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Editorial Introduction

By Major Stephen Court, editor

Greetings in Jesus' name. Welcome to JAC145 - the 145th issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity. This was going to be the Noland Excerpt Issue. But it was always going to be more than just that. Since the 2023 High Council was underway during editing for this issue, we are including a couple of entries on High Councils questions.

But we scoop the salvosphere with an entry from General-Elect Lyndon Buckingham (published when he was in his current appointment as Chief of the Staff) - a chapter from the book, DRUG OF CHOICE: Papers on leveraging creativity in the salvation war... a festschrift for the Nolands (Knaggs & Court 2020), called A LITTLE GREATNESS: Leveraging creativity in our biblical lifestyle, to kick off JAC145.

General-Elect Buckingham's chapter was written in honour of Commissioners Noland, and so it is fitting that we follow that chapter with our feature on Commissioner Joe Noland, prolific author as well as visionary leader. Noland has several new book titles in recent years (in whose honour Buckingham contributed the chapter!). I think that I have read all of his books (and co-authored several of them!). I recommend them. You might not have read all of his recent content yet. With his permission, we are running excerpts from a few of them, for your edification (the subtitles suggest the content).

Noland: STILL! The Church Culture Clash

Noland: UH-OH! The Evangelical Left-Right Dilemma

Noland: STUCK! The Leadership Dilemma

Roberts: Major Charles Roberts, prompted by the Asbury Revival, reminds us, that Revival Begins With Me: Understanding the Plan, Process, Posture and Person Behind Spiritual Awakening.

Bussey: Steve Bussey considers the influence of a popular teacher within parts of Christianity today, in Whispers On A Rohr?

Ennis: Major Wayne Ennis makes the case for the Trinitarian Foundation For Christian Morality.

High Council Questions And Answers Parts 1 and 2 take readers' questions and past official questions and offer some responses for our prayerful consideration.

And that's JAC145. Read prayerfully; apply courageously. Share liberally, believe faithfully. And if you complete JAC145 before August 2023 (due date for JAC146) or before Jesus returns (should He return before then), feel free to take multiple deep dives into the JAC archives (we're talking a thousand articles and scores and scores of contributors).

Stay close to Jesus. Much grace.

A Little Greatness General-Elect Lyndon Buckingham



Leveraging creativity in our biblical lifestyle Time to Unleash

(Note - this is a chapter from the book DRUG OF CHOICE: Papers on leveraging creativity in the salvation war... a festschrift for the Nolands [Knaggs & Court, 2020])

My father was a man who knew and appreciated the power of words. Forced to leave school at an early age, he educated himself through a relentless study of the Oxford Dictionary.

Each day he would choose a letter of the alphabet and read until he discovered a new word. The word would be studied, memorised and added to his vocabulary. He knew a lot of words!

Many who knew my father can testify to being mystified by words he used during sermons that they had never heard before - nor since, I imagine!

When I think about this innovative and somewhat creative education technique, I realise that both creativity and innovation can be found in many different and unexpected places. We may be more creative than we realise. Creativity is not limited to the arts, but can be found in many other disciplines and expressions as well. Business, finance, management, even our mission and the sharing of the Gospel.

I believe there is a spark of creativity and innovation in all of us just waiting to be unleashed. What are you hiding?

Inspired to grab the Oxford Dictionary, this is what I discovered about these two powerful words.

Creativity: The use of imagination or original ideas to create something, inventiveness.

Innovation: The action or process of innovating. A new method, idea, product, etc.

Innovate: To make changes in something established, especially by introducing new methods, ideas or products.

The use of creativity, innovation and imagination play a vital role in the success of any organisation including The Salvation Army. In fact, the loss of creativity and innovation will surely spell the end of our effectiveness over time.

If one were to say, “The Salvation Army is an imaginative, creative and innovative part of the body of Christ - It is an inspiration to the rest of the Church,” would it be true? I’m not sure. Maybe once upon a time – but now? To be honest, I think we have lost the edge. Traded it, perhaps, for stability, predictability, and a celebration of ‘same, same, same’.

We are certainly surviving, but, I wonder, where is the space for creativity and innovation? Do we endorse and embrace the new? My experience has been that ‘new’ is at best tolerated and at worst suffocated in preference for the old, tired, tested and increasingly irrelevant ways of the past. If we have a gift, it is to snuff out anything that does not fit well into ‘the box’.

I do not want to undervalue the good being done around the world in the name of The Salvation Army. It is amazing and I celebrate it wholeheartedly. We have a wonderful reputation for caring for people.

But by many we are seen as quaint and somewhat outdated. In most places where we are operating our impact is diminishing. We are falling way behind our potential. We are poor stewards of the innovative and creative minds in our midst and I suspect that’s why many have moved on to other opportunities.

Here is my plea for the Army: “Unleash the imaginative, creative, innovators.” We suppress them at our peril. We are destined to be grey, lifeless relics whose impact diminishes more and more over time. I fear we are a generation away from being a museum or monument to the past - unless we make space for new creative and innovative ways of expressing who we are and who we are called to be.

I write this at a time the Army is focused on matters of governance, accountability and impact measurement. I welcome this focus and drive to achieve better governance and management of the movement - but unless we nurture our creative innovative juices there will be little point. We’ll be well oiled, and shiny but not all that impactful.

Surely the whole idea of an Army metaphor is that we should be leading the charge, out in front, calling the rest of the Body to join us - not becoming islands of irrelevance in a sea of need and opportunity. The metaphor of the Army has so much going for it - organisation, mobility, availability, visibility.

But the down side – order, predictability, sameness - can overcome us. This metaphor needs to be true of our vision and purpose but we should be diverse, different, expressive, creative in our presentation of the Gospel. We need to use methods, strategies and splashes of creativity to excite, motivate, and reach out.

An Army of God's people - resolute, on the move and reflective of the communities in which we work. Back to my father for a moment. Since his passing back in 2009 I have been going through his papers and files. Lots of them actually, he was a hoarder for sure. I must confess that much has finished up in the rubbish dump!

But the records tell a story of a young, enthusiastic, creative innovator whose imagination when it came to sharing the Gospel knew no limits. As the years passed, however, the appointments changed and he became increasingly involved in administrative leadership positions.

The creativity and innovation of his youth was either suppressed or buried by the system. The roles defined him rather than him defining the roles. This is not a criticism, merely an observation - and perhaps too much of a generalisation.

The question for reflection is this: to what extent was he personally responsible and how much should be carried by the movement – where's the space to create?

I now find myself in a senior leadership role and must be honest, as I reflect on this topic, the same has happened to me.

Conformity at the expense of creativity. The space is there for me to create, but am I taking advantage of it? To what extent am I promoting creativity and innovation in my current role? Have I become too cautious?

As a young person I was full of imagination and creativity. I went from being Superman, to an Astronaut, to a cowboy all in the space of a Saturday morning. My dad's Ford Anglia was a spacecraft long before one was flown by Harry Potter! I created works of art, wrote plays and solved serious problems, like how to ride a three wheeled bike with only two wheels. Nothing was impossible. I admit that this also created problems from time to time. Imagination and creativity without appropriate boundaries can get you into all sorts of strife!

But a sacrificial, surrendered, worshipful, purposeful, creative, imaginative and innovative spirit - this can and will change the landscape completely. Is it too late for us?

Creativity, innovation, imagination were in full supply in my youth. I even wrote a little musical for our corps before entering the training college. So what happened – what happens? Is it age? Is it fear? Is it time, expectation? Is it resistance from those who fear change or new adventures? What knocks the creative, innovative, imagination out of many of us and how do we rekindle it and unleash it for the glory of God again?

As I reflect on my own situation, I must take personal responsibility for not keeping the creative innovative juices alive. I also believe we need to assess as a movement what space we make available for creative innovative expression.

Many get tired of the uphill battle. I remember being told that if I wanted to be out of the mould I would face a constant battle, that I should just accept that reality and get on with it. But does it have to be that way?

Is it possible to “mainstream” the notion of creativity and innovation? Commissioner Joe Noland has, throughout his officership, maintained an “out of the box” approach to mission and ministry - constantly searching out the creative edge to make a difference. He has been consistent in this and probably has the scars to prove it!

I wonder what his secret has been. Perhaps the mission of the movement has remained more important to him than the preservation of the movement. Perhaps he believed and still believes that God will take care of the movement if its members give themselves fully to its mission with all the resources they possess – that protecting the movement itself isn’t actually our job.

