

# **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

# **JAC Online**

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## Editorial Introduction

by Major Stephen Court, editor

### JAC 134 - Poetic Prayer Feature

Greetings in Jesus' name. Mercy and peace to you from God our Father. I trust the battle progresses well on your front.

This is the 134th issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity - the Poetic Prayer Feature edition. We are sharing a sampling of the prayer poetry of Commissioner Harry Read in JAC134.

Commissioner Read was entered into the Order of the Founder in 2019 (<https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/news/inr090719>). His JAC Interview, which we are re-running for your convenience here, was in 2013. A long-time devotional writer (notably WORDS OF LIFE), Read has a couple of recent books of prayer poetry: LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL ([www.bit.ly/Prayer-Read](http://www.bit.ly/Prayer-Read)) and HEART TALK (<https://tinyurl.com/Heart-Talk-Read>).

The JAC Interview - Commissioner Harry Read (2013), reprinted in this issue. (or at - <http://armybarmy.com/JAC/article3-83.html>)

JAC134 features newer creations by Read, as follows:

I Have Been Chosen  
Seeking And Finding  
The Promises Of God  
Our Generous God!  
Do It Again, Lord!  
My Need  
My Deepest Being  
The Triune God

And we are following the Poetic Prayer Feature with a couple of offerings sure to further challenge and inspire you:

Steve Bussey, catalytic innovator, has a piece called 'Theological Nomads?' in which he makes a reasoned defence of denominational conviction - and Salvation Army soldiership in particular - in the context of and in contrast to social media whimsy.

And Captain Pete Brookshaw, western Australia, exhorts us in 'The Salvation Army Is Shake, Shake, Shaking...' to trust the Lord in a season of seismic shift.

Finally, Lieutenant Erik Johansson in Bulgaria, in a flashback to his commissioning day four years ago, provides a testimony from that day called 'Enjoy Being A Cadet?'

And that's JAC134. May God use it to help you draw nearer to Him in prayer, conviction, and trust. Please feel free to share widely. And should you complete JAC134 before Jesus returns or JAC135 arrives, don't forget that there are 133 previous issues through which you can read while you wait. Stay close to Jesus.

## **JAC Interview: Commissioner Harry Read**

from JAC Issue #83 - 2013

J.A.C.: please tell us about your background, how you came to know Jesus, and how you came to know The Salvation Army.

H.R: I have a Salvation Army background. Grandfather Read then in his late 30s was converted under the ministry of James Dowdle. 'Fiddler' (he played the violin!) Dowdle was sent by WB to the north of England to win converts and open Mission Stations (this was pre 1878). In a small town on the north side of the River Tees called Hartlepool Grandfather became converted. Shortly after that, he moved to a small town called South Bank which, as its name suggests, is on the southern bank of the Tees.

My grandfather was born in 1838. Following his marriage he had a fairly large family and his wife died. Grandfather re-married and my father was the only child of the second marriage. Grandfather was 57 when my father was born. I add this trivia in case you are puzzled by the time frame.

After 38 years service as the Corps Sgt Major Grandfather retired from that position. He died in 1924. This was the year of my birth. In the 1930s my father became the Corps Sgt Major until his untimely death in 1943. My mother who, as a teenager became a Salvationist was from a non Army family but, after her conversion, other family members became soldiers.

Obviously, I grew up in the Army joining the Singing Company and YP Band, but was never an enthusiast. Al-though I had good friends in the Army, my main friends happened to belong to the Methodist Church. After much persuading, and with serious reservations, my parents al-lowed me to leave the Army and join the Methodist Church. Shortly after WW2 commenced I had a conversion experience and, since one of my older friends was a Methodist Local Preacher I made a similar application and, in 1940, aged 16, I became a 'Local Preacher on note'. This meant that a much older Local Preacher would mentor me and I would accompany him to his Sunday preaching engagements, read the Bible passages for him, lead a hymn or two but, in the main, allow myself to be influenced by this wise, godly man whom I liked and respected immensely.

I volunteered for military service aged 18 in 1942. I would have done so earlier but, understandably, my father re-fused to sign the essential document. He had been twice wounded and hospitalised in WW1, my older brother was a commissioned officer in The Royal Artillery. My older sister was in the Womens' Auxiliary Air Force and my father reckoned that was enough.

Aged 18 I didn't need parental permission to enlist but, because of his insistence, instead of joining the infantry, I joined the Royal Signals in September 1942 to become a Wireless Operator. I volunteered for the Paras early in 1943 and, when my Wireless Training was completed in May 1943, I joined the 6th Airborne Division. I parachuted

into France at 0050 hrs on D Day. For years I thought the landing time was 0120 hrs but the official history which I read long after the war ended is clear: it was 0050 hrs.

During my military service I still maintained my church links but, though I never became 'one of the boys', I lost the sharp edge of my faith. This I regret. If you want to know more of my military service there are refs to me on the web. Just type in "Signalman Harry Read" and three addresses will appear. The first, "The Second World War Experience Centre" gives a transcript of an interview they set up with me. The other two web addresses, having been given access to that typescript, have edited it.

At the end of the war I began seriously to consider what my future would be. In those reflections I began to realise that I didn't like what I could become if I didn't change. I sought the Lord afresh, committed myself to him and applied to the Methodist Church to be a Candidate for the ministry. My request was accepted and I began a study-course in preparation for that.

