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A Publication of The Salvation Army

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**Word & Deed Mission Statement:**

The purpose of the journal is to encourage and disseminate the thinking of Salvationists and other Christian colleagues on matters broadly related to the theology and ministry of The Salvation Army. The journal provides a means to understand topics central to the mission of The Salvation Army, integrating the Army's theology and ministry in response to Christ's command to love God and our neighbor.

**Salvation Army Mission Statement:**

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.

**Editorial Address:**

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Contributions related to the mission of the journal will be encouraged, and at times there will be a general call for papers related to specific subjects. The Salvation Army is not responsible for every view which may be expressed in this journal. Manuscripts should be approximately 12-15 pages, including endnotes. Please submit the following: 1) three hard copies of the manuscript with the author's name (with rank and appointment if an officer) on the cover page only. This ensures objectivity during the evaluation process. Only manuscripts without the author's name will be evaluated. The title of the article should appear at the top of the first page of the text, and the manuscript should utilize *Word & Deed* endnote guidelines. All Bible references should be from the New International Version. If another version is used throughout the article, indicate the version in the first textual reference only. If multiple versions are used, please indicate the version each time it changes; 2) a copy on a disk or CD, using Microsoft Word format; 3) a 100-word abstract of the article to be used at the discretion of the editor (e.g., on The Salvation Army's web page or in advertisements pertaining to the journal). Please note that neither the hard copies nor the disk will be returned to the author and that all manuscripts are subject to editorial review. Once articles have been selected for inclusion, the deadlines for submitting final material for the journal are March 1 and September 1. A style sheet is available upon request.

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# Word & Deed

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# Discipleship and Generation Next

*Jonathan S. Raymond and Roger J. Green*

Although it has been several years since, it seems only yesterday that The Salvation Army held its International Congress in Atlanta, Georgia (USA). The theme of the congress was all about the Army NEXT. It was a good theme then and even better now in light of the recently held dialogue of The Salvation Army with the World Methodist Council. The third in the Army/Methodist discussions focused on The Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28: 18-20). This issue of *Word & Deed* features a second set of papers from that third dialogue.

The topic of The Great Commission is pregnant with meaning for The Salvation Army and our development and refinement of our theology and ministry. Our fidelity to Christ’s command is contingent on our revisiting its relevance and meaning in the context of the present day and in our abiding concern for “Generation Next.” It is said that Christianity is millennia old and a generation deep. It is imperative then that we commit and recommit ourselves to discipleship, the raising up of the saints who are the next generation. We do this not only for the sake of the Army, but for the sake of Christ and his Kingdom. It is not impossible for Christianity to disappear. Read Philip Jenkins’ recent work entitled *The Lost History of Christianity* and you will discover what we mean.

The three dialogues with the World Methodist Council have borne much fruit for contemplation and serve to sharpen our thinking about the very foundational matters of our essence, mission, and ends as a means of grace in the Kingdom of God. Our continually developing theology underpins our service and missional effectiveness. Putting into practice our faith in turn informs our understanding of our biblically based theology of redemption, restoration, and sanctification made real in the discipleship journey of the next generation.

# Fulfilling the Great Commission Social Justice

*Karen Shakespeare*

## **The Salvation Army and Social Justice**

If you had visited The Salvation Army at Nunhead in South London on the evening of August 20, 2008 you would have been invited to enjoy fair trade chocolate while watching the film *Amazing Grace* and subsequently learning something of the realities of the slave trade in twenty first century London. You would also have been invited to return your chocolate wrappers to one of the young people who were hosting the event, easily recognizable in their blue (fair trade) T shirts bearing the message “Justice, Mercy, Humility,” so that they could use them in their efforts to convince the local shopkeeper of the value of selling fair trade confectionery.

A few days later, on August 26, in New York, the official opening of The Salvation Army International Social Justice Commission in the presence of distinguished guests marked the commitment of The Salvation Army at the highest level to “give strong and articulate support to social justice initiatives by Salvationists around the world.”<sup>1</sup> The Commission is designed to give a “renewed, modern focus” and provide a “previously missing element of intentional coordination across the 120 lands in which cur-

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rently we work.”<sup>2</sup> For The Salvation Army, whether it is the local worshipping community or the international administration, social justice is rooted in faith, and characterized by action, particularly on behalf of the oppressed. A holistic approach to salvation suggests that Christianity must address not only the spiritual and the physical aspects of people’s lives, but also the societal norms, traditions and policies that militate against, or prevent, wholeness for every individual. Therefore,

Justice is making life right for others. Justice means working for the dignity, respect and God-given rights of all people...<sup>3</sup>

I have chosen to use the model of the Wesleyan wind chime<sup>4</sup> as a lens through which to explore the relationship between The Salvation Army and social justice. While acknowledging the foundational role of scripture to both theology and Christian praxis it also allows interaction with secular reason, the tradition of the wider church, and the experience of The Salvation Army and affirms the belief that, ultimately, it is the wind of God’s Spirit that has, and will, inspire and energize God’s people, so that songs of his justice will be sung and heard in our world.

This series of papers has explored the themes of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). The divine imperative demands a response which is both personal and corporate as all peoples are drawn into the Kingdom that Jesus has proclaimed and inaugurated. The model of prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples included the petition “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Matthew records that Jesus, in his final instructions to the disciples, commands that they work for that coming, until the eschatological climax at the “end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). A holistic reading of these verses suggests that the outworking of the response to this command reaches beyond the confines of church disciple-making, vital though this may be, to prophetic word and action, particularly with, and on behalf of, the poor and oppressed, so that justice can be restored. Put simply, the disciples of a just and righteous God have no choice but to pursue justice and righteousness in their personal,

social and political lives.

### Scripture

The first of The Salvation Army articles of faith describe scripture as foundational to both Christian belief and Christian living.

We believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore any discussion of The Salvation Army's commitment to social justice must begin from our understanding of scripture and of the personal and corporate response that is required from the people of God. The self-revelation of God through the Bible establishes justice as the foundation of God's character; a justice that is revealed in love and mercy (Psalm 89:14). The creation of humanity in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27) not only implies the worth of the individual, but also a requirement that human beings too are just, loving and merciful, so that when God chooses Abraham to establish his people, the task is to "keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (Genesis 18:17-19). The Hebrew word *zedakah*, here translated as righteousness, is in fact a description of social justice, combining the notions of charity and justice in a way that implies the creation of a society in which "everyone has a basic right to a dignified life and to be equal citizens in the covenantal community under the sovereignty of God."<sup>6</sup> It is a description of the way things are intended to be and any form of injustice denotes opposition to God's will.

However, the fallen nature of humanity also calls forth from God a justice that brings healing. The effects of sin lead through social injustice to broken lives and communities and it is only through *hesed*, the relational, faithful and covenanted love of God, that justice can be restored (Isaiah 9:7, 1 John 1:9). Set within an eschatological frame, justice becomes a sign of the reign of God in which the goal is the reconciliation and restoration of the human community, bringing people into "right relationship with God, themselves, others and the environment."<sup>7</sup> Biblical justice is therefore an act of faith and hope which looks forward to "the restoration or establishment of



God's just ordering of things."<sup>8</sup> In the Old Testament the tension between the "now" and the "not yet" is most clearly seen in the words and actions of the prophets who constantly remind the people of their obligation to be a model of God's justice in the world and of their failure to fulfil this requirement (Isaiah 56:1, Jeremiah 23:5, Ezekiel 45:9, Micah 6:8).

In the New Testament, the coming of the Kingdom of God is the key theme of Jesus' message. His "manifesto" in Luke 4:18-19 is expressed in terms of the social justice that will be the evidence of the God's reign (c.f. Isaiah 42 & 61). "This is a message of salvation-as-reversal, of status transposition; of insiders becoming outsiders, of grace for unexpected people."<sup>9</sup> It is a message in which God's justice is re-asserted. In him, the Kingdom is inaugurated and the redemption he offers affects the whole of creation, including social structures as well as human hearts (Colossians 1:20).

So the followers of Jesus are commissioned to work towards the fulfilment of the Kingdom, with justice as a central reference point,<sup>10</sup> and for the Church, including The Salvation Army, justice is not only social justice, but Kingdom justice. It is the manifestation of the Kingdom of God in human society, the substance of religious faith, without which God and his purposes remain unknown.<sup>11</sup> Social justice should be the natural consequence of living out God's plan for the world. The justice of the Kingdom is the outworking of God's covenant love for humanity and the Church is required not only to speak about justice, but to work prophetically for its coming to a broken world.

"Those who know that God will one day wipe away all tears will not accept with resignation the tears of those who suffer and are oppressed now. Anyone who knows that one day there will be no more disease must actively anticipate the conquest of disease in individuals and society now. And anyone who believes that the enemy of God and humans will be vanquished will already oppose him now in his machinations in family and society. For all of this has to do with salvation."<sup>12</sup> The Biblical narrative continually emphasises that the people of God have a responsibility to the poor, however poverty may be defined; social justice is not an option, but is a requirement of God's people as they work to fulfil the great commission. It is not possible to

obey "everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20) without working for social justice, even when it is difficult and costly. There is a place in the Kingdom for all, no one need be excluded, and in the Kingdom we are all our brother's and sister's keepers. Jesus summarized the commandments; love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37-39). The love given to others must be a reflection of the unconditional love demonstrated by God throughout the Bible; a love defined by grace and right relationships and not by just deserts, by human worth and not by human status, by costly giving and not by self interest.

The Biblical account, of social justice provides a "divine rule of Christian faith and practice" which, while not unique to The Salvation Army, resonates in a particular way with our theology, tradition and ethos. The commitment of the Founders to the spiritual salvation of the poor and marginalized was eventually supplemented with provision for "the relief of temporal misery"<sup>13</sup> which has shaped the movement's focus and actions throughout its history.

### **Reason**

While The Salvation Army "at all times will be overtly and explicitly Christian,"<sup>14</sup> it is willing to engage in intelligent and sensitive networking with secular agencies in the cause of social justice. Therefore an appreciation of a non-religious concept of social justice will enable us to understand the motivation and priorities of our partners.

In classical philosophy, justice is seen when each person, group or social institution receives what is due to them. It is one of the four cardinal virtues which are essential to both a good person and a good society,<sup>15</sup> and can therefore be described as a "meritorious dimension of social relationships."<sup>16</sup> The assumption is that a just person will pursue just social relationships and therefore contribute to the development of a just society.

This notion has been developed in the concept of human rights and responsibilities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>17</sup> provides a foundation and a goal for the philosophy of many agencies and organizations. Human rights are viewed as a pre-requisite to the development of a just and peaceful society, providing a framework for justice and a "common standard of achievement"<sup>18</sup> which is to be respected, taught and progres-

sively pursued. Article 1 is foundational: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards a spirit of brotherhood.

Despite the fact that the Biblical witness to humanity created in the image of a just and loving God gives reason for human value which goes beyond the scope of the document, this statement resonates deeply with a Christian understanding of the worth and dignity of every human being, creates common ground and makes space for working together in the cause of global social justice.

The declaration echoes the classical moral concept of a just society as that in which each individual, group or social institution receives what is due to them. Some philosophers argue that this implies that the rights of one individual or group will necessarily place legitimate obligations on another individual or group, so that obligations and rights are the converse of each other. This notion of moral responsibility for the welfare of others serves to appease some of those for whom the language of rights appears to encourage and express "an individualistic way of thinking which is deeply alien to the Bible."<sup>19</sup> The Report of the United Kingdom Commission on Social Justice (1994) argues that social justice as an ideal can be defined in a hierarchy of four ideas; that "the foundation of a free society is the equal worth of all citizens"; that "everyone is entitled, as a right of citizenship, to be able to meet their basic needs for income, shelter and other necessities"; that "self-respect and equal citizenship demand more than the meeting of basic needs; they demand opportunities and life chances"; and that to achieve the above, society must recognise that "although not all inequalities are unjust, unjust inequalities should be reduced and where possible eliminated."<sup>20</sup>

Although echoing the language of human rights, this definition suggests that social justice is concerned with fairness according to entitlement, but it is not clear how, or by whom, inequalities are assessed. Ultimately, although it is important to identify common ground with the language of reason, "Christian theological ethics are not rooted in those rights to which people are entitled, nor in the concept of fairness as the heart of a decent society."<sup>21</sup> Christian justice is rooted in God's righteousness and his desire to give in love. So we do not get what we deserve, but receive the gifts that God

offers.

Similarly, the people of God are called to reflect His character. Christian social justice must be therefore motivated by love and will therefore always be generous justice. It is not based on what is deserved, or what is due by right, but what is gifted in love. Reinhold Niebuhr recognizes a tension between love and justice, arguing that the flawed nature of humanity will always lead to imperfect justice. "In so far as justice admits the claims of the self, it is something less than love. Yet it cannot exist without love and remain justice. For without the "grace" of love, justice always degenerates into something less than justice."<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the imperfection of the execution does not absolve the Christian of the obligation.

This means that Biblical justice, and therefore justice for the Salvation Army, is not only an issue of human rights, but also of grace. Quite often, in secular terms, we need to go beyond the "rights" of people if we are to give them that which in our eyes could be considered "just." The story of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) makes little sense in terms of rights or fairness and can only be interpreted in the context of God's grace.

### **Tradition**

While there is no doubt that the notion of social justice is fundamental to the Christian faith and should shape its interactions in the world, the history of the Church demonstrates that the relationship of the Church to the socio-political context has often shaped its response.

Christian history suggests that during the earliest days the Church was outside the structures of society, a marginal people with no political power, unable to address inequities. However, Christian teaching subverted the accepted norms, so that a runaway slave was encouraged to return to his master who would now view him as a brother, (Philemon 12, 15). marriage relationships were re-defined (1 Peter 3:1-7) and Jew and Gentile found a common center (Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:11-18).

Over subsequent centuries the Church became respectable, an institution of society linked to the dominant voices of the prevailing culture. In the West, from the period of Constantine to the beginning of the modern era, state and Church shared a common responsibility for the life of the people. The Church's influence provided a sure foundation, particularly in mat-

ters of law, education and medicine. However, it can also be argued that the close relationship between Church and state has sometimes compromised the Church's ability, or motivation, to work for social justice and social reform, and like the 'court prophets' of the Old Testament who tempered their prophecy to suit the mood of the time (Jeremiah 14:13), the Church has failed to critique the prevailing wisdom.