I fear that many creatives either leave for more permissive and productive pastures or perhaps curb their innovative enthusiasm and simply follow the tried and tired methods of our past. Let’s be clear here: my children’s generation are unlikely to settle for this. Loyalty to the Gospel and the mission will come before loyalty to the movement.

If we don’t give permission and space, they will move. I prophesy it. It will happen and we will be the poorer for it.

I want to be part of an Army that is clear about its purpose and rich in its diversity. I want us to celebrate creativity and innovation within the Movement. I want to be part of an Army so driven by its purpose that it embraces creativity and innovation - because it is not satisfied with diminished impact and falling rolls. I want to be part of an Army that imagines a greater impact and works boldly and creatively to achieve it.

I realise I have filled the pages with rhetoric but have not offered any solutions, creative or otherwise - so let me finish with some practical suggestions for consideration. Many companies intentionally make space for staff to develop new ideas, programmes, products or ways of doing business. The idea is to give staff time, space and permission to think outside the box. So as a whole Salvation Army, let’s create space - not just time, but permission, intentionality, room for creative energy around the mission of the Army. Let’s agree that we want to be leaders in mission, put it all up for grabs - our systems, structures, approach, programmes, methods - and unleash a wave of new, fresh thinking that takes us places we have not gone before.

Some suggestions for consideration -

1. Take personal responsibility for your own creativity and innovation. Don’t make excuses, blame the organization, your DC or THQ. Lead by example. Show some leadership within the movement by putting your creative, innovative gifts on the altar

and giving your best to help advance the Army's mission. Stay positive, stay engaged, keep telling your story and sharing your ideas. Keep trying, keep inventing, dreaming and scheming.

Have a go! Push the envelope!

2. Create Innovation teams at every level of the organization - Corps, Centre, Division, Territorial Headquarters. Discuss, dream, and innovate around processes, systems, structure, mission and how to grow the Kingdom in each context. What if right throughout the Movement there was an allocation of time, money and personnel engaged in creative innovation teams looking at new ways to advance mission? Imagine how God might use that!

3. Hold Innovation weekends. Invite all the creative innovators to a weekend of brainstorming, praying, thinking about how to put The Salvation Army back in its former position as a leader in mission advancement.

4. Encourage debate about what makes The Salvation Army, The Salvation Army. Simplify, Amplify, Multiply. If our model and structure does not encourage or accomplish growth, then it's wrong!

5. Be prepared to stop what's not working. Send the message that we will innovate and try, as well as stop and cease programmes and ministries that do not make a measurable impact for the Kingdom. This will help to create a culture of innovation and creativity. When we are prepared to stop old, ineffective, unproductive ministries, we make way for new ones to emerge.

I have read a good number of articles on creativity and innovation in the workplace. Consistent to many are:

- Stressing the importance to the organization of creativity and innovation. Reward it!
- Making space for people to dream, innovate and create.
- Leadership actively soliciting from staff ideas on improvements and better ways of achieving the mission.
- Encouraging risk taking.
- Allowing project ownership.
- Expecting and embracing failure.
- Tenaciously continuing to try.

I think somehow we need to "mainstream" the idea of creativity and innovation within the Movement. I have always believed that leadership creates culture. As leaders, we have a responsibility to encourage creativity and innovation. We may not be creative ourselves, but we can make space, be courageous and give permission. Saying 'yes' more than 'no' is a discipline of leadership that will lead to productivity, positive morale and growth for the Kingdom.

The warning signs have been around for a long time now. As much as we want to believe otherwise, we are losing ground.

Much of our creative energy goes into trying to convince ourselves this is not the case. Let's acknowledge that we need a wave of fresh ideas, new methods and permission to try. A wave of fresh expressions, models and programmes with the

same missional intent. This is the DNA of the Army - that men and women, boys and girls would come to know the love of God, as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Throughout their entire ministry, Commissioners Joe and Doris have encouraged creativity and innovation in mission for the good of the Army and the extension of the Kingdom. May God unleash others just like them and, please God, help the Army embrace and celebrate the gift they are to our God given mission, to take the world for Jesus.

STILL! The Church Culture Clash

Commissioner Joe Noland, *book excerpt*

In these pages, we will conduct a post-mortem on the past-modern (modern) and present-modern (postmodern) church pointing out its liabilities and viabilities. In so doing, we will call upon two very familiar acquaintances to help guide us: Li Ability and Vi Ability.

There is always great tension between Mr. Li Ability and Ms. Vi Ability (We'll refer to them as Li and Vi). You might say that their personalities clash. Li is stuck in the "STILL," always looking backward; Vi is liberated, always looking forward. He sees the disadvantages (liabilities); she sees the advantages (viabilities). He sees the obstacles; she sees the possibilities. He sees the old; she sees the new. For him it's business as usual; for her it's artistry.

The First Dilemma

As I said, culture is a curious thing. On the one hand, the culture that shapes and molds us is always the most appealing. On the other, different cultures must coexist together. What is appealing to one, may not be appealing to another. Alas, the first dilemma.

Li: "Yep, I vote for a church with good old fashion pews. That's what I grew up with. There's something sacred about them. When I walk into a church, I want to feel that sacredness."

Vi: "Un uh, no way! Just thinking about them makes my buns hurt. And after a nightgown robed, organ accompanied choir singing the same ancient songs repeatedly, followed by a long-winded, boring sermon, in some instances sprinkled with Latin. Ouch!"

Li: "Bring your pillow, exercise some of that adaptability you're always pontificating about, girl. Hey, and let's keep the sacred in our music too, huh? This new hip-hop generation is going to hell in a handbasket."

Vi: "Problem with you, is that you're stuck in the 'still,' while most of the world is moving forward. Not for this girl. I'm going to get with it, find a church with those comfortable theater chairs, one that rock 'n' rolls, along with a pastor that teaches likewise. That's much more Vi... able (wink wink)."

Now, now, you two, let's think this through.

The Operative Word

When faced with this kind of dilemma, I always first turn to Scripture for the inspired take on it. So, I placed the word "appeal" into my Bible search program, and this is what appeared:

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his **appeal** through us. (2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV)*

The operative word here is “appeal.” As Christ’s ambassadors, do we make our forms and worship attractive and appealing (enticing), not to just a select few, but to the whosoever? Catherine Booth doesn’t pull any punches with her take on this:

“We have stood to our stereotype forms, refusing to come down from the routine of our forefathers, although this routine has ceased to be attractive to the people, nay, in many instances, the very thing that drives them away.”

Vi: “Hallelujah! And that was uttered over a century ago. That old girl was way ahead of her time. Wonder what she’d be thinking, should she come back and see her beloved army now”

Li: “Ah, but those brass bands are still going strong in some places. Dang shame those newfangled, guitar-thumping praise groups started to take over.”

Vi: “Yes, brass bands were a great novelty back in the day, very appealing then. Especially combined with the spiritualizing of those drinking songs. Brilliant! But those days are long gone, no longer an attraction. And even those 1980s praise groups are now passé.”

Li: “Too bad they got rid of those high-collar uniforms and lovely bonnets. Classy. It was a fight right to the very end. But the present-day uniform looks real smart. Makes me proud when I walk into an army meeting and see blue everywhere. What a witness!”

Vi: “And who are they witnessing to, themselves? Think about that lost soul wandering into a meeting and getting swallowed up in that sea of blue. Talk about culture shock and feeling out of place.”

One Winning Strategy

You both make some very important observations. And while Salvation Army specific, conceptually they apply to the Universal Church as well. Exclusivity is one of the common dangers we face, culturally, whether it be in our music, dress, or whatever. And it goes both ways.

UH-OH! The Evangelical Left-Right Dilemma

Commissioner Joe Noland, *book excerpt*

I am a liberal, please pray for me. Why is this a problem? I am a white Protestant evangelical, my left-leaning ways not tolerated by the majority within this cultural grouping. I find myself in the minority, no stranger to prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry. I am an evangelical outcast, having been cursed, spit upon, maligned, and shunned. Anti-liberalism is a powerful force that I must reckon with daily.

I so desperately want to adapt, change, and conform, so much so, that I have even considered “conversion therapy”—conversion to conservatism. Seems extreme, doesn’t it? Anything that will lead me to the straight and narrow. Anything that will take this cursed mantle from me. Anything that will make me part of the evangelical mainstream. Anything that will make it all right (or is it alt-right?). Oh, how I long to be straight and accepted...

