

Journal of Aggressive Christianity

Issue 1, June/July 1999

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This article is adapted from the first editorial of "The War Cry", which is the official flagship publication of The Salvation Army. Not surprisingly, no author is named, for in the early days of this over one hundred year old publication naming oneself as the author was considered frivolously vain. For decades The War Cry called men and women to Jesus Christ with an aggressive and no holds barred journalistic style. With this reprint, tribute is paid to that old paper of war.

This powerful message contains the very reason for needing an aggressive Christianity in this time. It also contains a vision of the future day when the salvation war is finished. Fittingly, as it is adapted from the first "War Cry", it is published here in this first issue of the Journal of Aggressive Christianity, as a timeless battle cry calling us to rouse and finish off today the war begun of old.

"Why," you may ask, "a Journal of Aggressive Christianity?" Simply we reply, "Because we mean more war..." - J.N.

JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY
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Why a Journal of Aggressive Christianity?

"Why a War Cry?" (Why a Journal of Aggressive Christianity?) the first editorial asks and then proceeds to answer the question: "Because The Salvation Army means more war..." And why more war? Because the cry of slaughtered millions rises up louder and louder to heaven, crying to our inmost souls, with irresistible violence, to arise and fight more furiously than ever for the salvation of our fellows from the forces of evil which are dragging them drunken, befouled, degraded, wretched down to an eternity of woe. Because Jesus our King, the dying Jesus of Calvary, still looks weeping on doomed cities and multitudes wandering without a shepherd, and begs us to lay down our lives for them as He laid down his life for us. Because, following in his footsteps, despised, troubled, persecuted, opposed, we have by His continual help tasted victory, seen crowds of captives set at liberty and because we still hear that great voice high above all the noise of many waters bidding us go on to overcome the world. War! Yes, we will have more war. We will seize on the slain of the daughter of our people; and cleaving to pieces with the sword of truth the wretched victims of unbelief, of drink, of lust, of unfaithful ministry, we will send their quivering parts dripping with a soul's blood into every corner of the world with the cry of "Woe to him that holdeth back his sword." Upon every hilltop and from every high tower, shall gleam the blazing signal of war, until the cry of salvation and destruction, for the downfall of Satan's kingdom and for the reign of David's son shall echo and re-echo wherever the human tongue is heard. No more surrender; no more truce; no more "masterly inactivity" as to sin and ruin. God will have all persons repent. He will have his own people to repent and do their first works. He will have them abandon forever all friendship with the world, and all parley with evil hearts. Let all that name the name of Christ depart from iniquity. No more unbelief; no more pride; no more worldly pleasure or worldly dress or show; no more covetousness

or self-seeking; no more drinking or smoking or self indulgence of any kind. No more sin! Bought with blood, Israel is to be cleansed with that blood, and to be kept separate and unspotted from the world. Then, and then only, will God restore to Israel that kingdom, that supremacy over all which shall never again pass away. If we will we may be "the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit and trust in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh." Then on to victory! Let every faint heart be strong. No more hanging back to let others fight. No more keeping religion to yourself, or doing good in a quiet way, while the smoke of tormented millions rises blacker and blacker up from the eternal pit of woe, and the wail of anguish bursts from dying lips, from dying souls on every side, and the dance of sin and death goes madly on over the very corpses of the mutilated slain. To every lip the trumpet, and from every heart the life and death cry of warning and hope! Above all the din of the world's rattle, above the storms of bitter enmity to Christ, above the roar of every tempest of woe that bursts upon a sin-bound world let the King's name be heard, loud and clear, till not by tens or thousands merely, but by millions, those who have hated and refused Him fall weeping at His feet, to take up the easy yoke, and then to rise and swell the lines of victory. Salvation, always, everywhere!

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Captain Geoff Ryan (The Salvation Army Regional Commander, Russia South) and Bram Ryan (Editor, Christian Life), team up with a Y2K ready-or-not challenge to our comfortable sensibilities. Arguing that the established order is crumbling around the edges, to be replaced by warlords and gangster-statesmen, the Ryans ask us, what will be our mission? The answers in this explosive and potentially prophetic piece are found in the issues of essentials and compromise. WARNING: not for weak-kneed readership.- S.C.

JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

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A LINE IN THE SAND:

Mission Essentials in the Coming Anarchy

by Geoff Ryan and Bramwell Ryan

'I, the Captain of the legion of Rome, serving in the desert of Libya, have learnt and pondered this truth: 'There are in life but two things to be sought, Love and Power, and no one has both.'

Inscription in the Libyan desert

'I've never really been able to understand how anyone can believe in the possibility of compromise in matters of power, which is an absolute passion.'

Malcolm Muggeridge

In the fight for power there are always winners and losers. Even the great pre-creation struggle saw Satan thrown out of Paradise and the same applies here on earth. The question of power will be key for the Army of tomorrow and cuts to the core of the present discussion on mission essentials.

At the outset of the discussion listen to the prophetic voice of the British historian Paul Johnson (himself a Christian) as he describes our present century and thereby sets the scene for the coming one: The disturbances in Europe and the world which followed the seismic shock of the great War and it's unsatisfactory peace were, in one sense, only to be expected. The old order had gone. Plainly it could not be fully restored, perhaps not restored at all. A new order would eventually take its place. But would this be an 'order' in the sense the pre-1914 world had understood the term?

There were... disquieting currents of thought which suggested the image of the world adrift, having left its moorings in traditional law and morality. There was a new hesitancy on the part of the established and legitimate authority to get the global vessel back under control by the accustomed means, or by any means. It

constituted an invitation, unwilled and unissued but nonetheless implicit, to others to take over.

Of the great trio of German imaginative scholars who offered explanations of human behaviour in the nineteenth century, and whose corpus of thought the post-1918 world inherited... Marx described a world in which the central dynamic was economic interest. To Freud, the principal thrust was sexual. Both assumed that religion, the old impetus which moved men and masses, was a fantasy and always had been.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the third of the trio, was also an atheist. But he saw God not as an invention but as a casualty, and his demise as in some important sense an historical event, which would have dramatic consequences. He wrote in 1886: 'The greatest event of recent times- that 'God is dead', that the belief in the Christian God is no longer tenable- is beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe.' Among the advanced races, the decline and ultimately the collapse of the religious impulse would leave a huge vacuum. The history of modern times is in great part the history of how that vacuum has been filled.

