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In This Issue
JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY
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Editorial Introduction *page 3*
Major Stephen Court

Patriarchy, Peril, and Purpose *page 4*
Colonel Janet Munn

Inhabiting a Culture of Creativity: Part 2 of 3 *page 10*
Lieutenant Scott Swires

Inhabiting a Culture of Creativity: Part 3 of 3 *page 35*
Lieutenant Scott Swires

Who Do You Trust? *page 43*
Captain W. Mark Stanley

A Critical Examination of the Spiritual Discipline
of Contemplative Prayer Within the Context
of Ministry as a Salvation Army Officer Service *page 50*
Major Anna Kotrikadze

An Ode to Speed, Busyness, Globalization
and a Restless Society *page 56*
Lieutenant Erik Johansson

Learn to Dance *page 67*
Danielle Strickland

Re-imagined, Post-Pandemic Army:
The solution to almost every problem *page 78*
Major Harold Hill

Editorial Introduction

by Major Stephen Court

Welcome to JAC127 - the 127th issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity. This is a smorgasbord offering with lieutenants and a colonel, four countries, and more provocative, orthodox, edifying content than you can share a stick at.

We kick things off with Colonel Janet Munn preaching at Theatre 315, Mother's Day, on the topic, 'Patriarchy, Peril, and Purpose'.

Lieutenant Scott Swires follows with the long-awaited concluding sections of his multi-part prophetic series, with parts 2 and 3, 'Inhabiting A Culture of Creativity' (see *part 1*, here - <http://www.armybarmy.com/JAC/jac119.html>).

Captain Mark Stanley delivered a message at headquarters chapel in Toronto at the end of October answering the question, 'Who do you trust?'

First-time contributor Major Anna Kotrikadze makes 'A critical examination of the spiritual discipline of contemplative prayer within the context of ministry as a Salvation Army officer.'

Swedish Lieutenant Erik Johansson creates 'An Ode to Speed, Busyness, Globalisation, and a Restless Society'.

Danielle' Strickland invites us to 'Learn to Dance'.

And your editor contributes 'A Reimagined, Post-Pandemic Army: The solution to almost every problem.'

That's enough reading to get you through a global crisis. Or, if you are a fast reader, then you might need to mine the archives of 126 JAC issues, all free, all here (and if for some reason you exhaust all of that, hit the armybarmy blog archives). Spread widely. Apply diligently. Glorify Jesus incessantly. Godspeed.

Patriarchy, Peril, and Purpose

By Colonel Janet Munn

(delivered on MOTHERS' DAY May 10, 2020

Theatre 315/Times Square as part of their 'new normal' series)

Read Matthew 1:1-17

Within the past year I've become a grandmother -- so far it lives up to the hype! 😊

This has caused me to reflect on my own grandmothers – grandmother Ada, and grandmother Vida

- Both immigrants,
- Both birthed 5 children.
- Both women of generous hospitality.
 - welcoming the stranger home for a meal.
- Reading scripture at mealtimes (King James Version).
- Both women of deep prayer often found kneeling in prayer at bedside.
- Or sitting in the rocking chair murmuring psalm 91 in intercession.
- Both *Life-bringers*.

1. Patriarchy and Peril

The Gospel of Matthew chapter 1 includes the genealogy of Jesus –

- mentions four of Jesus' grandmothers (and Jesus' mom) in his opening verses of the first chapter – TAMAR, RAHAB, RUTH, BATHSHEBA -- and 41 of Jesus' grandfathers. 'the father of . . . 'the father of . . . ' On and on and on. . .
- Of course, Jesus, like every human being, would have had a 1:1 ratio of grandfathers to grandmothers – not 10:1.

Patriarchy: a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

- Oppression takes many forms, of which patriarchy is one.
- This, sadly, is not a new normal, but simply, in this fallen broken world – normal.
 - We take it as normal that women can't walk down street alone at night; are sexualized, experience more violence, receive less pay and so on. Not new, but normal.
- We take as normal that people of color experience discrimination, poverty, and incarceration, and so on, extremely disproportionately to the experience of white people. The results of which we are seeing in NYC today in the disproportionate impact of COVID on certain neighborhoods and communities. Not new but normal.

So the not-new-normal for the grandmothers of Jesus – their experience of patriarchy and peril looked like this:

- two were survivors of rape (Rahab/Bathsheba),
- two were prostituted (Tamar/Rahab),
- three widowed – one husband murdered by her rapist (Bathsheba/Tamar/Ruth),
- two abandoned and/or exploited (Tamar/Bathsheba),
- two outsiders/immigrants (Ruth/Rahab),
- They knew injustice, vulnerability, violence and poverty.

*And let's not forget Mary, Jesus' own mother, pregnant out of wedlock as a teenager, from a poor town, living her whole life under the threat of violence from Roman oppressors.

The genealogy in Matthew 1 not surprisingly includes the patriarchs – Abraham/ Isaac/ Jacob. What is surprising is that instead - the matriarchs – Sara/ Rebecca/ Rachel - these women are named – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba. Not normal. Why?

2. Purpose

A modern-day matriarch, influential in our day and in my life, is Maya Angelou: raped at age 8, abused, abandoned by parents, she knew homelessness, teen pregnancy, racism . . . forces pressing down on her to silence her voice. Mute for five years.

Maya Angelou experienced oppression and danger (patriarchy and peril) – not unlike Jesus' own grandmothers, and like countless others – normal.

Yet -- Angelou rose to outstanding *purpose* in her life:

- Received a Pulitzer Prize, and a Tony Award nomination.
- Won three Grammys for her spoken word albums.
- She served on two presidential committees.
- Spoke her poetry at a US presidential inauguration.
- In 2011, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

There was no doubt - *purpose* for Maya Angelou's life – and her suffering could have extinguished it – *but... it... didn't*.

History doesn't record Maya Angelou as an oppressed, marginalized woman of colour – as another statistic – which would have been normal. But as an award-winning poet, author, and activist. She created a new normal.

She came through oppression and peril – to a life of purpose.

Back to Jesus' grandmothers:

Grandma Tamar

- Widowed young, and childless.
- Kept childless, penniless, without heir and therefore inheritance, by her father in law – through patriarchal oppression.

- Tamar acts *purposefully* – posing as a prostituted woman, she becomes pregnant. Father-in-law Judah, commanding that she be burnt to death. But Tamar proves that her father-in-law Judah is the *father* of her child – through that child . . . *under those patriarchal, perilous circumstances* . . .
- *By her purposeful, life-giving action – Tamar is known, not as an oppressed childless widow . . . but as a grandmother of Jesus Christ.*
- (See Genesis 38 for more details)

Grandma Rahab

- Rahab is triply marginalized -- a Canaanite, a woman, and prostituted - living in Jericho, at the time of the Israelite invasion, which is about to be decimated – perilous times for Rahab.
- Like the midwives in Egypt, Rahab defies the ruler and rescues the Israelites, hiding the Hebrew spies in her home.
- And the life of her family is spared.
- *under those patriarchal, perilous circumstances* . . .
- *By her purposeful, life-giving action -- Rahab is remembered not as the triply-marginalized prostituted Canaanite woman, but she is mentioned twice in the NT as a hero of the faith –*
 - *By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. Heb 11:31*
 - *Was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? James 2:25*
- *and is a grandmother of Jesus Christ.*
- (Joshua 2 for more details)

Likewise:

Grandma Ruth

- the childless immigrant gentile widow, takes *purposeful*, life-giving action in relation to Boaz, brings life to the family line, that was as good as dead.

