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Editorial Introduction

Major Stephen Court, editor

Greetings in Jesus' name. Welcome to JAC119 – the 119th issue of Aggressive Christianity. We're taking a breather in '119 from themes, having run on 'Evangelism', 'Our Fathers Have Told Us', and 'Hope' over the past six months. JAC119 is a grab bag assortment of inspiration and teaching, from parts far and near. This issue runs from Lieutenants to Colonel, from Burkina Faso To Brooklyn, from Genesis 3 all the way up to the day you read this. Strap yourself in, and get ready to be edified by this inspiring line-up of contributors:

Lieutenant Brian Dueck was the commissioning speaker representing the Messengers of the Gospel in Toronto this past year and spoke compellingly on 'For The Sake Of Christ And The World He Came To Redeem'. With his wife he leads the Weetamah Corps in Winnipeg.

Major Terence Hale contributes some research into some 'fiery' songs of Lawley and Booth (with some mention of Booth children) in 'Considering Early Salvation Army Hymnology And Theology'. He's the Territorial Youth Secretary for Canada and Bermuda.

Captain Michael Ramsay – 'But Am I Saved?' is a hardcore look at some revolutionary teaching by John in Luke 3. Alberni Valley Corps in British Columbia fights under his wife's and his leadership.

Colonel Richard Munn's Egalitarian Relationships is part of some larger research in which he is engaged these days that gives us Biblical foundation and confidence to live boldly in His will. Munn leads and thinks and teaches on ethical and theological issues from his perch at USA Eastern's THQ.

Lieutenant Scott Swires looks through practical, prophetic lenses to encourage readers in 'Cultivating A Culture Of Creativity'. With his wife he leads the Brooklyn Bay Ridge Corps.

Captain Andre Togo and Major Stephen Court team up to disseminate some 'Incendiary Thoughts' that is a primer for a larger project and which aims to stir up some burning passion. Togo and his wife invaded Burkina Faso (#131 in SA countries invaded, for those counting).

Danielle Strickland reflects on 'Finding The Hidden Secret That Unlocks The Doorway To Blessing' (teaser- it has to do with gratefulness!). Strickland helped start up Amplify

Peace along with some other great commission initiatives (see DanielleStrickland.com for more).

That's JAC119. We hope you read it all, apply everything God highlights, share widely and frequently, and appreciate the experiences of our contributors from so many different perspectives and experiences. Hallelujah. Godspeed.

For The Sake Of Christ And The World He Came To Redeem

Lieutenant Brian Dueck

Well my fellow Messengers of the Gospel – here we are! It's been approximately 15,844 hours since most of us arrived in Winnipeg to begin our journey at CFOT.

Some of us may say the time has been long, others would say it has been short – but one thing is now our reality: the time is gone!

It is my privilege to try to capture our Training College experience in these few moments, and if there's something we have learned at CFOT, it is the value of being concise.

So, in that vein I would like to begin by summing up our collective CFOT experience in just one word.

And that word is: *nimeshiba*. What does this word mean, you may ask? Well, allow me to enlighten you. It is a Swahili word I picked up in Kenya which, to put it bluntly, means, "We've had enough."

Now, before this becomes the shortest sessional speech in the history of Commissioning, let me explain the full meaning of the word – and I promise, there is redemption to be found if you will follow me!

This word, *nimeshiba*, is what one might say after sharing in a good meal with someone. If after the meal, you are full, you are satisfied, and would like to compliment your host, you might say: *nimeshiba*.

So yes, in one way it means "I've had enough" – but more importantly it means: "thank you, I am satisfied."

In Kenya, this is one of the highest compliments you can give to someone after they have hosted you at their table because it says that the meal has accomplished its purpose of providing nourishment.

So, concerning these 22 months we have spent at CFOT, we Messengers of the Gospel would like to say
to all of our staff officers and mentors;
to the supports from THQ;
to the sessions of Cadets that have shared CFOT with us for a year;
and to our families and our friends who have supported us every step of the way;

... *Nimeshiba* – thank you, we have been well nourished; we are *satisfied*.

.....

Now, perhaps some of you are wildly optimistic and interpret that to mean that we've learned everything there is to learn, we know everything there is to know, and we are ready to conquer the world – but that's not *quite* true.

Actually, it's not at all true. If anything, after 22 months of Training College we know a lot about what we *don't* know!

But I think I can speak for all of us in saying that what we still lack in knowledge, courage, and faith is not something to be ashamed of – because the promise found in 1 Corinthians 12 is that “God's grace is sufficient for us, for his power is made perfect in weakness.”

We recognize that this means we also have to embrace humility. And we are okay with that.

In fact, my prayer for us is that when we look at our fancy new red epaulets, we would see nothing more than the crimson blood of Jesus Christ that testifies to God's love for the whole world that he so lovingly created.

And I can assure you, we who form this monochromatic group of misfits have not lost touch of the simple truth that we remain a group of sinners *rescued* by the boundless grace of Jesus Christ, so that we might participate in sharing his love. Speak with one of these Messengers – you will find this is something which excites us.

.....

Now on a lighter note, allow me to share something about our experience of community over the last 22 months.

If there is one thing we as a session have learned from CFOT, it is that living in a close-knit community comes with many blessings and, well, let's just say plenty of “opportunities for patience.”

We have found that sometimes living in community is like the feeling of falling off a hoverboard – you can be gliding along smoothly when hitting the smallest of pebbles sends you for a friendly encounter with the floor. But restoration and recovery is always right around the corner – and if you need tips on how to recover from a hoverboard fall, just ask Rick...

On the other spectrum of things, the Bible says “taste and see that the Lord is good.” And we have indeed found that community can be a beautiful experience of loving support – so much so that its taste is sweeter than liquid honey – isn’t that right Barry? We’ve discovered that community is leaning in to a conversation – even if it means getting one armed chopped off for leaning a little too enthusiastically..... Andrew...

We’ve discovered that community is supporting each other through the scary world of university academics, especially when you are constantly told by professors that you are “quite right” but never “exactly right.”

And we’ve discovered that growing together in community has helped us find our leadership compass and locate our “true north.”

But most of all, and in all seriousness, we have discovered that living as a close-knit community means participating together in the joy of life’s journey and encountering together the sorrows along the way. For this, we are grateful.

.....

Before I finish I would like to also acknowledge that Winnipeg has made a fine host city for our CFOT experience.

Now if you’ve spent a significant amount of time in Winnipeg you know that a pothole is considered a valley, such is the flat nature of the land; and you would also understand that your “welcome to Winnipeg” moment could be that moment when you panic because you realize you’re going the wrong way on a one-way street!

I draw attention to Winnipeg’s flat landscape and its love of one-way streets for the purpose of stating that in these two ways, Winnipeg does *not* actually represent what we have found to be our spiritual journey as a session of cadets.

The reality of each of our stories is that they do *not* consist of flat-line journeys; rather, they contain plenty of ups and downs.

I guarantee you that each of the Messengers of the Gospel here before you have walked the hills and the valleys, and by God’s grace have found the beauty in both.

And as far as one-way streets are concerned, we certainly do not buy into the notion of a one-way street when it comes to Christian community.

Allow me to explain:

You may have just witnessed the Messengers of the Gospel being commissioned as Officers, but that does not mean we are the only ones in our communities called to teach, preach, encourage, correct, forgive, guide and lead.

Our commitment and our prayer is that we will indeed do each of those things to the glory of God, but if we may be so bold, we would also hold you to the same commitment.