Nietzsche rightly perceived that the most likely candidate would be what he called the 'Will to Power', which offered a far more comprehensive, and in the end more plausible explanation of human behaviour than either Marx or Freud. In place of religious belief, there would be secular ideology. Those who had once filled the ranks of the totalitarian clergy would become totalitarian politicians and above all, the 'Will to Power' would produce a new kind of messiah, uninhibited by any religious sanctions whatsoever, and with an appetite for controlling mankind. The end of the old order, with an unguided world adrift in a relativistic universe, was a summons to such gangster-statesmen to emerge. They were not slow to make their appearance.(1)

And so Johnson analyses the post WW1 era, yet the application to today is obvious. I have seen such 'gangsters' in Russia and Haiti. The nightly news tells us about them in the Middle East, Asia, and throughout Africa. By 'gangsters' I don't mean the Stalins, Pol Pots, Khomeinis, and Saddam Husseins, but rather the new gangsters who are not statesmen, and who do not aspire to the control of legislature. They are the barbarians that international observers warn us of when they speak of the collapse of the nation-state.

They are young, unemployed men, with few prospects. Little wealth, nothing to lose. Their lives are cheap- in the eyes of those who lead them- and when raised amorally, without restraining and modifying influences of a faith, they are terrifying (in Columbia in 1995 there was a violent death every three minutes). These men already control portions of the earth and according to analysts such gangsters will expand their sphere of influence in the coming years (in Russia, 70% of all banks are Mafia-owned). Such centres of power do not respond to traditional, international means of mediation: treaties, honour, obligation,

standing, representation- all mean nothing (Bosnia, Rwanda, Liberia). The raw exercise of power is the means of survival. And although brutal, such centres of power soon attract the loyalty of large numbers of people since a populace cannot abide anarchy and humans rapidly subscribe to the terms and conditions of anyone as long as they can provide stability and order (Zaire, Albania).

As our present order breaks down, as inequities between rich and poor increase, as scarcity in resources grows, as the established leadership becomes parched of ideas about how to deal with the multiplicity of intractable problems and threats, the rise of warlords will become increasingly evident (Somalia, Chechnya). Pessimistic predictions are like front-line combat- they strip life to its essential simplicity- yet I am hardpressed to offer anything but pessimism about the years ahead. The twentieth century started so full of promise and has turned out to be the bloodiest in recorded history. In thinking of the twenty-first century, I'm afraid we haven't seen anything yet.

The question for The Salvation Army then is what will be our mission? What can we do such men rule the harvesting fields? To answer these questions means looking at the Army's relationship to secular power. For many decades the Army has courted the powerful. This alliance has inevitably brought a corruption of our original mandate. In befriending power, we have become the losers. Such is the nature of power: there always winners and loser.

Examples are numerous and world-wide: In some places we agree to operate centres for alcoholics without mentioning the habit-changing power of Christ; in others we run counselling programmes for the mentally-ill and probation services for ex-offenders in which Gospel presentations are forbidden; we own hospitals where the War Cry is not allowed to be distributed. Books are counted (double and triple counting people) in order to maintain funding calculated to absolute numbers; we agree to run massive humanitarian aid programmes in conjunction with state authorities with proven track records of human rights abuses; we accept endorsements (complete with photo opportunities) from politicians of dubious character; in South Africa, for example, we are now paying the price for years of peaceful coexistence with a regime that was founded on anti-biblical principles (in Cape Town we are the only denomination that never had a missionary expelled for contravening the apartheid laws); the advisory board system in itself, while of immense practical value, in cynical terms can be viewed as befriending power in its purest form. And so on.

As troubling and problematic as these examples may be, they pale into insignificance when considering the future of the Army- when power does not clothe itself in expensive suits and when it is wielded outside of the boardroom. If we have established that the Army likes the powerful, what are the implications when power disrobes and, stripped naked of all civility, morality, thought or consequence, roams in naked splendour? What will be the nature of the

master/slave relationship then? Will the Army continue to obey the edicts of the powerful then, as I maintain we do now?

Tad Homer-Dixon, the head of the Peace and Conflict Studies Program at the University of Toronto (and an Anglican) writing in 1991 in the *Journal International Security*, offered the following interesting metaphor: Think of a stretch limo in the pot-holed streets of New York City, where homeless beggars live. Inside the limo are the air-conditioned post-industrial regions of North America, Europe, the emerging Pacific Rim, and a few other isolated places, with their trade summits and commuter-information highways. Outside is the rest of mankind, going in a completely different direction. (2)

Robert D. Kaplan, in his 1994 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, 'The Coming Anarchy', notes: We are entering a bifurcated world. Part of the globe is inhabited by Hegel's and Fukuyama's Last Man, healthy, well fed, and pampered by technology. The other, larger, part is inhabited by Hobbe's First Man, condemned to a life that is 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (3)

The Army's reputation is that we are outside the limousine. But are we? Our heritage is one of radical, incarnational Christianity. We threw our lot in with Hobbe's First Man and lived and worked and died along side him. Now?

It has long been a personal fascination that people are willing to die for something. In travelling it's been a personal habit to visit war cemeteries and read the headstones of the fallen- their names and ages. Invariably tears come when there's a stone marking the grave of a man my own age as I stand and attempt to recreate in my mind the horror of the battle: standing in a trench in Gallipoli, on the fields in Athens, on a hill in Volgograd (Stalingrad).

There are currently 43 wars raging throughout the globe. Around the world people continue to fall. Why? What is so important to them that they are willing to die for it? The question becomes personal and circular: what am I willing to die for? What is of such importance to me that I am convinced I would never entertain notions of compromise? For what am I willing to be martyred?

These questions the Army will have to ask itself in the coming years. What is it we hold to be essential? What are we willing to abandon in order that the key essential will remain clear, vibrant, and strong? What is it for which we are willing to draw a line in the sand and to state with an unequivocal voice that this line will remain inviolate, that this line represents something so precious that no matter who wields power- whether by chequebook or weapons- we will not yield.