In 1945 The Royal Signals transferred me to the Orkney Islands where, in the little town of Stromness there was no Methodist Church. I attended a small Mission Church and learned of a Servicemen's Fellowship which I commenced attending. A couple of Salvationists in the Fellowship spoke of the Corps in Kirkwall, some 12 miles away which I began to attend. In 1946 I was posted to Edinburgh where I linked with the Methodist Church coming under the supervision of the Minister. Since the only Church that advertised a Saturday night meeting in the local news-paper was the Salvation Army I attended their Saturday night meeting doing so regularly and, although they knew I was working towards the Methodist Ministry, I was made welcome. The CO told me of some large meetings being held in Glasgow suggesting that I might enjoy them so I attended, and it was during those meetings that I realised God was calling me to Officership, not the Methodist Ministry. I arranged an interview with my Methodist Minister to share this with him. He was not unduly impressed, after which I became a soldier in the Edinburgh Gorgie Corps: this was June 1946.

I was demobilised from military service in June 1947 and entered the Kings Messengers Session at the ITC in August of that year.

J.A.C.: What is the most significant part of your war fighting today?

H.R.: Early in my officership I realised I had the gift of encouragement. This has been a major factor in my ministry through the years, no less so in retirement.

The poetry – I don't consider myself to be a poet, rather do I think of myself as a versifier – is important, but I'm sure that, if my verses were studied, they would be adjudged to be part of my ministry of encouragement.

In this ministry I affirm people; gently challenge them to live up to their potential and give as much support as I can for them to live the life of faith.

Almost as an aside: my daughter thought I should have a Facebook page and set it up for me. Because she was a widow working at DHQ she visited me regularly and maintained the FB page for me. When she remarried – she and her husband are now the DCs in our London North East Division – her visits obviously dwindled dramatically. I wondered whether I should close my FB page and, when I looked at it decided I would, but the Lord seemed to be saying that I could find a ministry through it and I think I have. I think you will notice from my contributions it is all encouragement. I like your contributions very much I might add. You, obviously, have this same ministry mindset.

J.A.C.: What was your most challenging appointment? Why?

H.R.: We were appointed from the College to IHQ where I functioned as ‘The Press Officer and Director of Information Services’. It was an important job, and paid rich dividends in the end, but it stood outside of my gift range, and was, therefore, hard, albeit fruitful work. I was glad when we moved from there to be DCs because field work is my natural element.

J.A.C.: What was your most influential appointment? Why?

H.R.: Difficult to answer. Win and I served 18 years in all on the College Staff. If you know the old structure, I was 7 years a Sectional Officer: for a youngish man, the best appointment imaginable. Then back to the Field as CO and DYS. Back again to the College as Field Training Officer followed by 3 years as the Second Side Officer then to IHQ as Press Officer etc. Following this we became the DCs of the marvellous Nottingham Division, then back to the College as Principal. They were rich years indeed. In 1981 we were appointed to Canada where I was the Chief Secretary. I may not have done much for Canada but Canada did much for me and then, as if Canada wasn’t enough of rich blessing, we were appointed to Australia East as TCs! With experience of both Canada and Australia my cup was truly running over.

But it didn’t end there! Our mutual friend General Eva phoned inviting me – if that’s the right word – to be the British Commissioner! I knew it was to be a demanding last appointment, and it was, but it was more than challenging: it was exhilarating with fulfilment to match my dreams. What a privilege! What joy!

Others must be left to evaluate my ministry and that of my darling wife, but though we faced the immense difficulties inherent in an increasingly godless society and a decreasing Church – and Army – we had a wonderful time. God has been so good to us.

J.A.C.: What is your most important legacy for the Kingdom?

H.R.: This is not a question I can answer. Like all TCs, I’d like to think I left the territory in better shape than I found it. A territory more ready for growth: buoyant, optimistic, confident in the Army’s soul-winning aims: a territory with a sharpening focus on the

faith-aims of a faith-born movement, but only other people can be the best judges of that.

J.A.C.: What are your dreams for The Salvation Army?

H.R.: I'd like us to keep our Army distinctives. I have no problems with describing ourselves as part of the Church because that's what we are but, we are an Army. I think we do the church thing less well than the churches do it, but when we do the Army thing properly, we are without equal.

In today's western world, I don't hanker after the scenes from our beginnings that still stir our hearts, because society has changed irreversibly and governments wouldn't allow us freedom to, for instance, repeat the initiatives that created our social services. But I do long for us to be an Army of faith, with programmes born in prayer, powered by faith and fulfilled in love.

I long for us to have the spontaneity, joy, mutual regard and 'family' identity of our earlier days. The past is wonderful and cannot be replicated but the essence of those days is timeless. Here and there we see that essence being expressed and we are moved accordingly. O that that was the norm rather than the exception!

If only we could persuade every Corps that it has a bright future! Even the smallest Corps which, in the will of God is not meant to be a small Corps, has a first step in faith to take. That first step may be nothing more complicated than the CO gathering his/her small number of saints together to plead with the Father to identify the next step. Undoubtedly, the next step would become apparent and then the next and so on. Our Lord didn't come to earth to launch mediocrity. The Spirit didn't give life to let it wither on the branch. We give up too easily.