You see, the Messengers gathered here before you do not believe in the notion of one-way ministry in Christian community. The body of Christ is made whole by the equal participation of each one of us.

So please, we implore you: help us make our journey as ministers of the Gospel a two-way street of accountability in mission. We ask that you do this *for the sake of Christ* and the world he came to redeem.

For the sake of Christ and the world he came to redeem...

Do not allow us to become so comfortable that we forget to sacrifice, and allow us to also push you outside of conventional comfortability; we are cross-bearers, after all.

For the sake of Christ and the world he came to redeem...

Share with us your radical ideas for spreading the message of the Good News, as we also ask you to join us in venturing outside of the ordinary in search of God's will; God's love is radical, after all.

For the sake of Christ and the world he came to redeem...

Ask us how we see God's hand working in our lives, and allow us to also encourage you to share your experience of God's faithfulness; we are a testimony people, after all.

For the sake of Christ and the world he came to redeem...

When we make mistakes and disappoint you – and I can guarantee it will happen – give us the grace to make amends, as we also forgive you when we have been hurt; we are a broken people, after all.

For the sake of Christ and the world he came to redeem...

Let us together participate in bringing beauty to brokenness; for we *are a redeemed* people, after all.

Conclusion:

This is the fullness of the message we have come to believe.

We are not simply *Messengers of the Gospel*. No – we are *Messengers of THE Gospel* – the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News that through Jesus, God has lavished his love and grace upon the world he created.

Our invitation to you is that you join us as we form a passionate hallelujah band celebrating the beautiful, bountiful, subtle and boisterous Kingdom of God. It's the Gospel – will you be a Messenger?

Considering Early Army Hymnology and Theology

Major Terence Hale

It has often been said that what a people sing becomes the DNA of their theology, or perhaps more accurately, the DNA of one's theology is revealed in what a faith community sings. I hold that it truly is a two-way street of sorts, but no matter what angle you approach it from, the theology of the people is embodied in the songs of the people. This can clearly be applied to the early Salvation Army. In short, we can assume when exploring the hymns of the early Salvation Army that they sang what they believed and they believed it because they sang it. Indeed, in the introduction of the 1930 edition of *The Salvation Army Song Book*, General Edward Higgins included the words of William Booth that implored the worshipper to "take in the meaning of every song." He continues, "here is a great treasury of truth... be determined that by God's grace you will never sing what you do not really mean and that you will be fit to sing all you find here."¹

Booth was not alone in this assertion. In recent history, Resch, in the introduction to his article, *Hymnody as Teacher of the Faith*, writes that, "Hymns are teachers.... The teaching influence of hymnody is important because ... both young and old learn about matters such as theology through the texts which they sing."² For the poor masses of Victorian England, hymns, which in the Army's case were set to familiar secular tunes, would have been key tools for the transmission and learning of theological concepts. Anthony Baker offers support for this idea. Baker explores the connection between poetry and theology, and while agreeing with C.S. Lewis that theology is not poetry, and actually belongs in an entirely different category, he lays out an argument that poetry can be theology or at least serve as a gateway for the human soul into theological understanding.³

With this in mind, what is very telling is that the early Army song book,⁴ and sung worship, was full of themes concerning the fire, the Presence of God, or the Holy Spirit, which served the role of empowering, transforming, and setting apart His people for service, mission, and sacrifice. In the same song book introduction already referenced, Booth writes, "let us persevere in our singing of the simple old truths ... that God has

¹ *The Salvation Army Song Book* (Toronto, ON: The Salvation Army, 1930), iv.

² Richard C. Resch, "Hymnody as Teacher of the Faith," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (July 1993): 161.

³ Anthony D. Baker, "Our grass-stained wings: an essay on poetry and theology." *Anglican Theological Review* 94, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 516.

⁴ Booth and his early comrades preferred to use the term songs oppose to hymns, as the latter lent itself too readily to the established church of their day which so many of their converts were disillusioned with, and disenfranchised from. Cf. Sandall, *History of The Salvation Army, Vol. 2*, 107; and Rightmire, *The Sacramental Journey of The Salvation Army* (Alexandria, V.A.: Crest Books, 2016), 61.

already blessed so widely to the Salvation of souls and the making and training of red-hot Soldiers.”⁵ Early Salvation Army theology and mission was very pragmatic and utilitarian. What was not necessary, and seen as key to moving the mission forward, was eventually jettisoned from the movement. The sacraments are a case in point.⁶ As the early years of the movement progressed much of traditional ecclesiastical practice was abandoned, if even adopted to begin with, while other more useful ideas and practices became solidified into its outlook.

Theologically, it is striking in this light how far the idea of the holiness and the fire of God, leading into power and sanctification, was kept and celebrated, testifying to its central importance to early Salvationists. The hymnology of the early Army accordingly reflects the pragmatic and utilitarian nature of theological thought within the movement. The majority of songs could be grouped into three themes, salvation, consecration, and, what would become a hallmark⁷ of Army sung worship, warfare. Sandall notes that in an early hymn book, of the then Christian Mission, there were twenty-five entries of ‘the type of “Soldiers of Christ, arise!”’⁸ In another work he adds that in his opinion The Salvation Army owed as much of its “astonishing success” to its hymns as it did to its disciplines.⁹

It is unnecessary for us in this context to delve completely into early Army hymnology, which, for instance, would have to consider the inclusion of many hymns by Charles Wesley, so for our purposes we can focus primarily on the works of just two writers, William Booth himself, and Commissioner John Lawley. Booth has not been remembered in history as a song writer, and indeed there are only two songs penned by him in the present edition of the *Song Book*. However, the two songs that he is remembered for are profound, and one in particular reveals his understanding of the role of sanctification in mission. In 1894 William Booth wrote the following song, entitled “Send the Fire”:

Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flame,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
Thy blood bought gift today we claim,

⁵ *The Salvation Army Song Book (1930)*, iii.

⁶ The Sacraments were phased out very early in The Salvation Army’s development. Rightmire notes that “anything that impeded the conquest of the world for God was expendable.” Rightmire, *op. cit.*, 75.

⁷ Sandall notes the following quote by a non-Salvationist commenting on the hymns of the early Salvation Army. “Hymns under all circumstances have been spiritual meat and drink to me, but the Salvation Army songs have tapped a new mine. I have felt like an old war horse hearing the trumpet sound at mass meetings. My whole being has been stirred by the power and intensity of these wonderful compositions.” Sandall, *op. cit.*, 108.

⁸ Sandall, *History of The Salvation Army*; Vol. 1, 227.

⁹ Sandall, *History of The Salvation Army*; Vol. 2, 108.

Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
Look down and see this waiting host,
Give us the promised Holy Ghost;
We want another Pentecost,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!

God of Elijah, hear our cry:
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
To make us fit to live or die,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
To burn up every trace of sin,
To bring the light and glory in,
The revolution now begin,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!

'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
The fire will meet our every need,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
For strength to ever do the right,
For grace to conquer in the fight,
For power to walk the world in white,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!