There is an urgency to this exercise. Empires always crumble at the edges first. Long past the time for the onset of decrepitude, the centres of empires display gaudy vigour, typical of life support and a guilty conscience. I have seen this firsthand as I witnessed the dissolution of the Communist Empire in the former

Soviet Union. And it is the same whether the empire is that of western civilisation (well beyond its appointed hour of bed rest) or the empire of The Salvation Army, where decision making and control is gathered to the centre while the edges begin to crumble.

This is especially pertinent with regard to our Salvation Army empire which needs to be fighting a guerrilla war on a world-wide battlefield- on an international basis, yet stubbornly clings to a standing Army model with resulting unwieldiness and inflexibility. Catherine Booth may have read and studied Clausewitz, but we need to study Sun-Tzu. We continue to franchise, and refuse to customise. The borders are crumbling while we array ourselves in parade uniform and practise our drills.

The fallow years are coming. The years of plenty- plenty of peace, prosperity, understanding, control- are exhausted. The edges of our civilisation are crumbling. The gangsters are breaking pieces off the rim and as they move closer to the centre we will be shocked from the numbness of our lives. We will be forced to make decisions, take action and draw lines in the sand to mark the limits of our endurance.

For The Salvation Army, unless the clarification of our key essential has been conducted and the steps taken to ensure a bedrock understanding about who we are and what we do, we will fall as swiftly as Rome. No one willingly dies for a lie. Every soldier who dies in battle (voluntarily that is, and we are a volunteer Army, notwithstanding Bramwell's famous exclamation) is convinced of the rightness of his cause. Battle effectiveness needs to be preceded by clarity of purpose- a definition of the essential. A readiness to declare to the opposing power, in unequivocal terms, that yielding on the key essentials is not an option. How many of the Army's soldiers- officer and lay- have such a clarity of purpose about the mission of the Army and their role in that mission? How many are prepared to answer the bugle call to battle?

Because unless a majority of Salvationists fully understand, and fully subscribe to the key essentials of our Army- we face trouble. In parts of the world where the anarchy is advanced- the edges- Salvationists must even now make tough choices about what they, and the organisation they represent, will do. Will those local Salvationists have the courage to make the necessary changes? Will we? Or will we find that we have been so compromised by past alliances that we have no more choices? Will the renewal of the Army and the realignment of our movement with its key essentials have taken place to the necessary degree so that when the anarchy reaches us, we will survive in the face of raw power? Will the Army be prepared, to the point of loss- of liberty, funding, reputation, life- to confront this power, whether it be tabulated in an accounting ledger or carried with us with a whiff of cordite?

Power doesn't change. Up to this point in our history the Army had generally accommodated the power of money. It is orderly and clean but no less gentle. There are winners and losers. A new power- the power of the gun, of chaos, of anarchy- is rising. It is messy and dirty but no less gentle. There are winners and losers.

What do we believe? Where is our line in the sand? What are we prepared to die for?

Endnotes.

1. Paul Johnson, MODERN TIMES (Orion Books, 1983), pp47,48
2. Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon, 'On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict', INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, Fall 1991.
3. Robert D. Kaplan. 'The Coming Anarchy', THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, February, 1994.

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*Several of Paul's letters in the New Testament were intended to be read by other congregations for their own edification. This very early apostolic missive from William Booth to the comrades at Dunedin Hall serves a similar purpose. Booth instructs us in the one essential for success in soul-winning. Please remember that he writes a full generation before the Asuza Street Revival, which gave birth to the Pentecostal Movement. May his prayer for a hundred-fold increase in fruitfulness be realised in all of us today.
This was first published in The East London Evangelist, 1 April 1869. - S.C.*

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The Conquerors Column

The Pentecostal Baptism of the Holy Ghost

by William Booth

TO THE BRETHREN AND SISTERS LABOURING FOR JESUS in connection with the Dunedin Hall Christian Mission, Edinburgh
BELOVED FRIENDS Though I have not been privileged to see you in the flesh, yet I have heard with great thankfulness from time to time of your work of faith and labour of love: and I rejoice greatly in the abundant blessing granted to your labours, and bless God for every brand plucked from the everlasting through your instrumentality. I earnestly pray that you may be made a hundredfold more useful in the future than you have been in the past. The work in which you are engaged is the most important that can engage the attention or call forth the energies of any being...

Success in soulwinning, like all other work, both human and divine, depends on certain conditions... If you want to succeed you must be careful to comply with these conditions... I desire to give a few brief practical hints...And, first and foremost, I commend one qualification which seems to involve all others. That is, the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost. I would have you settle it in your souls for ever this one great immutable principle in the economy of grace, that spiritual work can only be done by those who possess spiritual power. No matter what else you may lack, or what may be against you, with the Holy Ghost you will succeed; but without the Holy Spirit, no matter what else you may possess, you will utterly and eternally fail.

Many make mistakes here. Aroused by the inward urgings of the Holy Spirit, they endeavour to comply with the call which comes from the word and the necessities of their fellow men; but being destitute of this power, they fail, and instead of going to the Strong for strength, they give up in despair. Again aroused, again they resolve and venture forth, but having no more power than before, they are as impotent as ever. And fail they must, until baptised with power from on high. This I am convinced, is the one great need of the Church. We want no new truths, agencies, means, or appliances. We only want more of the fire of the Holy Ghost. ...

O what zeal, what self-denial, what meekness, what boldness, what holiness, what love, would there not be? And with all this, what power for your great work? The whole city would feel it. God's people in every direction would catch the fire, and sinners would fall on every side. Difficulties would vanish, devils be conquered, infidels believe, and the glory of God be displayed...

You do desire to see signs and wonders wrought in the name of Jesus. To see a great awakening among the careless crowds around you.... This baptism then, is your first great need. If you think with me, will you not tarry for it? Offer yourselves to God for the fullness. Lay aside every weight... Hold on! Though your feelings are barren, your way dark, and your difficulties be multiplied, steadily hang on the word of God. Expect the baptism every hour; wait if he tarry. 'This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting'; and the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple.

I have more to say to you, but must wait another opportunity. Yours in the fellowship of the Gospel,

William Booth

(c) Renewal Journal #6 (1995:2), Brisbane, Australia, pp. 26-32.