With the other churches, we have done that terrible thing: we have allowed the most exciting event in all creation to become common place; an irrelevant option; a divine intervention that leaves masses of needy people dismissive of God's existence, not merely his claims. I thank God for the Army: its existence is one of his great miracles. He has done so much through us. Numerically we are not dramatically strong but we always punch beyond our weight. Our achievements are amazing. People expect so much from us because of our reputation; a reputation that is not due to clever publicity but because we deliver. I thank God also for the new emphases on prayer, certainly in this UK territory, and for the serious attempts being made to relate to our various communities. Without doubt, new initiatives are improving our work and witness. What I add in this section, therefore, is not intended to be a criticism I'm too grateful for all that is being done to play the part of critic.

If, however, I'm allowed a 'but' it would be that, as an Army we are still inclined to do the organisation thing: too much 'top - down', stuff. Instead, we should focus more on locally generated initiatives and, working with the actual, as opposed to the assumed, go for growth that way.



I think I dream much the same kind of dreams about the Army as you and your wife and Joe and Doris Noland.

I ought to add that I am full of admiration for the way in which General Linda is approaching the subject of the Army's development. I have a dream that takes in the churches as well as the Army. In our western world, at least, we have been driven on the back foot by the growing forces of atheism. Articulate and prestigious atheists, operating in a society where the media is almost totally atheistic, our institutions, political groupings, education, health services, welfare and industrial organisations are all similarly driven. Atheists are always given a prominent platform by broadcasters and editors. These platforms we are denied.

We have brilliant, highly qualified scientists, physicists, mathematicians and the like who can argue most persuasively for Christianity but, though their work is published, it languishes for lack of public exposure.

My dream is that, perhaps stimulated by the Army, the churches will combine their resources to make a sustained intellectual challenge to the forces of atheism. We need to set up a united council to determine the right approach then do a massive PR job in putting atheism on the back foot where it rightly belongs.

Our voices are muted to the detriment of the Gospel. We need the public at large to hear the strong, reasonable-ness of our Christian faith in God. Making this happen will cost money, but money is the least of our considerations.

J.A.C.: Who has been most influential in shaping you into who you are today?

H.R.: You mean on the human level I suppose? I'm the product of a godly family. I was very close to my older brother who was a superb role model. I was at the sharp end of one of biggest and costliest battles in WW2. Some historians say that we who occupied that position had casualties to equal those of WW1. Certainly, in my section, of the less than a hundred men who made up the group, only 25 of us came back. That experience has helped to shape me.

At the Training College I met and married a lovely and remarkable lady. Win was hugely gifted and deeply spiritual. Together we helped nourish and shape each other into what we were to become. You can take your pick of the above and might decide that what I am is the product of all three.

J.A.C.: What books have influenced you most?

H.R.: In my very early twenties I was introduced to the work of the English poet Robert Browning. His spiritual insights have always blessed me. I bought his complete works printed in a number of pocket sized volumes. When I travelled, more often than not, it was with Browning. Over and above the more serious stuff I had to read, I al-ways had

a biography on the go to bless and inspire me but, in my younger days, C S Lewis was a living legend and his books gave my faith a great deal of substance.

However, the book that gave my spiritual life wings was written by a Quaker, Thomas R Kelly entitled, *A Testament of Devotion*. He spoke to my heart as a young man and has never ceased to do so since.

J.A.C.: Can you tell us of the most memorable campaigns and meetings in which you were involved, and their impact?

H.R.: Our second field appointment was very hard. There had been spectacular growth under the leadership of one couple and spectacular loss under their successors. It took us a year to stabilise things but in the succeeding year we witnessed growth again.

We were then moved to another Corps in the Division – one of those Corps to which no one wanted to be appointed. In the new situation it was born in on me that a better way of growing a Corps was through faith. True, we had to work hard but faith was the key.

It was the custom in the UK for every Corps and Centre to have a campaign during the first week in November. DHQ always asked for plans. Such plans were easy to submit and seemed to satisfy our DHQ. For instance, Band Practice and Songster practice nights were designated as Campaign meetings to which all were welcome and the Sunday titles were easy enough to create.

The Lord gave me a burden for this which my wife happily shared. We would call our campaign, a Faith Campaign. We would try to carry the Corps comrades along so that they would pray for family and friends. The climax of the week would be a powerful play written by Commissioner Alfred Gilliard and performed by Corps folk.

To hold us to the faith angle we would fix a meeting in the New Year when we would enrol as soldiers, the converts from the Campaign. To hold us even more firmly to the concept we would have a much respected, well-known visiting officer conduct that meeting. To tighten further the faith angle, in with the publicity for the Campaign we would advertise the January enrolment meeting. As you can imagine, some of the Local Officers gasped when I launched this at a special Census Board meeting but, to their everlasting credit, they got behind it. In the special soldiers' meeting we met with a similar positive response.

In the preliminary heart-searching it seemed to Win and me that we should aim for a specific number of 6 new soldiers. This, we shared with the Corps folk though not in the advertising. During the campaign we had a number of seekers who were family and friends of Corps folk, especially those taking part in the drama. On the enrolment night in January our visiting officer enrolled 5 brand new soldiers and reaccepted a comrade back into the fellowship whose name ought to have been removed from the roll years before. Everyone was thrilled.