The trend to viewing Christianity as "spiritual" religion, concerned primarily with preparation for the next world, rather than redeeming the injustice on this earth began with Augustine and persisted through the reformation. "The world was evil and unredeemable and changing its structures did not really fall within the sphere of the Church's responsibilities."<sup>23</sup> In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the differentiation between the public world of facts and the private world of values resulted in the marginalization of Christian voices in public life. The Church's involvement in society was often limited to acts of charity—social service. However, any involvement in issues of social justice was often deemed to be interference in matters that were outside the purview and understanding of the Church.

However, in the twentieth century, for some German Christians, colluding with the state, or taking refuge in a spiritual or private faith was not a possibility in the face of an increasingly oppressive political regime. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote from prison:

Some seek refuge from the rough and tumble of public life in the sanctuary of their own private virtue. Such men however are compelled to seal their lips and shut their eyes to the injustice around them. Only at the cost of self-deception can they keep themselves pure from the defilements incurred by responsible action...The responsible man seeks to make his whole life a response to the question and call of God.<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, the reflections of German theologians as they sought to make sense of their particular context began to challenge the self-understanding of the Church in its relationship to society. A meeting of Roman Catholic Bishops at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, marked a further turning

point, by acknowledging "that the Church had often sided with the oppressive governments in the region, and declaring that in the future it would be on the side of the poor."<sup>25</sup> The subsequent rise of liberation theology and its commitment to action in the cause of a more equitable society, although not without its critics, placed the Church firmly in the public arena and working for social justice.

In the North American evangelical Church two "mandates" of redemption, spiritual and social, had been distinguished as early as Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and in The United Kingdom for John Wesley (1703-91) social action and social reform were integral to the life of salvation and holiness.<sup>26</sup> However, according to Bosch,<sup>27</sup> a gradual shift towards the primacy of evangelism took place. Nevertheless, in this arena also, during the 1960s a renewed interest in social concern began to emerge. The 1974 Lausanne Covenant summarized the change of mood:

The message of salvation implies also a message of judgement upon every form of alienation, oppression, and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.<sup>28</sup>

As the paradigm shifts again, social justice has become of focus of the societal agenda. The pluralism of the post-modern mood allows for difference and diversity. Globalization and technological advance have served to raise awareness of social inequity. The needs of the poor and marginalized are known and acknowledged more graphically than at any other point in history. There is an increasing mood of responsibility for the world in which we live, both in the Church and in society. The Church has the opportunity to once more become a strong voice for social justice by "articulating norms of faithful discipleship alongside competing world-view."<sup>29</sup> It will not be the only voice; but it can be heard, it can do effective work. Its response can model the logical outworking of the great commission and in so doing work towards the building of a truly inclusive, socially just, Kingdom community. In this, it will no longer speak from the safety of the prevailing power base, but prophetically, from the margins, as a stranger in a foreign country, "res-

ident aliens, an adventurous colony in a society of unbelief.”<sup>30</sup> This brief, incomplete and primarily Western history may lead us to uncomfortable conclusions which the Church, including The Salvation Army, cannot avoid. Perhaps there have been times when, from our position of weakness, we have been unable to act. But perhaps we have also failed to act because of our comfort, our respectability. Sometimes, we may have been content to think about a promised future hope and have too readily accepted the injustice of the present, and sometimes we have offered charity but not justice.

The Salvation Army has strong traditions that have shaped our self-understanding and theology; two are particularly relevant to the area of social justice – a call to the marginalized, and a culture of activism. The roots of the movement in the East End of Victorian London, coupled with the social awareness of William and Catherine Booth, have ensured a historical commitment to the poor and marginalized throughout our history. From its beginnings The Salvation Army was always a “neighborhood religion” growing within urban society and led by local people. It both belonged to and challenged Victorian working class culture. Pamela Walker writes that “while the clergy found it difficult to bridge the chasm of class and culture that divided them from their flock, the mission’s converts could not help but address family, friends, and workmates when they preached in the streets.”<sup>31</sup> William Booth was deeply influenced by the theology of John Wesley, for whom “social righteousness,” that is caring for the needs of the poor and seeking to combat the social structures which cause deprivation,<sup>32</sup> was essential to the holy life. However, although he is known to have welcomed the very poor into his local Methodist church as a youth, much to the chagrin of the congregation, history records that it was not until in 1888, returning home late at night and seeing the homeless men sleeping under the London bridges that Booth truly recognized the need for The Salvation Army to act. Although the primacy of the gospel remained paramount, Booth acknowledged the role of economic poverty in jeopardizing the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual well-being of the poor. He became convinced of the value of “social work with salvation results in view.”<sup>33</sup> In 1890 “In Darkest England and the Way Out” which outlined

comprehensive plans to combat a wide variety of social ills of the time, was published and consequently the mission of The Salvation Army to serve the suffering received new focus. The transforming power of the gospel was proclaimed and enacted in evangelism and social action. Phil Needham writes, "In reality, one cannot hear the message of the Kingdom without personally confronting the one in whom it is present, and one cannot receive the Kingdom without confronting its implications for the world into which it has come and still comes."<sup>34</sup> In many senses we would claim to be a prophetic tradition both in terms of theology and practice. In its earliest days The Salvation Army stood outside the orbit of social and political influence. Using methods and techniques that appealed to the unsophisticated poor, it was viewed by some as a vulgarization of Christianity and as of no consequence. However, this did not lead to inaction. The importance of a visible, lived faith with a missional focus has shaped the development of the organization and its response to the social situation in which it operates. John Coutts writes, "It would seem that the Army is at its best when confronted by a tangible social evil that it can get its teeth into."<sup>35</sup> The pursuit of social justice became a feature of the Army's response to societal need. In the United Kingdom, contributions to the public pressure led to the reform of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 1885. Similarly, in Japan, working with a Methodist minister, Rev. U.G. Murphy, and other Christians, The Salvation Army raised public awareness of the prostitutes held in brothels against the payment of excessive "loans", eventually resulting in a change of law. During the first year, 1900, 12,000 young women obtained their freedom.

In 1891 the establishment of a match factory in London enabled The Salvation Army to contribute to the reform of two social injustices; the danger to employee health caused by the use of yellow phosphorus in making match heads and the underpayment of factory workers.

In the early years of the twentieth century reform work among the "criminal tribes" of India received government praise and approval. In response to a request from the authorities in 1908, settlements were established and individuals were educated and taught to work. Eventually, the "criminal tribes" ceased to exist and were absorbed into the general popula-



tion.

During the Second World War some Salvationists in occupied countries found opportunities to seek justice through the resistance movement. One such was Captain Theo Krommenhoek of Doesburg in the Netherlands.

The eventual closure of the penal colony in French Guiana known as Devil's Island owed much to the efforts of Commissioner Charles Pean and other French Salvationists. Although concerns had been raised as early as 1918, it was not until 1945 that The Salvation Army was eventually entrusted with the task of repatriating the last of the liberated men. During this time, social welfare had been operative, and through his writing, Pean had influenced governmental policy and the decision to close the settlement.

However, we need to acknowledge that as The Salvation Army has become more established, and in some countries, integrated into the fabric of society, it is also possible that, claiming a-political neutrality, we have preferred to work within the established norms of the culture, engaging in social service rather than speaking prophetically against the root causes of social injustice. With vast numbers of social service programs throughout the world, we have, in some countries, been thought of as a social service agency rather than as a Church whose involvement in social issues is an act of charity in its truest sense, giving in Christian love. Nevertheless, restorative justice has been at work, as the dignity and self-worth of individuals was restored and renewed, and the commands of Jesus obeyed as the hungry and thirsty have been satisfied, the sick cared for, and the prisoners visited (Matthew 25:35-36). Despite this, some would say that we have grown old and have been judged accordingly. "If any blessing has departed from the Army, it is more likely over this abdication of our prophetic role than over anything else. In our youth, we innovated and customized. In our old-age, we imitate and franchise."<sup>36</sup> The history of The Salvation Army also records our failure to truly seek justice in the apartheid regime of South Africa. Despite a condemnatory statement by General Eva Burrows in 1986, it is evident that "professing a a-political stance, we used this to avoid the kind of protest for which the early Salvation Army was known."<sup>37</sup> Although it was noted that this allowed freedom in ministry and the opportunity to offer help to some of those most severely affected, The Submission by The Salvation

Army to the Truth Commission (1997) noted that we did not "follow justice and justice alone"<sup>38</sup> (Deuteronomy 16:20), choosing to remain silent when we should have spoken. Here we see that pursuing justice for the future may jeopardize the possibility of acts of mercy in the present. It may be that to speak out is more costly than to keep silent.

Nevertheless, Salvation Army teaching carries within it a clear, if not often developed, rationale for the pursuit of social justice. *Salvation Story*, the official handbook of Salvation Army Doctrine, explains our position. "As members of God's Church we carry out God's mission in Christ's name in various ways, including ... by identifying and offering compassionate service to the poor and disadvantaged and by working with the oppressed for justice and liberty... We are all-engaged in mission to the whole person and the whole world through the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>39</sup> This theme is developed in the documents of the Spiritual Life Commission, convened in 1996 to "review the ways in which The Salvation Army cultivates and sustains the spiritual life of its people."<sup>40</sup> Salvationists are called to be

.... people whose witness to the world is expressed by the values we live by, as well as by the message we proclaim. This leads to service which is a self-giving for the salvation and healing of a hurting world, as well as a prophetic witness in the face of injustice.<sup>41</sup>

The prophetic witness is seen as ultimately a result of "... a commitment to the redemption of the world in all its dimensions- physical, spiritual, social, economic and political"<sup>42</sup> and the outworking of personal, relational, social and political experience of holiness.

The Soldiers' Covenant, a document signed by all who wish to be Salvation Army soldiers, contains the simple phrase "I will make the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard for my life." The values of the Kingdom cannot be properly apprehended unless they result in the pursuit of social justice. For The Salvation Army officer the theme is developed in the words of the Officers' Covenant and Commissioning ceremony with the promise "to strive to lead all persons to

their only Saviour, and for his sake to care for the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, love the unlovable, and befriend those who have no friends." Living in obedience to the commandments of Jesus (Matthew 28:20) places upon the Christian the obligation to "bring good news to the poor .... release to the captives...recovery of sight to the blind ... let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18-19).

### **Experience**

Despite the charge that we have grown old and "safe," as The Salvation Army faces the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is evident that social justice is once more firmly established as a primary focus of our movement. A re-exploration of a rich heritage and an honest appraisal of the demands of true discipleship are resulting in a resurgence of interest in issues of social justice at all levels of the movement. Some would say that we have been re-called to our roots, to the prophetic heritage that made us distinctive and courageous enough to challenge the prevailing norms as well as the undercurrents of society. In the West, the reaction against individualism and an increasing sense of social responsibility contribute to a society that makes space for the prophet and the activist, even when their message is disturbing.

The vision statement of the United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland expresses succinctly the world-wide purpose. "We will be a Spirit-filled, radical, growing movement with a burning desire to lead people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; actively serve the community; fight for social justice."

The establishment of the International Social Justice Commission will provide a major impetus and a point of international coordination. As "The Salvation Army's strategic voice to advocate for human dignity and social justice with the world's poor and oppressed"<sup>43</sup> it will speak on behalf of the powerless in the international public arena, particularly the United Nations and "assist the Army in addressing social injustice in a measured, proactive and Christian manner, consistent with the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army."<sup>44</sup> In addition, it will encourage and offer guidance to Territories throughout the world in addressing social justice issues in the local context.

For example, in recent years opposing the widespread evils of

human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation have become a core issue for The Salvation Army's fight against injustice. Global in its scope, the twenty-first century slave trade flourishes in a world which thought it was long since eradicated. Throughout the world, programs to raise awareness, to market fair trade goods and to care for victims have been established. Advocacy at the highest levels is complemented by the work of local activist groups in the effort to secure justice.

The presence of The Salvation Army in 120 countries enables the development of a truly international perspective. However while acknowledging that we are a global organization, we are also committed to responding to local needs. This dual focus is a strength, but also requires a nuanced understanding of contextual issues if social justice is to be pursued. For example, involvement of United Kingdom Salvationists in the Make Poverty History campaign did not imply a particular political allegiance, as it would have done in the United States of America. A challenge for those who work for social justice in the global context will be the need to take account of the diversity of situations, whilst keeping in focus the Biblical mandate to seek justice.

However, it is not only through the development of expertise or the setting up of programs that social justice will be established. It begins when individuals take responsibility for living differently, offering a new model of being human as citizens of God's Kingdom. The Church, including The Salvation Army, will only bring about justice when it lives justly, creating an inclusive, counter-cultural society in which all are offered a place and none are marginalized.

This will include ensuring that social justice is modelled within our own organization, in its structures and governance, in its worshipping communities and social programs, in relationships between individuals and in the ways in which gender issues are addressed. If social justice is the outworking of discipleship and demonstrated in holy living, then it should be evident in all the interactions of Salvation Army officers and soldiers, whether internally within the organization or in the world.

### **Conclusion and Reflection**

Isaiah 1:17 reads "Seek justice, encourage the oppressed."

Throughout its history The Salvation Army has “encouraged” and provided for the oppressed. Through its social service ministries and community outreach it has developed expertise, initiated programs and fulfilled its mission to “meet human needs in his (Christ’s) name without discrimination.”<sup>45</sup>

The role of the prophet, as one who speaks forth the word of God, is therefore to challenge those structures which lead to oppression, marginalisation and poverty. If The Salvation Army is to be a prophetic voice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it must continue to faithfully develop and expand its expertise in the area of social justice advocacy. “Prophetic voices are those which read the signs of the times in the light of the justice and love of God, and speak out against all which distorts or diminishes the image of God in human beings.”<sup>46</sup> When The Salvation Army works for social justice, it is a sign of hope for the future. The Kingdom inaugurated by Jesus will ultimately be completed, but until that day, we work to establish signs of its presence in individual lives, organizations and societies and in so doing fulfill the great commission to bring all peoples under his rule.

However, ultimately the Kingdom cannot be built upon human rights alone, but only through grace. The Love that brought us into the Kingdom requires, not that we treat all exactly the same, but that sometimes a preferential option is instigated. A just outcome will not necessarily be that all have the same, or comparable, resources, but that each one has the resources they need in order to facilitate, and bring into being, their personal human flourishing.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Shaw Clifton, “From the General” *The Officer* (November/December 2008), p.3

<sup>2</sup> Shaw Clifton, “From the General,” p.2

<sup>3</sup> International Social Justice Commission, *Singing the Songs of Justice*, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Rethinking The Wesleyan Quadrilateral* ([www.goodnewsmag.org](http://www.goodnewsmag.org) 2005).