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The Primitive Salvationist

History, Eternity, Memory

by Stephen Court

1. History belongs to the Intercessors.

History belongs to the intercessors. Right out of the blue the iron curtain fell with the bricks of the Berlin Wall. Few could predict that three generations of soviet communism would implode with little warning. However, multitudes of humble pray-ers, all around the world, were softening up the wall through effective intercession for years leading up to it.

In our city, the police corporal responsible for the programme aimed at curbing our Western Canada-highest auto theft rate won a North American award for the 69% drop over three years. Many applauded the signs, the increased awareness, the new penalties, and the emphasis on safety devices. However, the corporal credits the intercessors in churches of Williams Lake upon whom he called to pray for this problem. Many meet weekly in the City Hall council chamber to pray against this 'banner' crime for the city.

Unknown saints interceding on issues ranging from totalitarian regimes to small city safety are writing history right now. A review of the 20th Century will be determined by the people who prayed. Super-powers were quashed, habitual crimes erased. History belongs to the intercessors.

2. Eternity belongs to the Overcomers.

John records that they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Rev 12:11). The overcomers own eternity. They have overcome the devil and the world (see John 14:33b). Under the blood of Jesus, testifying to His power, not being in love with themselves but being willing to die for Jesus, these saints were conquerors. They literally made eternity. Not only did they get to heaven themselves, but they stocked heaven with the redeemed. They lived to win souls. When we get to heaven we will see a bunch of furniture rearranged because the overcomers kept adding reservations to the accomodations list? They struggled with their lifeblood. Eternity belongs to the overcomers.

3. Memory belongs to the Individual.

It doesn't matter how great the Christian Church has been. It doesn't count that The Army has won millions of victories over the years. William Booth's and Billy

Graham's triumphs are one thing. The success of various strategies and moves of God is another. General Rader and Phil Wall are winning some big battles. But none of this stuff will be in YOUR memory for ALL OF ETERNITY. Sure, heaven is going to be sensational. But how are you going to be remembering earth? With a few lame attempts to tell someone about Jesus? Or, with movie reels worth of footage featuring you in the thick of the fight, helping Jesus transform rebellious sinners into heavenly neighbours of yours.

King Manasseh was a terrible king. He was evil on the scale of Hitler. The Bible records that he, "shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end" (2 Kings 21:16). Praise God, this evil man finally repented, humbled himself, and sought the favour of the Lord (2 Chron. 33:12, 13). And he died soon thereafter. Now, King Manasseh is up in heaven, just as surely as Daniel and Noah and Josiah. But he can't share their memories. His memories are of a disgusting, despicable, evil, wasted life.

Eternity is a long time to remember the times you failed to give it for Jesus, to stand up for the right, to put your neck and your name on the line, to testify for Christ, to actually express His love for those in need of it. Too long. However, I can't wait to put together a highlight film of victory after victory in the Holy Spirit's power. I want to invite those redeemed to join me with popcorn and the ultimate big screen flat tv to watch them getting saved because I was obedient. I'll never forget those moments.

Do you want to make history? pray. Become an intercessor. Ask God to give you a heart for the 10/40 Window and for the neighbours through the window across the street. And then wear your knees out.

Do you want to make eternity- fight fight fight. Don't be in love with yourself. Wake up each day and sign your life over to Jesus. Trust Jesus and keep fighting like a maniac.

Do want to have some sensational memories for heaven? Don't wait until it's too late. Only you can make your memories. Start today!

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Send the Fire

A Manifesto of Aggressive Christianity

by John Norton

Christianity in the twenty-first century will be divided into camps, much as it is now. The lines however will not be drawn as they have been. We will and even now are turning from internal issues such as denominationalism to external issues such as inter-faith relations and cultural relevance. We are no longer the big fish in our little pond but have swum into the ocean of plurality. All around us are new challenges: secularism, eastern religions, disparity of wealth and power, Islam, nationalism, and a hundred other competing ideologies and materialisms. Christianity is about to be challenged on a scale that threatens its very existence. The only answer is a strategic plan, taking us back onto the offensive, to claim back not just the ground lost but to finish off the war once and for all.

There are and will be the conservatives who retreat intellectually and socially into a self-preservation mode. There are and will be the liberals who attempt to engage the world but in the process lose their distinction as recognizable Christians. The Salvation Army, with its military structure and historic assertiveness, stands a chance of making it through the coming storm. An aggressive form of Christianity is the only way forward in attempting not simply to survive but to thrive and convince the world of the truth.

A REAL, LIVING, TRIUMPHING RELIGION

Most people would not place the words aggression and Christianity in the same sentence. In our pop usage of these terms, we might pause to ask ourselves what hate has to do with love or violence with peace? Yet we miss the very essence of Christianity with this kind of thinking. The mistake of embracing a passive and unaggressive Christianity can lead only to either the fearful head-in-the-sand conservatives or the compromised liberals. Neither of these mutated forms of Christianity will survive the next century, both will be swept aside.

Catherine Booth wrote a book in 1880 which she titled *Aggressive Christianity*.

She wrote,

“Show the world a real, living, self-sacrificing, hard-working, toiling, triumphant religion, and the world will be influenced by it. But anything short of that and they will turn around and spit upon it.”

The days of turning around and spitting upon Christianity are over. We are entering the days of outright cleansing which threatens to wipe us off the earth. The world has measured us and Christianity has come up short. We are perceived to be at best lacking integrity and at worst totally irrelevant. We are not going to be spit upon so much as ignored. Nothing will spell our doom quicker. However, as always, those able to show the world a real triumphing Christianity will receive attention.

In this day and age I must be perfectly clear and say that an aggressive Christianity is not about a call to violence or hate. We step outside the way of Jesus the moment we entertain the possibility of these things. The importance of the goal never outweighs the importance of the means by which we get there. Aggressive Christianity has nothing to do with an abuse of power or people.

The reason we need to be aggressive is because the way of Jesus was the way of aggression. Mother Theresa was aggressive. William Booth was aggressive. Jesus aggressively defended his mission. He aggressively attacked the pharisees and demons. He aggressively went out of his way to meet the needs of people. He aggressively marched towards Jerusalem and his cross. He aggressively prayed with his heavenly father. Jesus aggressively died and rose again. He will return one day again to the earth, aggressively and in victory.