In the new spirit of faith generated within this Corps that had been stagnating and shrinking for years, we made 36 new soldiers in 18 months. It was magnificent. After 18 months we were appointed to the Training College but the work continued.

Faith really is the key.

Cadets' Campaigns I loved (I can keep you going for a long time!!) we went to a large Northern Ireland Corps. Arriving on the Friday evening we started working in the town centre on Saturday with open air mtgs. We had a fine welcome meeting which we followed with a Pub Raid. In case you don't know our drinking bars are called public houses and, at the appointed closing times we invited people to come to the hall for coffee and a mtg. It was well-attended, boisterous at times but, in the end we had two seekers. Not a bad start to a Campaign.

On Sunday, even though the meetings were well-attended and powerful, there were no seekers and this continued right through the week. This was a situation quite outside my experience. As a brigade we talked about it, prayed about but, at the beginning of the final Sunday, apart from the two seekers in the pub raid, there had been no seekers.

What a challenge to our faith! Came the final Sunday Holiness Meeting and I stripped everything possible out of the meeting to allow us time to have a good prayer mtg. I recall majoring on the words 'Prove me now' (Malachi 3:11 AV) and doing something I had never done before or in-deed since. At the end of my address, in complete silence, I walked down from the rostrum and, placing my open Bible on the Mercy Seat said something like, 'Here is the challenge from God, are you willing to Prove Him – Now'? It was as though the flood gates opened as people came to the Mercy Seat. It was a long but glorious meeting. There was an afternoon Praise and Testimony mtg – again with seekers. We had the Salvation Meeting, the last meeting of the Campaign and again, the Mercy was lined repeatedly.

The very last seeker was a middle-aged man who had been the drummer in the Corps but something had gone wrong and he became a backslider. Someone had been speaking with him in the prayer meeting and when he came forward there was such joy in the hall. When the count was taken afterwards, there were 87 seekers on that Sunday. The Cadet Sergeant who had shared the leadership of the Campaign returned with me in the January, as per the original plan, to enrol the converts won on the Campaign as soldiers. It was tremendous! Faith is the key.

Some time after the campaign, the Corps Band came to London on a specialing engagement and I arranged to attend their Saturday night festival. The drummer was the very man who was the last seeker on the Campaign. He was full of joy. And so was I.

A few weeks ago a name appeared on my Facebook page and I wrote her a note saying, 'Are you who I think you are?' She replied by return confirming she was one of

the young Salvationists whose life had been revolutionised on the campaign, and who is still going strong in the Lord's work.

J.A.C.: What is God teaching you these days?

H.R.: To trust more and to love more and to concentrate on the essentials of salvation. To believe that we are among those weak and foolish things of the world made strong by God. To believe that the Army's best days are ahead of us because we are still part of his strategy for a fallen world.

He is teaching me the absolute centrality of Christ to all that God has planned. He is teaching me about the tenderness of his providence and that, whatever happens in the days ahead, I can be confident in him. He is teaching me that he is my heavenly Father.

J.A.C.: Who are your heroes?

H.R.: Captain James Cook was born not far from my birthplace. What a navigator! What courage! What a man! In my reading and imagination I've travelled every mile with him.

Captain Robert Falcon Scott led an expedition to the South Pole hoping to be the first to arrive there. He was beaten by the Norwegian, Roald Amundsen. But Scott's return journey, though ending in his death and those of his colleagues, was an epic failure and full of courage. I've travelled every mile with him also.

My heroes include the founding fathers of our faith and the martyrs: 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church'. I have many heroes, men and women whose courage and faithfulness has moved me deeply.

My Salvation Army heroes start with the Founder and include his granddaughter Commissioner Catherine Bramwell Booth who captivated me during the time I was the Press Officer. My heroes include Commissioner Booth Tucker, Captain Harry Andrews, Commissioner Herbert Lord, General F Coutts, Colonel Catherine Baird. Both General Coutts and Colonel Baird mentored me without me realising it in the early days, and not just the early days, of my officership.

J.A.C.: What is your most memorable spiritual experience?

H.R.: I have so many deep spiritual experiences. Most of my prayer poems represent an actual spiritual experience but I recall an event from my military experience.

Having become properly saved I had no difficulty in witnessing to my mates. A parachuting injury invalidated me for further jumps and I was returned to an ordinary signals unit. Ex paras were allowed to wear their red berets and, of course, their wings which probably meant that, in an ordinary unit, an ex para was given a fair amount of respect, which meant that I had no strong opposition to endure. Because I was planning to become an SA officer I was allowed to use the office in which I worked during the

day as a study room in the evenings. One evening the door opened and a Corporal whom I knew fairly well came in to check what was happening. I was actually typing out a short talk I was to give at the Corps the next Sunday. He stood behind me and was obviously reading what I had typed. Our conversation was therefore, on the content of my talk. After many questions and much discussion the atmosphere became such that I suggested that perhaps he should do something about his need for God.

The result was that we knelt at the office desk and I led my friend to the Lord. The very first person I had ever led to salvation. Bill Day, for such was his name, told one or two of his close friends what had happened and it became common knowledge in the camp. He came with me each Sunday to Gorgie Corps. The YPSM and his wife used to take me to their home for meals on Sundays and the Corps Sgt Major and his wife took Bill. They were good for him.