To make our weak hearts strong and brave,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
To live a dying world to save,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
O see us on Thy altar lay
Our lives, our all, this very day;
To crown the offering now we pray,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Song Book of The Salvation Army*, song #203 (Verona, NJ: The Salvation Army, 1987). I have chosen for this section to reference all songs, unless otherwise noted, from the 1987 edition of *The Song Book of The Salvation Army*. I have done this for ease of reference for anyone wishing to see them in print or to reference the entire song where only portions have been quoted. While all the songs cited in the coming paragraphs were originally published in the earliest Song Books of The Salvation Army, finding reference copies, digital or otherwise, for review would be a very great challenge for most people wanting to explore them further. All the songs quoted, besides two, appear in the 1899 version of The Salvation Army Song Book, which was the first edition of the Song Book that was released in its 5th edition in 2015. The two songs that do not appear in the 1899 edition are *We the People of Thy Host* which was included in the 1930 edition, but was written prior to 1903. The second is *The World for God!*,

The sung theology is very clear here. In verse one the *fire*, which represents the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, is invited to come, by the merit of Christ's redemptive work, and fill the *waiting host*. The second verse is an accounting of the work of sanctification in the believer, the removal of sin and the indwelling of God's glory is directly correlated with the action of living and dying. We also see two precursors to the themes of the remaining verses, first of all, the singers are asking to be made fit, and I would suggest willing, to both and live and die for Christ, establishing the theme of sacrifice. Then secondly, revolution is requested; the revolution that is taking place spiritually is also being asked for in the world, bringing forward the theme of action. The third verse is a poignant prayer, *For strength to ever do the right, For grace to conquer in the fight, For power to walk the world in white....*The theme of action is brought into full view here, so that there is no mistaking what Booth is implying here, which is that the work of the Holy Spirit, the fire, translates into action. Then in the fourth verse the worshipper pledges sacrifice, *O see us on Thy altar lay, our lives, our all this very day....* In this concluding verse Booth makes clear the connection between sacrifice and what he sees to be our purpose, *to live a dying world to save*. It takes very little effort to see outlined in this song a process and cycle of pragmatic holiness. We have in it the realization of the character of God, followed by sanctification and consecration, and then a response of action and sacrifice.

The next songs I want to consider were penned by a much more prolific song writer. The contributions of Commissioner John Lawley have been found in every edition of *The Salvation Army Song Book* since very early days. John Lawley joined the Salvation Army when it was still called the Christian Mission. He was a dynamic preacher, but is remembered mainly as an accomplished song writer and private secretary to William Booth. This is worth noting as the theology that comes out in Lawley's songs would have had full opportunity to be influenced by William Booth because of the direct and close relationship between the two men for over 20 years.

In reviewing the works of Lawley, it is striking that his songs center upon one of two themes, either the invitation to salvation, or the ideals of sanctification and consecration. For obvious reasons, it is only possible here to focus on those songs that deal with sanctification and consecration. Our focus will be on one song in particular, "Near the Cross Assembled Master," the words are as follows:

Near thy cross assembled, Master,

which was a part of the 1953 edition, though was first published in 1937. It was written in 1934 however it is important to note that both of these songs were written by daughters of William Booth. *Salvation Army Songs* (London: The Salvation Army, 1899).; *Salvation Army Songs* (London: SP&S, 1930).; *The Song Book of The Salvation Army* (London: SP&S, 1953).

At thy feet we fall,
Seeking power to send us faster,
Hear, Lord, while we call.
Soul and body consecrating,
Leaving every sin,
Longing for a full salvation,
Victory we would win.

Fire that changes earthly craving
Into pure desire,
Fire destroying fear and doubting,
Fills and saves us higher;
Fire that takes its stand for Jesus,
Seeks and saves the lost;
Fire that follows where he pleases,
Fearless of the cost.

Fire that turns men into heroes,
Makes of weakness, might;
Fire that makes us more than conquerors,
Strengthens us to fight.
Crosses bearing, dangers daring,
By the fire set free,
In my Master's suffering sharing,
Send this fire on me.¹¹

We have in this song, as with Booth's, the recurring focus on the fire. Again, we see a longing and invitation, or seeking, in the first verse, he writes, *Near thy cross assembled, Master, At thy feet we fall, Seeking power to send us faster, Hear, Lord, while we call*. This is followed by the theme of consecration, with *soul and body consecrating, leaving every sin, longing for a full salvation*. The focus on consecration continues into the second verse with his naming of the *fire* as the energy that transforms *earthy craving* and destroys *fear and doubting*. Then for the remainder of the second verse and into the third he launches fully into the ideals of sacrifice and action, with the words, *fire that turns men into heroes, makes of weakness, might; fire the makes us more than conquerors, strengthens us to fight*.

These themes are continued in various degrees in Lawley's other contributions to the *Song Book*. A portion of his song "Wanted, Hearts Baptized with Fire" states:

¹¹ *The Song Book of The Salvation Army*, song #197.

Wanted, hearts baptized with fire,
Hearts completely cleansed from sin;
Hearts that will go to the mire,
Hearts that dare do aught for Him;
Hearts that will be firmer, braver,
Hearts like heroes gone before;
Hearts enjoying God's full favor,
Hearts to love Him more and more.

Hearts to hoist the colors bravely,
Hearts to share the hardest fight;
Hearts that know their duty clearly,
Hearts to dare and do the right.¹²

Elsewhere he writes:

To the uttermost he saves,
To the uttermost he saves;
Dare you now believe
And his love receive?
To the uttermost he saves.¹³

At first it appears that this is a song of invitation to salvation but it is not. Dating back to at least the 1930 version of the Song Book, it is included in the section on holiness under the sub section of the call to holiness. Lawley is referencing the idea of full salvation, and is challenging, daring, the believer to step into this realized consecration. Then, finally for our purposes, he issues a call for a manifestation of God's power among Salvationists, select lines of his song "Give Us a Day of Wonders," go as follows:

Give us a day of wonders,
Jehovah, bare thine arm...
We offer thee this temple,
With power, Lord, enter in...
Give courage for the battle,
Give strength thy foes to slay...
Give faith to fight with patience
Till fighting days are o'er.¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.*, song #704.

¹³ *Ibid.*, song #413.

These songs by Booth and Lawley are typical and representative of the sentiment of other early Army song writers. There is a preoccupation with the fire of the Holy Spirit leading to sanctification, and in turn leading to acts of service and sacrifice on behalf of those lost in sin. The many warfare songs such as Robert Johnson's "Storm the Forts of Darkness,"¹⁵ and "Marching On the Light of God"¹⁶ that features the line *marching on through the hosts of sin... victory's mine while I've Christ within*, can be clearly understood as an extension of the theology laid out in the songs we have already considered.

It is interesting to note that the songs that mention "fire" that transforms, or "blood and fire," all come from writers who were intimately connected with Booth or who were with him in the early days of the movement. The chorus of a song written by George S. Railton declares, "Salvation Army, Army of God, onward to conquer the world with fire and blood."¹⁷ Evangeline Booth, daughter of William and fourth General of The Salvation Army, penned these words,

The world for God! The world for God!
 For this, dear Lord, give to my soul consuming fire.
 Give fire that makes men heroes, turns weakness into might,
 The fire that gives courage to suffer for the fight,
 The fire that changes fearing to Pentecostal daring,
 The fire that makes me willing for Christ to live or die;
 For behold! On a hill, Calvary! Calvary!¹⁸

Reading these words, one cannot help but see the similarities to both Booth's and Lawley's songs and wonder how much of an influence these were upon her own theology.

There are two other songs worth noting; though they do not directly mention 'fire' they carry the same message as Booth and Lawley through just slightly different language. They are noteworthy not only because of the theological cues, but also because they are each written by one of Booths children. Emma Booth-Tucker wrote,

We the people of thy host,
 Standing here before thee,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, song #575.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, song #696.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, song #811.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, song #802.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, song #830.

For thy power, O Holy Ghost,
We, as one, implore thee!