An aggressive Church will have to consider issues of social justice, evangelism, its priesthood, and its own nationalistic tendencies. These are but a few of the challenging questions that face the Church of the twenty first century.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice must be felt in our personal lives as well as in the lives of our organizations and churches. It is the flip side of social service. The former addresses the larger questions of politics and cause, the latter addresses the needs of the individual and attempts to meet needs. One works within the paradigm while the other changes the paradigm. Both sides of the same coin must be addressed by the Christian community. Actively meeting physical needs and caring for the hurting is certainly part of what it means to be an aggressive Christian. The danger of only doing this one service however is that we risk becoming part of the system that keeps the injustice in place. The rich and powerful, our benefactors, pay us to be their conscience and deal with their dirt, which is the human victims of their greed and injustice.

It will be hard for the Church, and especially The Salvation Army, to break out from the role of just being a band-aid applicator. The problem is that we will have to get involved in politics. That is messy. Yet it is in the tradition of the early Salvation Army to be involved in social issues. Today there are centres for alcoholics, homes for spent prostitutes, and feeding centres for the hungry, but we rarely attempt to get to the economic factors that feed these problems. We become good at giving emergency first aid but do not ever get to the real reason for the sickness. Somewhere along the line we are going to have to pay the price and become surgeons to cut out the cancer.

Today we have an officer giving out humanitarian aid to the Kosovan refugees in Yugoslavia, but where is the appointed commissioner to act as special envoy for the Salvation Army's peace proposal to end the war? We cannot just leave the politics to the politicians. The Church is going to have to get involved. We do have something to contribute and the world is looking to the Christian community to make a difference. Only in this two pronged attack, through social justice and social service, can we ever hope to solve the problems of this age.

One social justice issue facing the world in the next century will be the disparity in wealth distribution. Despite the large middle classes in Europe and North America, the vast majority of the world knows either the pain of poverty or the privilege of absolute wealth. Christians will have to find ways to live at a lower standard of consumption or just quit claiming the title Christian. On this single issue, perhaps more than on any other, Jesus will say to those who feel strongly that they have served him, "Away from me, I never knew you."

Wealth usually translates into power, and vice versa, especially in those parts of the world where democracy does not have a strong foothold. The wealthiest families go from generation to generation passing on not only wealth, and the ability to make more wealth, but also the power to rule. It cannot be ignored that the wealthy 3% in most developing countries live off the enslavement of the 97% who are destitute. Middle-classes of developed nations support the governments and institutions in developing nations that often enable the powerful few to dominate the many. The stock market is the means by which the middle classes contribute to the system of economic disparity by investing in corporations that exploit the poor in other nations. We need to invest but in companies that have integrity and then we need to hold these companies accountable.

Even in The Salvation Army there is the danger of allowing those with wealth to control and dictate the future. The recent 1999 High Council saw five men nominated for General, all originating out of developed nations, even though The Salvation Army in most prosperous nations is by and large diminishing or becoming an irrelevant social organization. The vast majority of salvationists now live in developing nations. Where were the Koreans and Kenyans, those territories where we have seen significant real growth in terms of conversions and soldier making? They are huge territories in terms of numbers of soldiers.

As Salvation Army self-denial funding decreases and special donations become the norm, the rich are going to increasingly be giving their money to projects of their own choosing. In many ways it will be better as donors will hold recipients much more accountable for what they receive. The laws of capitalism will begin to take over and do a better job at supporting success and getting rid of failure than headquarters' were ever capable. However, it also will have the effect of making dependent territories answerable not to a bi-partisan and independent IHQ but to a donor with his/her own special agenda. The control of The Salvation Army has the potential to turn from IHQ to the wealthiest territories. The danger

of financially dependent territories becoming the servants of financially independent territories is going to be a divisive issue in The Salvation Army in the next century.

The Church will have to get involved in the political arena. The separation of religion and politics has not worked because it will not. Quite simply, religious beliefs cannot be taken out of every day life. Religion does play a large role in a person, and that must and does reveal itself in our politicians. Perhaps the day will come when an active officer of The Salvation Army will be appointed to enter into politics by running for public office. Christians will have to have their own representatives in world legislatures. Non-involvement is far too easy. The Church of the twenty first century, in order to survive, will need to take that difficult path. The Church, and The Salvation Army included, will turn away from being apolitical and enter into the fray of public life.

The Salvation Army in this century has been strong in social service but weak in social justice, partly because we are no longer an aggressive Christian force. We no longer believe we are an army. We no longer feel comfortable with our militarism. If our title, The Salvation Army, has become a comfort word in western society, conjuring up images of plump little old ladies sipping hot tea, perhaps we should abandon it for something newer and more offensive! I once knew a leader tell his officers to avoid military terminology in their corps advertisements because it has the potential to offend and cause confusion. Yet at the same time he was ordering that every corps have the name Salvation Army on its signs and advertisements. He forgot that in that foreign land the name "Salvation Army" was not well known and therefore potentially the most offensive and easily misunderstood name we could have called ourselves. Let us either be a Salvation Army at war, with banners unfurled and risking at times being misunderstood, or let us agree to once and for all abandon the whole military metaphor. We could change our name to something less offensive like the "Church of Quiet and Peaceful People", and as ridiculous as that sounds it is what we often want people to hear when we use the term "Salvation Army".

EVANGELISM

In Western society there is developing a strong aversion to passing moral judgment. Increasingly it is politically and socially incorrect to comment on the lifestyle or beliefs of others. This has progressed rapidly in northern continental Europe to the point where most evangelical Christian leaders no longer feel it appropriate or possible to exercise moral discipline on their wayward members. A whole new generation is being raised in an environment where it is permissive to do just about anything as long as it does not directly hurt another. For the most part the entire Church has been affected . It is a spreading cancer on the face of Christianity and Western society.

I want to be clear here and point out that the issue which concerns me most is not so much one of morality but rather one of truth. The background behind this

cultural phenomenon has nothing to do with morality but begins with a desire to accept people unconditionally. The part of this that is most frightening is not the resulting moral slippery slope, although that itself can be dangerous, but the inability or unwillingness to distinguish between right and wrong. Truth is the victim. It no longer becomes possible in such a cultural context to do aggressive evangelism, for that would be telling someone else that their beliefs are wrong and that ours are right. Such obnoxious thinking would insult the sensibilities of those we are trying to reach. We would be accused of narrow mindedness, which in a liberal culture is worse than the plague itself.