<sup>5</sup> The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story* (The Salvation Army International Headquarters 1998), p. ix

- <sup>6</sup> Jonathan Sachs, *The Dignity of Difference* (London: Continuum 2002), p. 114
- <sup>7</sup> Daniel L. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality and Justice* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis 2007), p. 27
- <sup>8</sup> Duncan B. Forrester, "Social Justice and Welfare" in Robin Gill ed. *Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics* (Cambridge CUP 2001), p.197
- <sup>9</sup> Joel B Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), p. 86
- <sup>10</sup> Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality and Justice*, p. 23
- <sup>11</sup> Donahue in Forrester, Social Justice and Welfare, p.197
- <sup>12</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis 1991), p. 400 "italics original"
- <sup>13</sup> William Booth, *Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army 1890), preface
- <sup>14</sup> Shaw Clifton, "From the General," p. 4
- <sup>15</sup> HDP Lee (translator) Plato, *The Republic* (London: Penguin Books 1955), p. 174
- <sup>16</sup> N. P. Wolterstorff, "Justice and Peace" in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: IVP 1995), pp. 15-21
- <sup>17</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)
- <sup>18</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)
- <sup>19</sup> Wolterstorff, *Justice and Peace*, p.16
- <sup>20</sup> Commission on Social Justice, *Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal* (London: Vintage 1994), p.18
- <sup>21</sup> Forrester, *Social Justice and Welfare*, p. 204
- <sup>22</sup> D.B. Robertson ed., Reinhold Niebuhr, *Love and Justice* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press 1957), p.28
- <sup>24</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM 1953), pp.15-16)
- <sup>25</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Oxford:Blackwell 2001), p.115
- <sup>26</sup> Earl Robinson, *Holiness and Social Justice* (Unpublished paper 2004), p. 41
- <sup>27</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 403
- <sup>28</sup> quoted in *Salvation Story*, pp. 137-138
- <sup>29</sup> Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, & Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM 2005), p.138

- 30 Stanley Hauerwas & William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon. 1989), p.49
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- 42 Street, *Called to be God's People*, p 69
- 43 International Social Justice Commission, *Singing the Songs of Justice*, 2008
- 44 Shaw Clifton, announcement re establishment of International Social Justice Commission. [www.salvationarmy.org/ihq](http://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq), 31 January 2007.
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- 46 K. Galloway, *Sharing the Blessing* (London: SPCK. 2008), p.vii

# Teaching to Obey Relevance for Holiness/Evangelism

*Brian Tuck*

This response is personal. It emanates from the tapestry of four generations of Salvationist mission, both helped and hindered by a Two-Thirds World context and my own limitations. Sri Lankan Jesuit, Aloysius Pieris, once suggested in the South Asian context that today's missional church "must step into the baptismal waters of Asian religion, and pass through passion and death on the cross of Asian poverty."<sup>1</sup> In similar vein, in a century that is arguably closer to the trends and theologies of the second century than any other, I believe we ought to get our feet wet in the rampant waters of secular culture and revised, barely-disguised Gnosticism to face the crucial challenges of contemporary pain, poverty and perversion if the Church is to experience in a new way and witness what Samuel Logan Brengle called "resurrection life and power."<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, our discipleship will be "teaching to obey" nothing but dead dogma, our evangelism will be mere recruitment as affiliation to a religious club, and our mission a stunted caricature content with parading about on the perimeters of our ecclesiastical ghettos. We are called not only to make disciples "as we go" but to go beyond the borders of what some would consider an inflexible pre-history.

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### The Missionary Task

The acceptance of this missionary task, so embedded in the Great Commission, involves the authority of the Master, Jesus Christ, and a willing recognition of His call to educative and demonstrative discipleship on the new frontiers of Christian mission. This mandate, not merely to teach, but to disciple, cannot be abrogated.

Facing this task, there is a nodding agreement with the Lund Declaration that we ought not to do separately what we can do together.<sup>3</sup> But somehow we sense that rigidity still divides us and not truth, for Jesus promised that the truth would set us free.<sup>4</sup> "We stand afraid," suggested Bishop John V. Taylor, "each of us isolated in his defeat, confused by the demand of Christ and the crying need of a world without God, and in our moment of truth we whisper to ourselves: *The Word of God tells me I am this and I know I am not. It says the Church is all that, and I know we are not.* The way forward is the way to someone else."<sup>5</sup> That is why we rejoice in these ongoing dialogues; by them not only do we bilaterally explore the way forward, but we recognize how, as church, we have institutionalized Christ and to some extent legislated for the Holy Spirit. In the interregnum between Pentecost and the *Parousia* (incidentally the time for both evangelism and incarnational holiness) we have lately majored more on what the Spirit has given to the Church than on what the Church has given to the Spirit,<sup>6</sup> or, ought to be giving. In this both Salvationists and Methodists are called into what Bonhoeffer termed the fellowship of the confession of guilt.<sup>7</sup> For in general terms we have not, "cried the gospel by our whole lives."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, sometimes we have instead "cried off" the gospel by an obsession with management and administrative techniques that lack redemptive purpose and a focus on distractions which suffocate the Church in its suicidal self-made circles of self-interest.

It has been claimed that we have moved away from Word-centered church to worship/fellowship centered, away from Word-based exposition to topical engagement, and away from peer and mentor-based discipleship.<sup>9</sup> Thus there is a need to learn from our shared histories as well as "teaching to obey."

### The Appeal to the Heroic in the Saved

The life, labors and legacy of John Wesley straddles that era of extremes,<sup>10</sup> the eighteenth century, and the century of struggle,<sup>11</sup> the nineteenth. The tentacles of his constructive influence reach down to modern times, to grasp and be grasped by the many movements of "methodistic" and related origin, including The Salvation Army, first cousins to the Methodists. Wesley, like Luther before him, had also to unequivocally declare "Here I stand, I can do no other," a stand indicated by G.C. Cell to be "midway in the vista of intervening events between the foundations of the first reformers and our own perilous times of travail."<sup>12</sup> Let us not be deceived as to the seminal importance of Wesley: master-mind behind the 18<sup>th</sup> century revival of Protestantism and the main link from the Old Protestantism of the Reformers and the New Protestantism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Yet I suspect we remain challenged by the fuller implications of Wesley's thought. Wesley was released by his theology rather than imprisoned by it, with little time for a narrow provincialism. Indeed, according to Wynkoop, the catholic Wesley should be understood, in doctrine and denomination not in the sense of a static "having," but in its quality as a dynamic relationship subject to infinite increase.<sup>13</sup> How different such creative dynamism is to that joyless parody of Christianity perhaps skeptically described by Monica Furlong as "a tired religion, dog-eared' around the edges, talking in tired language, shrinking from bold new thoughts and courageous new ideas."<sup>14</sup> No, I suggest we have not yet fully explored, nor understood Wesley. As Reverend Peter Storey, former Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, once inquired of his own rather riskless church in the South African context, "Why would you want to be a Methodist if you are not Wesleyan?"<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Salvationists increasingly ask themselves a similar question. And some remain blissfully unaware of their Wesleyan roots, with an appeal accommodated more to culture (should that be "technoculture" in some parts of the world?) than to Christ.

There was in early Methodism the appeal to the heroic in the saved.<sup>16</sup> Wesley as "a brand plucked from burning," kindled not only a fire

in many hearts, including that of William and Catherine Booth, co-founders of The Salvation Army, but ignited a form of recurrent Methodism which scorched even the minds and ministries of men like Dr. Andrew Murray,<sup>17</sup> and not excluding a few so-called heretics.<sup>18</sup> "Send the fire!" they prayed and sang, and not a few burned themselves out for Christ. Paul du Plessis writes of the Salvation Army soldier's commitment: "... feeling that the love of Christ, who died to save me, requires from me this devotion of my life to his service for the salvation of the whole world."<sup>19</sup> The basis too, of the Junior Soldier's promise has to do with reading the Bible, praying and abstention from alcohol and tobacco, but at its heart lies the pledge "helping others to follow Him."<sup>20</sup> Methodism broke out of an Anglicanism mildewed with mediocrity. In the language of one of America's presidents, "The Church was dead and Wesley awakened it. The poor were neglected and Wesley sought them out. The Gospel was shrunken into formulas and Wesley flung it fresh upon the air once more in the speech of common man. And men's spirits responded, leapt at the message, and were made whole . . ." <sup>21</sup> Like Methodism, the Army was born in revival flames and nourished at the same Evangelical breast. Booth's credo was "There is only one God, and John Wesley is His prophet."<sup>22</sup> Catherine was thoroughly Wesleyan, and even their love story was defined by biographer Harold Begbie as "a Methodist love story ... (its) passion restrained by duty and consecrated by devotion"<sup>23</sup> Though Booth claimed to be growing out of his Methodist skin and travelling a road none had ever trod before while unlearning his Methodist apprenticeship,<sup>24</sup> his Methodism was somewhat more than skin-deep. Nevertheless, the disputes within Methodism, especially regarding the recall of James Caughey from England in 1847,<sup>25</sup> the rebellion against autocratic Methodism by the Reformers as well as within their own ranks,<sup>26</sup> disenchanted the Booths. In 1865, in the East End of London, where "the enormous bulk of the population were . . . altogether uninfluenced by the existing religious organizations, so impressed him that he determined to devote his life to making these millions *hear and know* God (italics his), and thus save them from the abyss of misery in which they were plunged, and rescue them from the damnation that was before them. The Salvation Army is the result . . ." <sup>27</sup> As Paul A. Rader has opined, "the tentative exploration of

points of commonality and the distinctives of Wesleyanism has great potential for the future of the Army in the development of its own self-understanding and a reconnection with its foundations in the Methodist tradition."<sup>28</sup> Not to mention the inability to teach what we do not understand.

It is sad to note the acrimony within Methodism at the time the Booths severed their ties, with Conference in effect in opposition to revivals and the salvation of souls, as affirmed by Richard Cawardine.<sup>29</sup> Probably it consisted more of opposition to the methods of revival.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, while William Booth loved Wesleyan discipline, he despised its lack of focus and authority and decried its inflexibility.<sup>31</sup> While it is true that "Methodism put the sky into Christianity's backyard"<sup>32</sup> and the Army has had its own luminaries in that firmament, I believe the seeds are found here for an over-reliance on The Book of Discipline and our Orders and Regulations. Our addiction to procedural fundamentalism means we tend not to follow the Spirit where we do not wish to go,<sup>33</sup> and we remain blindfolded to God's further revelation because we prefer law and order to liberty and grace.

### The Charge of Jesus

What is inherent in "teaching to obey"? Certainly *didaskō* in Matthew 28:20 and related passages means simply "to teach."<sup>34</sup> It relates to Christ's teaching on the mount (Matt. 5:2), in the synagogues (Matt. 13:54), at the seaside (Mark 4:1), in the temple (Luke 19:47) and in the villages (Mark 6:6). Jesus taught the doctrines of God rather than the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9), taught in parabolic form about the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13), taught them of His death, resurrection, ascension and session at God's right hand (Mark 8:31). He taught the disciples the way of God in truth (Mark 12:14) and the Lord laid great stress on the role of the Holy Spirit in teaching (Luke 12:12, John 14:26).

Yet we are called to the Person of Jesus Christ rather than merely to His teaching. Jesus calls us individually, denominationally and as world communions to incarnate character, servanthood and tears. If Jesus descended into hell in order to save, there can be no limits to our own evangelism. At the heart of this "heroic in the saved" lies a unity and identification with Christ in His sacrifice, cross-bearing and self-denial,<sup>35</sup> and a faith active in love,<sup>36</sup> threaded through with justice and discipline. Every disciple can be

described as "a Christian who is growing in conformity to Christ, achieving fruit in evangelism, and is working in follow-up to conserve this fruit."<sup>37</sup> This requires an honest working through the five-fold discipleship tool: 1. Am I committed unconditionally to following Jesus in a life of total obedience? 2. Am I devoted to a life of prayer? 3. Am I devoted to a knowledge and a love of Scripture? 4. Is my life characterized by a relationship of love? and 5. Is there evidence in my life that I am bearing fruit? As Oswald Chambers put it, "the cost of sanctification will be a deep restriction of our earthly concerns, and an extensive cultivation of all our godly concerns."<sup>38</sup> There can be no *rigor scholasticus* in lives led by the Spirit, for without Him we can never know the truth.

Such discipleship<sup>39</sup> presupposes a Master (Isaiah 50:4), a Ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13), a Motivation (John 17:17) and a Mission, for we are sent by Jesus as He was by His Father (John 20:21). In owning Jesus as Lord we owe allegiance to no other. We must be doorkeepers waiting at God's gates (Psalm 84:10) with our ears attuned to God's directions for 21<sup>st</sup>-Century disciples. The one ministry given us is that of discipling others, as the primary goal remains to "make disciples." To our hands is committed this ministry, but unless we dine we cannot distribute (Matt. 9:9, John 21:16, 12 with John 6). In our commitment to this ministry there are to be no excuses and no goodbyes (Matt. 8:18:22). Thus Storey suggests that the Matthean mission paradigm offers a solid ground for viewing mission as disciple-making.<sup>40</sup> In this life-long process, one becomes a disciple when stabilized in the faith, has an ongoing commitment to Jesus as Lord, develops the basic disciplines of Christian living and service and is journeying towards maturity while reproducing disciples like him/herself (Phil. 3:12, Hebrews 5:11-12, 2 Timothy 2:2, Luke 6:40).

The emphasis is not "on possessing a system in which all questions are answered, but precisely on witness to the place and identity that we have been invited to live in."<sup>41</sup> We are to show what we see, to reproduce the life of God.

### **The Myth of Western Christianity**

Vitalino Simaloz maintained "*Christianizar no puede serlo mismo que occidentaliza*" (to Christianize cannot be the same as to Westernize)<sup>42</sup>

The differences, and sometimes anger, between Western Christianity and that in the Two-Thirds World has not always been realized. Oblivious to the changes indicative of the coming Global Christianity as predicted by Philip Jenkins,<sup>43</sup> the West has in part and in effect promulgated a myth, a pseudo-gospel baptized with a self-indulgence that equates affluence with Divine approval. While the true gospel can never authentically exist except as translated into a culture, we have allowed culture, in some cases, to supersede the gospel. Probably nowhere is this truer than in Africa, though she is not alone in this.