The sheer joy, exultation, of leading someone to the Lord is one of the deepest spiritual experiences one can experience. Though all subsequent similar experiences are wonderful there can only ever be a first, and Bill Day was that for me. If only more people could experience the sheer joy of soul-winning!

J.A.C.: Please comment on the state of Aggressive Christianity in the 21st century. How effective is primitive salvationism?

H.R.: I think it is important that we should be reminded of our heritage in this regard. Most churches probably move away from their roots a little as the founding enthusiasts die and the church becomes more organised. The changes too in society also facilitate this toning down of zeal and its challenges. But we do need to be reminded that the old way of getting saved is the way folk get saved to-day. If we devalue our Mercy Seat and decision-making emphasis we have, I think, devalued the Army and weakened our witness. I like the work you are doing to remind us all of the importance of the timeless values of the past.

J.A.C.: Our first General often wrote letters to his soldiers with teaching for daily life and warfare. Would you take this opportunity to offer a millennial message to soldiers around the world?

H.R.: To my fellow soldiers, I believe our name, The Salvation Army, is an inspired designation, born, not of human wisdom but of the Holy Spirit. The armies of the world are massed against us but, though powerful, they will be overcome. Faith, hope and love are the abiding qualities and they are not in the possession of the forces of evil.

I believe also in the timelessness of the divine qualities that built our Army. A changing society means that we have to adapt our programmes and strategies to maintain our effectiveness, but the essence of the Army, those divine qualities that created us, cannot be dismissed or compromised. They are of God. The Army is of God. The style may change but the aims and motives of our Movement are unchanging.

I am proud of all that our relatively small Army has achieved. God has used our greatly gifted people to best advantage and we who are ordinary confess that he has used our ordinariness wonderfully well also. Each one of us has an important part to play in the salvation war.

We have always been an accepting and affirming company of God's people. We have also been a joyful, praising, cheerfully sacrificial people: that we will remain.

What I hope we will consider and develop is an awareness of those special gifts of the Spirit given to each one of us whether we count ourselves ordinary or unusually able.

I hope that, within our regard for each other – our love for each other – we will feel a measure of stewardship to-wards each other if we do not already do so, so that we will actively identify and encourage each others gifts. These gifts will flourish in a truly supportive atmosphere and, employed with confidence and wisdom will build up each Corps; build up the Army; help build God's kingdom. Within the competence of each Corps there are gifts, sometimes unidentified which, when they are known and released, will bring remarkable results.

The need to adapt is self-evident and the best means of adaptation come from our heavenly Father's hands. He will not fail us. He also happens to love the Army. Has he not chosen us to be his soldiers? Are we not a vital part of his strategy?

May God richly bless us all.

Harry Read – your fellow soldier.

## **I Have Been Chosen** Commissioner Harry Read

I have been chosen Lord. Thy favour rests  
Upon me, and my heart is filled with peace.  
Within my heart, no room for other guests  
For I am Thine. In me, Thou must increase.  
My chosenness, a new perspective gives  
New values dominate my questing mind.  
With Christ as centre, my whole being lives  
To please Him, and His ordained way to find.  
I have been chosen! With faith and confidence  
I step out on my pre-selected way.  
Each day, a new, confirming consequence  
That it was best, the Saviour to obey.  
Even in troubled days, when light grows dim,  
I am secure, for I still walk with Him.

*John 15:16*

*"You did not choose me but I chose you".*

With abundant blessings,

Harry

10.07.21

## Seeking And Finding

Commissioner Harry Read

My seeking soul, Lord, reaches out to you,  
For in no other can its joy be found.  
That you are all in all to me is true,  
And of my aspirations you're the ground.  
With hopes great eagerness to you I turn  
And know my turning cannot be in vain,  
For you have fixed in me the power to yearn  
And promised if I ask I will obtain.  
More of yourself, dear Lord, I humbly seek,  
More of your Spirit reigning in my soul,  
More of your power – unaided I am weak  
And prone to lose direction and my goal.  
My prayer is great, but you now bid me pray,  
Have you not given this prayer to pray today?

*John 15: 7*

*"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you".*

With abundant blessings,  
Harry  
03.07.21



## **The Promises Of God**

Commissioner Harry Read

We love and serve a promise making God!  
He fits a promise to our mortal needs,  
No matter where dull human feet have trod  
His promises have made for noble deeds.  
His sky is crossed and arched by rainbow hues,  
Though storm-clouds roll, His promises are sure  
And though at times, our way we seem to lose,  
His word and will forevermore endure.  
Do we need guidance, power, or simply grace?  
Or patience, courage, or the will to be?  
Or eyes to see the Christ in human face?  
Or faith enough, eternity to see?  
He has a promise strong and sparkling bright  
To lift each earth-bound soul to heaven's height.

*Romans 11: 33*

*"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"*

With abundant blessings,

Harry

30.06.21

**Our Generous God!**  
Commissioner Harry Read

God is seeking those who need him,  
In his unobtrusive way,  
Waiting patiently to lead them  
From the paths wherein they stray.  
Ever seeking – ever yearning –  
God, the Shepherd seeks his sheep –  
Heart aflame, with mercy burning –  
God has promises to keep.  
Open-handed God approaches,  
He has gifts of grace to give,  
On our freedom ne'er encroaches  
But he knows through him we live.  
He will grant the gift of pardon,  
Adds to that the gift of power,  
Be himself our soul's sure guardian,  
Caring, guiding, hour by hour.  
More than gifts – though gifts are treasures –  
Has our generous God supplied.  
Love requires undreamed of measures:  
Twas for love that Jesus died.  
More than gifts, God gives us Jesus –  
Gift beyond our furthest dream,  
Christ in us is how he sees us  
Christlikeness – God's gift supreme.