Send the power, send the power,
Sent it, we implore thee.
Fill us with the Holy Ghost,
As we bow before thee

Thine for time, and thine for aye,
Battling, conquering for thee,
Till, when ended life's short day,
We in Heaven adore thee.¹⁹

Her brother Herbert Booth penned dozens of songs, many of which are still in wide circulation within The Salvation Army today. The following is an excerpt from one of those songs that originates from the early days of the movement.

I bring to thee my heart to fill;
I feel how weak I am but still
To thee for help I call.
In joy or grief, to live or die,
For earth or Heaven, this is my cry,
Be thou my all in all.

No tempest can my courage shake,
My love from thee no pain can take,
No fear my heart appall;
And where I cannot see I'll trust,
For then I know thou surely must
Be still my all in all.²⁰

It is interesting how the songs early Salvationists sang were able to capture both their hope and their method in a succinct fashion. The following quote from Booth creates a summarizing link between their mission and worship, "so wake up all the powers of your being... and consecrate every awakened power to the great end of saving them [the unconverted]. Be a Salvationist. Rescue the perishing... Be self-sacrificing."²¹ We can conclude simply with Booth's own words:

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, song #643.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, song #489.

²¹ Begbie, 409.

Let us look at it. What is this work we have in hand? To subdue a rebellious world to God. And what is the question to which many anxiously ask an answer? How is it most likely to be accomplished? Now, there are some things on which we may reckon all to be agreed:

1. That if ever the world, or any part of it is subdued, it will be by the instrumentality of men.
2. By holy men, saved, spiritual, divine men.
3. By men using substantially the same means as were used by the first Apostles, that is, preaching, praying, believing, etc.
4. That all that is effected will be by the co-operation and power of the Holy Ghost, given through and because of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.²²

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²² *Ibid.*, 411.

But Am I Saved?

Captain Michael Ramsay

Luke 3:7-14, A Revolutionary Text^[1]

John, 'the Baptist' as he was called, was a celebrity preacher in 1st Century Palestine. He was on a speaking tour through all the country around the Jordan (Luke 3:3). People were making an effort to see him. In order to see John in those days you couldn't just drive, catch a bus, hail a cab or get a ride from someone. You had to walk, by and large, and you had to walk a long way; you probably had to take at least one day off work to get where you were going.

Picture this scenario with me. Pick some famous person you want to see; they are coming to a city near you and you have been given free tickets. You take time off work or cancel your plans for the day to go see them. Now imagine that they are a celebrity preacher. Danielle Strickland, not that long ago, was named one of the most influential Christian speakers. Imagine she comes to a town near you. Big crowds come to see her and not just Salvationists but all kinds of us. Let's say we all walk there or better yet we get a bus full of people and we take the day off work to go hear her. We are among hundreds or thousands of people who take the time and make the effort to travel to see her. Now imagine that when we get there she says (cf. vv.7-9), "All of you who have come to see me... you are a bunch of snakes! Why are you here!?" "Who told you, you could be saved!? You need to start acting like Christians! And don't tell me you've been a Christian since you were six or you had this life changing moment when you were eleven or your great grandmother was saved through William Booth himself on the streets of London 100 plus years ago. Don't tell me you don't need saving because you are already a child of God. I tell you the truth God can raise up children from these rocks here if He wants to; if you say you are His children you need to start acting like it!"^[2] Can you imagine? How would you feel? What would you think?

This is what it would have been like for people in our text (Luke 3) who had taken a whole day or two off of their lives, walked for maybe up to 100km and made this effort to go hear John in the desert; he addressed the crowds in much the same way, telling them that if they think they are children of Abraham they're really not unless they start acting like children of Abraham. In today's colloquial vernacular, many who went to the desert may have 'thought they were saved' but John said, 'are you so sure about that?' This is quite a greeting!

It is effective though.^[3] Luke recorded voices seeking salvation in the disparate crowd calling out to him, "what should we do then?!" (v.10). John told them, in essence, if you think you are saved, and if you really are a part of the 'Kingdom to Come', then, Verse

11, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

How many people here have two shirts – or more? How many people in our world have none? How many people reading this will eat today? How many people in our world won’t? I know that most of us who are reading this are good at sharing with our friends who need food, clothing, and other items – individually and through The Salvation Army. I know there are many regular JAC readers who would give the shirt right off their own back to someone in need. John, the Baptist, says that that is because you are a part of the Kingdom of God. I love it when we study the Gospel of Luke because Luke, like the Army’s spiritual grandfather John Wesley, is crystal clear in presenting the Gospel as a social justice gospel: Christians will not acquire and hoard wealth while others are in need.^[4] The Baptist says, quite the opposite, “produce acts in keeping with repentance” (v.7).

But there is more to the story than just this. After John answered these cries from the crowd about what should anyone do who wants to be saved from the coming wrath (v.7), tax collectors who are part of this crowd said in essence, “yes, we all know that: everybody who is saved, who is part of God’s Kingdom, will give food and clothes to those in need. But what specifically should WE, saved tax collectors, do when we make this public confession through this baptism that we have come here to make today?”^[5]

Verse 13, “Don’t collect anymore than you are required to,” John told them. Now this sounds easy but let’s look at the way things ran back then. It was not all that different from the way things run today. These tax collectors were probably Jewish toll booth operators working for the Romans. Their job was to collect tolls and they made their money from surcharges applied to the tolls. The Romans used an early franchise-style system of sorts to collect these taxes.^[6] They pseudo-privatized their toll booths. Much like well-known fast food restaurants, big chain stores, and other corporations today; they used a franchise-style system. Judean business people would buy a toll booth franchise or a number of toll booth franchises (such as in the case of Zacchaeus; Luke 19); they would collect the money to cover the fees from their clients and everything else they made after they paid their overhead was profit. This is similar to the way many or most chain stores, franchises, fundraising catalogues, contemporary manufacturers and most big businesses in general are run today. They collect what they are required to for head office or whomever and/or to cover the cost of inventory already paid for and then the rest, after expenses, goes to profit. But John said to them, ‘don’t collect any more than you are required to [by the head office].’ Don’t make a profit the laissez-faire capitalist way, charging what the market can bear in order to make a profit... Well, who would want to be a tax collector then?! Can you imagine if the Baptist told the franchise

owners or others today that they were not to make a profit off their customers? Can you imagine if he told the big name companies that they were only allowed to charge what they are legally or otherwise required to charge, what would they do? ... Well, just maybe John, Luke, and even Jesus IS saying just that...just take what you need. Luke is a revolutionary text. Luke's is a gospel to the poor. Luke is the social justice gospel.