It seems to me that we have indigenized the Church rather than allowed it to be indigenous,<sup>44</sup> with serious consequences for discipleship and evangelism. We have sometimes forced "indigeneity" from without rather than let the Church be herself, attached to her historical situation through her life and ministry. The Indigenizing and Pilgrim principles for authentic mission have not always been followed.<sup>45</sup> Quick to be opportunistic, our dependence on colonial influences has backfired on us in the post-colonial era. We are guilty, in my view, of sometimes strangling the vibrant life and witness of receiving countries with the tentacles of ecclesiasticism.<sup>46</sup> Churchmanship has been confused with leadership. What David Bosch intimated, though writing in the context of the challenges of Black Theology, remains a valid observation here too: "We have built sky-high walls around us ... and almost imperceptibly our strongholds have been transformed into prisons."<sup>47</sup> The question may even be asked as to what extent the World Council of Churches by its emphasis on the unity of member churches has invented a ministry of satisfying ecclesiastical hierarchies rather than in fulfilling the Great Commission. But this is a question we should also be asking ourselves in our denominational contexts. If we claim obedience, to whom is this obedience given?

The history of The Salvation Army does not indicate brilliant discipleship, for its genius lay in "getting saved, keeping saved and getting others saved,"<sup>48</sup> in William Booth's words, "from Rotten Row to Royalty."<sup>49</sup> It has sought to save a man and set him free to save and to serve others, most notably his peers, by way of militant hot-gospel holiness evangelism with self-sacrifice as central to the mission. There is thus in the Army the idea of

apostolic succession in terms of its mission and also the inherent germ of restitutional Christianity so evident in the holiness *genre*.<sup>50</sup> There are some therefore who have gloried in our uniqueness by masquerading under the banner of Remnant Theology. We have deserved Peter Wagner's criticism of the wider evangelical movement, certainly in the early Salvation Army, that our tendency was to concentrate largely on individual soul-saving.<sup>51</sup> The point can be made that we majored on dominant individualism while omitting the weightier matters of discipleship, justice and the shape of the church.<sup>52</sup> Though our social work was opened as a "second front" in 1890, personal and social redemption was held by Booth in balanced tandem as two horses pulling the gospel chariot, and his constant fear was that social salvation would break loose from its moorings in spiritual salvation: "If you want my social work, you have got to have my Religion; they are joined together like Siamese twins; to divide them is to slay them!"<sup>53</sup> Yet it is possible to pamper one of the twins, and inhibit the other.

The theological non-negotiables have been basic to Army doctrine and practice: the glory of God as the chief end of humans, confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, the preaching of the gospel as the preaching of the kingdom of God, the Scriptures as the only normative authority for believers; sin, salvation and eternal life and death as eschatological realities, God's will for all to be saved and all God's people tasked with the responsibility for saving souls, the Holy Spirit working with and through them to accomplish the task. G. Campbell Morgan has shown that no phase of our Lord's great commission to His disciples was without reference to the Holy Spirit (Mark. 16:16, John 20:22, Luke 24:49, Matt. 28:19 with Matt. 10:21 and Acts 1:5, 8).<sup>54</sup> We would have to admit that our teaching, in capacity and receptivity, has been weak.

In respect of Wagner's list of qualifications for serving God,<sup>55</sup> there is no doubt that Salvationists have been people who knew God in reality. Their early morning "knee-drills" and entire nights of prayer and the continuation of Wesley's *Watchnight* services reveal them to be people of prayer. The phrase "filled with the Spirit" lingers on their lips and in their lives, more so today when the Pentecostal language of Samuel Brengle and Allister Smith has fallen into disuse, or taken on a meaning which these progenitors

of Army holiness expression never intended to convey in terms of so-called “power evangelism.” They had an obedience that drove them out of the world, and yet into it, to openly confess Christ, as the wearing of the uniform implies, undertook a voluntary acceptance for Christ’s sake of total abstinence in drink, drugs and smoking, with a strong emphasis on the presentation of the body to God as a living sacrifice.<sup>56</sup> They were also energetic and creative, understanding the marching orders of the Church better than most, while a grasp of the “form follows function” principle enabled the Army to “dwell in the tents of perpetual adaptation”<sup>57</sup> extending the gospel canvas over the poorest of the poor while retaining mobility, fluidity and flexibility. Jack Hayford expressed it well in suggesting that we drop our labels and become “people committed to witness *all* God’s word in *all* the Spirit’s workings until *all* the world is reached with *all* Christ’s fullness.”<sup>58</sup> While Wesley sought to do this through individuals, Booth formed an Army to do so collectively. Have we moved away from these things? Do we teach them to our people?

This creativity extended to an a-sacramental position, for in severing the ecclesiastical guy-ropes that tethered his emerging Army to the outdated structures of a previous era, Booth would have agreed with Benjamin Reist that “the Church’s sole reason for its being is to bear witness to Jesus Christ its Lord, in and to the world. All other things which are necessary parts of its existence – its government, its orders, its power, its sacrament – are subservient to this.”<sup>59</sup> But it is not our purpose to pursue this apologetic here. Certainly “teaching to obey (observing to do)” cannot be interpreted to mean ritualistic or sacramental salvation. The 21<sup>st</sup> century demands not only a “missiology of the street” (Luke 14:21) in which all are invited to the banquet, but a true eucharistic celebration<sup>60</sup> in which remembering the suffering of Jesus has an “anamnetic solidarity with the dead and the victims, the outcasts and the powerless”<sup>61</sup> and in which the mighty and powerful, including church structures, take or give up their seats, by a transformation to a new life of justice, reconciliation and restitution. Thus we are called also to a “missiology of the road.”<sup>62</sup> Possibly this would make more sense if you had lived through the horrors of an apartheid South Africa with a politically insensitive spirituality, what J. B. Metz in the context of Christians in



Germany during World War II described a “a purely believed-in faith ... a faith without compassion but with a belief in compassion which, under the mantle of believing it was compassionate, cultivated the apathy that allowed us as Christians to go on believing with our backs turned to such a catastrophe.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Journey to a New Land and Two-Thirds World Perspectives**

In my homeland, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has been directed by Conference to a new road – the “Journey to a New Land.” Noting significant denominational decline, with most losses to the *AmaZioni*, the Church has identified several lacks: lack of clergy management, training and skills, lack of economic development, lack of mission focus in spite of the Four Mission Pillars,<sup>64</sup> lack of evangelistic fervor and lack of extensive inclusion of youth. During the apartheid years the MCSA was so politically driven that, by its own admission, it had forgotten how to be Church. Therefore, at Mthata in 2001, the charter of the Mission Congress (MCSA) called for a discovery of every-member ministry, a commitment to oneness so that the world may believe, a deepening spirituality, a resolve to be guided by God’s mission, a re-emphasis of, and recommitment to servant leadership and discernment as the model for ministry.<sup>65</sup> From my students engaged in TEE courses, it is apparent that the Church can be the instigator of evil, even institutionalized apartheid; that the tendency is for justice and injustice to rain on both the just and the unjust dependent on who occupies political and ecclesiastical office. This is because oppression is found on all levels: political, economic, and social and is manifested in relationships, as between rich and poor, male and female and that peculiar ecclesiastical brand of master and servant relationship which has been described as “a Nietzschean kind of will to dominate others.”<sup>66</sup> Indeed, it has been suggested that the Army is in danger of becoming an army of assault rather than an’ army of occupation, and not only on the “citadels of evil.” Obedience to God in these areas is essential if, as Church, we are to become what Bonhoeffer called “nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has already taken form.”<sup>67</sup>

To what precisely am I referring? I mean we must rediscover and teach community in praxis, walking with each other in relationship and com-

munity rather than simply attend church in proximity. Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas emphasized the I is primarily constituted by the other, and how in this encounter we also meet "the Other."<sup>68</sup> Hermeneutically and epistemologically this informs African thought in the concept of *ubuntu*: "We are, therefore I am." In Zulu, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, meaning "a person is a person through other persons." Because the Church is simply no longer the Church without the stranger, there needs to be an urgent construction of xenology and a biblical understanding of inclusion. Nor can we ride rough-shod over those we are intended to serve. We cannot be a community after God's heart, where leaders operate Diotrephes-style hierarchies and where the DNA of genuine spiritual leadership cannot be clearly discerned by the man-in-the-pew. In the context of consumerism's "shabby little gospel of greed and gain,"<sup>69</sup> MCSA Bishop Ivan Abrahams wrote, "Poverty in our region is a scandal and a major challenge to the Church ... Our Wesleyan heritage reminds us that our salvation depends not only upon our relationship to God, but also our relationship to the poor."<sup>70</sup> We teach also by personal example and lifestyle in these areas. It seems to me we have jettisoned much of this heritage as we have outgrown our early poverty. Yet we meet the Very God of the creeds in the seeking of non-persons.

Still the Two-Thirds-World Church can speak about unequal stipends, inequities in housing and appointments as well as partisan privileges and have been made sullen by that oppression which may be defined as the denial of rights, movement, and self-expression by those who have the power to do so. Candidates of the ministry speak of declining statistics and a failure to follow urban development; of attendance without seeking membership; of dodging the dogmatism, enriching the club mentality, abdicating to eschatology and continuing "sheep-stealing ...." Ethically we indulge in the double-speak of Ethics Commissions, namely DEWCOM and MASIC, which give uncertain positions on abortion, same-sex marriage and the issues of our time but which still end with a plea and call to a nebulous "holiness."<sup>71</sup> We must revise and revive both Methodist class meetings and Salvationist soldiers' meetings to be schools of fellowship and training from which aggressive Christianity can launch forth to make the Sauls of today the Pauls of tomorrow.

We need to acknowledge the “hole” in our hólism,<sup>72</sup> and return to a pro-active ‘proclamation evangelism without which neither Methodist nor Salvationist would have existed. As Ajith Fernando maintains, “the Great Commission would be meaningless if those who obeyed it did not also obey the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbor. And we must continue to challenge people with the dual responsibility to live the gospel in society and to take the gospel to the unreached,”<sup>73</sup> for our obedience is haunted by this dualism. To what extent are Evangelicals in North America crippled by an impoverished worldview which divorces thinking from acting, and preaching from serving? It seems we combat one heresy with another, providing a reactionary theology which does not do justice to the richness of biblical teaching.<sup>74</sup> The Salvation Army has been holistic in ministry virtually from its origins, but we do well to ask if our heightened social consciousness has drained our zeal of its life-blood – evangelism. How much are we doing that should be done by others, or done in tandem with other churches and organizations? What should be dropped altogether if we were really “teaching to obey”?

The above requires a strong Christological focus, not one centered in spiritual experiences or social do-good-ism– it demands utter obedience to an authentic Christ of the gospels rather than the apologetic, politically-correct Jesus we sentimentally represent. As Dorothy Sáyets expressed it: The presentation of Jesus by sections of the Church has “very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies.”<sup>75</sup> The anaemic teachings of a non-disturbing Jesus challenge no one.

Therefore, a reversal of the classic Monophysite view of Jesus is needed lest, by our very concern for those living as footnotes on the margins of life we reduce the gospel to a mere humanism that negates the need for genuine conversion. Our problem has always been, as Pascal put it, in having “as much difficulty in showing that Jesus Christ was man, against those who denied it, as in showing that He was God; and the probabilities are equally great.”<sup>76</sup> This calls for a re-statement of the implications for our communities of body-life teaching without the introspective navel-gazing so prevalent

among some groups.

### **Practical Holiness and Evangelism**

I believe we ought to teach practical holiness as normative for Christian experience in spite of the views of Luther and Calvin. A new focus is necessary in view of the perceived ecclesiastical *laagers* if the fragmented holiness movement, the erosion and reduction of Wesleyan holiness-sanctification doctrine and lifestyle to a Cinderellian status, and the blurring, if not outright apologetic for Wesleyan distinctives in a threatening Reformed-Pentecostal climate in many areas of the world are to be challenged. In particular we should teach our people discernment in the books, views and theologies they read. We must deepen our reliance on the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth (not merely a single point of view) and to personally sanctify while strengthening our trust in each other to be legitimate vehicles of Christian witness. In doing this we ought also to redefine not only the frontiers of mission but the agents of mission today, recognizing the role of the laity in Methodist and Salvationist endeavor as urgent and effective.

The question here must be asked: where does legitimate evangelizing and discipling end and where does negative proselytizing begin? How much of our evangelical action lies in seeking and squabbling over the coins already within God's house rather than seeking the lost sheep who know Him not?

### **The Call of the Spirit Today**

Ultimately the Spirit beckons the Church to get off the balcony, move to the door and get out into the highways and byways (Luke 14:21) of the world as never before.<sup>77</sup> The Spanish proverb reminds the traveler, "There are no roads. Roads are made by walking." We are called to a holy engagement with the world which, as John de Gruchy has pointed out, is derived from the gospel rather than from secular norms, values and pragmatism.<sup>78</sup> We must pursue and prescribe that practical holiness, exhumed from the tomb of fettered terminology and dead orthodoxy and express it in terms understood by postmodern thought. For Wesleyan holiness remains biblical holiness, one that should not tolerate the present serious gaps in our holiness ethics. Spirituality has been equated with doing instead of being, substituting spark for sparkle. We should admit the persuasive influence of

worldliness, so often linked to our own comfort and security. We must be more than churches of doctrine, but churches of teaching. By teaching and obeying Christ in these areas we can be the Church of the Next rather than tragically regress to the Church of the Way Back There.<sup>79</sup> The Holy Spirit recalls us to the fact that the experience of holiness is the will of God; that such experience is provided for us in the death of Christ, that it is intended for believers, is characterized by perfect love and prepares us for further growth in grace.<sup>80</sup> Privileged to attend Lausanne II, I will never forget the closing words of Thomas Wang: "Sometimes it seems God is ringing a bell in heaven, as if He is saying to His Church, "Ladies and Gentlemen, the hour is late, and the job is not yet done. It is time to get serious. Remember My commission to you. Complete it soon."<sup>81</sup> In this we should not wallow in our lack of a holiness which we proclaim so vastly but practice so vaguely, but appropriate His holiness. We should teach the doctrine of grace, not the vagaries of our own psychological state. Our seminaries and training colleges must prepare pastors/officers for the real world, not an antiquated caricature with a Victorian image. We must develop a new respect for the Bible as the Word of God while seeking Christ "beyond the sacred page."<sup>82</sup> We should discern the spirits more and trust in planning less, and we should put our knees where our hearts are. Our churches and corps must embody that transformation we would urge upon the world, and all of our people, especially our laity, must become again the new agents of mission to a world saturated with spirituality but which has lost the spiritual. We must build the body of Christ in which spiritual gifts can be exercised and spiritual fruit exhibited to the glory of God. We must rediscover community celebration and ban the politics of exclusion. We must live out our faith in what Sweet calls "the dimension of magic, mystery and miracle."<sup>83</sup> It is imperative that we teach to obey all that Jesus has taught, both personally and through the Holy Spirit. This may not be the same as denominational emphases.