*Matthew 5: 6*

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

With abundant blessings,  
Harry  
26.06.21

**Do It Again, Lord!**  
Commissioner Harry Read

Thy mighty deeds O Lord, have long been told.  
Creation's story stands for all to read,  
And how the weak, by Thee were made as bold  
Performing many a great heroic deed.  
Thy Spirit who came down at Pentecost  
Unleashed upon the world undreamed of power,  
And people, who to heaven were counted lost  
Became Christ's people through that very hour.  
Withheld nor e'en diminished is Thy might,  
Nor weary is Thy heart of humankind,  
Thy love's great light shines through the darkest night,  
Each sinful, weary soul, to seek and find.  
All powerful, present, loving God art Thou,  
Reveal to us Thy power – and do it now.

*Habakkuk 3:2 (Good News Bible).*  
*“O Lord, I have heard what you have done, now do  
in our times the great things you used to do”.*

With abundant blessings,  
Harry  
23.06.21

## My Need

Commissioner Harry Read

I feel my need, and open wide my heart  
Your Spirit to receive in added power.  
Of you, I would forever be a part  
Throughout each day and every passing hour.  
Help me to yield in glad totality,  
To open up to you my secret thought,  
And let your Holy Spirit cleansingly  
Flow through this heart which Christ on Calvary bought.  
Imploringly, before you, Lord, I kneel,  
And stretch towards you, open, questing hands,  
Believing you will meet the needs I feel  
And answer my soul's eloquent demands.  
O Holy Spirit, seal me yours alone,  
Infill me now, and make my heart your throne.

*John 16: 15*

*"All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you".*

With abundant blessings,  
Harry  
19.06.21

## **My Deepest Being**

Commissioner Harry Read

In me are depths which only grace can plumb,  
Of which alone God's Spirit is aware,  
Where sentiments are formed and seldom dumb  
Providing good and evil with a spur.  
These forces lie beyond my conscious reach,  
Against their upward flow I have no power,  
And yet – unteachable, my heart they teach  
And my intended plans with ease obscure.  
But he, the Holy Spirit can descend  
And to that chaos can true order bring;  
He turns that threatening foe into a friend  
And in that alien place crown Christ as King.  
His coming grants my latent strength release,  
And grants to my unstable heart, his peace.

*John 14:26*

*“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

With abundant blessings,  
Harry  
16.06.21

## **The Triune God**

Commissioner Harry Read

I cannot visualise the face of God,  
He is the great - the uncreated one  
Whose Spirit reaches where no feet have trod,  
Where light unseen by mortal eye is shone.  
How can this God by humans be defined?  
How can we even guess where he abides?  
How, by our searching, penetrate the mind  
Of him who over worlds and space presides?  
How else, but through his Son, the Word made flesh  
Who came to show us what our hearts would know?  
To open wide our eyes - our souls refresh  
With news that in Christ, God is here below?  
And as we look at Christ, his deeds his ways,  
We see how well his Father he portrays.

*John 20: 18*

*"Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news:  
'I have seen the Lord!'"*

With abundant blessings,  
Harry  
12.06.21

## Theological Nomads?

Steve Bussey

The word “denomination” comes from the old French and Latin, meaning “to name something completely.” Some etymologists believe the Latin word “nomen” and the Greek word “nomos” are interchangeable. The Greek word refers to the idea of “law” or “precept.”

A denomination is a tribe of people who share a complete and logical understanding of the precepts of Scriptural interpretation. In Judges 17:6 we read about how in Israel “everyone did whatever seemed right in their own eyes” - they interpreted the law (nomos) subjectively and in isolation.

In today’s postmodern world, we have come to celebrate radical subjectivity. “My truth” is absolute. In many ways, every person has become their own denomination, their own tribe. Recently, it has become popular to say, “I am post-denominational” - I don’t associate with any tribe. I’m a theological “nomad.” This sounds better, right?

Let’s play this out: Roman’s 12 challenges us to “not be conformed to the patterns of this world” but rather to “be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can test and approve what God’s will is.” That makes sense! I read Scripture, interpret it, and live it out. Simple.

How do I test and approve what God’s will is? Do I just do what is right in my own eyes? No. I need to be accountable. Who should I be accountable to? People who are going to tell me what I want to here? Doesn’t this lead to confirmation bias? To groupthink? Yes, somewhat. But how do I know what God’s will is? How do I make sure I am not “drinking the kool-aid of some crazy cult?”

Interesting to note that “cult” has to do with worship... It is also where the idea of “culture” comes from - a group that shares an identity, a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors. Those shared ideas entice folks to come together and share in community around those shared convictions. Many cultures as shaped online these days by virtual groups of people who share their ideas - their views of the world.

But back to the kool-aid: How do I know I’m not in a cult? How can I figure out whether my culture is healthy? If I am a sheep (stay with me on this metaphor) - and I know sheep have a tendency to stray... How do I make sure I am not being led by a wolf in sheep’s clothing? How do I make sure the culture that is shaping my identity, values, beliefs, and behaviors is good for me - and, more importantly, is true? How can I know whether “my truth” (or, for that matter, “our truth”) isn’t a bunch a baloney?