Grandma Bathseba

- took purposeful, life-giving action to secure the throne of David for her son, Solomon, (instead of his older brother).
- In God's story - Bathsheba primary identity is not as a rape victim,
- But it was through *Bathsheba's* descendants that the Messiah was born, that God entered human history in the flesh.
- Grandmother Bathsheba's story reassures us that even through heartbreaking, sordid, tragic events and experiences, God's life-giving purposes advance – How? Through human agency, human participation.

So why were these four women singled out and named in Jesus' genealogy of Matthew 1?

Remember – this genealogy culminates in Matthew 1:16 –

Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

- All of these grandmothers (and mother Mary too) are named because of their purposeful participation in bringing life through the generations – to the arrival of Jesus Christ, Messiah, the One born to save His people from their sins.
- History could have remembered Jesus as the illegitimate son of a peasant teenager, who was too smart and outspoken for His own good, invested years in people who all betrayed and abandoned Him, got Himself killed with His grandiose ideas, died young and forsaken.
- But no. Those people who abandoned Him rebounded, regrouped, and went on to tell His story – we call it the gospel – to the ends of the known world, and mostly died for the sake of it.
- This same Jesus rose from the dead, and millions have given their lives *to* Him and *for* Him, including billions of people alive on planet earth today.
- He is often described as the most influential person ever to have lived.
- Jesus Christ – who brought about the great NEW NORMAL ever!... Who opened the new and living way – so any human who wants to – can have access to God.
- Showing us that in Christ, God acts as one who sides with the outcast, endangered woman and child. This is not normal.
- The inclusion of these messy, oppressive, perilous stories – reinforces the truth that -- Jesus is as much the son of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, as He is of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and King David.

- *These grandmothers - hint that in the coming Kingdom of Christ, a new normal has begun.*

Application:

What does this mean for us?

- For every one of us, though not equally, these are perilous times – with thousands throughout New York City and across the globe, sick and suffering and dying, and the normal oppressions remain, only worse.

- But like Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, Maya, . . . Jesus
 - Our worst times
 - Our deepest pain
 - Our suffering under oppression in the midst of peril
 - Which are all NORMAL in this fallen world
 - Those things don't necessarily have the final word in our story.
 - Not personally
 - Not corporately

But, three things:

1. Like those mothers in faith – and their son, our brother Jesus

- We can be confident that whether we live or die, we have an eternal Father God whose purposes will prevail.

*The plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the **purposes** of his heart through all generations.
Ps 33:11*

Kingdoms rise and fall; some terrible things happen, and are happening; such as happened to Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba – but in the end – right through the mess of it all -- God's purposes prevail.

2. Like those mothers in faith – and their son, our brother Jesus

- We can choose to participate in God's purposes in the world. Thereby helping to establish a NEW NORMAL – Christ's Kingdom community: How about it? Will you participate? Let's do it!
 - i) Where we love one another deeply.
 - ii) We give generously.
 - iii) We forgive readily.
 - iv) We say no to sin and yes to holiness.
 - v) All for the King of Love, our Lord Jesus.
- Insignificant, illegitimate, defenceless, tabooed people are beloved of God and may become agents of divine action in history.

*Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world (what is normal),
but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.
Romans 12:2 NLT*

3. Third – this was not available to Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, but through Christ is available to us -- We can receive comfort from the Holy Spirit to be with us always – including with us now, in these perilous times, and always, even to the end of the age. The Spirit of peace –

*You will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.
His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:6-7*

"In a world racked with injustice, where the lament of promises never fulfilled and the frustrations of hopes doomed to despair are the bitter bread of millions..." like - Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, Mary - ...and Jesus ...and you, and me, in the midst of oppression and peril,

- Can be confident that God's purposes will prevail. *Trust Him.*
- Can choose to participate in divine purpose, through Jesus Christ.

- Not a passive spectator – *participate in the new normal of Christ's Kingdom.*
- But *take purposeful initiative* and action – for now and for the generations to come.
- Can experience peace beyond reason, through the Holy Spirit of peace.
 - *Receive holy comfort now.*

An excerpt from Maya Angelou poem – *Still, I Rise*

Penned by a woman who knew oppression, and danger, yet whose life had great purpose. The poem equally could have been written by Tamar, or Rahab, or Ruth, or Bathsheba, or by Jesus.

And is for us today as a word of resurrection – this the 5th Sunday in Easter:

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

*Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?*

*You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise. I rise. I rise.*

Inhabiting a Culture of Creativity: Part 2 of 3

By Lieutenant Scott Swires

In Part 1 I laid down what I believe is the foundation for inhabiting a culture of creativity. There has to be an understanding that there is God and that He wants good things for you. Hebrews 11 also explains that everything seen was made from things unseen. God created all existence by bringing unseen things into a place where they could be seen. We looked at how there is a barrier between the two places and how when we are being creative we cause a breach between the two realms. I would like to look more closely at what the breach is and how to encourage more breaches. We could think of it as creating portals.

So, what things make your heart race? What things make you so excited that your friends point out how loud you are talking? Ironically, I am attempting to write two feet away from a 9 year old girl that has just discovered the movie Hairspray and is singing as if no else lives here. As parents, we want to encourage an environment that will allow our daughter to explore creativity. We want Selah to know how to be passionate while doing life with others. If she is not thinking about how her passions are mixing with herself and others she could potentially create an environment hostile to being creative. Example, standing two feet from daddy and singing "Good Morning, Baltimore" as loud as she can while he is trying to write. My look of displeasure tells her that singing right now is not okay, but it could also be telling her it is never okay. That's not what I want to communicate. Gifts need shared, but they also need to be received for them to find their full purpose.

My saint of a wife is my main outlet for my ideas. And I have a lot of them. They can be narrowed down to two topics. I get loud when I talk about prophecy and Disney. One more question I could add is what do you always circle back to in a conversation. These questions can help reveal your passions. My wife often tells me that I'm talking too fast and too loud when the topic is Disney and/or prophetic ministry. I will always circle back to these two. We could watch anything from a Space-X launch to a movie like *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* and I will say, "This is so powerful. This is prophetic." To me, art is the final product of a passion that someone allowed themselves to explore. I don't care if it is the tuna sandwich you just spent 20 minutes on when it could have taken five. You are passionate about tuna and to me that is beautiful. Recognizing it is an opportunity for me to grow. In sharing your passions, without realizing it, you have created an atmosphere for me to interact with my passions. Art is a mirror that doesn't lie. It reflects the one creating. Only beings with the ability to express themselves can lie. Mirrors reflect what they are given and you just revealed yourself with a tuna sandwich. Sharing creativity is risky. Yet, in the vulnerable moment we share our passion with others we are telling them that their passion is welcome. The creative community cannot grow until someone takes the risk of being exposed— it will remain too shallow for roots to take hold. Creativity will grow best in environments where it can be shared and received.