Then, in the words of Mendell Taylor shall we teach to obey by "translating experience into expedition, cleansing into campaigning, worship into work, and communion into a commission."<sup>84</sup> In the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century discipleship and evangelism, the greatest of these remains "Go into all the world ..."

**A Prayer (Dr. Richard F. Zanner):**

God give your servants a discerning spirit; a wisdom to recognize priorities; a passion to impact minds and hearts; a deep longing to provide tools and equipment for the task; an eagerness to mould, to form, to shape; a creative mind to convey lastingly; a faith that is contagious and ignites; and a love that transcends the temporal and leads to the eternal. Amen.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Aloysius Pieris, S.J.; *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1988, p.63.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Logan Brengle, *Resurrection Life and Power*, Atlanta: The Salvation Army Supplies and Purchasing Department, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Lund Declaration, World Council of Churches.

<sup>4</sup> John 8:32

<sup>5</sup> John V. Taylor, *Man in the Midst*, Highway Press, 1965, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> John V. Taylor, *The Go Between God: The Holy Spirit & the Christian Mission*, SCM Press Ltd: London, Ninth Impression 1980, p.133.

<sup>7</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, SCM Press, 1971 ed; pp. 90, 95.

<sup>8</sup> Pere Charles de Foucauld: "I wish to cry the gospel by my whole life."

<sup>9</sup> John Pyper, Willow Creek Study in Thomas S. Rainer, & Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*, June 2006.

<sup>10</sup> A. Skevington Wood, *The Inextinguishable Blaze, Spiritual Renewal and Advance in the Eighteenth Century*, The Paternoster Church History, vol. VII, Exeter, Devon: The Paternoster Press, Second Impression March 1967, p.1

<sup>11</sup> J.F. Mouton, *Revivalisme in Suid Afrika in the 19de Eeu in Studia Historicae Ecclesiasticae VIII*, Referate gelewe by die Vergadering van die Kerkhistoriese Werkgemeenskap van Suid Afrika, Tema: Pjetisme en Metodisme in die Suid Afrikaanse kerkgeskiedenis, Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1982, p. 21.

- <sup>12</sup> George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*, University Press of America, Inc; reprint [s.a.], originally published New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc; 1935, p.1.
- <sup>13</sup> Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love, "The Dynamics of Wesleyanism,"* Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972, p. 66.
- <sup>14</sup> Monica Furlong, *With Love to the Church*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1965, p.10.
- <sup>15</sup> John Pudney, *John Wesley and his World*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978, p.13.
- <sup>16</sup> Brian Gordon Tuck, *The Holiness Movement in South Africa with Special Reference to the Salvation Army – A Historical Perspective*, Unpublished D.Th thesis, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992, p. 424.
- <sup>17</sup> Rev. Dr. Andrew Murray Jr., famous for his books on holiness, was decried by his own Dutch Reformed Church as being infected with Methodism, though Keswickian in persuasion.
- <sup>18</sup> Bearing in mind Wesley's observation that "Heresy and schism ... are sins that the Scripture knows nothing of; but were invented merely to deprive mankind of the benefit of private judgment and liberty of conscience." John Wesley, *The Wesleyan New Testament*, p. 431.
- <sup>19</sup> P.A. du Plessis, Paper *See I am doing a new thing: The Challenge of World Evangelization*, April 2004, p.6.
- <sup>20</sup> Du Plessis, *op. cit.*
- <sup>21</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *An Address Delivered at Wesleyan University on the Occasion of the Wesley Bicentennial*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, [s.a.], p.41.
- <sup>22</sup> Tuck, *The Holiness Movement in South Africa*, p.303.
- <sup>23</sup> Harold Begbie, *The Life of General William Booth*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920, Vol. 1; p. 100.
- <sup>24</sup> Robert Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army, Vol. I, 1865-1878*, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1959 reprint, p. 20.
- <sup>25</sup> Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Vol. 1, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1960, p. 379.
- <sup>26</sup> Roger J. Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth*, New York: Abingdon Press, 2005, pp. 47-48.
- <sup>27</sup> William Booth, *Who is William Booth?* In Salvation Army publication *All About The Salvation Army*, 1885, quoted in *Christian History* vol. IX, no. 2, 1990, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup>Paul A. Rader in Foreword of Roger J. Green's, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth, Founder of The Salvation Army*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2005, p. xvi.

<sup>29</sup>Richard Cawardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism, Evangelicalism in Britain and America 1790-1865*,

<sup>30</sup>Caughy was not averse to issuing individualized "death warrants," and the planting of penitent-form decoys. Refer Norman H. Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994, p.10. Murdoch notes the arrival of "Shopkeeper Methodism" marked by respectability and decline in open-air preaching.

<sup>32</sup>Leonard I. Sweet, *The Four Fundamentalisms of Oldline Protestants in The Christian Century*, March 13, 1985, p.267.

<sup>33</sup>John 21:18.

<sup>34</sup>Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible*, Eighth Edition, London: Lutterworth Press, 1967, p. 962.

<sup>35</sup>General Eva Burrows illustrated this to would-be disciplers, "Go and live there!" in *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes*, Lausanne II in Manila, International Congress of World Evangelization, 1989, p. 329.

<sup>36</sup>A phrase peculiar to both John Wesley and William Booth.

<sup>37</sup>Brian Tuck, *Notes for Cell Group Leaders' Seminar, College for Officers' Training*, Johannesburg, 1990, p.1.

<sup>38</sup>Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, edited by James Reimann, Vereeniging: Christian Art Publishers, Third Edition, 2000, February 8.

<sup>39</sup>There are 270 references to discipleship in the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

<sup>40</sup>Peter Storey, *And Are We Yet Alive? Recovering our Wesleyan Heritage*, Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup>Rowan Williams, *Plenary on Christian Identity and Religious Plurality*, World Council of Churches 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly, 14-23 February 2006, Porto Alegre, Brazil, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup>Quoted in Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 107.

<sup>44</sup>Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World*, Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc; First Printing, June 1974, p. 171.

<sup>45</sup>Bosch defines these as "the gospel at home in every culture" (Indigenizing), and "the painfully out of step with society" (Pilgrim). D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*,



p.17.

46 The documented case of Bishop Dr. Samuel Crowther of Sierra Leone is an example.

47 D.J. Bosch, "Processes of Reconciliation and Demands of Obedience: Twelve Theses", in *The Cost of Reconciliation in South Africa*, edited by Klaus Nurnberger and John Tooke, Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House (N.I.R. Reader Number One, 1988, pp. 98-112.

48 A phrase used constantly in the Army's propagative literature.

49 Murdoch, *Origins of The Salvation Army*, p.134.

50 Booth sought a plan that would reproduce aggressive first-century Christianity.

51 C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, San Francisco; Harper and Row, 1981, p.3.

52 Tuck, *The Holiness Movement in South Africa*, p. 492.

53 Fred Cox, *The Founder*, Special Lecture to Cadets, London, 24 January 1924, p. 9.

54 G. Campbell Morgan, *The Teaching of Christ*, London: Pickering & Inglis, Ltd., (s.a.), pp. 55-56.

55 C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth, Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* London: March 1988 edition, pp. 20-24.

56 See the present *Soldier's Covenant* or the original *Articles of War* signed by all Salvationists.

57 This is the great ecumenical phrase of W. A. Visser t'Hooft in *The New Delhi Report*, New York: Association Press, 1962, p.90.

58 Jack Hayford, *The Holy Spirit in Evangelization* in *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes*, p. 406.

59 Quoted in R.M. Brown and D H. Scott, *The Challenge of Reunion*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963, p.181.

60 I think the early Army love-feasts are an example of this. Refer Norman H. Murdock, *Origins of The Salvation Army*, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994, p. 110.

61 M. Lamb, *Solidarity With Victims. Towards a theology of social transformation*. New York: Crossroad, 1982, p. 54.

62 John MacKay, *A Preface to Christian Theology*, London: Nisbet & Co., 1942, p. 44. MacKay defines the symbol of the Road as first and experience of reality where thought, born of a living concern, issues in decision and action. Religious truth is

obtained only on the Road.

<sup>63</sup>J.B. Metz, *Communicating a Dangerous Memory: Soundings in Political Theology*, edited by Fred Lawrence, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987, p.44.

<sup>64</sup> TEE College Study Guide: The Four Pillars are Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience.

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Atwell, *The Methodist Church: An Introduction*, Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House, 2005, p.28.

<sup>66</sup> Tony Moodie, Principal of TEE College, Southern Africa in personal correspondence with the writer dated 11 December 2008. Moodie quotes Albert Outler, who cites vehement attacks by Wesley on Augustine because of his views on sin. Moodie is intimating that, according to Maximus the Confessor, unholy passions (have to be) supplanted by the holy passion of love.

<sup>67</sup>Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, p.147.

<sup>68</sup>Quoted in Theo Sundermeier, *Missiology Yesterday and Tomorrow* in *Missionalia*, Vol. 18, No.1, April 1990: Mission in Creative Tension: A dialogue with David Bosch,

<sup>69</sup>Dennis Potter, quoted in Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999, p. 349.

<sup>70</sup>I.Abrahams, Address to Conference, MCSA, Ref. [www.methodist.org.za/index.php](http://www.methodist.org.za/index.php).

<sup>71</sup> John Pyper, Willow Creek Study, 2006.

<sup>72</sup>Expressed by Paul Pierson as “a desire to tackle the problems of Western society coupled with doubts about the validity of world evangelization.” Stan Guthrie in *Foolish Things*, *Christianity Today* on Internet, Posted 21 January 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Ajith Fernando, *Getting Back on Course*, *Christianity Today* on Internet, Posted 11 February 2007.

<sup>74</sup>Peter Kuzmic, quoted in *The Consultation on the Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Responsibility* by Mark Lau Branson, TFS Bulletin, vol.6, no.1, September-October 1982.

<sup>75</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, Quoted in Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, p.23.

<sup>76</sup> Yancey, *The Jesus I never knew*. P. 24.

<sup>77</sup>MacKay in his *A Preface to Christian Theology* wrote of the “Balcony” approach which betrayed an aloofness to what was happening in the street below and that of the “Road,” concerned with things in their concrete existence.

<sup>78</sup>J.W. de Gruchy, *Radical Peace-making: The Challenge of Some Anabaptists* in

*Theology and Violence*, edited by C. Villa-Vincencio, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, p.183.

<sup>79</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999, p. 35.

<sup>80</sup> Laurence K. Mullen, *Holy Living – The Adequate Ethic*, in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Fall 1979, Marion: Wesleyan Theological Society, p. 92.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Wang, *The Great Commission Decade in Proclaim Christ Until He Comes*, p. 360.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Artemisia Lathbury, Song 650 verse 2 in *The Song Book of The Salvation Army*, Verona, N.J.: The Salvation Army National Headquarters, American Edition 1987, p. 592.

<sup>83</sup> Sweet, *The Four Fundamentalisms of Oldline Protestantism*, p. 270.

<sup>84</sup> Mendell Taylor, *Handbook of Historical Documents of the Church of the Nazarene*, Kansas City: Nazarene Theological Seminary, [s.a.], p. 2.

# The Divine Imperative To Make Disciples Of All Nations

*Karen Jobson*

The words of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 give clear instructions to those who would follow Jesus: they are to go and make disciples of all people. Yet, the understanding of these words has changed over time and it has been driven by the social context in which each generation of disciples has lived out their faith. This paper will explore how Methodist missiology has evolved and adapted to a rapidly changing world while endeavoring to hold fast to the foundations on which Methodism was built, particularly with regards to world mission. In so doing it will draw on the work of David Bosch, arguably the most significant missiologist of the past century, who has offered a critical understanding of mission.

## **Methodism and Mission in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Industrial Revolution triggered an unprecedented expansion of capitalism that demanded a massive labor force and resulted in a change both in the production and the sourcing of goods and materials. In Britain this led to urbanization as people flooded into the cities to work in the factories. Work and housing conditions were extremely poor, as was the standard of education amongst the working class.

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Globally, Britain was dependent on its colonies for raw materials, and labor in the colonies was sourced by the slave trade. Missionary societies began to emerge that followed the same routes as the traders, and the countries of the empire became the focus of their endeavor. Increased traffic to other continents and better communications allowed for more missionaries to be sent abroad. Two of those were John and Charles Wesley.

John Wesley had been ordained as a priest in 1728 having served his curacy with his father in Lincolnshire but he oscillated between academic life and his call to ministry. However, with Charles he established himself as an effective organizer, instigating the Holy Club in Oxford. This had one primary aim: the pursuit of holiness through prayer, fasting and meditation on the scriptures. This also resulted in their involvement in pastoral work among prisoners and the poor, expanding in relation to their increased commitment to their spiritual growth.

But this was not enough. In 1735 they became missionaries working under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). SPG was formed in 1710 with two resolutions:

That the design of propagating the Gospel in foreign parts does chiefly and principally relate to the conversion of heathens and infidels, and therefore that branch of it ought to be prosecuted to all others.

That in consequence thereof, immediate care be taken to send itinerant missionaries to preach the Gospel among the Six Nations of the Indians according to the primary intentions of the late King William of glorious memory.<sup>1</sup>

They were sent to American Colony of Georgia; John Wesley was frank about his motives for going:

My chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul. Adding: I am assured that if I be once converted myself, He will then employ me both to strengthen my brethren and to preach his name to the Gentiles...Nothing so convinces me of our own importance as a zealous attempt to convert our neighbor.<sup>2</sup>

Charles Wesley left Georgia less than six months after he arrived, having fallen victim to the pernicious bullying of the Governor, Edward Oglethorpe. John remained, though his ministry was fraught with problems. His mission reflected a deep commitment to the gospel but he readily alienated both the settlers and the Native Americans. His ministry there was finally curtailed after he fell in love with Sophy Hopkey, whose guardian was the local magistrate. He wrestled very deeply with his feelings towards her and when she married another man he denounced their marriage. The situation escalated and he was forced to flee from Georgia in 1737.