Aggressive Christians are going to have to take a stand against this creeping secularism. Already it has a stronghold in the Christian community, and I fear, in The Salvation Army itself. There is a difference between right and wrong, truth and lies. There is a heaven to be won and a hell to be shunned. The gospel is right and all other religions are wrong. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is no compromise. This does not mean that we should not live in peaceful non-violent coexistence in so much as we are called to love others and show the world by our example that we are Christians. But it does mean that we are at war, and our war is every bit about the mind as it is about the body and soul. If the truth is offensive, then offensive we will be. This is the very essence of Christianity, a religious system based not on philosophical mush but on the historical fact of the death and resurrection of the Jesus Christ. We proclaim Christ and we proclaim him crucified. Let it offend. The Salvation Army and the Christian Church will not survive the next century if we do not first win the battle for truth.

Evangelism cannot be only so-called friendship evangelism or setting-a-good-example. People do not want to be awakened from their slumber and apathy. They do not want to know of hell and the joy of life in Jesus. Sin remains the great blinding mechanism by which much of the world is ignorantly darkened. People must be dragged into a relationship with Jesus. We must take our Christianity out to meet them where they are, which is very often on the television, internet, or restaurant. There will be cyber open air meetings in the future!

In the next century, competing belief systems will no longer be on the other side of the world. Through multi-religious cities and mass media, to name a few, the Christian war is coming to your doorstep. The era of missionaries journeying afar to pagan lands to bring the gospel is over. We are now in a time of jet-setting global competition. We are going to be challenged most strongly not by another religion, although I believe we have only just begun to experience Islam in full measure, but by an economically based secularism and shallow spiritual pluralism. Satan's strategy is to lull us into compromise and bring us to a middle ground, anywhere but on the side of the truth.

Christians are going to have to openly speak about what they believe. Our future depends on our ability to go on the offensive. Do you believe in God? Are you a Christian? Why not? What do you believe? Can I tell you about my experience with God? If you died tonight, do you think you would go to heaven or hell?

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

The concept of a professional clergy is dead. The paradigm has shifted and we are still holding onto our dignity and structure. One mistake of the Church today is in continuing to argue about issues that no longer matter: whether women should be ordained or about whether or not officers should be married to other officers. We are a half century behind when we continue on these topics of a different era. We need to just abandon this archaic form of religious patriarchy. Theologically speaking, the concept of ordination does not have a leg to stand on.

We are going to see an end to the term "para-church organizations" as they take over and become "Church" tomorrow. People are voting with their feet and joining those organizations that, among other things, have discarded a spiritual hierarchy. Today's believer is now educated and no longer needs the medieval model of someone ordering her spiritual experiences. It may have been appropriate to have a voice of authority in days when the average Christian could not read and had a life expectancy of 40. Those times are long over. What she needs and wants today is a community to walk beside her. She may at times ask for a guide and a friend, but not a priest. She knows that she has access to God directly and does not need a human intercessor.

There is still a place for full time ministry. Officers in The Salvation Army have a significant role in guiding the organization. They have and will continue to have tremendous spiritual influence upon their people. They will still be needed for that special function called leadership. They will not be seen however as better or above others. Claims of ordination, or a special gifting from God, reserved only for those wearing priestly collars or red epaulets will be mocked. The next century will see us enter into the reality of the New Testament priesthood of all believers - whether the Church wants it or not.

Authority will not be invested in rank or status. It will be given to those who earn it. The question will not be, What title do you have? but rather Who are you? What have you done? What kind of person are you?

INTERNATIONALISM

Nationalism and ethnicity is the destructive force that continues to divide Europe, Africa, and much of Asia. But flag waving patriots in the West are equally as guilty of thinking of their own nations as better than others. In an increasingly globalized society, the nation state is losing its influence. However ethnicity and racial distinctions persist. Christians are going to have to join together to show the world the one truly international group - the Church of Jesus Christ. Believers

everywhere are going to need to admit that their passport is not as important as their membership in the human race. And the same goes for their Church denomination.

Differences in salary and allowance among Christians from various parts of the world need to be aggressively re-allocated. Resources need to be shared. The world is one and we are not citizens of a nation but citizens of heaven and aliens in all these foreign lands. Today some officers in some parts of the world must beg (called selling the War Cry!) for their salary in order to feed their children, while officers in other parts of the world feel they need a second car because one is not enough. A failure of Salvationists to recognize themselves as part of a global Salvation Army, and a global Christian Church, is a condemnation for all of us.

Nationalism divides but internationalism unites. We will not all be the same but we will all be one. We must teach ourselves and the world that diversity is a strength. We must rejoice in our internationalism. We must negotiate our disagreements. And we must begin by recognizing that at present we do not all pull ourselves up to the negotiating table as equals.

George Scott Railton, the first internationalist of The Salvation Army, wrote,

*No home on earth have I, No nation owns my soul,
My dwelling place is the Most High, I'm under his control.
O'er all the earth alike, My Father's grand domain,
Each land and sea with him alike, O'er all he yet shall reign.*

In these words the Christian internationalist finds his anthem. Nationalism, the cause of so much pain this century, will surely be with us into the next if we do not fight against it. We must aggressively war against it, cut it out from our ranks, and then move out to capture and destroy it. We hold up only the Kingdom of God which is a kingdom of unity amid diversity. We must be careful in our calls for internationalism to not imply a call for others to simply adopt the dominant or first culture. We must all learn from one another. Let The Salvation Army be truly international and not an export of British or Western cultural and religious traditions.

What does all of this mean? Where are we heading into the twenty first century? We must recognize that only aggressive Christian organizations will have the possibility of surviving the apathy towards religion, the intensification of global capitalism, and the increase in world secularisation. It is necessary that we demonstrate to all a real, living and victorious Christianity. We must enter into social justice and make it the other half of our social service, engaging the world rather than retreating from it. We need to recognize our calling to be evangelists in a time in which it is socially inappropriate to tell others that their beliefs are wrong. We must be international in economic and politic, ever reminiscent of the

atrocities committed in the twentieth century in the name of nationalism. We seek first the Kingdom.