Another sign I am passionate about something is I sound like I am rambling. I don't connect the dots of my thoughts for my listeners. I am so aware of how they connect

that I don't think to let my listeners in on how all of those thoughts connect. This is one way I felt connected to Bob Jones. We were honored to share life with him for a season. He was often found confusing to others when he would quickly jump thoughts. He was actually following a connection that had become so solidified, so obvious, that he didn't think to mention it. It became more like pure thought than an expression of words. One example is he was once talking about believers being marked. And then said, "That's what I'm talking about— Mark 12, 'You will love the Lord your God.'" Bob wasn't connecting mark and Mark as much as he was connecting that Love will press on us like the stamp of a signet ring, and just like a royal seal was easily recognized, so we will be easily recognized by the impression that Love will make on us. The act of loving God is forming us into an easily recognized mark or symbol. The more intensely we receive His love, the deeper the mark. In Bob's mind the truth that we get our shape by how impacted we are by Love was a given. It had evolved from words, to an idea, to a belief, to his very identity. Bob understood that it was God's love that formed us and created us, and therefore is the *modus operandi* of Heaven. It is in that loving relationship that our identities are made and shared.

Creating a culture of creativity is about allowing God and others the opportunity to make contact with what you love and encouraging other to do the same. By creating space for the free exchange of ideas you are creating an environment for them to grow into the fullness that God has for them. If I do not create a welcoming environment, then you are creating a place for ideas to die in adolescence. I love the story of when a child asked Walt Disney if he was the man that drew Mickey Mouse. Walt had to admit that he didn't draw anymore. The child then asked if he was the voice of Mickey. Walt had to admit that he didn't even do the voice anymore. The boy was confused and asked what he did. Walt said, "Sometimes I think of myself as a little bee. I go from one area of the studio to another and gather pollen and sort of stimulate everybody. I guess that's the job I do." He understood that to design a culture of creativity he needed to encourage people's passion and that it grew best with others. If you want to start being creative practice celebrating what you love. If you want to grow in creativity, then celebrate what others love.

Inhabiting a Culture of Creativity: Part 3 of 3

By Lieutenant Scott Swires

Hope is a powerful thing. There seems to always be a major battle going on for our hope. Remember, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen. So if the enemy of this world can get you to stop hoping then you will lose your ability to interact with those things that are unseen. You will begin to doubt that there is something more than what is in front of your face.

This transition is subtle. You might start to give yourself false pep talks to be content in all things and to get whatever is within reach and be happy with it. You will spend less time in imagining about things not seen. This will eventually affect your relationship with God, because we meet Him in those unseen places. I think this is one of the warnings C.S. Lewis gives in the life of Susan Pevensie in *The Last Battle*. She loses everything when she loses her imagination. The more we practice day dreaming the more we will encounter God in our day and build relationship with Him.

I love going to Disney World because the entire place is built on dreaming and hoping to give something to the generations after us. A key to Walt Disney's creative process was consistent hope. I think fear aims to keep us from hoping regularly. We have all been burned and some have been burned so many times that the fear of failure overwhelms our ability to hope and we never get to see the value of a hope realized.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life.
(Proverbs 13:12)

Did you ever hear the story of Laugh'O'Grams? Most people do not know that Walt Disney's first attempt to make his own company ended in bankruptcy. Even after that, he came close to bankruptcy a lot! This led him to believe that everyone needs a good hard failure in life and that hopefully it happens when they are still young. Walt always seemed to believe his efforts were headed to something big. He was willing to lose everything he had to see the reality of a thing he could not describe. He was like a man that went out not knowing where he was going (*Hebrews 11:8*). Hope allows risk, and without risk there is no creating. We will never risk if we do not see that there is a possibility of success. The battle for our choice is between the voices that say we can and those that say we can't. The two voices that matter the most are yours and God's.

It is sad how many dreams I see that end because people talk themselves out of any chance of them succeeding. The fear of failure is so strong that no dream can stand against it. It is also not enough for people to kill their own dreams—they kill the dreams of those around them. This is often done because they "care" for the dreamer "too much." We can do a lot of damage in the name of someone else's good.

Negative speaking is a common way to comfort. I do not just mean to say something that is bad. The word *negative* means the taking away of something. People often try to

encourage people, meaning to fill them with courage, by speaking discouragement. Discouragement is the taking away of courage.

No matter how much you take away something you will never end up adding something. The only way to add something is to do just that—add something. No matter how much you discourage someone from feeling discouraged, you will not fill them with courage. Matthew 12:44-46 explains how badly that works out. A creative culture will be one that is full of positive talk that is not afraid to chase after something.

“For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.” (Eccl 5:3)

Talking will only get us so far. Hope needs acted upon to continue its healthy growth. It is easy to get stuck in the place of dreaming and never get to the place of doing. I will get stuck because I fear the “what if” instead of embracing it. If we are going to fear something then we should fear God. It is important to understand that the fear of the Lord is not about fearing punishment. It is about recognizing that the most powerful Being in all of existence is for you.

It always amazes me that in order to enter the Promised Land, the Hebrews only had to believe God was for them. They could have houses they did not build, vineyards they did not plant, and wells they did not dig if they would follow God into the Land and believe that He was going to conquer it with them. This is still true. Often I find myself dreaming of something and getting ready to go after it, but I allow my own negative talk to be louder than God’s positive talk. Have you ever said something like the following?

*I don't have enough time.
I don't have enough money.
I don't have the energy.
I can't organize my ideas.
I don't have the right equipment.
I don't have the right connections.
I don't have enough experience.
It never works.
I've used up all my chances for doing that.*

I could go on and on and on. I also find myself needing ten confirmations to do something I actually want to do, but only one confirmation to not do something I want to do. It is easy to talk ourselves out of good things. It’s even crazier than that, because we talk ourselves out of entertaining the possibility of a good thing. We hear the voice of fear say “what if” instead of hearing the voice of God say “what if.” I remember hearing Bob Jones say that fear was the killer of God’s greatest miracles. Bob was really big on fighting fear and encouraging others to dream big with God. He did not allow negative talk and negative thinking. Once, a person walked in and Bob instantly saw the fear on him. Without even saying hello, Bob said, “You know, worry’s a sin.” If we are going to start living in a place where creativity is encouraged we need to stop negative talk and

embrace positive talk. We also need to quit focusing on what we do not have and start with what we do have. According to Ephesians 3:20 that's a lot!