Luke's not so subtle condemnation of this 1st century expression of a prototypical market economy that made the rich richer and the poor poorer is as radical then as it would be now if we applied the gospel to our own society.^[7] We recently moved from Toronto and previously we have lived in Victoria and Vancouver. Anyone who drives regularly in these city knows that the parking meters all collect different amounts of money for the same amount of time: a dollar fifty here, \$3 there; \$8 for a parkade here, twenty dollars for a parkade there. And grocery stores owned by the same person, the same corporation, the same company – you buy the same product at a different outlet and it is a totally different price simply because they know they can get more money from you at that location. This is Adam Smith and Ayn Rand's version of capitalism; this is the free market.^[8] But what John is saying to the owners of the Roman tax franchises in the first century is seemingly quite the opposite; he says, “don't collect any more than you are required to.” And this I think is what Luke is telling us today: poor people in the Kingdom of God should have the same access to life as wealthy people, so do your part, “don't collect any more than you are required to;” don't make a profit at the expense of others. Luke's is a revolutionary text. Luke's is a social justice gospel. Luke's Gospel, as Jose Miranda and John Wesley remind us, is good news, gospel for the poor.^[9]

Now after these tax collectors/toll booth franchise owners get their answer, the soldiers who have also come here to be baptised are eager to know what is required of them. Like the tax collectors, the soldiers know they need to give food and clothes to the poor - but they don't own toll booths; they don't own franchises. They aren't rich. Quite the opposite: while the tax collectors were apt to get rich from this 1st century expression of a prototypical market economy, the Judean soldiers were likely to get poor from it; so, what should they do when they are saved from the impending wrath? What should they do as citizens of the Kingdom of God? Verse 14, John says, “Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

This sounds easy enough: don't extort money from people; don't falsely accuse people and be content with your pay. Easy? Maybe. These soldiers weren't Romans; they were Judeans just like the tax collectors and just like most of the rest of the crowd. These soldiers worked for the Romans just like the tax collectors but these soldiers were very poorly paid. They didn't have the freedom of the toll booth operators to set their own

wages so they resorted to other ways to make money - basically stealing. But that was okay, they convinced themselves, because 'everyone was doing it'. But that is not okay.

I remember when we were living in Vancouver, there were many stores in our neighbourhood which would charge you less if you paid in cash because then they wouldn't have to declare the money as income. I have met many people who are paid 'under the table', who deliberately do not claim income on their taxes – after all they don't make very much and the government doesn't need their money. When I worked at a military base pre-9/11, one co-worker allegedly regularly used to take discarded copper home to sell for extra money, after all he only made minimum wage; the government didn't need more money. I remember as a janitor when I was a teenager, colleagues who would take food or office supplies from the buildings where they were working: they're only going to throw it out anyway. Why would they miss this food from their coffee room? They have lots of money to buy more. Luke says, "Be content with your pay."

I remember too, we used to be able to make more money by working more hours so we would ask to take on extra hours cleaning extra buildings. I –like my fellow janitors – loved that. This is where you could get overtime pay without ever working one hour overtime. It was late at night and we often worked alone so some of us could do 16 hours worth of cleaning in just six hours without anyone noticing. The buildings were clean (thus no one complained) so we would write 16 hours on our timesheet even though we only worked six; 'no one cared, everyone was doing it' and that way we would not only get paid for 10 hours of work we didn't do but we would even get time-and-a-half or double-time for some of those hours. It was an easy way to make an extra buck or two. Get paid for hours you don't work, take food and supplies no one will miss which 'everyone else is taking anyway'.

I remember one security guard at a building where I worked for a while. I would chat with him about God, among other things; one day he asked me, "If you are a Christian, why are you leaving early?"

"My work is done."

"Are you getting paid?"

"Yes."

"So, do more work."

“Everyone just leaves when they are done, we’re expected to”

“Isn’t that stealing?”

The baptiser, John, said to those of his day who weren’t paid necessarily a ‘liveable wage’, “be content with your pay.” Luke says to us today who may be tempted to pad our hours, not declare our income, or manipulate our wages, “be content with your pay.” It is always interesting looking at Luke. Luke is the social justice gospel. It is a revolutionary text. Luke tells us what the impending Kingdom of God looks like. It is a place where the poor will have equal access to life and liberty as (or more than) the rich and everyone who is a part of God’s Kingdom will deal openly and honestly with each other. Luke’s is a revolutionary text and the Gospel is a revolutionary Gospel.

And honestly, this revolution is important. We, as Christians, are called to be holy. We, as Christians, are called to be the advance guard of a just society where the poor do have the same access to life and forgiveness as the rich. The middle class and the elite - like the tax collectors - are not to make a profit at the expense of the poor and those just barely eking out a living; we are to do it honestly. And all of us, rich or poor, are to be content with our wages for God will provide for us as He provides for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (Luke 12:27, Mt 6:28).^[10] Everyone, as we are a part of God’s proleptic Kingdom, we are to love our neighbour and as they are in need we are to provide for their need just as our Heavenly Father provides for our needs.

[1] Adapted from Luke 3:7-14: In the Advent of Revolution. Presented to TSA Corps 614 Regent Park, Toronto, Ontario on 20 December 2015 and Alberni Valley Ministries on 16 December 2018 by Captain Michael Ramsay

[2] Cf. N.T. Wright, Luke for Everyone (Louisville, Kentucky, USA: WJK, 2004), 34

[3] Cf. Fred B. Craddock, Luke (Interpretation: Louisville, Kentucky, USA: John Knox Press, 1990), 48.

[4] Captain Michael Ramsay, Analysis of 'The Use of Money': Sermon 50 by John Wesley (Presented to William and Catherine Booth College, Summer 2008) http://sheepspeak.com/reviews_Michael_Ramsay.htm#Use

[5] Walter L. Leifeld, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Pradis CD-ROM:Luke/Exposition of Luke/III. Preparation for Jesus' Ministry (3:1-4:13)/A. The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-20), Book Version: 4.0.2

[6] R. Alan Culpepper, Luke (NIB 8: Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1995), 84

[7] N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (Louisville, Kentucky, USA: WJK, 2004), 36

[8] William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (NTC: Baker Academic: Grand Rapids Michigan, 2007), 208

[9] Cf. Jose Miranda. *Marx and the Bible: a Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*. Trans., John Eagleson. (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 250

[10] R. Alan Culpepper, *Luke* (NIB 8: Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1995), 85.

Egalitarian Relationships

Colonel Richard Munn

Introduction



A truly distinctive feature of The Salvation Army is our commitment to egalitarian leadership. It is the freedom of thought characterized by William and Catherine Booth and other pioneers of our movement who actively encouraged the deployment of women and men – even during the patriarchal Victorian era.

The boldness and freshness of this value is as relevant today as ever.

More than tradition and history, however – is there a biblical basis for egalitarian male-female relationships?

Scripture

The order established at the dawn of creation speaks to our day.

Genesis One – Man and Woman: The Pinnacle of Creation

The significance of the relationship between a man and a woman is such that it forms a central part of the opening pages of scripture. The very pinnacle of creation.

Genesis 1:26 ‘Then God said, ‘Let **us** make man in **our** image, in **our** likeness, and let **them** rule... ‘

Lesson



God determines to make ‘man’ (singular), but refers to ‘man’ as ‘them’ (plural). ‘Man’ is a generic term for ‘human beings’ and encompasses both male and female. Both man and woman are God’s image-bearers.

Joint Leadership

Genesis 1:28 ‘God blessed **them** and said to **them**, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’

Lesson

In this idyllic relationship man and woman are also together commanded by God to subdue the earth and rule over all other living creatures. The emphasis is joint leadership. Just as man and woman jointly share in the image of God, they also jointly rule the over the earth.

Genesis Two – Reinforces teachings of Chapter One and provides some new insights.

Genesis 2:18 (NIV) - 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a *helper* suitable for him.'

Lesson

With God's provision of Adam's 'helper' there is again an emphasis on the man and the woman as social beings. The word 'helper' (NIV) or 'helpmeet' (KJV) consists of two ideas - '**help**' meaning 'share the same tasks' and '**meet**' meaning 'do it as equals.'

Far from inferring *helper* as a term of subjugation the concept rather describes a mutually beneficial relationship, with the concept of 'counter-part,' one who completes, 'rescuer' even. The literal translation suggests 'his counterpart, corresponding to him.'