And again G.S.R.,

*With thee, the east, the west,
The north, the south are one;
The battle's front I love the best,
And yet: thy will be done.*

An aggressive Christian I will be. There is no other choice.

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Commissioner Wesley Harris (R) has been an officer since 1948. A journalist by training and an evangelist by calling, Commissioner Harris fused these two passions in service around the world, including commands in Scotland, New Zealand, and Canada and Bermuda territories. This article comes from one of his books, BATTLE LINES. - S.C.

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MISSION POSSIBLE: DEDICATION FOR MISSION

by Wesley Harris

Every organisation tends to ebb the lengthening shadow of its founder. Certainly, even after more than a century the Army still bears the mark of the dynamic personality of William Booth. HE was an activist and so are many of his followers. Of course, in our busyness it is important to bear two things in mind. It is not what we do but what we get done that counts. And we have to ask whether what we get done by the way of Christian service is of priority importance. Everything must be measured against the mission which is ours.

In 1 Kings 20:40 there is a little story about a man who was charged with keeping a prisoner safely. He allowed him to escape and in reporting this to the king he said, "While your servant was busy here and there the man disappeared." That can happen in pastoral ministry. While we are busy with this or that, some of the Lord's prisoners can escape from our care.

In all this ministry it is imperative that we keep a sense of priority and direction. As we think about dedication in mission there are three simple points I want to make. First of all mission should start in worship. What we have at the end of the Gospel of Matthew is really an account of the first commissioning or ordination service. Like so many spiritually significant events in the Bible it took place on a mountain. We can picture Jesus waiting for the disciples to arrive, maybe out of breath as they climbed the steep hill. In Matthew 28:17 it says, "When they saw Him they worshipped Him; but some doubted." The Scripture doesn't put haloes around the heads of the apostles. It doesn't pretend that they were other than faltering and fallible people. Paul Tillich has said that doubt is part of being a man, and who of us has not had to deal with a doubt even in the middle of a

sacred service? We believe that Jesus is worthy of all praise and honour and glory and we will be wise in mission if we start there and indeed finish there as well. During the crusades knights from Europe went to Palestine in order to liberate some of the holy places. It was sometimes customary for them, before going into battle to go to a church, kneel before the altar and offer their swords to God. Before we go into battle to win people to Christ we too should go to the sanctuary of worship and there offer the Sword of the Spirit which is delivered to us and pray that the Holy Spirit may arm us for battle.

Second, mission should be sustained by compassion. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul says, "Christ's love compels us..." But does it? Does the compulsion of compassion drive us to go the extra mile or indeed the extra many miles in order to bring a lost sheep into the fold? When I was young I used to hear some of the old spiritual warriors talk about a 'passion for souls'. I haven't heard that phrase for a long time. It seems to have gone out of vogue. But a passion for souls and a burning love for people is one of the greatest needs of the Church today. Love will help us communicate even with those who are culturally different from ourselves. When I was a young man I fell in love with an English girl - albeit one who was born in China. If I had fallen in love with a Finnish girl or a Dutch girl I'm pretty sure I would have found a way of communicating my feelings even though I was unable to understand either of the languages. If I had cared, I would have communicated - be sure of that! Of course, caring is costly. A detached and 'professional' approach is less likely to take a toll on the nerves. But if we are take Jesus seriously and seek to fulfill His mission then we will not be seeking a bypass road around Calvary or a discount off the cost of caring.

Thirdly, mission demands holy living. We can never separate the man or woman from the mission. What people are speaks louder than anything they say. We may be gifted wordsmiths, eloquent in our utterance but if people in the congregation know that they are dark holes and corners in our characters then our mission can hardly be effective. We have an awesome responsibility to live a holy life. As God's people we dare not fail. As Brindley Boon has written, "For Thy mission make me holy." That is vital. We know something of the havoc which has been caused by the misdemeanours of some prominent evangelists and on a lesser scale we have it in our power to wreak spiritual damage where we are. But by the grace of God that need not happen. By the transparent holiness of our lives we can commend the Gospel and commission committed to us.

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Phil Wall. Whether its the front page of national magazines or the back streets of the poorest districts, Phil is getting the Word out! One word describes Phil: compelling! He has tapped into the prophetic calling of the Booths. You'll never forget his preaching. His example is stimulating. Phil started the UK Mission Team, a model that is impacting the whole world in evangelism and training. Phil started ROOTS, the 3,000 strong annual conference that is bringing us back to the holiness-powered roots of primitive salvationism. Phil started eXtreme. Phil started MQ, (Mission Quarterly) the magazine that gives it to you straight from a salvo perspective. Phil started the 10/10 project, multiplying money to serve AIDS babies in Africa. Phil wrote "I'LL FIGHT!" his salvationist manifesto for world conquest. He preaches all over the world, seeing sinners saved, saints sanctified, and God glorified. - S.C.

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Feature Column

Belonging To Believe

by Phil Wall

'In terms of resources, religion is not very efficient; there's a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning' so says Bill Gates, the richest man in the world and the genius behind the Microsoft corporation. Regrettably, this attitude is often reflected by millions of people within our culture. Christian belief has become an arid collection of intellectual ideas, low on the priority list of those who are 'lost'. It has been relegated to the fringes of people's lives, becoming a purely private affair certainly not something that should interfere with their leisure-driven lifestyles. Why do people think like this? There are many reasons but I would like to focus on what I think is one of the primary causes: the crisis of 'belief'. This crisis is more specifically what we believe about belief. I fear that we have moved away from the correct biblical understanding of belief. When Jesus proclaimed, 'Repent and believe the good news!' (Mark 1:15, NIV) it involved much more than just affirming a set of intellectual statements.

To Believe is to Belong

The philosophical debate relating to the nature of belief is beyond the remit of this article but a couple of clarifying statements are a necessary foundation.

In biblical thinking belief is wrapped up in belonging. There is no belief outside this context. You find this illustrated in the New Testament church where to believe was to belong and to belong was to believe.

The separation of belief from the community to a set of individually held 'beliefs' is a concept that finds its source in secular philosophical thought and not biblical teaching.