Walt Disney's first successful character was Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Walt had a staff helping him with the art and creating stories. Things looked bright. He was called from California to head to New York to meet with his distributor. Back then, the artist didn't own the rights to the character, the distributor did. Walt thought he was going to negotiate his contract and was hoping to grow into bigger endeavors. He arrived to be fired and was told his lead artist was leaving his team to continue working with the distributor on Oswald. The distributor thought that the lead artist was the creative person that was making Walt's team successful. Walt left New York to head back to all the people waiting on the good news they all believed he had received, but in reality Walt was heading back with nothing. While he was on the train he began to doodle. He drew a little mouse and said he would call him Mortimer Mouse. His wife, Lillian, suggested he call the little guy Mickey instead.

Every day is filled with "what ifs." Take advantage of them. Risk something today, even if it is a little thing. We were created to create, and there is no creating without risk. Make a decision to increase the positive talk in your life. Go find/make your tribe of positive talkers. Challenge each other in taking steps toward the dreams being shared, because we always do better when someone is watching us. Then look around and enjoy the culture of creativity in which you are living. I remember a sign a former music teacher used to keep up in our department—"No practice; no success. Know practice; know success." Practice the things discussed above and watch how quickly it makes a difference in your day.

Who Do You Trust?

By Captain W. Mark Stanley

Psalm 15 (CEB)

1Who can live in your tent, Lord?

Who can dwell on your holy mountain?

2The person who lives free of blame,
does what is right, and speaks the truth sincerely;

3Who does no damage with their talk, does no harm to a friend,
Does not insult a neighbor;

4Someone who despises those who act wickedly,
but who honors those who honor the Lord;

someone who keeps their promise even when it hurts;

5Whoever does these things will never stumble.

When I mentioned to my son that I was doing chapel on Halloween I said, "I wonder how Halloween could - or even if it should - fit with a THQ Chapel?"

He said, "Easy - talk about trust." I said, "trust?"

He said, "Yes - it's the only time of the year we tell our kids to go out in the dark, talk to strangers and if they offer candy - take it."

In the Leadership Development Department we talk a lot about what makes for a great leader. We talk about leaders creating and casting a vision, developing and executing strategy, communicating effectively, innovation, effectively lead a team. Research shows that among all the attributes of the best leaders, there is one that stands above the rest: **Trust**. Leaders who inspire trust get better results, have better staff morale and staff retention, and have more innovative organizations. Trust affects a leader's impact and organizational success more than any other single thing.

But trust seems to be in short supply these days. Our political parties snipe back and forth at each other with the most prevalent accusation from each party being that you can't and shouldn't trust the other party or its leader. Only four in 10 Canadians trust the prime minister, and only a third of Canadians trust their premiers. Only 40% of Canadians trust the news media and only 20% of us trust large corporations. Social media sites - where anyone can say anything and claim it as truth - have surpassed print newspapers as the news source for North Americans. Pollster Bruce MacLellan said, "Until this 2019, Canada was trusted as being different from other parts of the world where people are falling into fear and cynicism. However, new studies suggest that cracks are appearing in Canada's trust foundation."

Who do we trust? Why do we trust them?

It's interesting to me that when the topic of trust comes up, most of the conversation is about who we don't trust and the problems that exist in the world

and in our lives because other people are not trustworthy. And if only that other person would somehow become trustworthy - then things would be better.

The problem with that is: 1) there's nothing we can do to make that other person trust worthy, and 2) it doesn't require we do any examination of our side of the equation.

Here's the tougher question: Who trusts you and me? Why do they trust us?

When we think about the meaning of "trust" - there are plenty of definitions - here's one that I like from David Horsager, author of "The Trust Edge".

"Trust is the confident belief in an entity (a person, organization) to do what is right, to deliver what is promised and to be the same every time whatever the circumstances."

In the life and teachings of Jesus we see that definition lived out, and it is a model for us about how to live as trustworthy people of God.

Jesus Did What was Right

In Matthew chapter 8 we read the story of a Roman Centurion asking Jesus to heal his servant. This encounter happened just after Jesus gave His sermon on the mount - a sermon where Jesus taught:

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

and

Do to others as you would have them do to you

and

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you

This centurion was a Roman stationed in Palestine to make sure the Jews followed the law and submitted to the Emperor's rule. In this encounter we see Jesus doing what was right - even when the person he encountered was not known to him, not a friend, and who Jesus had no obligation to help. **Jesus did what was right** and healed the centurion's servant. He did what is described in Samuel 16:7: "For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Who can we trust?

People are consistently wanting and trying to do the right thing. They may not always get it right, but their intent is to do right - to be right people doing right things.

How can you and I be trust worthy?

We can be the person who is known for the doing the right thing - not just when it's easy, not just with those we care about - but in whatever the circumstance - even when no one's watching.

Jesus Did What He Promised

We all struggle with the stories that are about us not measuring up - not delivering what we promised. The stories that make us cringe.

My parents are Salvation Army officers and when I was a teenager we had a Commissioner at our house for dinner. My sister and I were told we had to be on our best behaviour. When we sat at the table for lunch my father asked me to say grace. I would normally use one of our usual graces - "for food and friends and all God sends" or "God bless this food which now we take" ... but I guess the stress of having a Commissioner at the house got to me, and I began boldly and confidently with "Now I lay me down to sleep". It was embarrassing then - but what makes it cringe worthy is that while the years have passed, my mother still loves to tell that story.

There are two words in the resurrection story that have always been a powerful reminder to me of God doing what he promised. Despite Peter's protest that he would never sell out Jesus, that he would never deny his relationship with Jesus - when the moment came, Peter denied even knowing Jesus. I imagine what it would be like to be Peter and hear that story told again and again - and cringing every time it's retold. I imagine Peter feeling that Jesus would be disappointed in him, would no longer love him, would not want him around.

But Jesus had promised, "I will never leave you or forsake you." Later on in the story, when we Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James come to the tomb they find the tomb empty and they meet an angel and with just two words, Peter is assured that Jesus loves him. The angel tells the women, "Go, tell his disciples **and Peter...**" that Jesus is risen and will soon meet with them. Peter is singled out by name, he is not forgotten, and is given an intentional, personal message from Jesus so Peter will know he is still loved by a Saviour who always keeps his promises.

Who can we trust?

People who do what they promise - people whose yes means yes, and no means no. And when they slip up, fail, or let us down - they admit their mistake and take responsibility for it.

How can you and I be trust worthy?

By being people who act with integrity and keep our promises, who tell the truth, keep confidences, admit our mistakes and take responsibility.

In the Leadership Development Department we use the LEADS framework to describe the capabilities needed by leaders: Lead Self, Engage Others, Achieve Results, Develop Coalitions, and Systems Transformation. In the domain of Lead Self - one of the demonstrable behaviours is to "Demonstrate Character" and one evidence of character is admitting when we're wrong.

Research has shown that the four hardest things to say are:

I was wrong
I'm sorry
I need help
Worcestershire Sauce

Jesus is the Same Every Time Whatever the Circumstances

The Bible gives us many accounts where Jesus was the same - every time - no matter what the circumstance. On the cross at Calvary, while in agonizing pain, facing his own death - the thief next to him asks "remember me". Jesus responds with compassion - and perhaps more importantly with hope - "today you will be with me in paradise."