Genesis Three – The sin of Adam and Eve catastrophically breaks the ideal relationship.

Genesis 3:16 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing, in pain you will bring forth children. Your desire will be for your husband, and **he will rule over you.**'

Lesson

The woman will yearn for the 'one flesh' union that defined the family prior to the fall (2:24). Her desire will be for her husband, and yet instead of meeting her desire and providing a mutually supportive and nurturing family environment, he will rule over her.



Lesson

Just as death and the toil of the earth – absent in Eden to this point – result from sin, so too is the pain of childbirth and the dominance of man over woman.

‘The ‘he shall rule over you’ should not be viewed as prescribing God’s will any more than death may be regarded as God’s will for humans.’

Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*

New Testament

In the NT we see numerous examples where Jesus restores human dignity to women, that experienced by Eve before the fall.

- Mary, posture of a disciple – LK 10
- Samaritan woman at the well – JN 4
- Woman anointing with perfume – LK 7
- The woman caught in adultery – JN 8
- Mary, commissioned with the news of the resurrection – MT 28



The ‘meta-narrative’ of the salvation story, the arc of scripture, is that that God intends redemption to restore gender equality, beginning with the community of faith, the church.

2 passages illustrate this well:

Church Relationships – Mutual Identity in Christ – Galatians 3:28

‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’

Marital Relationships – Mutual Submission in Christ – Ephesians 5:21

‘Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.’



It is expressing the original biblical egalitarian relationship between men and women that makes Salvation Army use of shared ministry especially dynamic.

Thesis

A healthy male/female relationship represents the original and full image of God to people and can model restoration in the broken relationship between men and women as a result of the fall

Biblical Principles for Today

Implementing egalitarian relationships takes forthright thinking from both men and women, requires consistent dialogue over role-expectations and a willingness to face the backlash from challenging old patriarchal wineskins.

Sociologists refer to the 'competition' that can emerge between male and female in egalitarian role relationships. We might say a more redemptive description would be 'iron sharpening iron,' 'spurring one another to love and good works' and 'in honor preferring one another.'



Cultural Dynamics – Yesterday and Today

Broadly speaking, the empowerment of women during WW2 while men were away in large numbers continued momentum through the 1950's and blossomed as a genuine cultural movement in the 1960's and 70's. This critical mass shows no sign of abating. Women now consistently lead in politics, education, law, medicine and business.

The world of free enterprise is catching hold of this with the 'collaborative couple' emerging as a competitive force, especially for small business operations. The flexibility, creativity and trust of the healthy husband-wife team has a 'competitive

advantage' over a more conventional 'business-associate' arrangement.

The army was ostensibly way ahead of all this, and even today still holds distinction with comparatively more ordained and commissioned women per capita than any other denomination. This is especially true for the husband and wife corps officer team.

We can think of egalitarian values as holding a 'sanctified missional advantage.'



Masculinity

Tony Campolo says that in addition to loss of power, some men have other fears about women leaders:

- Loss of status in the eyes of other men
- Loss of masculinity

William David Spencer, husband of teacher Aida Besancon Spencer - both clergy - speaks eloquently to these misconceptions.

'Far better for males to serve our wives as Christ did the church.... enabling her to become that lovely polished jewel glorious with lustrous good works in the human bracelet that adorns the hand of God. And women.... will turn back a great appreciation on their husbands, who will live a life a sultan would envy.

The crucial difference between being 'macho' and being 'masculine' is what distinguishes males who are secure enough to liberate women for leadership.

Femininity



Female leadership should not deny femininity, just as it should not deny masculinity for male leaders. For a woman to function as a leader must not mean that she become 'like a man.'

While being astute and vigilant – shrewd even – are helpful leadership attributes, such qualities should not negate femininity for women leaders.

An authentic egalitarian leadership model would seem to lessen the pressure on a woman leader to function in such a way. That is why it is so important to have men and women on committees and boards. One bereft of the other leaves an imbalanced committee.

Marriage Types

Canada's *Faith Alive* magazine found that 'shared leadership' marriages ranked higher on the satisfaction scale than 'husband-led'

marriages.' The conclusion of the survey is important regarding husband and wife leaders:

'Those who claim a shared spiritual leadership or mission seem to be happiest and most fulfilled in life.'

The Future

Western culture increasingly provides a smorgasbord of options, with no reduction in sight. Today people can choose from a wide array of possibilities, and in so doing, they are empowered. People can affect outcome, and they are used to it. We are part of a world where empowered choice and variety are the norm.

Insert into such a world an educated, creative, self-actualised woman where the only option is to contribute in a subordinated role, and we have a recipe for unhappiness.

This is especially so for younger woman leaders.



Raised with increasingly egalitarian values women expect that the army will affirm their gifts, education and aptitudes, and deploy them for mission. Would we want it any other way?

Salvationists

Embrace this as a Biblical model and God's unique desire for The Salvation Army. The outcome has the potential to multiply mission effectiveness well into the future, and rightfully position the army at the vanguard of women leader deployment.

May our 'espoused theory' match our 'theory-in-use.'

Men

- Encourage and empower women for leadership and influence
- Appoint women in leadership roles
- Defer when a capable woman can contribute, or take the lead

Women

- Assert yourselves, deliberately, into leadership roles
- Don't let the men get away with being the dominant alpha male all the time
- Don't let the women get away with habitually being side-lined as lesser leaders

Couples



- Share household and family duties
- Share decision-making
- Share days of recreation
- When one has a guest, the other serves
- When one works all day, the other prepares the meal
- When one has a project of significance, the other assists

Earnestly, forthrightly, playfully talk this through – today, and for a lifetime to come.

The heart of the matter is that when men and women empower each other to reach full leadership potential they will be helped to reach their own also.

We can be secure in the knowledge that this is both scripturally sound and psychologically healthy.

Conclusion

General Gowans described egalitarian convictions as ‘clearly God’s intention for us to follow.’

It is the broad-based, year-in-year-out implementation of true egalitarian leadership across the army world that will likely magnify the impact of our mission.

The current generation of men leaders are surely up to the challenge; the women leaders most certainly are.



Cultivating a Culture of Creativity

Lieutenant Scott Swires

Being a Classic Disney fan, I find it an ideal setting for exploring Faith. I believe that God speaks to us through the redeemed imagination, therefore a place that holds a position for Imagination Engineers is appealing to me as a believer. What are they doing and why do they do it that way? Once we understand what and why something is, then we get to the fun part, which is asking things like “what if.”

As Paul explains, the three greatest things are Faith, Hope, and Love (1 Corinthians 13:13). I find it interesting that the three greatest things cannot be understood in the World’s favorite methods of defining: qualitatively and quantitatively. This means Faith, Hope, and Love are not measurable using scientific methods. Many would argue they don’t exist because they cannot be observed scientifically. For many, talking about something like Faith is silly. Talking about Hope and Love are also silly and childish. I like how C.S. Lewis shared that when he grew up he, “put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.”

The world's standard that something does not hold a significant weight and value unless it is measurable is dangerous to the system that it represents. Then the only things that matter come from... matter. It's why atheists are desperate to prove that emotions like enjoyment and fulfillment have a physical source. Faith, Hope, and Love are powerful because they are evidence that something else is in the room with us. (Suspiciously look left. Suspiciously look right.) A person once shared that we come to God when we start to believe there must be something more to our universe, but our deeper relationship comes from realizing that He fills it. To consider that something else is possible is the way in which we engage the unseen realm of the spirit. The imagination is the place where the material and the spiritual meet. So without accepting our imagination we limit our relationship with God and others.