Back to denominations - why am I a part of a denomination and how can I make sure it is not a cult?

A “denomination” is not merely a Facebook group or a couple of folks meeting together to form a book club. A denomination roots itself in Scripture - which is what we in The Salvation Army call “the DIVINE RULE for Christian faith and practice.”

However, we do not interpret this independently, but we test it in light of TRADITION. To help avoid groupthink and slip into the whole “doing whatever is right in our eyes” thing, we connect to a broader movement that has tested and approved interpretations of what should be believed (what is called “orthodoxy”) and how this should be lived out (which is called “orthopraxy”). The “wisdom of crowds” idea applies here - in that we look to a global and historic community to test and approve these ideas. Those ideas should work together - you don’t want something that is illogical, testing an idea to make sure it works is a good practice!

There are, however, different interpretations of “what is true” and “what works” - and this is where we have the gift of REASON and EXPERIENCE to wrestle through these matters.

A denomination is a tribe of people who share a coherent and logical orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Those who share these convictions make up that culture. They share a view of Scripture that is rooted in a particular tradition and embrace an articulated logical belief system which they commit to living according to. Like any group, there are certain rules which govern the tribe. If I am a fan of Coca-Cola, I join that club. If I am a fan of Pepsi, I join that club. If I think Coke should be Pepsi, I am entitled to that opinion... but I should probably join the Pepsi club...

Likewise, those who are part of a denomination share those convictions. A person is entitled to change their views, but this ends up changing which group one associates with.

In our denomination, The Salvation Army, we are global, we are diverse, we are historic. How do we remain united? What is it that brings us together? This movement is rooted in Scripture. We are part of the universal church. We come from the Protestant tradition. We come from the Classical evangelical tradition - and more specifically the Arminian, Wesleyan, revivalist and reform tradition. We were founded by William and Catherine Booth who rooted us in the worldview we call “Salvationism” which is tethered to this tradition.

Our orthodox beliefs are articulated in our Handbook of Doctrine. Our orthopraxy (behaviors) are articulated in our Orders and Regulations. These continue to be wrestled through with international governance councils. We are connected to the broader evangelical community and the wider ecumenical church. This is not merely a Facebook group, this is a denomination.

One other important point, while some tribes/denominations operate on a Congregationalist governance model, we do not. We are an autocratic movement - which means that we don’t “vote” whether or not we are going to change our beliefs.



This was abandoned in 1875 when the Booths realized the governance model of the Methodist New Connexion would lead to mission drift.

To keep “the main thing the main thing,” the members of the Christian Mission began to make the shift from mission to Army. They shifted from their leadership from being a General Superintendent to being a “General” - yep, a person who says, “this is what we are doing - and we do it.” Wow - that’s some serious trust! How do we make sure this person is aligned? There are checks and balances out into place. In fact, there are limits to even the authority of the General to change things! That’s how serious this movement is about not drifting from our convictions and mission! The Army even set a succession plan in place (modified in 1929 for extra checks and balances) to guard this identity and purpose and to protect the movement from straying from these convictions of belief and practice.

While we have a new Orders and Regulations for Soldiers - it really is the same, but just articulated in a new and fresh way. However, we in The Salvation Army believe strongly in free will. Every person chooses whether they will follow Christ. Likewise, every person chooses whether they will be part of a denomination.

So what tribe are you a part of? For me, I have wrestled and been convicted that I am called to be a soldier in The Salvation Army. My covenant is not to the General. It is to God. However, I will faithfully serve under my General and my Territorial leadership to live out these ideals. I hope you will join!

## **The Salvation Army Is Shake, Shake, Shaking...**

Captain Pete Brookshaw

There's a significant, seismic shift happening in The Salvation Army in these days. One may suggest that's true across the church more broadly, but I'll allow others to witness to that.

I've heard some describe it as a 'shaking' of the church. Others have said, it's the start of a new reformation. Someone told me recently, "I think we're on the brink of an awakening".

It's near impossible to tell you what it's all going to look like 20 years from now. What will The Salvation Army look like in 10 years? God only knows. I don't even know what the world is going to look like in 12 months!

The shaking is the only word I can think of, to describe what God seems to be doing. Every little thing, God is shaking it. Does it matter? Is it about the Kingdom of God? Is it bringing light into the world? Is it a man-made construct that holds people back in religious institutionalism?

Old ways of doing things: Shake, shake, shake.

A formal uniform in a post-militaristic society: Shake, shake, shake.

A Sunday gathering that expects the unsaved to come to them: Shake, shake, shake.

A Bible study that has shut the door to people that aren't like them: Shake, shake, shake.

Fail to treat everyone the way God would have us: Shake, shake, shake.

Music that is old and stale that expresses nothing new to an inquisitive world: Shake, shake, shake.

All that matters is your stats: Shake, shake, shake.

A form of Christianity that celebrates conformity and religious duty: Shake, shake, shake.

A Christian who can't worship Jesus, unless the minister wears a tie: Shake, shake, shake.

God must think anything is permissible: Shake, shake, shake.

Any form of evangelism that doesn't look at holistic salvation of an individual: Shake, shake, shake.