When there is a crisis, chaos, confusion - it is then more than ever that we want to be led by people who are consistent, who are able to function and bring calmness out of the chaos. It's what we look for from our leaders - and it's what those we lead look for from us, whether that's at home, at work, or in our community. These "crucible" experiences are defining moments that reveal to ourselves and others who we truly are.

That's a hard one to live up to - to be consistent - in a good way - whatever the circumstance. To always be fair. To always be caring. To always be kind.

Who can we trust?

People who are consistently good and consistently do good - whatever the circumstances.

How can you and I be trust worthy?

By honoring our commitments, keeping our promises.

In his poem, "If", Rudyard Kipling says:

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it.

Now - we might be thinking, those are some nice ideas - but the world doesn't work that way. "You don't know what it's like in my situation." "I've been burned so many times I don't trust anyone." "How can I have any impact where trust has been so broken and shattered?"

I'm not suggesting you trust people who aren't trustworthy - but I am suggesting that in The Salvation Army, where the notion of restoration is at the heart of all we do, we can each be agents of change and agents of trust. There's a world outside our doors and there are people in this building longing for something and someone they can trust. We have a message for them - they can trust in Jesus who is alive - who does what is right, who does what He promised, and who is same in every situation - loving, caring, and faithful.

Last year in November, I had opportunity to be in the Newfoundland Division at their first Hope in the City breakfast. They had a musical guest, the Ennis Sisters - beautiful voices. They sang a song called, "Your Light" that has a repeating refrain with a great message and challenge for you and me, "Where there's no light, shine your light, and there'll be light."

A Critical Examination of the Spiritual Discipline of Contemplative Prayer Within the Context of Ministry as a Salvation Army Officer

By Major Anna Kotrikadze

Adele Calhoun suggests that in our modern life we need to reevaluate the importance of contemplation. She states that 'we are hasty people bent on experiencing as much life as we can', and we do so by moving faster, seeing, doing and producing more (Calhoun, 2015, p. 55). Most Christians have adapted the culture of speed and business, thus feeling that it gets harder and harder to include God into our lives. Richard Foster states that the goal of contemplative prayer is 'union with God' (1992, p. 167). Contemplative prayer serves as a vital tool for exploring oneself and God, as a spiritual discipline it is indispensable for the spiritual growth and formation on a personal and corporate level. For me, as an active Salvationist, it is important to see the signs of contemplative spirituality in the past and present of the Salvation Army and continue to live and serve in its power.

Foster argues that those who practice a contemplative life style struggle 'to describe the indescribable' using 'obscure, nearly unintelligible language' (1992, p. 169). It is hard to describe the experience or give a clear 'manual' for contemplative prayer. Ryrie suggests that 'there is no one single method' of doing it (1999, p. 139) because the term 'contemplation' could be used in a broad general sense about 'the act of gazing at or reflecting upon something' in terms of God or 'something which leads us to him' (1999, p. 2). There are two statements which, in my opinion, express well the nature and essence of it.

The first one is penned by Alister McGrath who suggests that contemplative prayer is 'a form of prayer... in which the individual avoids or minimizes the use of words or images in order to experience the presence of God directly' (1999, p. 182). The second one, suggested by Christopher Bryant, is - a prayer 'in which the individual waits in an open and receptive attitude, looking to the Lord' (Bryant in Ryrie, 1999, p. 4). There might be no universal definition or practice but some things have become essential parts of contemplative prayer with time. Although the contemplative way of life most often associated with the Desert Fathers or monastic movements, there are 'elements in the practice' which could be traced back to the Old (Ryrie, 1999, p. 139), as well as New, Testaments. Because of the word limit I will narrow them to: God's presence, knowing God, being still and silent.

The Bible speaks about God's presence with people from their first breath (Genesis 2:8). The closeness of the Garden of Eden was lost but could be restored. Through the Old Testament God is constantly seeking to have authentic relationships with humans reminding that He is close (Isaiah 41:13), He could be called upon (Jeremiah 33:3). There was the Tabernacle and special places to worship Him but He was also present with the broken hearted and humble (Isaiah 57:15). This belief of God's presence in people was reinforced in the New Testament (Romans 8:9) with an image of humans being God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

Saints from the past had different views on how to experience God's presence. In the Western part of Christianity it was common to think that contemplative way of life had several stages to go through in order to have fellowship with God (Ryrie, 1999, p. 2). There was an idea of symbolic ascension to God which was formed under the influence of neo-platonic belief that the soul could achieve salvation by ascending to the One who created it (Ryrie, 1999, p. 3). For Theresa of Avila this inward search for the presence of God is like taking a journey through a castle of many rooms. The castle represents a person and it is the dwelling place of God (Frohlich, 2010, p. 209). God's outpoured light is eternally present there.

Tony Horsfall compares the experience of contemplation with 'entering into the Most Holy Place' where we could get nearer to God and He to us (2012, p. 121). For the contemplatives of East tradition it does not happen through stages but through standing 'in the heart' (McGinn, Meyendorff, 1989, p. 395). Ryrie believes that this approach is more biblical for in the Bible the heart is considered to be a special place, 'a person's inner being, the seat and mainspring of the inner life' (1999, p. 165). In the heart the whole person is 'represented': her emotions, affections, intellect and mind (McGinn, Meyendorff, 1989, p. 395, p. 399). Jesus warned his followers to guard their hearts because of its importance in so many ways but most of all as God's dwelling place where he is met and 'seen' with 'the eyes' of the heart (Ephesians 1:18).

Thomas Merton believes that to experience the presence of God we need to let go 'of everything within us, all desire to see, to know, to taste' (2005, p. 111). One could sense God's presence when she reaches or develops 'the apophatic attitude', when there are no 'images and concepts' of what we think of God are left in the mind (McGinn, Meyendorff, 1989, p. 399). In other words, one should be void of any expectations of God and how He manifests himself in order to truly 'see' him. John of the Cross calls this attitude 'the dark night of the soul' which can be quite a lonely and hard experience when 'the soul is stripped of its self-assurance and self-reliance', so closer relationships with God could be obtained (McGrath, 1999, p. 106). People of the Bible also experienced it. The prophet Elijah learned that God's presence and manifestation could be found in unexpected way - in 'a still small voice' (1 Kings 19:9-12). The apostle Peter learned that God's presence was available for Jews, as well as other nations (Acts 10:1-36). It is interesting, that God's absence is also a part of the contemplative prayer experience. Writers of the Psalms described this experience as God 'hiding his face' (Psalms 13:1; 102:2; 143:7). It might happen because of the sin in one's life or there might be no explanation at all. Isaac of Nineveh, St. John of the Cross and others share the experience of God's absence as, in fact, a natural part of contemplative prayer in the stage of deepening one's faith and getting closer to and with God (Ryrie, 1999, p. 170-172).