REBORN!

So, I look for mentors and role models to help guide me through this conversion journey—all the way back into New Testament times. Who else but Jesus?

WWJD?

Then Jesus went to work on his disciples. “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. (Matthew 16)

Don’t run from suffering; embrace it.

UH-OH!

Jesus was a Galilean.

This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee. (Matthew 21)

According to Allen D. Callahan, Associate Professor of New Testament, Harvard Divinity School:

“Galilee had a reputation for being the hotbed of radicalism. It was the ‘60s Berkeley of Palestine—a center of dissent and defiance. They had a reputation of being rabble-rousers, as they often took part in protests and uprisings against the Roman occupiers.”

Furthermore, “Judeans tended to look down on Galileans, viewing them as uneducated and of questionable ancestry—considered outsiders, not Jews of the traditional sort.” Think about it. This is where Jesus grew up and where his human values were formed—in a climate not “of the traditional sort.”

Hold on! Relax. Not to worry, my conservative evangelical brethren. Jesus was most certainly an outlier—set apart from this more permissive atmosphere. Can I get a “Hallelujah!” here?

Not to be contrarian, but it does begin to get a little trickier and more complicated, as eleven of his disciples were also Galileans, Judas the only Judean in the bunch. And it was in Galilee where his first miracle was performed—turning water into wine. Yikes!

But don't despair, like Emmylou Harris sings it: “We still have a ways to go.”

Keep me in your prayers tonight
I'll be weary upon that road
I know the finish line's in sight
But I still have a ways to go.

Book link >> www.bit.ly/Uh-Oh4u

STUCK! The Leadership Dilemma

Commissioner Joe Noland, *book excerpt*

The subject of leadership is a much-studied thing. There are books, seminars, blogs, podcasts, videos galore on the subject matter. So, why add another one you say? Good question. This may appear a bit self-serving, but you'll have to read another book (this one) for the full answer. Let me begin with a hint.

There are a host of leadership stylizations out there, creatively presented by leadership gurus. But when all dummed down, they fall into three basic categories: 1) Autocratic, 2) Democratic 3) Laissez-faire. Most leaders find themselves exclusively STUCK in one of these styles.

The first dilemma: Where do I fit? How do I fit? What is the best fit? This leading to an even greater quandary. What if nothing fits perfectly? If already fitted, how do I BREAK LOOSE?

Aha! The plot thickens. How do we resolve this dilemma? The simple answer: By blending all three and doing so in the appropriate measured amounts, to affect a successful result. My stylized word for it is "homogenous" leadership.

Homogenized: transitive verb. 1a: to blend (diverse elements) into a mixture that is the same throughout. b: to make uniform in structure or composition throughout: to make homogeneous. (merriam-webster.com)

Sounds like gobbledygook, I hear you thinking. And you would be right if we left it there. You'll have to read on for complete clarity. Not to worry, I promise it will be painless, and I'll try to make it fun, novel, and even a bit quirky at times. The result, hopefully, will be one of those personalized "aha!" moments for you.

For my theologically minded readers, think of it like the Trinity: God the Father (autocratic - absolute). God the Son (democratic - participative). God the Holy Spirit (laissez-faire - helper, guide). The perfect blend. Again, read on for complete clarity.

With eight decades in the making, many of them in a leadership capacity, five proven, tested, and guiding homogenized leadership models have emerged. When embraced and employed, they are deserving of a boisterous and enthusiastic high five. Here they are:

- MODEL 1: Don't bark, wag. (Compassion)
- MODEL 2: Think loudly, lead calmly. (Vision)
- MODEL 3: Choose your sidekick wisely. (Balance)
- MODEL 4: Feel fiercely, step softly. (Passion)
- MODEL 5: No risk, no glory! (Risk-taking)

Book link >> www.bit.ly/Lead-4u

Revival Begins With Me

Major Charles Roberts

Understanding the Plan, Process, Posture, and Person, Behind Spiritual Awakening

With all of the excitement and interest generating from the recent and ongoing events at Asbury University, it might be helpful to put awakening/renewal/revival in its proper context for our understanding.

Revival is a term that is commonly used in Christian circles, but what does it really mean? Revival can be defined as a spiritual awakening that brings about a renewed sense of devotion, passion, and commitment to God. It is a time of renewal, restoration, and reformation. Revival is not just a one-time event or a fleeting feeling, but a sustained movement of the Holy Spirit that transforms individuals, communities, and even entire nations. However, the question remains: how does revival start? The answer is simple: revival begins with me!

The Plan: God's Plan, Not Ours

Revival is not a human endeavor, but a divine plan. It is a work of God that is initiated, sustained, and brought to completion by His power and grace. Our role in revival is not to take the lead, but to follow God's lead. We cannot create revival, but we can align ourselves with God's plan for revival. The first step towards revival is to submit ourselves to God and seek His will. In the Wall Street Revival in 1859, Jeremiah Lamphier was moved by God to start a prayer meeting at noon. This prayer meeting grew in Spirit-led influence, so that capitalists began to exhibit extraordinary generosity, preferring the poor and disinherited. You would know that this revival was in operation years before Commissioner George Scott Railton and the "Seven Hallelujah Lassies" opened fire at Battery Park, Manhattan.

The Process: Not Accidental, But Organic

Revival is not an accidental occurrence, but an organic process. It is not something that can be manufactured or forced, but something that grows and develops naturally. Revival is not just about dramatic events or large gatherings, but about daily habits and practices that cultivate a spirit of revival. The process of revival involves a combination of prayer, fasting, studying God's Word, confession, and repentance. These practices create an environment where revival can flourish. The three forces that combined for the perfect revival conditions in 1859 were: 1) a nationwide revival of prayer, 2) a nationwide movement of men, and 3) national economic collapse. On the other side of the pond, William and Catherine Booth were serving in Gateshead leading a massive revival to the point where their Methodist New Connexion church was known as "The Converting Shop"! When we think we are down to nothing, God is always up to something!

The Posture: Prayer, Intercession, and Unity

Revival is a posture of the heart, characterized by prayer, intercession, and unity. Prayer is the primary means by which we connect with God and invite His presence into our lives. Intercession is the act of praying on behalf of others, asking God to

move in their lives and bring about revival. Unity is the creation of gospel movements that bring together believers from different backgrounds and denominations for the sake of the gospel. This posture of prayer, intercession, and unity creates a fertile ground for revival to take root and flourish.

The Person: Jesus, Who is the Builder, Planter, and Expander of the Church

Revival is ultimately about a person - Jesus Christ. He is the builder, planter, and expander of the church. Revival is not about us, but about Jesus. Our role is to follow His lead, to listen to His voice, and to submit ourselves to His will. We cannot create revival on our own, but we can partner with Jesus in His work of revival. Jesus invites us to join Him in His mission of making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Requirement: Awakening, Faith, Prevailing Prayer, Sorrow for Sin/Repentance, Restoration of the Esteem of Jesus Christ

Revival requires certain conditions to be met, including awakening, faith, prevailing prayer, sorrow for sin/repentance, and restoration of the esteem of Jesus Christ. Awakening is the realization of our need for God's presence and power in our lives. Faith is the trust and confidence we have in God's ability to bring about revival. Prevailing prayer is persistent and fervent prayer that seeks God's will and His kingdom. Sorrow for sin/repentance is the acknowledgement and turning away from sin that hinders our relationship with God. Restoration of the esteem of Jesus Christ is the recognition of His supremacy and sovereignty over all things, all sectors of society: education, government, business and industry, media. Revival truly is a "Jesus Revolution!" If you have ever taken a good look at Jesus, most of what He did happened as He was on His way somewhere else. He had an "as you go" mindset. I wonder what miracles, what conversions, and what other manifestations of power will follow you "as you go" to the car wash, the bus station, or Walmart?

In conclusion, revival begins with me. God is always for revival and ready to grant it. It begins with my willingness to submit to God's plan, to engage in the organic process of revival, to adopt the posture of humility and dependence upon God for moral and national change, as we "lift Jesus higher" and "raise a Hallelujah" everywhere we are. May God position each one of us to be a conduit for revival, wherever we are.

Will you Revive us again, O Lord, that your people will rejoice in you? (Psalm 85:6, New International Version.)