Despite being a very challenging time for John Wesley, it is apparent that his experiences as a missionary were also tremendously formative. He had gone with a clear desire to deepen his faith, but the treacherous voyage alone and the example of the Moravian missionaries whose confidence in God even in the midst of mortal danger challenged everything he thought he believed. He was to reflect on his return that:

It is now two years and four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgia Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I found myself in the meantime? Why least of all what I expected, that I, who went to America to convert the Indians was never myself converted to God.<sup>3</sup>

It was only a year later in 1738 that Wesley on visiting a society of Moravians was to have a deep and transformative experience of God, which is when he recorded that he had "felt his heart strangely warmed." He was to use these first hand experiences of faith as the foundations of his preaching and teaching. He promoted the view that Christian perfection was something that could evolve and that was multi-faceted. Therefore, it was essential that Christians were nurtured and challenged through societies and later through the class system so that the different stages of faith, being justification, regeneration and sanctification could develop and discipleship could be deepened. He maintained that:

... a man may have some degree [of faith] before all things in him have become new before he has the full advantage of faith.<sup>4</sup>

And at the core of the teaching was the emphasis on the prevenient grace of God that all people are bestowed with and that allows each one to enter into a deep relationship with God regardless of sin. Accordingly, it was incumbent on each person who had heard the Christian message to work towards his or her salvation. He was also clear that his mission had outgrown the confines of the parish church system. In a statement that encapsulates his whole approach to mission he commented:

I look upon all the world as my parish: thus far I mean that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet and right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.<sup>5</sup>

Many were converted and became excited by this message conveyed so passionately through field preaching by Wesley and his associates. Plenty of opportunities were offered to respond and thousands of the urban poor were to join societies in which they received education and encouragement in their faith. It has been noted that because of this and because Methodism was "catholic" in its inclusivity, ambitious in its scope and did not submit its members to stringent tests of faith required by many Reformed churches and Quaker meetings, it was the ideal missionary religion.<sup>6</sup> From the beginning of the movement the emphasis was on going out to make disciples, whether that was going into the slums or prisons as in the early days of the Holy Club or preaching at outdoor gatherings, as did Whitefield and Wesley as the movement began to develop momentum. Even as it became more established as a denomination in its own right, Wesley was insistent that ministers were to be itinerant, going to those who needed them most.

And it was these early converts who were to prove the most effective missionaries in spreading the message of Methodism. Years before the British Methodist Church formally appointed missionaries, people who had

experienced Methodist Societies in the UK and in Ireland began to travel, taking with them what they had learned, and were keen to develop Methodist societies abroad. In 1766, for example, two Irish linen workers, Philip Embury and Barbara Heck, seeking a new life in New York, founded a Methodist Society on their arrival. Other Irish immigrants were to be highly effective in preaching and teaching a form of Methodist Christianity in America.<sup>7</sup>

In 1786 Thomas Coke, who had been appointed as a missionary by the British Methodist Conference landed, through force of bad weather, in Antigua, only to discover that Nathaniel Gilbert, a West Indian planter, had already established Methodism there. He had heard Wesley preach in London and taken it back to the island. In 1811 The British Methodist Conference appointed its first missionary to Sierra Leone. Again he arrived to discover that Methodist lay people had already been very effective in spreading the message. In Southern Africa it was a soldier who established the first Methodist Society, and the same was true of India where Andrew Armour formed a Society in 1816 that met for prayer and fellowship.

And so Methodism spread abroad, just as it did in the UK, through people who had become passionate about Christianity through the power of Methodist preachers and the discipline of being a member of a society. The American Methodist Church was soon to become an effective missionary body in its own right. In 1784 Wesley ordained Thomas Vasey and Richard Watcoat, appointed Thomas Coke as Superintendent, and sent them to America with a letter releasing them from the British Methodist Church and authorizing them to meet the sacramental needs of the growing number of American Methodists. However, Francis Asbury was already established there and held deep concerns about the negative relationship that Wesley had with American Methodists. At Christmas in 1784 a conference was held of all American itinerant preachers and they voted to become an Episcopal Church. Soon afterwards Asbury became a bishop and this marked the end of the relationship with British Methodism. New settlements were developing all over America which were fertile ground for mission and a system of circuit riders developed, again very much focused on the need to "go and make disciples."



In the years that followed new expressions of Methodism were to emerge in America that were a response to racial tensions in the churches. Despite differences in worship, ecclesiology and politics all shared a deep passion for mission both in the US and overseas. For example, the African Methodist Episcopal Church sent missionaries to Haiti in 1821 and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was effective in a mission to Liberia, Ghana and Nigeria.

Consequently all Methodist societies around the world can trace their roots back either to the UK or the US. However, mission never exists in a vacuum and as more Methodist missionaries were sent they encountered challenging social and moral dilemmas regarding the people that they worked with. They were in a difficult position, a long way from home and dependent on the hospitality of the communities in which they served: They had to adapt a Christian message that they had encountered in the industrial towns and cities of Britain or America to the villages and townships of very different countries with very different cultures.

One of the greatest challenges was how to respond to colonialism in its many forms. Perhaps the most pernicious of these was slavery. Wesley himself stated that slavery was the "execrable sum of all villainies."<sup>8</sup> Missionaries who were working in the field were clear that there could be no salvation without emancipation and they were able to give emotive accounts of the circumstances under which the slaves toiled, which fueled the abolition movement both in the UK and the US.

However, there was pressure from within Methodism to be careful with regards to the issue. Bunting, one of the founding fathers of British Methodism, felt that it was the role of the Methodists to be "the quiet in the land" of Britain and he questioned whether it was the role of a Missionary Society to "meddle with the civil or political." He also felt the need to maintain a positive relationship with the government in order to have their support for Methodist missionaries.<sup>9</sup> Social holiness has always been the bedrock of Methodist social action but within the tradition the tension between conformity and non-conformity has always existed. John Wesley, despite strongly speaking out against slavery, was conservative in his politics. In 1792 the Methodist conference stated that it would be wrong to criticize

the government. This was reinforced in the 1797 conference when it was ordered that any members who "propagated opinions inimical to the civil government" would be expelled.<sup>10</sup> In the mission field there was equal caution. Watson, secretary of MMS, was elected as a member of the executive board of the anti-slavery society. In the West Indies there had been many attacks upon missionaries by the plantation owners, and this news caused further agitation. As a result MMS forbade anyone associated with the organization in the West Indies from being involved in the struggle.

In America the issue was equally divisive. The Book of Discipline contained a statement that ordered anyone owning slaves to emancipate and set them free. However, this was dropped as a result of pressure from the many Methodists who owned slaves. It split communities and congregations.

Later in other countries too there was a tension between colonial expansion and the needs of indigenous populations. In New Zealand, for example, John Hardy, the chair of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, joined forces in 1838 with representatives from CMS to challenge the colonial expansion stating that:

To evangelize is one thing, to colonize another. The colonist goes "with arms of mortal temper in his hands; with the musket, the bayonet, and the gunpowder"; but your missionaries go "with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." I trust that they will be permitted to go unmolested. Nothing can be greater than their disinterestedness in that cause. They cannot be suspected of any objects of ambition; they go poor and defenseless, to make many rich; whereas colonists generally go to make many poor in order to enrich a few.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these efforts to challenge injustices that went alongside the missionary enterprise, the Methodist approaches to mission in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have been subject to strong critical analysis not just from those from outside the evangelical tradition but also from within it. One of the most influential of these was David Bosch, a South African, Dutch

Reformed Church minister, missionary and theologian. His evaluation of that period will now be considered.

### **David Bosch**

In his analysis of the development of mission, Bosch placed the emergence of the Methodist Church very much at the heart of the enlightenment era, along with others who were involved in the Evangelical Revival in Great Britain and the Second Great Awakening in the United States. He suggested that several concepts were central to enlightenment thinking: objectivity and reason, belief in progress and excitement about the potential for discovery, especially exploration of the physical world. Modern theology adopted this conceptual framework and alongside the commitment to progress was a belief that the entire world would soon be converted to the Christian faith. Christianity was perceived as a force for reforming the world, eradicating poverty and restoring justice for all. He acknowledged that the evangelicals of the era, motivated by their own transformative experience of faith, were to have a profound effect on challenging the conditions under which the poorest both in the UK and abroad had to work and live. He noted that Wesley "was very conscious of the fact that God was above all a God of mercy."<sup>12</sup> This emphasis was attributed to the ability of all to respond to the offer of salvation, to the emerging enlightenment thinking that above all human beings are rational creatures who must be treated as individuals, and they must respond to the offer of God's grace as individuals.

Though able to acknowledge the positive effects of the Evangelical Revival on society at large, Bosch criticized the way in which the missionary thinking of the era was to develop: "compassion and solidarity had been replaced by pity and condescension"<sup>13</sup> as many missionaries began to perceive themselves as superior to those that they evangelized. He argued that the result was a paternalistic attitude to mission in which those living in the mission fields were perceived as the "poor heathen." No longer was the missionary focus giving glory to God, teaching people about God's love for them; rather, they had been replaced by the need to rescue the inferior natives from their impoverished state and in so doing impose an attitude of religious and cultural supremacy. He did qualify his attack on the nineteenth century missionaries by acknowledging that any attempt to transmit the gospel will

come in "cultural robes." Western missionaries did make a positive contribution to other societies, and he highlighted that a number of missionaries were conscious of their own cultural imperialism and sought to challenge it. Yet, despite this defense he concluded that:

. . . a dismal picture of (admittedly well-intended) imposition and manipulation remains. Missionary advocates were, on the whole, unaware of the pagan flaws in their own culture . . . They were unconscious of the inroads the Enlightenment had made into their thinking and of the fact that because of this, the old unity of "Christianity" and "civilization" had broken asunder.<sup>14</sup>

These criticisms are as legitimate of Methodist missionaries as they are of anyone. They were very much men and women of their time, subject to the same teaching and socialization that encouraged a degree of jingoism. As has been noted, many missionaries did take a stand to defend the rights of those they worked with and this brought them into conflict with those who sought to colonize for economic gain. Yet, it is also true that often there was little respect for indigenous cultures and Christianization was often equated with Westernization.

In critiquing different periods of mission history, Bosch suggested that there was a tendency to adopt one specific biblical verse as the core missionary text that embodied the missionary paradigm of the time. In his work on the Enlightenment era that encompassed the birth of Methodism he acknowledged that due to the diversity and complexity of the era, a number of verses were particularly significant, including Acts 16:9, Matthew 24:14 and John 10:10. Yet he argued that the most prevalent text that was emblematic of the time was the Great Commission. Many missionaries identified this text as their key motivation for becoming missionaries and it was "natural that every preacher on mission would refer to it on every sermon, even if the text played no integral role in the overall argument."<sup>15</sup> The American Methodist John Mott placed much significance on the verses: "Jesus' final charges, reported in all the gospels and the Book of Acts, define the first and

most important part of our missionary obligations.”<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, obedience to this command was seen by many of the time to be paramount.

In a more detailed commentary on the Great Commission, Bosch showed that Western Protestant missionaries of this time placed much emphasis on the active element of the sentence; the aorist participle, “Go ye therefore.” He stated that it fit well with the desire to cross geographical frontiers and that it was “the only translation that made sense to him [the missionary] during the golden age of Western consciousness of superiority.”<sup>17</sup>

However, Bosch also contended that the “making disciples” element of the Great Commission was often lost in comparison, and though he recognized that the use of this text did serve as a catalyst for many to respond to the missionary call, he also expressed concern that often it “removes the church’s involvement in mission from the domain of gospel to that of law.” Though recognizing the validity of some aspects of his argument and the fact that there was a considerable degree of legalism in the early Methodist Church, the whole emphasis of a Methodist understanding of faith development has been dependent on the very principle of discipleship and an individual response to the gospel. Without them Methodism would never have grown.

Bosch posed a well-reasoned argument for the flawed nature of missionary development during this period. Methodists are proud of their history, but not uncritically, and his work has helped to develop a deeper understanding of the meta-narratives that unconsciously shaped the evolution of Methodism. His commentary on the emergence of postmodern missionary paradigm has been equally influential and this will now be considered.

### **The Divine Imperative in the Postmodern Age**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the social context for mission continues to change rapidly. Economic globalization potentially presents a great threat to many in the world. The centers of economic power have diversified considerably since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, yet they have become increasingly interdependent. Global warming, HIV/AIDS, competition for resources (including water and food) and conflict based not just on land borders but more than ever on religious ideology offers immense challenges to the churches that

seek to “make disciples of all nations.” Philosophically, too, there has been a shift from the enlightenment that defined the modern era to the postmodern era.

Postmodernism started as a post-war movement and is still more a collection of ideas rather than a unified theory. As such it does not have a universally accepted definition. However, Lyotard, one of the most influential philosophers in this area describes it as “incredulity towards metanarratives.” Three central principles have been suggested to define the postmodern consciousness: *anti-foundationalism*; (there are no moral absolutes anymore), *anti-totalitarianism* (there are no indisputable foundations to knowledge) and *anti-utopianism* (knowledge has not produced the utopia of human emancipation.)<sup>18</sup> Bosch accepted that we are living in a postmodern period and differentiated it from the Enlightenment by suggesting that it marked an end to the belief that God could be mastered by human rationality alone and that the contemporary “gods” of science, technology and industrialization have lost their influence.

### **Mission and Pluralism**

In the postmodern world, religion has become increasingly privatized, shifting from the social to the individual and often seen in the same realm as many of the programs that offer routes to self-fulfillment. In such an environment the truth claims of any religion, including Christianity, are open to question. Though Christianity has always existed alongside other faiths, the growing effectiveness of Islam as a missionary religion presents particular challenges; it has been estimated that 26.9% of the world’s population were western Christians in 1900. By 1980 this was about 30%. In 1900 about 12.5% of the world’s population were Muslim; by 1980 it was about 18%. It is estimated that by 2025 about 30% of the world’s population will be Muslim.<sup>19</sup>

A response to this plurality from all of the major world religions has been a rise in fundamentalism as people of faith have sought to defend their beliefs from the perceived attack. Many have reacted against the moral relativism of the time by seeking expressions of faith that offers absolute certainty and security, often in a way that directly confronts those of other faiths.<sup>20</sup> There are those within Methodism who have chosen to do this, too.

However, others have sought to take a less provocative stance that is prepared to enter into dialogue with those of other faiths and none. In doing this they follow the example set by Wesley, who although a man of the enlightenment era and confident about the necessity of evangelism, could recognize the good in religions other than his own. He recorded in his journal in 1737 on a sea voyage: "I began learning Spanish in order to converse with my Jewish parishioners, some of whom seem nearer to the mind that was in Christ than many who call him Lord."<sup>21</sup> Wesley's openness and positive actions to enter into conversation epitomize a dialogical approach to interfaith work that was promoted by Bosch and continues to be supported by many others. Seeking to make disciples of all nations in the current context does demand that we wrestle with the issue of how we relate to other faiths. Bosch suggested that there are several elements that need to be considered, commitment that demands that those involved are prepared to "witness to [their] deepest convictions" whilst listening to the same in others. Holding on to the belief that God is present in the midst of the dialogue and also entering into the conversations with deep humility that recognizes that in this life we will only ever have partial knowledge. Finally, Christians need to accept that each world faith is different from Christianity. It is not helpful to generalize and ignore differences or to focus purely on what the faiths share in common.<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that this approach has been at the heart of ecumenical dialogue for many years. Moreover, in pluralist societies the need for positive ecumenical relations is even greater as increasingly Christians are in the minority.