There is this dualistic notion of contemplative prayer: absent and present, known and unknown God. Symeon the New Theologian, a Byzantine Christian monk, argues that 'God is both unknown and yet well known, beyond all being and yet everywhere present' (McGinn, Meyendorff, 1989, p. 411). On the one hand, the knowledge of God and his law are engraved in the heart of people (Deuteronomy 8:5, 11:18; Isaiah 51:7;

63:11) and the believers have the Spirit of God who will teach and guide them (John 14:26). On the other hand, God is so rich in wisdom and knowledge, so no one can know 'the mind of the Lord' (Romans 11:33-34). Paul writes about it in terms of seeing not clearly, 'through a glass' and knowing only 'in part' (1 Corinthians 13:12). Bernard of Clairvaux is certain that 'true vision will come only in heaven' (McGinn, 2005, p. 142). The fourteenth century work *The Cloud of Unknowing* suggests that there is 'a sort of cloud of unknowing' which exists between the believer and God, and because of it 'God can never be seen clearly, understood by the mind, or experienced in human affection' (McGrath, 1999, p. 105). This fact is not an obstacle to but part of the contemplative humbling experience. Not being able to know God fully should not be taken negatively but, quite the opposite, 'a sense of unknowing and unclarity are the veritable hallmarks of authentic knowledge of God' (McIntosh, 2005, p. 219).

Contemplative prayer is not a 'magic device' which makes God 'appear', like when Aladdin rubs the lamp and Jinn comes. Never the less, there are some practices, like being still and silent, which are helpful. Both, West and East faith traditions, argue their vital importance. Jesus said that his flock needs to hear his voice (John 10:3-4). It is not possible to hear the divine voice when there is so much noise, outwardly and inwardly. Stillness and silence do not make contemplative prayer happen but allow and help a person to hear, see and experience God. Morton Kelsey is convinced that for many Christians the thought of correlation between silence and prayer 'may sound like an out-and-out contradiction' (1976, p. 93). It is so customary to pray using words but for this type of prayer words are not really needed.

During the Old Testament silence was a proper response to God's holiness, mystery of his ways, 'and at the same time a sign of confidence and trust' (Ryrie, 1999, p. 130). Horsfall states that 'God's presence is often associated with silence' (2012, p.122). Indeed, human words fail to express the feelings and thoughts towards who God is. The early Christian contemplatives lived not only in physical silence of the desert but, more importantly, in the silence of their hearts. Contemplative prayer is not desperate for words because there is no 'need to ask for anything', it gives an opportunity to 'simply rest in God' (Horsfall, 2012, p. 122) and to listen (Isaiah 53:3). Being alone helps to achieve the desired stillness and silence. Abraham and Moses, writers of the Psalms were alone with God. Jesus went off by himself (Luke 5:16, 9:18) and said to his followers to pray in private (Mathew 6:6-13). Through the words of the psalmist God calls to his people 'be still and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10). It is not always possible to be alone, so it is vital to learn to be free from any distraction or anxiety or concern (1 Peter 5:7) amidst our daily routines and pause for God.

Although contemplative prayer usually is a wordless prayer sometimes words could be used 'rhythmically to help produce silence' (Kelsey, 1976, p. 103). The so called Jesus Prayer could be helpful to inner silence as a means of "'keeping guard" over intellect or heart' (McGinn, Meyendorff, 1989, p. 403, 406). It is a very simple prayer – 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'. It is repeated over and over in 'rhythm with the breathing' (Horsfall, 2012). The verses from Psalms could be also used or any brief words addressed to God. The value of the Jesus Prayer is cherished in the East and

West Church traditions not only as a helpful means to prepare oneself for contemplation but also for meditation which can be part of the contemplative prayer or a separate spiritual exercise.

It may be an 'impossible', 'inherently contradictory activity' to speak about the 'unknowable God' and our experience of Him, but it is a necessary task, for God continues to reveal himself through it (McGuinn, 2005, p. 147). Christine Faragher speaks about six traditions within Christian spirituality suggested by Richard Foster in his book *Streams of Living Water* (2010, p. 9). Each of them is an expression of inner experience with God. Foster argues that Christ is the 'source' of all traditions, and, I agree, this is non-negotiable. However, I would suggest that the Contemplative tradition is the corner stone to: the Holiness, the Charismatic, the Social Justice, the Evangelical and the Incarnational traditions. The diversity of expressions of faith is based on the habitual practice of spending time in God's presence. Faragher suggests that the contemplative tradition is a 'hidden stream' in the Salvation Army. I would like to think of it as being a bit forgotten and misunderstood. I believe, it could be rediscovered. Going back to the early years of the Salvation Army's birth and formation one could see a strong bond with the contemplative tradition. Going back to the roots of the contemplative tradition one could see its connection with the Army's present.

Contemplative prayer does not exist in isolation, and it is not one of the facets of Christian life but is the foundation of it. It leads to and is 'a part of a particular style of spirituality and a particular way of life' (Ryrie, 1999, p. 5). I believe it because of its essence. The essence of contemplative prayer is seeking God's presence at any time and place. In the words of Ignatius of Loyola it is 'finding God in all things' (Liebert, 2010, p. 198). However, one needs to find God, first of all, in her own heart. It was mentioned above that the human heart has a central role in contemplative spirituality not only as the centre of who the person is, her driving force but also as the dwelling place of God. Augustine challenges us to return to our hearts and perceive God 'because the image of God is there' (Sheldrake, 2005, p. 284). The state of the heart is vital for one's spiritual life: our seeing or not seeing God depends on it - 'blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God' (Mathew 5:8). The contemplative spirituality is birthed in the heart, in the pure heart.

Early contemplatives, like John Cassian (ca.369-436), spoke about 'rendered apatheia as puritas cordis, "purity of heart"' (McGinn, Meyendorff, 1989, p. 398). Merton wrote about monastic fathers and their daily practices as aiming 'at purity of heart, an unconditional and totally humble surrender to God, a total acceptance of us and of our situation as willed by him' (2005, p. 83). The foundation of this special blessing is 'God's outpoured love' inside every human being (Frohlich, 2010, p. 209). Great Christian leaders in the ages to come shared the same experience of God's love in their lives and the same passion of obtaining the blessing of the pure heart. John Wesley wrote that God purified people's hearts from pride and anger, 'from every desire but to please and enjoy God, to know and love him more and more' (Sermon 23, <http://www.godrules.net/library/wsermons/wsermons23.htm>). Phoebe Palmer, an American holiness minister, described her experience of pure heart as a heart which

'was emptied of self, and cleansed of all idols, from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit' (Stanley, 2004, p. 5).

William and Catherine Booth, having been influenced by Wesley's teachings, knew the value of the blessing of the pure heart. William Booth was sure that God desired to be with people in their hearts, and that 'Purity of Heart is the condition on which God will enter and dwell in your soul' (1902, p. 18). Catherine wrote in her diary in 1847 that her primary longing was 'holiness of heart', her wish was 'for perfect love', 'for the royal way of love' (Green, 1996, p. 103). Foster argues that the love of God in our hearts helps us to love Him back and 'leads us into the purity of heart' (1992, p. 168-169).