Major Charles Roberts is Corps Officer at Syracuse Citadel and Area Coordinator at Syracuse Area Services, NY.

Whispers On A Rohr?

Steve Bussey

I have been hearing the name, Richard Rohr, the Catholic Franciscan friar who is the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is someone who has been championed in pop culture by individuals like Bono (from U2) and Oprah Winfrey; and has had a profound impact on key influencers in the "emergent church" (Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Tony Jones, Ruth Haley Barton, and others) - many of whom are now champions of the movement known as "progressive Christianity" and the "eXvangelical" movement.

While Rohr is widely published, his most influential work has been "The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, and Believe." Rohr syncretistically fuses together elements of Christian mysticism with Eastern and New Age concepts that are extremely popular in today's world.

First off, in "The Universal Christ," Rohr dedicates the book to his dog, who is a "Christ" for him! Don't get me wrong, I love my own dog (we have a 14-year-old bichon named, "Mr. Railton" whom we love and adore), but my dog is no more "Christ" than I am... but I get ahead of myself.

Several issues arise from Rohr's writing, including but not limited to:

- Promoting UNIVERSALISM (the idea that all are saved)
- Promoting PERENNIALISM (the idea that all religions and myths share the same archetypes and thus are all viable means by which to seek salvation (whatever that means for you).
- Promoting PANENTHEISM (the idea that God is contained in all creation and creation is contained in God).

Rohr rejects our fourth doctrine, which states:

"We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man."

He separates the idea of "JESUS" the human being - who was a normal human being like you and I but a great moral teacher and exemplar for us - from "CHRIST" the cosmic, divine idea - which is not limited to Jesus, but is a title all human beings... and all living things... and all organic matter embody this cosmic reality (see panentheism above).

This isn't a new idea. In fact, it is a major proponent of a movement that came into vogue in the 1960s and 1970s called "process theology" that mirrors Rohr's claims - and reflected much of the sixties revolution's core values. It also goes back further, manifesting itself in various fringe theologies that present themselves as being "contemporary," "modern," "enlightened," etc., etc. In essence, these have been proven again and again to have cut the cord with classical Christianity. They aren't Christian ideas. They are a radically different religion altogether.

However, Rohr's pop theology can be very subtle as it cohabits well with ideas that at first seem to affirm many of the core values of Salvationism: spiritual formation, social justice, understanding our identity, compassion for the poor, and reflecting the

love of God. All these sound like wonderful ideas - and they are! Sadly, these ideas are "hosts" which are wonderful conduits for injecting parasitic ideas that subtly realign the disposition of a genuine seeker away from living for the glory of God and the salvation of the world. As the enemy in the garden whispered to Eve, "hath God said...," these ideas begin to erode confidence in orthodox beliefs, orthodox values, and orthodox practices. Before you know it, a tipping point hits where the Christian faith seems hollow (because it has been devoured from the inside out) and has been weakened to the point where one can only deconstruct the outer layers of faith, leaving the once saved individual lost and adrift in a sea of despair.

You might say at this point, "Come on, Steve. That is a bit extreme." Just Google the host of individuals who have abandoned the Christian faith or morphed it into some syncretistic form and tell me I am wrong... I am simply following the evidence. What might appear at first to be a sheep might actually be a wolf.

When reading Rohr, there are some elements of his writing that sound very Christian. However, when you look closer, you will see that there are significant, and dare I say extremely dangerous tares that are sown among the wheat.

Let me illustrate:

In The Salvation Army, our fifth doctrine states, "We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God."

I will never forget back in 2012 when attending a conference where I heard a well-respected, younger Salvationist stand up and say, "Yeah, I don't believe that doctrine at all" - and went on to go through a list of the doctrines which he didn't believe. I was flabbergasted as I listened to him - and talked with him afterward to confirm I had heard correctly. Sadly, I walked away from the conversation heartbroken to see an individual who I counted as a strong leader from my generation who was no longer aligned nor committed to the mission of The Salvation Army (despite the fact that he continued to travel worldwide promoting these ideas...).

At first, I thought this was an anomaly - but over the past 10+ years, I have seen this multiple ad nauseum - not only in The Salvation Army but also in the church writ large.

What does this have to do with Rohr? Let me share some direct quotes from his book, "The Universal Christ" - and tell me whether or not this reflects the zeitgeist of this present moment:

"The true and essential work of all religion is to help us recognize and recover the divine image in everything. It is to mirror things correctly, deeply, and fully until all things know who they are" (p.59)[I agree].

"For example, there is a divine mirror that might be called the very "Mind of Christ." The Christ mirror fully knows and loves us from all eternity, and reflects that image back to us." (p.59)[yes, I agree. This is biblical and Wesleyan].

Rohr carries on:

"Our inherent "likeness to God" depends upon the OBJECTIVE CONNECTION given by God EQUALLY TO ALL CREATURES, EACH OF WHOM CARRY THE DIVINE DNA in a unique way. Owen Barfield [one of the Inklings, and founder of a movement called 'anthrosophy'] called this phenomenon "original participation," I would also call it "original blessing" or "original innocence" ("unwoundedness").

Whatever you call it, the "image of God" is ABSOLUTE AND UNCHANGING. There is nothing humans can do to increase or decrease it. And it is not ours to decide who has it or does not have it, WHICH HAS BEEN MOST OF OUR PROBLEM UP TO NOW. It is pure and total gift, given equally to God" (pp.60-61).

This is not biblical nor Wesleyan. First of all, Genesis 1:27 makes it very clear that HUMANITY was made in the image of God. This is unique to humanity alone. We believe all creation signifies through general revelation evidence of God the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things (doctrine 2), but the idea of God placing "eternity in our hearts" (Ecc. 3:11) is for humanity alone. This breaks with the idea of pantheism being promoted here. So, while I might love my dog, Mr. Railton, I'm sorry but he does not reflect the image of God. He did not have God breathe His spirit into him.

In John Wesley's sermon, "The Image of God," he does say that all of humanity was made in the 'imago dei' - but he emphasizes that when sin occurred, the "natural image" (perfect knowledge, tempers, and liberty) were horribly marred. In his sermon, "The New Birth," Wesley differentiates the "natural image" from the "moral image of God" that INSTANTLY DIED when Eve and Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. While Adam physically lived for 966 years before he physically died (a consequence of the curse of sin), he and Eve IMMEDIATELY DIED SPIRITUALLY. They lost the moral image.

Here is what Wesley states: "For it is evident, Adam did not die in this sense, "in the day that he ate thereof." He lived, in the sense opposite to this death, above nine hundred years after. So that this cannot possibly be understood of the death of the body, without impeaching the veracity of God. It must therefore be understood of spiritual death, the loss of the life and image of God."

Wesley goes even further in his sermon on "Original Sin" where he states we no longer bear the image of God, but the IMAGE OF SATAN!:

"Satan has stamped his own image on our heart in self-will also. "I will," said he, before he was cast out of heaven, "I will sit upon the sides of the north;" I will do my own will and pleasure, independently on that of my Creator. the same does every man born into the world say, and that in a thousand instances; nay, and avow it too, without ever blushing upon the account, without either fear or shame. Ask the man, "Why did you do this" He answers, "Because I had a mind to it." What is this but, "Because it was my will;" that is, in effect, because the devil and I agreed; because Satan and I govern our actions by one and the same principle. The will of God, mean time, is not in his thoughts, is not considered in the least degree; although it be the supreme rule of every intelligent creature, whether in heaven or earth, resulting from the essential, unalterable relation which all creature bear to their Creator."

Wesley's (and the Booths') whole theology of redemption - prevenient grace (which awakens us to our crisis and leads us to conviction and repentance) leads us to recognize our predicament. Justifying grace, cleanses us from sin and allows for us to experience "regeneration" - the REBIRTH of the MORAL IMAGE OF GOD; and sanctifying grace leads us to begin the process of RESTORING THE IMAGE OF GOD through holiness of heart and life. While we believe that we can rule and reign victoriously over sin here and now, this will only be finally realized in perfection, when Christ returns and there is a new heaven, new earth, and bodies FULLY and ETERNALLY restored to the image of God.

This is a FAR CRY from Richard Rohr's theology. Here is what he says:

"But this picture was complicated when the concept of ORIGINAL SIN entered the Christian mind. In this idea - first put forth by Augustine in the fifth century, BUT NEVER MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE [are you starting to see the tares being sown here?] - we emphasized that HUMAN BEINGS WERE BORN INTO "SIN" because Adam and Eve "OFFENDED GOD" by eating from the "tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil." As punishment, God cast them out of the Garden of Eden" (p.61).