Wesley made a clear statement about the nature of God that is helpful in both ecumenical and interfaith dialogue:

. . . God is love; he is conformed to the same likeness. He is full of love to his neighbor: of universal love not confined to one sect or party, nor restrained to those who agree with him in his opinions, or in the outward modes of worship, or to those who are allied to him by blood or nearness of place.<sup>23</sup>

Theologically and missiologically this is an important statement since it affirms that God is bigger than our churches or even our religion. At times within the history of Methodism as with other traditions, this has been forgotten and the focus has rested on the church not on God.

### **Postmodern Theology of Mission**

This recognition is central to the paradigm shift that has occurred in the postmodern era. The doctrine of the *missio Dei* has become more prevalent as a model of mission and Bosch described it thus:

The primary purpose of the *missiones ecclesiae* can not simply be the planting of churches or the saving of souls; rather, it has to be service to the *missio Dei*, representing God in and over against the world . . . In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of that reign and the powers of darkness and evil. <sup>24</sup>

Lesslie Newbigin contributed to the development of this thinking. He suggested that focusing on a central doctrine of the *missio Dei* is crucial in order to avoid fallacious concepts of mission, two of which often seem to compete with one another. The first of these is the view that numerical growth, through effective evangelism, is the central goal of mission. In this approach salvation of the individual soul and the growth of the church takes primacy over challenging unjust structures in society. The second view focuses on quickening the coming of God's kingdom on earth through works of righteousness and peace.

For those who are oppressed, work by the churches that encourage justice, freedom, healing and works to alleviate their poverty is important, but simply evangelizing in this context is not the true *missio Dei*. However, neither is focusing solely on the coming of the Kingdom without acknowledging the coming of Christ. The mission of God is in recognizing that Jesus has challenged the powers and principalities of this world and through the presence of the Holy Spirit is still actively at work in our world today. With this doctrine, mission is not about numerical growth but it is about witnessing to the transformative love and power of God and communicating that



through words and actions.<sup>25</sup>

### **Implications for World Mission**

This has significant consequences for churches, theology and mission. It marks an end to the cultural imperialism that often defined world mission, in which Christianization was often associated with Westernization. As a result, within the churches practically and philosophically there have been distinctive shifts. The churches that were planted by missionaries have become more established and much less reliant on the parent church, financially and for personnel. It is no longer the case that the western churches hold all of the power, though there are still economic disparities in line with the disparities in global markets. Missionaries are still sent, but they go as guests of local churches. The emphasis now is on partnership, solidarity, mutual encounter and exchange. This has resulted in churches throughout the world, including the west, not just sending missionaries but also receiving them. There is now an acknowledgment that the church has only grown through the process of inculturation; "the church has not expanded but [has been] born anew in each new context and culture."<sup>26</sup> Each community that has received Christianity has adapted it to fit their own culture though this has sometimes been very threatening to the missionaries who delivered the gospel.

During the past fifty years there has been a growing acknowledgment within Methodism, as within other traditions, that the Western church has much to learn about the nature of God from those who practice the faith in other cultures and who choose to re-contextualize classic Methodist theology to adapt to Western societies that have become more diverse. This has led to a greater degree of interculturalism as different theologies inform each other. Black, Liberation and Asian theologies are all becoming increasingly accepted as being crucial to the emerging canon of Methodist theological understanding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is also apparent that churches within the Methodist tradition have diverged a great deal. Anyone who attends World Methodist Council (the global forum drawing together representatives of churches from the Wesleyan tradition) is struck by the diversity of theology and approaches to missiology sometimes between Methodists from the

same country.

This diversity has always been present within Methodism. The desire to bring Methodists together to share concerns, give mutual support and explore differences was the catalyst in the development in 1881 of the predecessor of the World Methodist Council, the Ecumenical Methodist Council. Yet in the postmodern, post colonial era there has been a growing recognition that it is the churches in the Two Thirds World that are growing the fastest and contextualizing Methodist theology most effectively. They have much to teach the parent churches who may need to concede their historic stronghold on power and influence as a result.

Through the missionary efforts of those who went before, Methodism is now a strong global church, and within this inheritance there is much to celebrate and much to learn from, too. The Methodist Church has continued to adapt to its environment and its ability to do this is essential for its future survival. Though there are considerable differences between the Enlightenment era and Postmodernity each generation of Christians must live with the challenge of telling of a God who does not change, to societies that constantly do. Yet within the flux of all this is the assurance from Jesus in the final words of the Great Commission: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964) p. 226

<sup>2</sup> R. Hattersley, *John Wesley: A Brand Plucked From The Burning* (London: Abacus, 2002) p.103

<sup>3</sup> B. Tabraham, *The Making Of Methodism* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1995) p. 26

<sup>4</sup> R. Hattersley, *Ibid*, p.160

<sup>5</sup> J. Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) p. 44

<sup>6</sup> D. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000) p. 6

<sup>7</sup> For a helpful account of the global development of Methodism see K. Cracknell and S. White, *An Introduction To World Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2005)

- <sup>8</sup>S. Jakobsson, *Am I Not A Man And A Brother?* (Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksells, 1972) p. 446
- <sup>9</sup>D. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1984) p. 211
- <sup>10</sup>W. Gibson, *Church, State and Society, 1760-1850* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994) p.79
- <sup>11</sup>Cited in K. Cracknell and S. White, *Ibid* p. 84
- <sup>12</sup>D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 2002) p. 287
- <sup>13</sup>D. Bosch *Ibid* p. 290
- <sup>14</sup>D. Bosch *Ibid* p. 298
- <sup>15</sup>D. Bosch *Ibid* p. 340
- <sup>17</sup>D. Bosch *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1980) p. 69
- <sup>18</sup>P. Taylor et al., *Sociology in Focus* (Ormskirk: Causeway Press, 1995) p. 697
- <sup>19</sup>S. Huntington *The Clash of Civilizations And The Remaking Of World Order* (London: The Free Press, 1997) p. 65
- <sup>20</sup>For a useful recent account of this see S. Bruce, *Fundamentalism: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008)
- <sup>21</sup>K. Cracknell and S. White *Ibid* p. 262
- <sup>22</sup>D. Bosch *Transforming Mission* pp. 482-489
- <sup>23</sup>K. Cracknell and S. White *Ibid* p. 263
- <sup>24</sup>D. Bosch *Transforming Mission* p. 391
- <sup>25</sup>L. Newbigin *The Gospel In A Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989) pp. 135-140
- <sup>26</sup>D. Bosch *Transforming Mission* p. 454

## Book Reviews



John Larsson. *1929: A Crisis That Shaped The Salvation Army's Future*. London, England: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 2009.

Reviewed by Roger J. Green

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At the outset of this review there are three words of explanation that are needed, especially for those outside of The Salvation Army who read this journal. First, the author of the book is a retired General of The Salvation Army, a position held by only one person at a time. And as the Army's international leader from 2002 to 2006 John Larsson served with distinction and provided leadership for the work of The Salvation Army around the world, a work in which he himself was engaged on three continents before being elected as the General of The Salvation Army. Second, the subtitle of the book, *A Crisis That Shaped The Salvation Army's Future*, might lead readers outside of the Army to think that this work is only for those interested in Salvation Army history. This is not so. This is a book that, while dealing with a particular event in the history of the Army, nevertheless uncovers principles of biblical leadership worthy of everyone's con-

sideration. Third, the historical crisis that prompted the writing of this book was the deposition from office of General Bramwell Booth, the eldest son and successor of William Booth as the second General of The Salvation Army. Bramwell Booth served in that capacity from the death of his father in 1912 until the leadership of the Army finally established that he was unfit for office. Since this constitutional crisis no General of the Army has ever been named by his or her predecessor, but has been elected by the body of world leaders of the Army known as the High Council.

There are several reasons to commend this book, not the least of which is that the book is so well written. This will come as no surprise to those of us who have read other works by General Larsson. There is a clarity that is noteworthy in this book because the author has to deal with so many complicated historical, biographical and legal matters that otherwise could become rather confusing to the reader. Such confusion has often been the case in the past when dealing with this event in Army history. However, one of the many accomplishments of this book is that it is so well written, so lucid. And the character sketches throughout the book of many of the participants in this crisis add to the richness of the text and help the reader to see the human face of history.

The author goes out of his way to present a balanced treatment of the people involved in this conflict as well as the motivations assigned to those people. Again, in this way the book addresses confusion from the past where some members of the Booth family (Bramwell Booth and those who supported him) were portrayed as the heroes while those discharged with the responsibility of putting him out of office were the sinners, or vice versa—some have seen Bramwell Booth and his defenders as villains and the other officers as saviors. This author will have none of that, but readily appreciates the complications of human motivations, the passions of held beliefs, and the imperfections of character with which we all live and which are part of the human condition.

The people involved in this conflict were, in their own minds, defending principles that they believed inviolable. The unfortunate subplot to this event is that family members were at odds with each other, and good friends saw things quite differently, and at times that had to cause some grief

among the participants. To be sure, one of the acts of this drama was that Bramwell Booth's sister, Evangeline Booth (who would eventually become the fourth General of The Salvation Army), pleaded with her brother to do the honorable thing and step down from office, while Bramwell Booth's wife, Florence, and daughter, Catherine, defended their husband and father against the wishes of Evangeline.

Add to that the fact that this drama did not begin and end in a day or a weekend, but was drawn out. General Bramwell Booth undertook court action to retain his position as well as his right to appoint his successor. Most of his contemporaries were appalled at this action that brought The Salvation Army to the attention of the British press and of concerned Salvationists around the world. As if to add pathos to the story, an officer of the High Council (Lieut.-Commissioner William Haines) died during the deliberations of the High Council and the meetings had to be suspended in order to conduct his funeral. And mere months after being deposed from office, on June 16, 1929 Bramwell Booth died.

What is potentially the most complicated part of this story are the legal details. However, the author guides us through that maze with care, and those details are well set into the historical narrative in such a way that they do not overwhelm the reader. However, this book must be read with discernment if the implications of this crisis are to be understood. But again the author comes to the rescue of the reader by one of the concluding chapters entitled "Ongoing Reform." And so the events of 1929 are seen not in isolation from the ensuing events of the Army, but as a catalyst for reform that still continues in the Army today and prevents the Army from being locked in a tradition that would be impossible to defend in the years since this tragic confrontation.

Walter Brueggemann. *A Pathway of Interpretation: The Old Testament for Pastors and Students*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008.

Reviewed by Donald E. Burke, Booth College, Winnipeg, Canada

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For the past 30 years Walter Brueggemann has been the most prolific scholar of the Old Testament writing in English. During his career, he has published more than 60 books and literally hundreds of articles. The fact that his first significant book, *The Prophetic Imagination*, remains in print more than 30 years after its initial publication in 1978 testifies to the fact that his writing strikes a chord with many Christians. While he has written on larger issues of Old Testament interpretation, this writer finds that his most engaging and stimulating work is his exegetical studies of biblical texts whether in the form of commentaries, short essays or sermons. It was for this reason that I read the book that is under review here with anticipation.

*A Pathway of Interpretation* is a very personal book. It begins with Walter Brueggemann's reflection upon his own story. In the Preface, the author recounts the early influences upon his reading and interpretation of the Bible. Three significant shaping influences are identified. First, having been raised the son of a pastor in the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Brueggemann was shaped by the social gospel, its commitment to social justice, and its expectation of the Kingdom of God. Second, his church was also characterized by a strong pietism that eschewed strong confessionalism and the conflicts that often accompany it in favor of a more irenic spirit. Third, as a scholar he was shaped decisively by his doctoral supervisor, James Muilenburg, who was one of the first scholars to chart a course away from the constraints of the historical-critical method and toward a rhetorical approach to scripture that appreciates the artistry of the biblical texts.

This book is also personal because it is Brueggemann's reflection on his method of interpreting biblical texts. In Chapter 1, "Introduction: That the World May be Redescribed," he sets out his understanding of the context in which we read the Bible. It is now widely accepted that we do not read the

Bible in a vacuum; our social, economic and political contexts constitute a "world" which shapes how we interpret Scripture. Assuming his American context, Brueggemann asserts that, "This constructed world is a delicate combination of aggressive secular cynicism, coupled with a veneer of religious legitimacy, so that *raw power* is nicely matched to *passionate religious conviction*. In this socially constructed world, the great gaps between rich and poor and the institutional maintenance of injustice are kept carefully hidden and off the public agenda by mantras about 'opportunity' and 'freedom'" (p. 3). According to Brueggemann, as the Church interprets the Bible it comes to see that the reality on the ground does not match this dominant description of society. When reading the Scriptures, the Church is redescribing the world, seeing it through different lenses. This writer might express the same point differently, but essentially the Bible subverts the dominant view that God is either irrelevant or serves only to maintain the status quo. Instead, according to Brueggemann, the Bible invites us to imagine a different world, one in which God is central and free. "YHWH is given in this text as a live, free, unencumbered agent of newness with whom all creatures—Israel, nations, human persons, and nonhuman creatures—must come to terms" (p. 5). As a result, the Church's reading of the Bible is *unsettling* because it questions our settled interpretation of the world, and *liberating* because it envisions a new world.

In the second chapter, "Setting the Stage: The Church's Task of Interpretation," Brueggemann develops further his assertion that any serious engagement with Scripture requires interpretation which is always shaped by the context of the interpreter. As a result, all interpretations of the Bible, reflecting the limitations of the interpreter, are partial and provisional. No interpreter or interpretative community has a full and complete understanding of the biblical text. Therefore, the stance for which Brueggemann argues is one in which the interpreters of Scripture dialogue with those who have arrived at alternative interpretations. Every interpretation of Scripture must be tested against the response of the whole Church. According to Brueggemann, this serious study of the Bible and dialogue regarding our various interpretations is the Church's most important task for it informs all that the Church does.



He goes on to suggest that the interpretive task in our postmodern context is an artistic engagement with the artistry of the text (p. 27). This stands in contrast to the traditional historical-critical reading of the Bible which seeks to interpret the Bible from within a scientific hermeneutic. In his approach to the Scriptures the artistic dimension is critical because it inspires acts of imagination which draw the Church beyond the constraints of present reality to imagine a new world.