This belief of holiness or 'perfect love' was challenged by some critics. John Wesley was accused of encouraging people 'to self-delusions and self-righteousness' and being inconsistent 'in respect of "perfection"' (Outler, 1980, p. 283). Wesley defended his stand writing that 'A man may be filled with pure love and still be liable to mistake', mistake in judgement or practice even if love is her primary driving force (Outler, 1980, p. 284-285). It is a natural outcome of living as a human. A state of perfection for Wesley was not the immaculate state but 'the fulfillment of faith's desire to love God above all else and all else in God' (Outler, 1980, p. 32). The longing and prime desire of great people of faith was 'the fullness of one's love for God and neighbor' (Outler, 1980, p. 31)

I believe that the blessing of the pure heart is a two way street. God wants to bless His children with it, but people have a part to do. Early Church contemplatives, holiness seekers, the Booths, believed that submission to God's will, emptying oneself from selfish desires and personal expectations of God were crucial in this process. Merton (2005, p. 83) describes this in the following way:

Purity of heart is then correlative to a new spiritual identity - the 'self' as recognized in the context of realities willed by God-Purity of heart is the enlightened awareness of the new man, as opposed to the complex and perhaps rather disreputable fantasies of the 'old man'.

In the contemplative tradition the secret of obtaining this precious blessing is possible when the old 'self' is given to God. Foster describes the experience of Brother Lawrence when he was confused by having found many different ways 'of going to God', and his only desire was 'to become wholly God's', so he resolved his confusion by giving 'my all for God's all' (Foster, Smith, 1993, p. 116). Phoebe Palmer uses similar words writing about her experience: 'he had become the portion of my soul, my ALL IN ALL' (Stanley, 2004, p. 5). When William Booth was about sixteen years old, he wrote in his diary: 'God shall have all there is of William Booth' (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/activists/william-booth.html>). Catherine also understood the importance of 'consecrating everything to God', and 'she laid all on the altar' (Green, 1996, p. 105-106).

When this happens, God purifies the heart. Ryrie shares that 'Among contemplative writers the heart is often thought of as a mirror in which the face of God is reflected', so when it is purified then, as Gregory of Nyssa describes it, 'you will see clearly that blessed visions within the pure brilliance of your own heart' (1999, p. 165). With this comes not only a clearer vision of God but also a change of person's inner being when 'the soul to be transformed like a worm into a butterfly' (Frohlich, 2010 p. 214). Brother Lawrence compares this process with carving 'a beautiful statue' by God, when he forms 'his perfect image in my soul and make me entirely like himself' (Foster, Smith, 1993, p. 120). Faragher argues that understanding of prayer as 'the means by which God changes us' is the 'principle understanding of prayer in the contemplative tradition' (2010, p.41).

It all happens in God's presence. I believe that contemplative prayer and lifestyle is the glorious heritage of the early Army. Bramwell Booth was inspired by Brother Lawrence and the way he constantly lived in the presence of God, making it his business 'only to persevere in his holy presence...' (Foster, Smith, 1993, p. 119). In 1926 Bramwell challenged officers to believe that 'sense of God's presence and power' may be with them 'all the time' and that they need to 'cultivate their own personal experience of God in the day-to-day of their lives' (Faragher, 2010, p.11).

The importance of being in God's presence was also expressed in the corporative worship by having a mercy seat in the Army's halls. Karen Shakespeare describes the mercy seat as the place used by God to 'confirm his presence', what is 'rooted in the Biblical foundation of a meeting place with God (Exodus 25:22)' (2011, p. 42). She suggests that 'in the twenty first century it is also more generally viewed as a place of prayer and encounter with God....' and not only in its original goal of conversion experience (Shakespeare, 2011, p. 41-42). The proper attitude and usage of the mercy seat in the Salvation Army's tradition is a symbol and reminder of God's constant presence in our lives. Commissioner Samuel Brengle once said, 'I have carried a penitent form (mercy seat) around in my heart half a century or more. And if there is ever any need, I constantly fly to thee' (<https://others.org.au/viewpoint/why-do-we-kneel-at-the-mercy-seat/>).

Being in God's presence, having the heart purified and 'self' changed, also brings the change towards others in action. The motto of Salvation Army is Heart to God, Hand to man. In my understanding, it is an authentic expression of contemplative lifestyle. A person gives her heart to God, accepting by faith what Christ has done for her, and then is moved by the Spirit to help and care for others. William Booth believed that 'a Pure Heart will make you a blessing to those around you, and that not merely as a result of what you do, but from the fact of what you are' (1902, p. 21). Catherine longed to 'love the Lord will all my heart and my neighbour as myself...' (Green, 1996, p. 103). Faragher states that notable people from contemplative tradition extended their ministry 'to the poor and disenfranchised in the world', and so the Booths and other early Salvationists leaders did not have any problems to identify themselves with 'these saints and mystics of the church' (2010, p.13).

Being contemplative is not being passive, for 'the real test of this prayer is that the love of neighbor does not end with the end of prayer time, but carries over into practical action' (Frohlich, 2010, p. 214). The contemplative life style is getting ready for action in your inner self by constant communion, purification and transformation by God. Only then, one like William Booth could say 'I'm not waiting for a move of God; I'm a move of God' (<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/811927>). Social action and justice are the natural outcomes of time spent in God's presence and seeing more than eyes can see. Faragher states that 'The Salvation Army sees itself as an activist rather than contemplative movement' (2010, p.113). I could agree with this statement, partly. Some of the vivid Army's characteristics are striving for holiness, social justice and pragmatic Christianity. All of these are natural outcomes of God's presence in one's life, purity of heart and dedicating yourself to God. So, maybe it is time to go back in history and see the roots of our identity in the contemplative tradition and be proud of it. I would also suggest that it might be the matter of balancing contemplative and active ways of life on a personal and corporate level.

The world desperately needs today not 'a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but deep people' (Foster, 1998, p. 1). Depth comes from the heart. From the inner unseen centre of a person come the 'streams of living water' (John 7:38) pouring out into actions. Balancing contemplative and active of one's spirituality has been a constant challenge. The apostle James wrote about faith and actions, their mutual dependency and union (James 2:14-26). Jesus draws Martha's attention on the need to sit at his feet, listen and learn from him (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus teaches that it is vital to have a pause in the business of life and just be in his presence but it does not mean that there should be 'a split between inner and outer' spiritual experience (Sheldrake, 2005, p. 282). 'Martha' and 'Mary' need to learn how live side by side in one's life.

Liebert, referring to Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, emphasizes that prayer and daily life intertwine 'with contemplation and action as two faces of the same reality' (2010, p.198). That reality was not meant only for monastic life but for any believer because 'the Examen looks for God's presence and human response in the midst of daily life...' (Liebert, 2010, p. 204). Contemplative prayer helps to see and comprehend God more clearly and deeply. It also makes it possible for the world around to lose 'its opaqueness' and to become 'transparent'; in the words of Henri Nouwen 'the world of experience starts pointing beyond itself to the luminous Source of wisdom and understanding', to the reality of God's Spirit (2011, p. 5-6).