Do you see what Rohr is doing here? He caricatures and twists what is pretty clear in both Scripture and the consensual Christian tradition and mocks the idea that sin would "offend" God. If Rohr is right, that a holy God is not "offended" by sin, then WHAT'S THE POINT OF THE ENTIRE REDEMPTIVE STORY? Oh, that's right - everything has to change to accommodate this God who excuses and tolerates sin...

Rohr carries on:

"This strange concept of original sin DOES NOT MATCH THE WAY WE USUALLY THINK OF SIN, which is NORMALLY A MATTER OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CULPABILITY. Yet original sin wasn't something we did at all; IT WAS SOMETHING DONE TO US (passed down from Adam and Eve). So we got off to a bad start." (p.61).

So, we are not accountable for sinning to the Moral Governor (doctrine 2) because we are accountable to ourselves. I'm not born with the consequence of Adam and Eve's sin - I am only personally responsible for MY sin.

This is where things get tricky. There were some Wesleyans in the 19th-century who bought into the teachings of a fellow named Pelagius, who rejected Augustine's interpretation of Scripture communicated as Original Sin. This was never embraced by Arminius, John Wesley, or the Booths. This was popularized by a syncretistic faction in the mid- to late-19th century. Our 5th doctrine has been consistent in The Salvation Army since 1865 and was consistent in Methodism since the beginning - as this has been the core beliefs of Christians since the beginning. Yes, that means that while this might have been explicitly named 'total depravity' as summarized by Augustine in the 5th century, it was implicit in the theology from the first generation of Christians.

Rohr then taps into his perennialist notions:

"By contrast, most of the WORLD'S GREAT RELIGIONS START WITH SOME SENSE OF PRIMAL GOODNESS IN THEIR CREATION STORIES..." He then goes on to explain how this is what Jews and early Christians also believed, "But after Augustine, most Christian theologies SHIFTED FROM THE POSITIVE VISION OF

GENESIS 1 TO THE DARKER VISION OF GENESIS 3 - the SO-CALLED FALL, or what I am calling 'the problem' ...Christians SHRUNK OUR IMAGE OF BOTH JESUS AND THE CHRIST [hear the separation of doctrine 4?], and our "Savior" BECAME A MERE JOHNNY-COME LATELY 'ANSWER' TO THE PROBLEM OF SIN, A PROBLEM THAT WE HAD LARGELY CREATED OURSELVES" (p.61).

So, this need for "the salvation of the world" for Rohr is a shrunken, weak, not 'great' vision and mission for Jesus or the church. Does that sound like Christianity to you? Not to me. Not to the Booths. Not to Wesley. To be honest, I'm not sure at this point if Rohr has read ANY of the Bible after Genesis 1! He seems to think we are all still living in Eden...

Rohr states,

"That's a very limited role for Jesus. His DEATH instead of his LIFER was defined as saving us! ...Jesus became a MERE MOP-UP EXERCISE FOR SIN, AND SIN MANAGEMENT HAS DOMINATED THE ENTIRE RELIGIOUS STORYLINE AND AGENDA TO THIS DAY" (pp.61-62).

He then frames this narrow-minded view as essentially being the reason for everything that is wrong with the world. These types of beliefs are oppressive and cause for so much abuse.

"When we start with a THEOLOGY OF SIN MANAGEMENT administered by a too-often elite clergy, we end up with a SCHIZOPHRENIC RELIGION. We end up with a Jesus who was merciful while on earth, but who punishes in the next world. Who forgives here but not later. God in this picture seems WHIMSICAL and UNTRUSTWORTHY even to the casual observer. IT MAY BE SCARY FOR CHRISTIANS TO ADMIT THESE OUTCOMES TO OURSELVES, BUT WE MUST" (p.63).

Wow. So, Christianity is schizophrenic when we believe in the Biblical story and what has been tested and validated as part of the consensual Christian tradition? Nothing good has come from this whimsical and untrustworthy movement? Then why even be a part of it? If all people who call themselves are deluded and fearful to simply acknowledge this, then why have anything to do with it? [Please note, I am being facetious here - I don't agree with pretty much anything Rohr is saying here. I'm not sure how ANY person who calls themselves a Christian can...].

So, while pretty much EVERYONE who has influenced the Church since Augustine has got this wrong, Rohr is now going to set things right [I do think we call that 'hubris']:

"To begin climbing out of the HOLE of original sin, we must start with a POSITIVE AND GENEROUS COSMIC VISION... The Christian story line must start with a POSITIVE and OVERARCHING VISION FOR HUMANITY AND HISTORY, or it will never get beyond the PRIMITIVE, EXCLUSIONARY, AND FEAR-BASED STAGES OF MOST EARLY HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. We are ready for a major course correction" (p.63).

And so Rohr begins to help the church overcome its arrested development by presenting a "new theology" - one crafted in his own, more 'positive' and less 'primitive' vision that is so much more evolved and sophisticated than this barbaric form of Christianity that we need to shed as quickly as possible!

So... that's just a few pages. Does anyone think this is something we should be promoting? You're welcome to, but please do the world a favor and call it something other than Christianity.

Catherine Booth warned us about such false teachers. In *Popular Christianity*, she warned:

"Men have made up their minds that they can possess and enjoy all they can get of this world in common with their fellow-men, and yet get to heaven at last. They have made up their minds that it is all nonsense about following the Christ, becoming a laughing stock to the world, which He made Himself every day He lived, and setting themselves to live a holy life, which He said if they did not they were none of His; all this they have abandoned as an impossibility, and yet, not content without a religion, and finding it impossible to look into the future without a hope of some sort, they have manufactured a Christ to meet their views, and spun endless theories to match the state of their hearts. The worst of all, however, is that a great many of the teachers of Christianity have adopted these theories, and spend their whole lives in misrepresenting the Christ of the gospel."

I stand with Catherine Booth and implore us to return to Jesus Christ and sound doctrine that provides the true hope for this generation:

"Here I stand and make my boast, that the Christ of God, my Christ, the Christ of the Salvation Army, does meet this crying need of the soul, does fill this aching void, and does become to man that which God sets Him forth as being in this book. Guilty humanity He promises to pardon, and He does pardon. Ignorant humanity (with respect to God and the things of God) He promises to enlighten, and He does enlighten it. Degraded, sunken, impure humanity (in the very essence of its being) He promises to purify, and He does purify it. We make our boast of this Christ, and we say He is able to save to the uttermost, and that He does this now as much as ever He has done in the 1800 years that are past, that He is a real, living, present Saviour to those who really receive and put their trust in Him."

Trinitarian Foundation For Christian Morality

Major Wayne Ennis

We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory. Doctrine 3.

Christian ethics/morality has become not only an awkward but a contested subject within Western The Salvation Army territories of late. The discomfitment seems to be further accentuated by the fact that inside the sphere of the gospel, ethics is part of the gospel, whereas when it is attempted outside the gospel and trinitarian participation, ethics and morality becomes contrary to the gospel. The power of the Secular Age and popular media are a growing challenge the Christian ethical/moral life as each in its own way seeks to enforce the Secular Age's moral system on the world and the Church.

Whatever morality or ethics we engage in is participator, for the Christian life it is participation in a 'Trinitarian morality/ethic' through the Spirit's indwelling presence. What it means to not only live a faithful life but to develop habits for a holy moral and spiritual life depends on the gospel on the one hand and the doctrine of the Trinity of the other.

Christian ethics/morality, which includes our theology, stands within the Triune revelation of God. The revelation of God, his holiness, and the good is not so much a knowledge category as it is a communion category. We can only know ethics/morality in communion with the Father, in the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. Our ethics/morality is participation in the Trinity otherwise it does not exist.

Doctrine three reminds us that the God of the Bible is not a generic god. The God who has revealed himself is not just comprehensively trinitarian, but also thoroughly trinitarian. The Triune nature of God is not one attribute among many, it is who he is and who God is in himself must be true to who he is for us. If the doctrine is in fact true then it has consequences for how we think about Christian ethics/morality and whether there is such a thing as a 'Trinitarian morality'.