Hebrews 11 says that without Faith it is impossible to please God. We have to believe that He is and He wants good things for us. This chapter is beautiful in explaining that Faith in action is the definition of creation. To create is to believe that something unseen will eventually be seen. As we create we are doing Faith. Because Faith is the substance of things hoped for and not seen. Faith is the act of going into the unseen realm and grabbing something that is there and then bringing into this realm. God created everything seen from things unseen. God created by an act of Faith in Himself. He is the example of how we are to create- by believing in His ability to do. When we believe that He is and that He wants amazing things for us the sky is not even a limit (Jeremiah 29:11, Ephesians 3:20, Psalm 145:19).

This is how I heard it- it's like tapping for maple syrup. You have a spile that you drive into the tree, breaking the barrier that is holding back the syrup. From that point on syrup can come out of the tree. Go up to the tap with a container, and you can get some syrup. Now, imagine a barrier between you and the unseen realm of the spirit. Imagine the presence of God full and ready to burst on the other side of the barrier. Your act of creating by Faith is driving the spile into the barrier and releasing the presence of God. Whenever anyone walks past your act of creation there is then the opportunity to experience the Presence of God. It will help to have your bucket ready, which is you. You are a vessel created to catch God's presence and a prime place to do that is in a place that has cultivated a habit of creativity.

I think Walt Disney became skilled at this and developed it into a virtue. My wife and I have a poster of Walt Disney superimposed over Cinderella's Castle and the construction site, a reality who would not live to see. Below it is the quote, "It's kind of fun to do the impossible." During the opening ceremony of Walt Disney World, a man leaned to Roy and said that it was a shame that Walt hadn't lived to see it. Roy turned and said that if Walt hadn't seen it then they wouldn't be sitting there. Walt had seen the park long before anyone else did. Walt breached the barrier with his passion and belief in what could be and I believe that breach allows people the opportunity to encounter the presence of God. Whether it's going to Disney, watching Jiro Dreams of Sushi, or sitting next to your kids as they play, I encourage you to find a place where creation is happening and practice being aware of God's presence.

Incendiary Thoughts

Captain Andre Togo and Major Stephen Court

God himself is Fire! (Hebrews 12:29) The Message

"The time has come for fire." Catherine Booth.

At a 19th century Council of War, Catherine Booth exhorted:

The time has come for fire. All other agents have been tried; intellect, learning, fine building, wealth, respectability, numbers. The great men and the mighty men and the learned men have all tried to cast out these devils before you, and have failed. TRY THE FIRE. There are legions of the enemies of our great King. Fire on them... Charge on them, pour the red-hot shot of the artillery of heaven on them, and they will fall by thousands.

The word incendiary has uses that allude to negative consequences. But if you apply it as Booth does 'fire' here, you see that the negative impact of the red-hot shot of heavenly artillery is experienced by 'devils'. What's negative for devils is positive for us!

But the word, as we intimated, has positive connotations as well, as Booth's husband William, co-founder of The Salvation Army, describes:

How much more might be done if you had all received this Pentecostal baptism in all its fullness? If every soul were inflamed, and every lip touched and every mind illuminated, and every heart purified with hallowed flame? The whole city would feel it!

God's people in every direction would catch fire, and the sinner would fly on every side. Difficulties would vanish, devils be conquered, infidels believe, and the glory of God be displayed. As it is written, every valley would be filled, and every mountain would be brought low, and the crooked path would be made straight, and the rough ways would be made smooth, and all flesh would see the salvation of God. (William Booth)

That's incendiary! It's explosive, wild, rapidly expansionist, overpowering, contagious, and efficacious. But what is it, specifically? The Salvation Army's prophet of holiness, Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle, explains:

What is this fire? It is love. It is faith. It is hope. It is passion, purpose, determination. It is utter devotion. It is a divine discontent with formality, ceremonialism, lukewarmness, indifference, sham and noise, and parade and spiritual death. It is singleness of eye and a consecration unto death. It is God the Holy Ghost burning in and through a humble, holy, faithful man or woman.

We're talking about God the Holy Spirit so igniting in every person fire swiftly proliferating in more and more people, 'burn(ing) up every trace of sin^[1]', that supernatural transformation is left in its wake.

Burn Out Or Burn On

"Your message is like a fire burning deep within me. I try my best to hold it in, but can no longer keep it back." (Jeremiah 20:9 Good News Translation)

We know a senior leader who met up with a newly commissioned Salvation Army lieutenant who, on the edge of the gathering, confided that he was suffering from burn out. The commissioner wondered at that – after all, he'd just been ignited!

Jokes aside, don't burn yourself out. You're not much use to the salvation war if you burned out. Burn on. Yes. But don't burn out. Burn like that bush Moses came across while shepherding. It didn't burn up or burn out. It just kept burning...

One day, Moses, "guided the flock far away from its usual pastures to the other side of the desert and came to a place known as Horeb, where the mountain of God stood" (Exodus 3:1. The Voice).

There, the Special Messenger of the Eternal appeared to Moses in a fiery blaze from within the bush. Moses looked again at the bush as it blazed; but to his amazement, the bush did not burn up in flames. (Exodus 2:2. The Voice)

(and, look, a few verses later (v6), the One in the fiery blaze identifies Himself as God!)

How did it burn without burning out? Well, God was IN IT. Incendiary! So, God In Us. This is a mind-boggling concept, a re-enactment of the immaculate conception, that miracle of 8 pounds and 3 ounces, the Creator of the Universe shrinking Himself down to fit into the womb of a teenaged girl. This is more than conversion and justification and regeneration here (not to belittle salvation). Paul was writing to convinced Christians when he prayed, "God, may Your fullness flood through their entire beings" (in Ephesians 3:19 The Voice). That's a fire flood of love as God Himself fills and saturates our beings. This is some supernatural incendiary infusion and ignition, highly combustible and HOT!

Afraid of burning out? Look at Isaiah 55:3,8-13:

3 Listen closely, and come even closer. My words will give life,
for I will make a covenant with you that cannot be broken, a promise
Of My enduring presence and support like I gave to David.

Eternal One: 8 My intentions are not always yours,
and I do not go about things as you do.

9 My thoughts and My ways are above and beyond you,
just as heaven is far from your reach here on earth.

10 For as rain and snow can't go back once they've fallen,
but soak into the ground

And nourish the plants that grow,
providing seed to the farmer and bread for the hungry,

11 So it is when I declare something.
My word will go out and not return to Me empty,

But it will do what I wanted;
it will accomplish what I determined.

12 For you will go out in joy, be led home in peace.
And as you go the land itself will break out in cheers;
The mountains and the hills will erupt in song,
and the trees of the field will clap their hands.

13 Prickly thorns and nasty briars will give way
to luxurious shade trees, sweet and good.
And they'll remind you of the Eternal One
and how God can be trusted absolutely and forever. (The Voice)

Could it be that burnout, as we know it, is not so much a matter of too much work as it is working without listening to God, so that our work is not rooted in His covenantal purposes for us and the world? Isaiah 55 answers with a resounding 'Yes'.^[2]

So we are challenged to make our moments sacred, to redeem all of our time, to imitate Jesus in doing what we see Father doing (and praying, "help us to see what You're going and do what we're seeing" from John 5:19), to find my fuel (like Jesus at the well with the woman who got saved) in that seeing and doing more than in our favourite desserts and pastimes and several soft hours on two pillows.