Some Christians might think that we lose our time while contemplating: 'we observe, we "smell the roses" – do we say it? – we do nothing' (Willard, 2006, p. 129-130). But no time is wasted. There is a time to be still and there is a time to act. One should not choose one over the other for they complement each other. In the life of early Army 'there was an integration of contemplation and action' when 'deeper engagement with God led to deeper engagement with humanity' (Faragher, 2010, p. 105). This integration is desperately needed because some personal and corporate battles are won on our knees: 'But it is not a war of guns, bullets, bombs, riots and physical destruction. It involves our soul – our way of life, our priorities and attitudes' (Munn, Court, 2012, p.

31). Before we know what to do, there should be a response in the heart (Ryrie, 1999, p. 149). For the modern Salvation Army it is expressed in a worldwide call for 24/7 prayer when Salvationists take time to come in God's presence and pray. Then we are ready to help and serve others. The work of God would be done in and through us. Kelsey argues that when there is a balance between the 'inner-directedness' and the 'outer direction' it is a sign one maturity (1976, p. 98).

Dallas Willard challenges us 'to keep God before our minds', we can and must do this 'first and most basic thing' (2006, 125). Many 'ordinary' Christians might think that contemplative prayer and life style can be practised and achieved only by spiritual giants by meeting certain criteria. Like: being in a certain place, spending time on it, having 'spiritually special', mystic, experience. I believe that this kind of thinking might be the outcome of not knowing the fundamentals of contemplative prayer and misuse of the terms. Mystics are often thought of as people 'not of this world'. Faragher, referring to Ursula King, argues that: 'a mystic is a person who is deeply aware of the powerful presence of the divine Spirit', who connects 'deeply with God and that connection usually leads them back to the needs of the world' around them (2010, p.41). In that sense, we all could be called 'mystics'.

The contemplatives, most of whom were monks or people living in physical solitude, believed that the practices in a monastic setting were achievable outside of it. It is possible to live contemplatively and not to be 'in caves or mountains or monastic cells, but in the middle of the cities', in the midst of mundane life (McGinn, Meyendorff, 1989, p. 412). For there is nothing mysterious or secret about contemplation, 'no secret mantras, no mental gymnastics, no esoteric flights into the cosmic consciousness' but there is this simple truth 'that the great God of the universe, the Creator of all things desires our fellowship' (Foster, 1998, p. 17). This could happen anywhere, anytime ...to anyone.

By all means, the desert has been an important place to many contemplatives of the past. McGrath suggest that there are two approaches to the 'desert' concept. One is a literal desert, a 'place of prayer, as well as purification', with no distractions 'in which the individual is alone with God, and thus has the opportunity to reflect' upon spiritual matters (McGrath, 1999, p. 101). They sought for solitude, a hiding place from the evils and temptations of life surrounded by many people. The second approach is allegorical; the desert is not a physical place but a 'spiritual journey of increasing faith and holiness' (McGrath, 1999, p. 102).

Today more than in the past Christians need to have a 'desert' experience. I do not mean a physical place, although there an increasing interest in spiritual retreats when people could spend some time in solitude and contemplation. It could, indeed, be a helpful practice. But it is more helpful if we learn to create a secluded space for contemplation inside us. Ian Adams argues that the verse in Mathew 6:6 was understood by the monastics not as a private prayer in a room but as 'a call to discover the "cave of the heart"', 'the still point', and this is something as close to us as our breath which 'we carry with us wherever we go' (2013, p. 45).

Contemplative prayer and life style are meant for all earnest seekers of God, but there are words of caution about it. There are some possible parts or experiences of it that might be too much for some of us. Teresa of Avila in the 'Sixth Dwelling Place' describes 'imaginative and intellectual visions, raptures...flights of the spirit, and many other experiences given only to mystically gifted souls'. (Frohlich, 2010, p. 215). Henry Nouwen gives a caution that one might need help 'to distinguish between the Spirit of God and the many ungodly spirits that haunt our souls' because this experience 'might do more harm than good' (2011, p. XXI). For some of us it might be 'an unknown zone' of spiritual realms. Perhaps this is why, Foster argues that 'Contemplative Prayer is for those who have exercised their spiritual muscles a bit and know something about the landscape if the spirit', and suggest to pray a prayer of protection before practicing it (1992, p. 164 and 166).

It is good to be aware of possible 'happenings' during the contemplative prayer but there is also a hope that God, in his wisdom and love, will protect a person, if needed. The most important thing is to be aware that 'contemplation is a gift, rather than an art we have to learn' (Horsfall, 2012, 124). It is a gift for anyone who is willing to experience God's presence in her life. By all means, for some people, like introverts, who are oriented more into their inner world, it might be easier to practice and live it out. I, an extrovert, agree that I tend to depend more on the outer world, than the inner one. There are some spiritual practices that come to me harder than others. Never the less, I do not regard my personality type as an obstacle to my relationships with God. If one is serious about her spiritual life, then she will be proactive and conscious about doing things which are helpful. As a spiritual discipline the contemplative prayer can be used by God 'as a means of grace' (Willard, 2006, 130). I have learned with years to appreciate the power of contemplation and it's every day practice. The question which we need to ask is whether we, actually, are willing to take time for it (Willard, 2006, p.131)?

The word 'discipline' might have unpleasant connotation because of negative associations, for example with some extremes as in ascetic way of life. McGrath states that originally asceticism (from the Greek word askesis – 'discipline') was 'meant to be about the process of self-discipline which enables Christians to lead more authentic and effective lives as believers' (1999, p. 91). Discipline should not be associated only with people who live 'on bread and water' but with an athlete or a warrior for who the preparation for action through discipline and training was vital. It is more helpful to think about discipline in terms of discipleship. Nouwen argues that the word 'discipline' and 'disciple' have one Latin root 'discere, which means "to learn from" (2011, p. 18). Spiritual disciplines are not 'some dull drudgery aimed at exterminating laughter from the face of the earth' (Foster, 1998, p. 2) but are 'tried and true ways we can pursue abundant life in Christ' (Willard, 2006, p. 132). The discipline of contemplation helps to start noticing God's presence within us, in this world, as well as gives God a chance to transform us and use for His purposes.

Calhoun suggests that 'life makes it evident that what we contemplate shapes us' (2015, p. 240). Through the ages countless women and men, monks and ordinary people, known and unknown, have been following 'quietly and in secret' the path of contemplation; have been waiting for God 'in the depths of their hearts' (Ryrie, 1999, p. 183). It continues to be an intrinsic part of faith life of God's people today, on personal and corporate levels. It is a part of The Salvation Army's past and present. Evagrius Ponticus, one of the Desert Fathers calls contemplation 'a theoria physike, which means a vision (theoria) of the real nature of things (physike)' (Nouwen, 2011, p. 5). One needs this real vision of self and things around, not from the perspective of the world but from God's. We might never go into the physical desert or complete a spiritual journey of six dwelling places. What we could do is to practice God's presence and see God in all things. Today more than ever there is a need for Christians to turn to contemplative tradition and regain its value. We need to contemplatively live before God in the midst of our daily activities in order to be changed by Him for our sake and for the sake of the world.

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