The doctrine reminds us that our life as disciples of Jesus Christ sits within the Triune revelation of God, and that if the gospel is where we first encounter God, an encounter that is first and foremost a Trinitarian encounter. A Trinitarian theology expresses what it means to experience salvation by God through Christ in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine goes on to remind us that as redeemed humans we are enabled by grace and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to pursue becoming like the Trinity, morally speaking, in participation with God, as person-in-relation. Participation or being 'in Christ' is the relational context and means of empowerment by which we are enabled to pursue moral transformation and a Trinitarian ethic life.

Being trinitarian is more than adhering to a doctrine. It is recognizing that without the Trinity we have no revelation and no lens for seeing all Christian doctrine as gospel and life-giving truth. The doctrine of the Trinity, then, provides us with the context and power for all moral/ethical thought and action. The doctrine of the Trinity is the

foundation of all Christian morality/ethics and how it is lived out in a world that sees such morality as boring, and dangerous to their authentic self. All attempts at living outside participating in the life of the Triune God is futile and folly. Any attempts at life according to mandates the Secular Age or seeking to be virtuous in their eyes is equally folly. Christian moral transformation and our ethical living in today's context must be Trinitarian centered otherwise it and we will become something in opposition to the gospel.

Is there such a thing as a 'Trinitarian morality?' Yes there is, it's what our doctrine teaches and the flag proclaims.

High Council Questions & Answers Part 1

We invited questions that you'd love to have addressed by candidates for general in the 2023 High Council (we've been blogging them leading up to the High Council, which started in mid-May, just before JAC145 was released, June 2023).

The initial idea was to consider them early enough that High Council delegates could read them and add them, and potential candidates could read them and prayerfully consider their responses.

We also included some ideas that need to be considered in responses.

It's all been meant to edify the process (Major Allister Smith set the precedent when he published his Memorandum for the High Council in 1946. (questions are all anonymous unless otherwise stated!))

QUESTION:

I think that in a current political situation in the world the Army fails its internationality miserably.

Although It has always been said that Salvationists has a right to hold to any political view, there has never been any real solid teaching on the Internationalism, on being beyond political view and structures.

I am often surprised to see a national flag in the meeting halls. I always thought that the Army hall is a representation of heaven, where there is no "jew nor gentile".

With all that is going on in the world, especially with the ongoing conflict in Europe, you kind of expected to have an opinion condemning the Russians attack on Ukraine, condemning everything Russian (from language to culture), condemning every Russian as a blood-thirsty militarist.

We tend to forget that we have brothers and sisters on both sides of the conflict, who continue to serve those who suffer, regardless of their ethnicity. Also, regardless of their own personal views on the reasons for the conflict.

The General made a statement a year ago, which I appreciate very much, but since then our comrades in Russia suffered, not just financially (many have to work civil works to keep the ends meet and provide for their families), but from neglect. The contacts from the IHQ are sparse and it always feels like they are afraid to say something wrong (read - politically incorrect) if there is someone who is listening.

All conflict end, sooner or later, but end. With the unaddressed growing hate (not misunderstanding, not difference of opinion, but actual hate) within our ranks, I wonder, how are we going to call ourselves One Army, how are we going to co-exist and work together across the borders? Do we really care for each other? The General has to address this issue. And as soon as possible, before it is too late.

ANSWER?-

Very interesting perspective. There are traditions within The Army to fly the national flag and to stand it in our halls alongside the Salvo tricolour.

So, how can we best address this issue? I wonder if, as we leverage the fund-raising self-denial practice with 'partners in mission' from just prayer and financial support into strategic adjacent-country invasion and great commission advance, that stronger organic connections between territories ('the fellowship is in the fight') will increase bonds and love and mutual support?

And maybe this is a great situation for emergency disaster relief expertise to be leveraged to aid.

Finally, our suggestion in the Year Book series that a global territory standard (we proposed 100 corps / 10,000 JS+SS / 100 active officers) meant that continental Europe would be one territory, bringing Russian salvationists more into the fold.

Guiding thought? Bramwell Booth's 'every land is my Father's land'.

QUESTION:

In western territories we are seeing positions historically held by covenanted officers filled by professionals who bring their faith, or their different faith, or no faith to their organizational influence. One outcome is the shift from mission driven priorities to corporate driven priorities. What specific initiatives would you implement to course-correct this troubling trend?

ANSWER?-

There are territories which require senior positions to be staffed by soldiers (that includes the possibility of officers, of course). That seems the simplest solution.

We aren't sure what is included in territorial memoranda of appointments for TCs / CSs (these are not publicly accessible). However, it seems like clear goals and mission parameters could help keep strategies focused.

We understand that outside consultants are engaged by territories in different parts of the world. Maybe the non-salvo worldview is infecting The Army more than it is helping it? Maybe we'd do well to choose our consultants more strategically?

QUESTION:

Territorial commanders have the power and authority to implement sweeping changes in their territory. In most cases these TCs move on, either to a new appointment or into retirement before the full impact - both good and bad - is felt in the territory. The result is authority without accountability. What specific changes would you make so those with significant power are held to greater account?

ANSWER?-

A senior officer was teaching at the training college back in the day and was emphasizing the importance of accountability. When pressed on the consequences of missional failure by a cadet, he admitted there was no accountability. All of that to say, it isn't only at the top, and it isn't only in our generation.

The solution might appear evasive, too. We have experienced a general term highlighting transparency (Cox). That, actually applied missionally, might be part of the answer. And such transparency might also affect High Council deliberations.

Memoranda of appointment that include missional expectations will help. And, finally, Year Book trending (to this point in time, the world depends on armybarmy for armybarmy statistical trends – which, by the way, you can scroll over to April entries to pore over to your heart's content).

QUESTION:

There are many who feel the appointment process is broken; it is subjective, lacks transparency, and seems to be based more on who leaders like, than on competency and capability. What three things would you do to fix this broken system and ensure fairness and transparency?

ANSWER?-

How about this?

- i. start with open application system for all non-senior appointments currently filled by impending retirees (implicit in this proposition is that position profile and qualifications will be disseminated and can be matched with applicants' resumes);
- ii. pray down the enemy that seems to twist the system with the problems mentioned in the question;
- iii. the next general may well have several new appointments (as in, s/he is just making them up; think of DuPlessis' international evangelization appointment or Krommenhoek's ambassador for global expansion appointment) to fill. Why not put those out for application?
- iv. phase in a general open application system (maybe not for specific corps, but specific types of corps [such as urban or suburban or rural; by geographic region; etc.]). Yes, it can still be a spiritual exercise, comrades, to have people submit indication of interest and maybe even qualifications for a certain appointment or certain type of appointment. And it will almost certainly help those making the decisions to discern the appropriate people for positions.

QUESTION:

It is now almost 25 years since the International Commission on Officership submitted its 28 recommendations to General John Gowans. Is it now time to convene a new commission:

- i. To review progress on the original recommendations;*
- ii. To consider hindrances to the implementation of the original recommendations;*
- iii. To make new recommendations to help bring the Army's relationship with its officers into the twenty first century;*
- iv. To consider new paths to officership and other models of spiritual leadership that have emerged in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.*

ANSWER?-

The short answer is, 'yes'. While many of us thought the Gowans commission was extreme, you'll find our proposals this month in armybarmy surpass them significantly. That doesn't mean Gowans was too cautious (though, maybe on a few points, such as spouses sharing senior reserve ranks, for example, he was), but that the conditions of the conflict have changed and the solutions are more radical. So, to speak to each bullet point:

i. sure, review progress, but recognize that a change in generalship changed some of the direction of things;

ii. It seems that there was unity of purpose on the changes for two terms of general things were on track. The nature of our system (five year general terms) makes it impossible to guarantee longer term alignment with a particular implementation initiative (we immediately think of the Larsson goal of 2 million by 2010);

iii. amen. We've covered a lot of this in previous answers. But, briefly, application for specific (types of?) appointments, regional parameters for appointments, duration of appointments (knowing, going in, that you will be 'there' for five years, for example), better treatment will all help;

iv. amen. So, we've advocated compacts in armybarmy for a couple of decades. These are like term-limit covenants – you sign up for five years or for ten years (yes, you can re-up as mutually agreed) and fulfill your commitment. The new 'auxiliary-lieutenancy' is a version of this (though the name is a mouthful). We mentioned 'field commissions' in a different post related to officer ranks. But in this context they'd work, too. For example, we have many outstanding and influential soldiers who could really help us accelerate the advance of the salvation war in senior leadership roles – why not slap some red on their shoulder, call them 'commissioner' and get on with it? (possibly for one of those 'term' compacts!)