If we accept these as true we will need to look at our evangelism and the process by which people come to faith. We have traditionally understood believing to be the doorway to belonging, but this is not the biblical picture. Effective evangelism will not just answer the intellectual questions but will give people the opportunity to belong to the community of the Kingdom. The traditional 'believe, being, behave' process of discipleship - where we first ask people to believe what we believe, then we allow them to belong, which in turn changes their behaviour - is not an adequate picture. Jesus seemed to work with a different model, following a 'belong, believe, behave' model. He initially asked the disciples to 'be with him' (Mark 3:14, NIV~), then, in that context, they came to believe and to behave differently.

They travelled their journey to belief in the context of belonging to a distinct community. Their 'Christianity' was more 'caught than taught' as they spent time with Jesus, listening, observing and acting. They 'tasted' truth in the person of Jesus and it was the 'belonging' that drew them to faith. Their 'belief' was not the doorway to belonging but rather the fruit of it.

If coming to faith was just about 'believing' certain facts Jesus' time would have been better spent setting up a world-wide network of colleges or even organising the angelic realm into a world-wide leaflet drop! Instead he created a community to 'flesh out' truth. John Stott states, 'True evangelism, evangelism that is modelled on the ministry of Jesus, is not proclamation without identification any more than it is identification without proclamation. Evangelism involves both together, Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the proclamation of God; in order to be proclaimed, however, the Word was made flesh.'

In a society where family and community life is breaking down, where the most feared disease is loneliness and where acceptance is a rare commodity, it is vital we rediscover this aspect of evangelism. The massive growth in some of the more 'off the wall' cults show clearly that it is not sensible 'belief' that draws people (have a look at Mormon belief!) but rather the strong sense of belonging that they provide. Os Guinness notes that many cults grow because they are strong at the point at which the church is often so weak, their expression of 'belonging'. We will continue to struggle to reach our society if we insist on confronting people with information about Jesus before we allow them to belong. Most people are not ready to tackle the big intellectual questions about faith, their focus being on the basic question of belonging somewhere. In light of this we may need to seriously rethink exactly what it is we are trying to achieve in our 'outreach'. I would like to suggest that we need to be finding more creative ways to enable people to 'belong', so that they might believe. In our corps programmes and personal lifestyles, how can we help people to belong?

Doorways to Belonging

I preach regularly at evangelistic meetings and I often begin by stating that every human being is on a spiritual journey. The only two questions that we can all ask

are 'Where are we on our spiritual journey?' end 'What does the next step need to be?' The issues of truth are addressed later but recognising the reality of the journey is important. For many people 'belonging' to a particular group is an important step on their journey.

Access Points

In his book *How Your Corps Can Grow* Commissioner John Larsson shows the need for a corps to have numerous 'open' groups. The diagrams below show the need to have numerous 'open' groups which allow people to belong to us and feel part of who we are. Corps A has few open groups, giving new people few options to belong, whereas Corps B has a lot of open groups providing plenty of opportunities for belonging. I feel one of the greatest challenges is for our music sections. They are often the primary social network in a corps yet are closed to all but soldiers. Maybe some creative thinking should be done as to how they can be more 'open' and accessible. The challenge is to provide as many access points for people as possible.

The John 4 Principle

One of the most powerful ways to give people ownership and a strong sense of belonging is to give them a role. One of the most powerful evangelistic phrases we can utter is, 'Can you help me, please?' We see Jesus applying such a principle with the woman of Samaria. Despite knowing this woman's background he asked for her help, 'Will you give me a drink?' (John 4:7, NIV). This achieved two things. Firstly it gave respect and value to this woman of disreputable social standing. Secondly it said 'you are needed and wanted, you have something to contribute'. Many of those outside the Church feel we don't respect them and certainly don't think they have anything to offer us. When we give someone a role we battle with prejudice and build bridges people can walk across. Working on the principle that our faith is more often caught than taught, giving people a job is a wonderful tool of outreach. The following are some very practical ideas how this could be done:

* *Social Action Programmes* - This is one of the things we are best known for and a great way to serve our communities. Draw together some key people to establish a Salvation Army Community Association which will monitor and respond to local needs. This could include representatives from existing housing and community associations. On a smaller scale our existing Red Shield Appeal and Christmas programmes give great opportunity to involve people.

* *Specialist Personnel* - Communities are full of people with special skills that could be utilised. I know of a corps where a local doctor was asked to come and address a parenting course. The possibilities are endless, from building maintenance to musical support. If you have no musicians why not advertise for them? What a great opportunity to be able to explain to people why we do what we do. If we can let someone who isn't a believer mend our windows why can't

they help us with our music? (I am not talking about handing out commissions, just utilising the skills people have.)

* *Educational Programmes* - Possibly controversial, but why can't parents and others help us with our education programmes? We would need to have some clear guidelines as to exactly what we wanted people to do, but can you think of a better way for a person to get into the Bible than by helping prepare for a lesson? The only limit to the possibilities for the above is our imagination, and in some cases specific rules and regulations. Try different ways of giving people a role, and consequently a sense of belonging.

* *Make the most of what we have* - A well-run cradle roll with good follow-up, regular information and lots of parties can provide a sense of belonging for young families who often feel isolated in communities.

* *Community Celebrations* - An opportunity to bring all the different groups that are connected to the corps together. Whether it be in the context of a picnic or a family fun-day, the process of bringing people together can deepen that sense of belonging.

* *Sold Patrol* - Moving into a new area can be an isolating experience. Dropping an information pack round soon after new residents move in can be an invaluable first contact, and a way to bring a sense of belonging.

These ideas are just the tip of a creative iceberg. The questions still remain, 'Do we help people belong?' and 'How could we do it better?' I believe that by applying the answer to these questions in our lives, corps and communities more people will 'catch' this infectious disease that we know as Christianity!

This article first appeared in MQ (Mission Quarterly) a publication produced by the UK territories Mission Team. MQ aims to inform, equip and resource Salvationists for mission and evangelism. An overseas subscription for MQ is £8 for 4 issues. Send your payment in pounds sterling (sorry we cannot take credit cards) along with your name and address to: Mission Team (MQ), The Salvation Army, 21 Crown Lane, Morden, Surrey SM4 5BY, England. Tel No: +44 181 288 1202 email: mq@mission-team.co.uk

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