The miracle of the burning bush might more appropriately be known as the miracle of the fuelless fire.^[3] God needed neither the bush nor Moses to keep burning. The Fire keeps burning. We just need to embrace the Flame.

You see, the Fire can distinguish between character. Look at the three Hebrew boys in Daniel 3. They audaciously disobeyed the king's command to idolize him. Threatened with punishment in a fiery furnace, they replied (3:17-18):

If you throw us into the blazing furnace, then the God we serve is able to rescue us from a furnace of blazing fire and release us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if He does not, O king, you can be sure that we still will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue you erected. (The Voice)

Wow. So the king took them at their word (3:21-23):

Then they were picked up and thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. The furnace was so hot and the king's command carried out so quickly, without any precautions, that the soldiers who took Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego up to the furnace were themselves killed by the heat of the raging fire. And the three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, tied and bound, fell into the furnace of blazing fire. (The Voice)

The Fire consumed the soldiers by its raging heat. The Fire is destructive to the demonic. But look at how the three Hebrew boys fared. In the shocked exclamation of the king (3:25): "I see four men, walking around freely in the fire, completely unharmed! And the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!" (The Message).

The officers, prefects, governors, and king's advisors moved closer to see what had happened to these men. They, too, could hardly believe their eyes. The fire had done nothing to harm these men. Their hair was not singed. Their clothes were not scorched. They didn't have the faintest smell of smoke on them. (Daniel 3:27. The Voice)

The only thing that burned was the bindings! The fiery furnace freed them! They were walking around. And it provided the context for intimacy with God. They were walking around with one who 'looks like the son of the gods!'^[4]

So, let's recap. The evil doers are consumed. The bindings are consumed. The Fire brings freedom and intimacy.

Who among us doesn't need that? And who, on those cold desert nights, doesn't need the warmth provided by the pillar of Fire?^[5] It brought the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace freedom and intimacy. If God is burning IN you, you will not burn out. You will burn on.

Today is your special day. Are you ready for the Consuming God to ignite His fire in your inner soul today? Are you running away from His calling? Are you turning down this special invitation to blaze you in the Spirit? Look up and see Jesus reaching out in love. His warriors are flaming fire, are you In or Out? Are you burning on? God is looking for you to pour His hot flaming spirit out on you and let you burn on!!

[1] This line comes from a song called SEND THE FIRE, by William Booth, in the second verse:

God of Elijah, hear our cry:
Send the fire!
To make us fit to live or die,
Send the fire!
To burn up every trace of sin,
To bring the light and glory in,
The revolution now begin,
Send the fire!

[2] Sunder Krishnan, THE CONQUEST OF INNER SPACE. p13.

[3] We also read that in Sunder Krishnan's book.

[4] We're talking, quite possibly, of a preincarnate Christophany – that is, Jesus Christ showing up IN the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew boys! Tertullian, Augustine, and others hold this position (see Barnes' Notes On The Bible; Ellicott's Commentary For English Readers; etc.).

[5] Exodus 13:21. Commissioner Stuart Mungate highlighted this benefit the pillar of Fire provides.

Finding the hidden secret that unlocks the doorway to blessing

Danielle Strickland

I've been contemplating gratitude lately. It must be the pumpkin spice and leaves turning color that prompt me to think about thankfulness. It reminds me that it's not a 'extra' blessing sort of attitude that I need to cultivate once a year or during special events that warm my heart and make me utterly grateful but it's more like a weapon to survive the onslaught of an in-grateful world. Entitlement, dis-satisfaction, greed, the ever present sense of needing more, wanting more, deserving more, the constant sense that I'm not enough or don't have enough or am lacking something... it's like my brain is constantly roving around for a snack that I just can't find... salty? sweet? new car? Latest model? outfit? haircut? Nothing seems to do. Nothing seems to fill.

This is not an accident. It's a design. I remember reading years ago a book called 'Life: the movie' about how the media has hijacked our lives by making us witnesses of it instead of participants in it. We watch our lives unfold instead of living them. And to keep the machine going advertisers are needing to capture our attention. The problem is that the old trick of selling us a single product doesn't work well enough anymore. The new technique is not to sell us their product - it's to make us feel dis-satisfied with what we already have. If you can create a Mick Jagger ('I can't get no satisfaction') feeling in the lives of everyone you can sell them almost anything! It's literally a commercial conspiracy. And if you consider that we all watch (whether we mean to or not) tens of thousands of images every week that are all telling us the same basic thing - you aren't enough, don't have enough and deserve more... well, you can do the math. It all adds up to a feeling that you just can't name but you know all too well - dis-satisfaction. So, we go about our lives trying to scratch the itch that we really didn't have in the first place but we feel is so vividly real - and thus begins the consummate consumer quest - the search for more.

How do we fight this insipid (can't get enough) disease that threatens to consume us from the inside out (and the outside in if you think of the cost to the oceans and the vulnerable folks on our planet, oh and the animals stuck in a disgustingly greedy food industry and I could go on...)?

The answer is so simple it almost seems trite. It's gratitude. Gratitude, can literally cultivate the opposite spirit of 'lack' that is perpetuated by our current culture with something that can truly satisfy our deepest selves. With 'enough' - actually, it can even do more than that - it can open the door to the 'more than enough' abundant life that we actually crave - on the deepest level.

St. Ignatius understood this in his generation when he was battling a similar spirit of greed and lust for more stuff and greater glory so he suggested that gratitude was the chief of all virtues. Gratitude, said the Saint, is how we enter the door of blessing. It turns out that thanksgiving is not just an awkward dinner with your family where you eat too much food and add brown sugar to everything! It's a doorway to satisfaction in your everyday life.

How?

First, it recognizes God as the creator and source of all life. That insight opens us up to realize that every single good thing in our lives is a gift. This perspective moves us from wanting more stuff to counting our blessings. And how many of those do most of us have? Wowzers. As you begin this process you start shifting your posture from 'can't get enough' to 'can't fit anymore'. Already the weapon is fighting the hoards of greed battling for your mindset.

After that door is opened, you walk into an increasingly spacious expanse. You realize that the physical realm is but one among many. Think about that moment in school when you realized the stars you could see weren't the end of the world but the beginning of a galaxy. It's literally mind-blowing when you enter the gratitude door how big your life becomes. Far from the shallow feeling you get when you go from shop to shop trying to fill your version of 'empty', gratitude spills to overflow out of your soul and expands your world. Gratitude is honest. Far from the Hallmark kind of smile and be thankful even if you really aren't deep inside, the intentional practice of gratitude and thankfulness includes all the horrible things of our lives. It's an honest reflection that even those dark and deep things that threatened our peace of mind allowed us to experience the fullness of God's presence and the deepest of human connection, and the depth of our own human capacity and strength. I've got friends who've survived cancer and talk about how grateful they are for the reminder that every single day they wake up thankful for the gift of life! They are truly living.

But maybe best of all, gratitude is the opposite of spectating - it's active. It acknowledges both the giving and receiving of great gifts. And you can rest assured that this kind of spirit is very infectious. People who are grateful, those who live lives that are genuinely thankful, are the kind of people you want around. They make everyone's life larger. I'm intensely grateful for the folks who have helped me understand the practice of intentional gratitude. Its unlocked the prison door to get me out of cynicism, greed, narcissism, not-enoughism, and every other kind of sinking sand that threatens to pull me in on myself. Just that one thought of the doorway to blessing, makes me grateful. See how that works?