QUESTION: ‘

Given that the majority of High Council members are likely to know very few of the other members, should psychometric testing or some other effective form of psychological profiling be introduced as part of the process?’

ANSWER?-

Interesting idea. I suspect this might most advantageously be implemented way outside of the high council, maybe at confirmation of officership (that is, all being well, five years after commissioning), informing appointment process throughout the majority of one's active officership and then automatically made available to each high council delegate (yes, Captain Lee can opt out so that a bunch of commissioner delegates at high council do not have automatic access to her results and have to specially request them) for consideration BEFORE nominations. (and, yes, maybe some 60+ may choose to update the testing before the high council so that 40 year old results aren't in play)

You'll know that there are international leaders conferences seemingly bi-annually. But it is true that they don't know each other well, in general. And they don't know the rest of the officers (at least outside of leaders in their own territories) very well...

QUESTION:

When I was enrolled as a soldier back in 1980, I was taught SA doctrines and OR. (I was lucky, we had good corps officers). When I became an officer in 2001, I signed my covenant "To maintain the doctrines and principles of The Salvation Army, and, by God's grace, to prove myself a worthy officer."

If I ever discover that I cannot be loyal to my covenants (included how they are interpreted), I will have to resign as an officer, and find another church. That would be the only honourable thing to do.

Then, in recent years, some (even senior) officers have decided to teach, preach, and act in ways that are not faithful to our covenants. Normally, the General would take disciplinary actions, but outward it seems like he has not done so. (Thou I don't know what is going on behind closed doors)

Since we no longer can take doctrinal faithfulness for granted, even among senior officers, this need to be addressed at the High Council. So, my questions to the nominees for the office of the General are:

Do you agree with the traditional understanding of TSA doctrines and principles?

Will you be faithful to them?

Will you appoint leaders who also will be faithful and take actions against unfaithfulness?

Will you uphold our standards even if it should cost officers, money, public support and reputation?

It is sad that we have come to a situation where these are not obvious things. But this is what I expect from those who are overseeing my service. If they cannot be faithful, they should do the honourable thing and step down from their positions, and consider resignation from officership. And they certainly should not accept nomination to be the General.

ANSWER?-

Let's put the candidates on the spot! Good. Tough. Truth. Love. God help us. Much grace.

QUESTION:

What difference is electing you going to make for the world?

ANSWER?-

Rubber hits the road. I'm sure there are hundreds of officers who could maintain things at the current rate (maybe thousands). The system is set and organisation 'runs' by 'memory', almost. The direction is set and the annual calendar reminders slot in our traditional, conventional, annual responsibilities and expectations.

The trouble with picking one of those hundreds (or thousands) of officers capable of maintaining things at the current rate is that we will continue in 'maintenance' mode at the current rate.

So, instead of picking one of them, it seems essential (since the current rate is toward 'YMCA' status in many parts of the world [think abdication of Jesus-loving, Jesus-featured mission] and toward 'Volunteers of America' in others [as in early SA-spin-off down to husk-status today]), that we pick someone else.

And, there are probably not too many potential candidates among the 16,346 active officers who can do more than maintain. It may be a small number (I hope it is higher than zero).

What 'more than maintain' can be accomplished? Off the top, here are a handful of suggestions:

- global corporate identificational repentance;
- focus on great commission;
- 'eagerly desire' (as Paul likes to say) a 'tsunami of the Spirit' (as Paul Rader likes to say);
- setting and implementation of global standards (doctrinal, practical, corps / divisional / territorial, etc.);
- strategize toward winning the world for Jesus;
- total war -> total love. ('total war' is a term describing the complete mobilisation of the citizenry toward victory in a conflict (or, in this case, the soldiery and even adherents and employees); 'total love' is the means by which we win the salvation war - Holy Spirit filling us, saturating us, and overflowing us such that the love of Jesus splashes and spills out over the planet)

QUESTION:

i. Why do we run programs we can't run?

ii. Why are we not training up Salvationists to lead all of our social services?

iii. Why are so many of The Army's educational resources expended on training Officers rather than a more balanced approach that includes educational resources for social services ministries, ministries that dominate the work of The Army in the US?

ANSWER?-

Great questions.

i. There may be as many answers to this one as there are programmes. But we aren't fantastic at 'ending' programmes (I'm putting my hand up, on this one!). So, once started, some can take on a life of their own (or, die and continue as zombie programmes). Other reasons? Tradition, desperate need, government funding, doing the community a favour, bad decisions, we're not quite as good as we think / we're not quite as well-resourced as we think / we're not quite as well-staffed as we think / etc.

ii / iii. It seems like a little creativity could allow us to redirect the Harvard-level financial investment in cadet training (in the west) to training up Salvationists to lead all of our social services. Would it be simple? No. Is it possible? Yes. Could it improve things? Yes.

Phase 2 - now we're adding sample questions from actual High Councils that General John Larsson (in his book *INSIDE A HIGH COUNCIL*, page 52) suggests are among the basic questions asked.

QUESTION:

Describe your leadership style. How would becoming the General impact this style?

ANSWER?-

It would be great for all of the candidates to see themselves in Ephesians 4:11-13, somewhere:

"So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Whether apostle, prophet, evangelist, or discipler (the proper conflation of 'shepherd and teacher') - or some combination of those - every candidate (and, coincidentally, every armybarmy reader!) should understand how they are empowered to advance the salvation war so that, among other things, they can surround themselves with complementary 'pieces' such that the four-fold is full loaded and active at IHQ and in every HQ and corps around the world.

And part two of the question - how would being general affect this style? Well, a good understanding of your place in Ephesians 4 combined with the ultimate human authority of the general's office promises a clean and clear replication of v11 - apostles, prophets, evangelists, disciplers - leading to an optimal impact for v12,13 - building up the body of Christ / unity in the faith / maturity / 'whole measure of the fullness of Christ!'

QUESTION:

Describe your vision for The Salvation Army. What mission priorities could contribute to achieving this vision?

ANSWER?-

Wouldn't it be great for a candidate to take up the original mission to 'win the world for Jesus'? That's a 'vision'!

Wouldn't it be great for her/him to understand that we are a revolutionary movement of covenanted warriors exercising holy passion to win the world for Jesus?

Wouldn't it be great for the Salvo Maxim to be THE mission priority - Salvos multiplying multiplying disciples multiplying multiplying bases?

QUESTION:

Identify and describe the relevance of Salvation Army distinctives in today's world. What do you see as the key considerations in safeguarding The Salvation Army as a unified and international movement?

ANSWER?-

Strange first question. We have to clarify things before answering it.

It seems obvious that our distinctives - if by that you mean our terminology and our trappings - are irrelevant 'in today's world'.

But if, by 'distinctives', you mean holiness and covenant (which are our short-list salvo distinctives) - then in 'today's world', fraught with all manner of sin and broken covenant, then obviously holiness and covenant are extremely relevant.

What are the key considerations in safeguarding global SA unity? Here are three:

a. corporate holiness (we wrote about this [one of our co-authors is scheduled to be a High Council delegate!] in HOLINESS INCORPORATED);

b. unified mission (this is not new, as General Bond's emphasis was ONE ARMY, and Knaggs and I have a ALL FOR ONE book trilogy with following titles - ONE ARMY, ONE DAY, ONE THING- even before that). Now, that's not as simple as it

sounds because of the federalization of armies by country and territory and the difficulty of the original mission, which has almost ubiquitously coaxed a subtle but momentous change of our mission from prescription to description as follows:

Prescription - win the world for Jesus;

Description - "The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Its message is based on the Bible.

Its ministry is motivated by the love of God.

Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination."

Do you see the difference? The prescription is about results. The description is about process. It got too hard to follow the prescription. Or it got too socially uncomfortable...

Let's all get on the same page with our original mission to win the world for Jesus.

c. Communication. We can celebrate each other's advances; We can interceded for each other's challenges. We can share best-practice between territories. We can transfer more officers between territories. We might want to globalize a periodical / website / podcast / communication vehicle to get everybody on the same page that way.

We wonder if IHQ will let us know the questions actually asked, and the answers actually given! More importantly, the issues raised are ones that each of us will do well to prayerfully consider as we march out 'Salvation Life' for the glory of Jesus where He deploys us.

Read on in Part 2 specific questions and answers on decline.