In chapter 3 he outlines his simple, three step method of interpretation. Step 1 is a rhetorical analysis of the biblical text. This is characterized by what often is termed a "close reading" which attends to how the text has been constructed, the words used and word patterns. According to Brueggemann, the focus at this stage of interpretation is not on what the text teaches but upon the way in which the text affects the reader. This distinction between the cognitive and affective impact of the text is important to him; it suggests that the artistic impact of the text is primary. The Bible is read not for its ideas but for its transforming impact upon us.

Step 2 is a key word analysis. Building upon the identification of key words in the passage in Step 1, this stage of interpretation seeks to uncover how those key words are used in other biblical texts and to discover what that usage might contribute to our understanding of the text under consideration.

In Step 3, he turns to a social analysis of the text. His presupposition is that all texts are written to advocate for some ideology. The biblical interpreter must ask what peculiar advocacy is undertaken in the text being studied. To assist with this, attention must be given to the ongoing disputes that were underway in Israel. For example, the tensions between Israel and Judah, rich and poor, rivals for the throne, rival priestly groups, and supporters of Yahweh and supporters of Baal which inspired lively debates in ancient Israel are evident in Old Testament texts. Understanding these contentions allows us to uncover the special advocacy underway in the text. Identifying these advocacies also may help us to become aware of the peculiar advocacies that we have in our own social and faith communities. Attention to the social context and social conflicts in ancient Israel, in our churches, and in the larger world help us to recognize the manner in which

our assumptions and values control our interpretation of biblical texts. Since our self-interests, according to Brueggemann, often determine our interpretation of the text, awareness of our own special interests will help us to hear the text in new ways.

In the remainder of Chapter 3 and the subsequent four chapters he applies his method to several texts. One of the interesting features of this portion of the book is the fact that he does not seek to provide an interpretation of the biblical texts; he has already done this for each passage in other publications to which he refers the reader. Rather, he describes the interpretive process itself. In a sense what we have in these chapters is his commentary on his own interpretative method as he considers each text. It is similar to hearing a surgeon offer a running commentary on a complex surgical procedure. We are invited into the thought process as each decision is made. What we learn from observing Brueggemann at work is that each biblical text has its own idiosyncrasies and requires a tailored application of the three step process.

The book concludes with a chapter that provides suggestions for secondary sources that are helpful to the interpreter and some concluding observations about the role of the Scriptures in the Church.

*A Pathway of Interpretation* is a book that is addressed to the Church. Brueggemann clearly takes seriously the Bible as scripture. He argues that the Church must listen intently to hear the Word of God in the Bible and that the discipline of reading carefully is key to such listening. He also argues that when we engage in such careful listening, the results often are disturbing, for the God presented in the Bible often does not mesh neatly with our static orthodoxy. One comes away from reading Brueggemann with a deep sense that his interpretation of Scripture manifests his profound discontent with the present and an intense longing for a better future.

To those familiar with Brueggemann's work his interpretation of the way in which the careful study of the Bible is done within the Church will not be new. It is consistent with his work over the past thirty years. But it is also, nonetheless, a challenge to the Church which tends to read the Bible in ways that support our comfort and privilege. His insistence that we read the Bible with sensitivity to its social advocacies is especially relevant in our postmod-

ern context.

Throughout the book, Brueggemann offers provocative comments about the way in which the Bible is handled in the Church. He is highly attuned to both its uses and its abuses. Readers of this journal clearly will not agree with everything that Brueggemann says about the Bible and about specific texts; but we will deprive ourselves of an opportunity to hear and read the Bible in new ways if we simply disregard or dismiss Brueggemann's work.

Dallas Willard. *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*, Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Reviewed by Judith L. Brown, The Salvation Army, NHQ publications editorial staff

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It is unfortunate that many committed Christians refrain from discussing experiences in which they believe God has spoken directly to them. Sometimes this reluctance stems from a desire to keep their spirituality confidential, or from uncertainty about the source and the clarity of the message they have received. But even if the word is clear and its source seems unmistakable, most believers do not want to be deemed eccentric or out of touch with reality. We live in a world that extols doubt more than faith, where the Church is consigned to the periphery of the world, and where many Christians seem to have given up on the possibility of a conversational relationship with God. *Hearing God* is thought to be a rare gift set aside for the chosen few, perhaps even a privilege that God no longer extends to us. Little guidance is available on how conversation with God works, what it signifies, and how to cultivate it within a life of faithful discipleship.

What are some of the basic ways in which God speaks to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How do we distinguish the divine voice from other competing voices in a pluralistic world? What are the consequences for our spiritual formation when we do hear it? Is God still with us when we fail to hear Him speaking to us? We owe a debt of gratitude to author Dallas Willard for fleshing out these difficult questions in his provocative book, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*. Willard's book is a well-spring for twenty-first century disciples, invoking Scripture, personal stories, and scientific analogies to unpack the enigmatic subject of divine guidance. It helps us claim the promise made over and over again from Genesis to Revelation that God truly is "with us," continually seeks us out, and yearns for us to live and work alongside Him in the fullness of salvation.

For Willard, hearing God is one aspect of a rich personal relationship

with God in which we live with Him as friends and fellow workers in the Kingdom. As this intimate relationship steadily deepens over time, we mature enough to understand God's goals and ideas through our participation in the work of the Kingdom—just as Jesus did. Yet hearing God's word does not mean that we are virtuous or right, or even that we have interpreted the word accurately. "The infallibility of the messenger and the message does not guarantee the infallibility of our reception," writes Willard. (39)

*Hearing God* highlights our need to pursue radical transformation from the inside out before we can hear God speaking to us. Willard's view is that we are to take Paul's epistle to the Romans literally when he says, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (*Rom 12:2*). We are encouraged to search out and to know the mind of Christ, and then use our knowledge of God to begin grasping the truth about ourselves. Then we can gain an understanding of how God relates to us through His ideas and plans, and how He works in the world. Only by becoming familiar with the way God voices His word through creation and redemption can we be truly comfortable hearing God, says Willard.

During our gradual transformation into the image of Christ, Jesus' ways become written on our hearts, God's love becomes our love, and God's faith becomes our faith. We are able to identify with Christ so closely that we become blessed with the "faith of Christ" rather than "faith in Christ." The sense of "mine" and "thine" disappears until there is only "ours." (155) We become able to clarify the meaning of our behavior, aims, and environment through a divine lens, and our individual spirit begins to function as the "candle of the Lord." (101) The process of becoming more fully human opens us to the grace to differentiate between a thought that belongs only to us and one that is also God's.

Willard urges us to freely immerse our hearts, souls, and minds in Scripture to commune with God and to open the door to union with Him. Such time-honored Christian disciplines as submission and study can help train us to absorb the truth of God's Word. If we can read humbly and with a repentant heart, the Bible will guide us into a relationship with the Living Word. We should be ready to give up everything—all of our acquisitions, attachments and achievements, as Anthony De Mello says—and focus on

our desire to do the truth rather than simply hear it. An integral part of this process is planting the written Word in our hearts (James 1:21), and washing our minds in Scripture (Eph. 5: 25-27).

"The literal truth is that Christ through his living Word removes the old routines in the heart and mind . . . and in their place He puts . . . His thoughts, His attitudes, His beliefs, his ways of seeing . . . his words," Willard explains. (154) Hope dethrones fear, confidence erases suspicion, patience and kindness usurp suspicion and love conquers hate. Through God's redemptive work inside us, communication progresses into communion and communion into union. As a result of this Spirit-led process we develop a human character that is naturally open to a conversational relationship with God.

In Willard's view, God may speak to us through dreams, visions, voices and other phenomena, but these experiences typically occur in the early stages of spiritual growth. Perhaps to protect the listener and to allow time for a response, they are puzzling in content and meaning. Just as we wrestle with mysterious passages of Scripture, God speaks to us in forms that we struggle to understand. But an intentional and disciplined effort to hear God opens us to grace, which helps us to sort out the truth, and gradually our faith enables us to appreciate the sacred messages that are revealed to us.

For Willard, God's most common and most valuable way to communicate with human beings is the still small voice that Elijah heard after first expecting God to speak dramatically through wind, earthquake and fire. It can be heard through human language and through the inner voice of our own thoughts, but it usually comes through our own thoughts and feelings. According to Willard, when a message comes from outside the mind or personality of a person, it most often comes through another human being. This method "most fully engages the faculties of free, intelligent beings who are socially interacting with agape love in the work of God as his co-laborers and friends." Sometimes the individual spoken to and spoken through are identical, as in the familiar Bible story of Nathan and David. (2 Sam:12), when Nathan deftly exposes David's sin through the parable of the ewe lamb.

Perhaps because of our fallen state as human beings, we do not automatically know when God speaks to us, but we can learn to discern God's voice through effort and experimentation both on God's part and on our

part. Willard identifies three “lights,” (Wesleyan in nature) which are mutually interdependent and will guide us in recognizing the voice of God: 1) circumstances [open or closed doors] 2) impressions of the Holy Spirit 3) Scripture. The divine voice will create a strong impression, carry a weight of authority, affirm Biblical truths, and resonate with a spirit of peace, confidence and joy. When the Holy Spirit works in and through us, we will perform tasks that would be impossible to accomplish on our own. Willard points to some practical benefits that will ensue from a conversational relationship with God, including 1) direct, daily access to the Kingdom 2) confidence, comfort and peace 3) protection from cults and legalism and 4) deeper faith as Bible stories become more real and we begin to relate to the characters as genuine human beings.

The author suggests that when we fail to hear God speaking to us, perhaps God withholds his voice because we lack the clarity to understand it and the competence to respond to it. Moreover, our motives for seeking conversation with God may be selfish or ambiguous. Human difficulty in hearing God underscores the paradox between our “massive testimony and widespread faith” in divine guidance, and “a pervasive and often painful uncertainty” (25) about how it works today in the Church and in Christian life. Another stumbling block is the high premium our culture places on skepticism, which makes even those who do hear God’s voice hide their experiences to avoid sounding foolish. Because we live in a society that reveres scientific knowledge above and beyond theology, it is quite possible to graduate from a top-ranked university without learning anything whatsoever about God.

*Hearing God* holds a hopeful message for those who wrestle with the sounds of silence—our failure to hear does not mean either that God is silent or displeased with us. We can be still be within the will of God without knowing exactly what God wants us to do every step of the way. As often as possible, God will allow us to choose our own path through life as a way of developing and testing our character. Even so, Willard maintains, “we are showered with messages that simply go right through or past us” (69) simply because we are not familiar with God’s voice. But if we truly believe that God is not speaking to us, it may be appropriate to take an honest inventory of our spiritual condition by asking ourselves some pointed questions:

Am I ready to obey and change? Am I in right relationship with God? Am I living to be transformed like Christ, to serve His people and to build his kingdom on earth?

“Perhaps we do not hear the voice because we do not expect to hear it. Then again, perhaps we do not expect it because we ... fully intend to run our lives on our own and have never seriously considered anything else. The voice of God would therefore be an unwelcome intrusion into our plans.” (78)

During those times when God seems silent, it may be because of the spiritual warfare between good and evil that is raging in the universe. In our darkest hours we have to stand alone in our grief and pain, just as Jesus did during his last hours on earth. But the good news is that even then, God is still with us. Even then, we have something that is greater than God’s immediate guidance—the assurance of faith, hope and love, delight in God’s creation and provision for us, and an abundant life of worship and adoration. This supernatural life, or “zoe” in the Greek translation, is an unhurried life of peace, power and joy—a life of obedience in which everything we do begins to naturally and freely reflect the image of Christ. Such a life moves us beyond the question of hearing God to focusing on doing all of our work to the glory of God and his purposes.



## Book Notes

by Roger J. Green

Himes, Michael J. *The Mystery of Faith: an Introduction to Catholicism*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004.

There is a phenomenon within the Church today that would have been unthinkable before the Second Vatican Council. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are in conversation on many levels, and various denominations both within and without the Evangelical tradition are also speaking with Roman Catholics and seeking some common ground. This was not altogether unknown in the period of the Reformation, but since the sixteenth century there have been rare occasions of conversation. This book is helpful toward an understanding of basic Roman Catholic theology. It is brief (only 94 pages) and lucid (each chapter is only a few pages long, and at the end of each chapter there are questions for reflection). Protestants will do well to read this informative book, and will recognize what we have in common with Roman Catholics (such as the doctrine of the Trinity or the doctrine of Christ), and will also understand where we differ from Roman Catholics.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*. New

York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007.

Readers of this journal will have seen other reviews of books by this author, but several may be given because Alister McGrath writes a great deal and is gifted in his craft. Alister McGrath is an Evangelical theologian teaching at Oxford University. This is one of his recent works in which he deals with the sweep of the history of Protestantism. That history is at times difficult to understand, especially when struggling with theological differences, but McGrath writes in such a lucid way that the history is accessible to every reader. That history also comes alive as the author tells the Protestant story in compelling and exciting ways. The book is lengthy, but that should not deter any reader anxious to understand the history of Protestantism from the sixteenth century.

Parkhill, Gordon and Graham Cook, *Hadleigh Salvation Army Farm: A Vision Reborn*. London: The Salvation Army, 2008.

Hadleigh was the first farm colony that William Booth established after launching his Darkest England Scheme with the publication of his now famous book entitled *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. The scheme included the City Colony, the Farm Colony, and the Colony Overseas. The Farm Colony was, as the authors mention, a place where people “would be offered training in various forms of work, principally agriculture and brick making. This was intended to be an industrial as well as a farm colony” (p. 2). This book well rehearses the history of that farm colony, which is still owned and operated by The Salvation Army. The Farm continues to be maintained at Hadleigh, but the resources of Hadleigh have evolved into a Training Center, a center “aimed to provide a program that would help people between 16 and 55 with their personal development and enable them to realize their potential in mainstream education, training or employment” (p. 87).

The authors of this book are both soldiers (laymen) at the Leigh-on-Sea Corps (church) very close to Hadleigh. They are knowledgeable not only about local history, but specifically about the colorful Salvation Army histo-

ry in Essex. Their book is well written and filled with pictures of great interest, including many pictures of the Colony bands that spanned the years of the Colony.

This book is an invaluable contribution to Salvation Army history. The authors are to be commended for their hard work in putting this history together and also sharing the vision of the Colony as it continues to minister to people in the name of Christ from the sixteenth century to today.

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To order a copy of *Hadleigh Salvation Army Farm: A Vision Reborn*, contact Salvationist Publishing & Supplies at [www.sps-shop.com](http://www.sps-shop.com).

# Discipleship and Generation Next



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