Maybe God's ok with sin? Shake, shake, shake.

You don't have your hair up when you preach: Shake, shake, shake.

Now, I'm not trying to stir the pot (even though I probably offended many in the last few paragraphs). I think you can blame God for the shaking. See, I'm actually quite afraid. Scared even. A little anxious. Even at the age of 39, I hold dear to many things. I already have a few decades of Salvation Army history under my belt. I have precious memories. I have rich stories of the Spirit of God working in different Salvation Army settings.

But despite that, God is shaking things. Some of the methods might stick and be around in a generation or two, but I sense the shaking that God is doing right now, is causing some ways of thinking and doing to become irrelevant and superseded by the new thing God is wanting to do.

So, if you've come this far with me, you may agree that the holy discontent among Salvationists is at an all-time high. We are discontent. And that's not because of some leader, or even some bureaucratic process that frustrates us. It's because we aren't who we're meant to be (yet). And we're trying to discover it.

God is helping us along by shaking the very foundations of our movement. The foundations that became somewhat set in stone some years after William and Catherine went to be with the Lord.

God is not finished with The Salvation Army. God is refashioning us. God is remolding us; reshaping us. And while we celebrate all that God has done through many a faithful believer in years gone by, (There is much gratitude for all their work), we know God is up to something.

The core belief we have is that God is love. So we trust, what Christ has in store. We trust, through faith, that the shaking is not just for our benefit, but for the salvation of the world.

We must allow God to make new wine in new wineskins. The problem is, we're trying new things and putting it back into old wineskins. We try to squeeze innovative ideas for the Kingdom, into the frameworks that we created decades ago. Take a new idea, birthed by the Spirit of God, and allow it to ferment and exist within a new way of operating. A new framework. A new, God-inspired way of working. Don't put new wine into an old wineskin.

There's a detangling happening. Some of us, are navigating our way through change, and learning to detangle ourselves from the expectations of man, and learning to live and serve for an audience of one. No power struggles. No unrealistic expectations upon the shoulders. No backstabbing other leaders. No putting down another colleague. Just

a raw, authentic work of God, that is calling us back to the boundless salvation found in Jesus Christ.

I'm learning to trust the Lord in these days. I'm learning to have faith in what he's doing. I'm choosing to not be afraid. The words in Psalm 46:1-2 sum up some of my thoughts:

"God, you're such a safe and powerful place to find refuge! You're a proven help in time of trouble ~ more than enough and always available whenever I need you.

So, we will never fear. Even if every structure of support were to crumble away. We will not fear even when the earth quakes and shakes, moving mountains and casting them into the sea.

For the raging roar of stormy winds and crashing waves cannot erode our faith in you."  
(The Passion Translation)

The Salvation Army is shake, shake, shaking... Will you embrace what the Spirit is doing? Will you be courageous enough to embrace an awakening within the people of God, that will absolutely transform the world around us, with the incredible mercy and love of Jesus?

## Enjoy Being a Cadet?

Lieutenant Erik Johansson

*In June 2017 I was commissioned as a Lieutenant in The Salvation Army. At the Commissioning Meeting at the Temple Corps, Stockholm, Sweden, I was given the opportunity to give a testimony. This is what I said that day, four years ago. I pray it may inspire, convince and edify someone today - particularly someone who may feel called to an officer, but are less excited about going to Training College.*

**During my two years as a cadet**, people around me have often asked: “*Do you enjoy being a cadet?*”. I’ve never really known how to best answer that. The honest answer would probably be: “*sometimes!*”. Sometimes I have enjoyed it. If so only for the great session mates I’ve had. But at the same time, my two years as a cadet has given me my first gray hairs - maybe that says something about how much I’ve enjoyed it.

**Actually, though, it’s the question that is wrong**, and therefore impossible to answer properly. Because I did not say yes to God’s call to be a Salvation Officer in his Salvation Army so that I could have a good time as a cadet. I said yes to God’s call because there are **4 billion** people in the world who do not know Jesus. I said yes to God’s call because there are almost **700 million** people in the world living in extreme poverty. I said yes to God’s call because after **2000 years of Salvation Warfare** we have come a long way, but we have still not won.

**So, I stand here today**, in front of you all, with my red epaulets, commissioned as an officer in God’s Salvation Army with the task of co-operating with God for the rest of my life to do something about that - so that I do not have to sit here in the same hall in 50 years and hear a new cadet saying the same things, because we haven’t come any further. And I’m hoping that you who are hearing this and considering answering God’s call to be an officer, including you who are maybe already accepted as a candidate, are not becoming a cadet because you want to have a good time training and studying. But that you are saying yes because you want to be a part of acting out the prophetic mission of The Salvation Army to be a **stone in the shoe**. A stone in the shoe of our **comfort-loving, coffee-drinking, sleepy christianity** - and a stone in the shoe of a world plagued by **nationalism, consumerism and middle-class-ism**.

**In 1880 Catherine Booth, co-founder of The Salvation Army, prophesied:** “*We shall win. It is only a question of time. I believe that this Movement is to inaugurate the great final conquest of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” I’m standing here today in order to, together with 1.2 million Salvation soldiers around the world, make sure that Catherine - and even more so the God who spoke to her - finally gets her prophecy fulfilled. **God wants it. I want it. I hope that you want it too.**