High Council Questions & Answers Part 2

Reversing Decline

We invited questions that you'd love to have addressed by candidates for general in the 2023 High Council (we've been blogging them leading up to the High Council, which started in mid-May, just before JAC145 was released, June 2023).

The initial idea was to consider them early enough that High Council delegates could read them and add them, and potential candidates could read them and prayerfully consider their responses.

We also included some ideas that need to be considered in responses.

It's all been meant to edify the process (Major Allister Smith set the precedent when he published his Memorandum for the High Council in 1946. These two questions from Commissioner Joe Noland deal with decline and stand apart from part 1:

QUESTION:

Commissioner Joe Noland has a new book coming out –
<https://themorerevolution.wixsite.com/still>

He covers a lot of this ground in those pages. And he offers a couple of questions on a couple of those topics:

Part 1. According to the very credible Barna Research Group in their “State of the Church” study, they found: “One-Third Fewer Americans Attends Church Weekly Now Than in 1993.” Also, a recent study from the very reputable Pew Research Center found that “70-75% of Christian youth leave the church after high school.”

The Salvation Army, in the western world, appears to be trending likewise, statistically. If elected General, how will you address this concern?

ANSWER?-

Starting with an easy one, Commissioner! The long answer is ‘many things’. The short answer is to lean heavily into base networks and away from conventional western churchianity (this, along with holiness, is THE solution). (When you lean toward something you are at the same time leaning away from something else. That doesn't mean the other thing is bad. This is a matter of emphasis in some of what follows)

And let that context inform your understanding of the following:

Lean into holiness and away from relevance;
Lean into discipling and away from programming;

Lean into evangelism and away from inferiority and fear;
Lean into faith and away from caution;
Lean into reaching and away from attracting;
Lean into compassion and mercy and away from propriety and middle-class dignity;

Lean into front line warfare and away from parade ground impressiveness;

Lean into salvationism and away from the institution;

Lean into great commission and away from services rendered;

Lean into winning the world for Jesus and away from hoping the decline will slow.

Let's break that down:

i. lean heavily into base networks and away from conventional western churchianity.

Base Networks. Base = cells + hubs.

(just search for "base Network" on armybarmy blog for details)

This is New Testament Christianity; this is Wesleyan Class system revival stuff; this is structured primitive salvationism. This is a (the?) system for world conquest.

And away from conventional western churchianity.

We have to stop imitating churches to fit in (with churches!). In virtually every country the people we aim for have proven by their habits that they think churches are obsolete and irrelevant. It is strategic self-sabotage for us to continue mimicking what is rejected by the people we are looking to reach.

ii. Lean into holiness and away from relevance;

Holiness – Holy Spirit can fill us with perfect love, can neutralize our natural inclination to sin, can refine our character to reflect His character (think, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...).

Relevance – in this season, the temptation is to compromise (and wave 'good-bye' to holiness) to fit in with the culture on certain issues, personal and corporate, micro and macro.

iii. Lean into discipling and away from programming;

Reminder – these are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Discipling – we recommend Infinitum (fitting into the base network model we advocate).

Programming – junior soldiers, corps cadets, and so on could be great for discipling (and are in some situations today – hallelujah). Organic > programmed in most instances.

iv. Lean into evangelism and away from inferiority and fear;

Evangelism - I mean, let's get down to it: who's evangelizing? Who have you evangelized in the past week? Too short? How about the past month? All of 2023?

(remember that we're not talking about inviting people to a meeting on Sunday or to watch *The Chosen*, or about saying 'God bless you' when someone sneezes or holds the door for you, or saying 'grace' at a meal with someone who isn't a born again disciple of Jesus yet)

Inferiority and Fear – those are two of the key obstacles to evangelizing. So, by evangelizing we are automatically leaning away from inferiority and fear. How to tackle your inferiority and fear? Get entirely sanctified and evangelise.

v. Lean into faith and away from caution;
Faith - make that, R I S K.

Caution - gets us where we are now.

vi. Lean into reaching and away from attracting

Reaching – 'Impact through contact' is the maxim. So we have to be close to people. Be where they are. Live among them.

Attracting – look, this might have been more effective in the past, before people had access to hundreds of channels and many apps ready with every entertainment and diversion right in their hands. Now, it is extremely difficult to compete with both the quality and the quantity of alternative content.

vii. Lean into front line warfare and away from parade ground impressiveness;
Alright, we admit that we're talking about the trappings of *The Salvation Army* here. And we're more interested in simplification along the following lines:

Uniform: identifying *The Salvation Army*, promoting Jesus, fair trade, inexpensive, machine washable, more like the current frontline of military war than the medal ceremonies of military armies.

Ranks: for a handful of years this century we were commissioning officers as captains. And most non-salvos, insofar as they know any ranks, probably think of most officers as 'captain'. Do we need lieutenant and lieutenant-colonel ranks anymore? Do we need major rank?

Not only that, but what about the practice of 'field commissions' or 'battlefield promotions' in which soldiers are given an appointment in combat conditions? Might we see all of the 'reserve' and 'senior reserve' appointments as temporary 'field commissions'?

In this scenario, Captain Jones is appointed territorial commander and given the rank of Commissioner. She serves effectively for five years in that appointment with great victories and expansion and revival. Hallelujah. And her next appointment is to a corps in a different territory, and she reverts back to 'captain'. Captain becomes the default rank of every active officer.

But let's push it even farther. We include generals in this. At retirement, every officer becomes a brigadier. It honours their service and experience and wisdom.

And it is a great equalizer for colonels and generals and commissioners upon retirement (whether or not you choose to use the 'default rank' option immediately above).

(in this realm, the 'general' pips (and the 'commissioner' and 'colonel') are badges that can be stuck on the velcro base of any salvo shirt / sweater ('uniform'!))

Briefly, on the parade ground impressiveness – who dresses up as much as we do (very few of the old answers of a generation ago that used to include business people, politicians, professionals [like doctors / lawyers], teachers, police, airline employees, firefighters, etc.)?

viii. Lean into salvationism and away from the institution;

Yes, the answer to the next question is 'God', for all you Sunday – Schoolers out there.

Who or what is going to win the world for Jesus? ('God'! shout the keen Sunday schoolers) It is Salvationism, not The Salvation Army.

ix. Lean into great commission and away from services rendered;

This is about a ruthless strategic focus on multiplying multiplying disciples multiplying multiplying bases (the Salvo maxim) and away from reliance on people fed, bedded, etc. (though we recognize it is handy to flex on those things sometimes). Zero Budget Strategy.

x. Lean into winning the world for Jesus and away from hoping the decline will slow.

This probably starts with repentance and is followed with a reversion of our official reversion of our mission statement to the original mission to win the world for Jesus (since we haven't accomplished that mission yet).

QUESTION:

Commissioner Joe Noland has a new book coming out – <https://themorerevolution.wixsite.com/still> He covers a lot of this ground in those pages. And he offers a couple of questions on a couple of those topics:

Part 2. The Barna Group, in partnership with Pepperdine University, published the findings of another study: "The State of Pastors." Following is a brief synopsis of those findings:

"When George Barna published his 1992 findings in Today's Pastors, the median age of Protestant clergy was 44 years old. One in three pastors were under the age of 40, and one in four were over 55. Just 6 percent were 65 or older. Twenty-five years later, the average age is 54. Only one in seven pastors are under 40, and half are over 55. The percentage of church leaders 65 and older has nearly tripled, meaning there are now more pastors in the oldest age bracket than there are leaders younger than 40."

The low number of cadets, recently, in our training colleges suggests that we are trending likewise. If elected General, will you address this concern, and if so, how?

ANSWER?-

Sure. Here are a few quick ways:

i. completely overhaul the training system. Apply an incarnational apprenticeship model to develop cadets to meet the entry profile of a newly commissioner officer:

- a. this allows them to train closer to home;
- b. this allows them to advance at their own pace;
- c. this allows them to get live-fire experience.

(one quick practical result could be the commissioning of many soldiers who already fit the commissioner officer profile – sort of like with the ‘Gowans Lieutenants’ 15 years ago)

ii. arrange so that officers from region A can be transferred anywhere within region A. But other regions in the territory require official requests and acceptances, just as the current arrangements with appointments outside of territory.

iii. find the best recruiters and deploy them accordingly (it only takes a bit of research in the Year Book to find the upward-trending sessional sizes in each territory).

iv. treat officers better.