[28] We saw this worked out recently in Vancouver, as Church groups participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Walk, an effort to speak honestly and find peace between First Nations groups and Christian and governmental organisations. When the Church faithfully lives out the ministry of reconciliation, it is fulfilling its identity and the mandate that flows out of its very nature as the forgiven people of God; it is embodying the Kingdom of God, and signaling the presence of the rule of Christ here on earth, a foreshadowing of the glory to come; and it is communicating this gospel message into the heart of a postmodern culture that is in desperate need of Jesus' redemption and peace.

[1] Lecture Notes 1, p.4, citing Lesslie Newbiggin.

[2] James D. Hunter, "What is Modernity? Historical Roots and Contemporary Features", in *Faith and Modernity*, edited by Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, Chris Sugden, Milton Keynes: Regnum Books International, 1994), p.18-20

[3] Lecture Notes 4, citing John Howard Yoder.

[4] Hunter, *Modernity*, p.25; Philip Sampson, "The Rise of Postmodernity" in *Faith and Modernity*, edited by Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, Chris Sugden, (Milton Keynes: Regnum Books International, 1994), p.33

[5] Hunter, *Modernity*, p.26; Lecture Note 3, p.6-7.

[6] Sampson, *Postmodernity*, p.34

[7] Sampson, *Postmodernity*, p.38; Lecture Notes 5, p.2

[8] Read Mercer Schuchardt, "Swooshtika: Icons for Corporate Tribes", *The Ooze*, Friday, Sep 13, 2002. p.7; Sampson, *Postmodernity*, p.33

[9] Lecture Notes 7, p.2

[10] Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 51; also citing Acts 1:8

[11] Lecture Notes 7, p.1

- [12] Sider, *Good News* 51, citing Luke 4:43
- [13] Sider, *Good News* 51, citing Mark 1:14-15
- [14] Lecture Notes 7, p.2, citing Matthew 11:4-6
- [15] Lecture Notes 7, p. 3, citing Luke 9:1-6
- [16] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of Church*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), p.75.
- [17] Lecture Notes 7, p.6, citing Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31
- [18] Lecture Notes 7, p.6
- [19] Lecture Notes 7, p. 4-5
- [20] Lecture Notes 8, p.1
- [21] Lecture Notes 8, p.2-5
- [22] Van Gelder, *Essence*, p.155-156
- [23] Sider, *Good News*, p.100
- [24] Sider, *Good News*, p.138-139
- [25] Sider, *Good News*, p.100
- [26] Lecture Notes 11, p.1-2, citing Romans 5:9-11, Colossians 1:19-20, Ephesians 2:14-16, and 1 Corinthians 5:17-20
- [27] Lecture Notes 11, p.3
- [28] Lecture Notes 11, p.3