

# **Journal of Aggressive Christianity**

**Issue 5, February-March 2000**

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## **Interview Exclusive with** **General Arnold Brown**

*General Arnold Brown was the eleventh world leader of The Salvation Army (1977-81). Prior to this position, General Brown was involved in innovative evangelical television and radio ministries in Canada back as far as the 1950's, before it was popular to do so. The General has always been an enthusiastic and captivating preacher and speaker, and is constantly in demand around the world even now into his 88th year.*

J.A.C.: For those who haven't read The Gate and the Light yet, please tell us about your background, how you came to know Jesus, and how you came to know The Salvation Army.

AB: I was led to Christ by my godly mother, and at her knee. During prayers she carefully explained the way of Salvation, and rather tearfully I joined her in singing an old chorus: "My sins rose as high as a mountain. They all disappeared in the Fountain. He wrote my name down for a palace and crown, Praise His dear Name I'm free, I'm free." And I was!

As far as The Salvation Army is concerned, I was born into it. My parents were officers. All my father's brothers and sisters were also officers. All but one married, which meant that when the family gathered in the home of my paternal grandparents there were 13 officers present in full uniform, all of them in charge of corps on the British Field. (Present as a young boy, I could be forgiven for thinking that everyone in the world was a Salvationist!) I can still hear that group singing the old hymns while gathered around the harmonium played by my father. The one unmarried aunt was the only woman officer ever to command the renowned Regent Hall Corps. She was the one who, knowing I had been "called," encouraged me to enter the College for Officer Training.

J.A.C.: You've been an innovator through your life, pioneering Radio and Television ministry, pace setting in Public Relations, and advancing administrative forms and function. What opportunities in the 21st century will open up to the Army, and how do you believe we should exploit them?

A.B.: I will not live through the 21st century, but I'm sure that there will be technological developments in the next 50 years that would startle me. Science has greatly improved man's lot, but the hungers of the heart have remained, and will remain. If The Army is sensitive to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, its ministry will be guided toward, and into, appropriate forms of adaptation. Even in a totally mechanized world, the human heart will be famished without the Bread of Life.

Salvationists of the far future, who will themselves also be engulfed in vast societal changes, can take comfort in the fact that it is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for ever." All I hope is that they will claim, and use, "the wisdom that cometh from above."

J.A.C.: What is the most significant part of your ministry today? Is it the writing, the preaching, the legacy, or something else?

A.B.: I still consider preaching to be a high honour, and though advancing years militate against regular "specialling," to occupy platform or pulpit and proclaim Christ as Saviour remains an appreciated privilege. Divested of administrative burdens I have had more opportunity for writing, and I remind myself that the printed word has the possibility of reaching greater numbers of people, and of outlasting by far the spoken word. Both preaching and devotional/inspirational writing require prayerful preparation, and this, in itself, as an exercise, is rewarding.

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

A.B.: That it remains a militant expression of the universal church of Christ in the world; that it will have a stronger voice on behalf of the suffering and the needy in the upper councils of legislation; that it will be acutely aware of societal changes as they are happening, and be imaginatively proactive. I dream of an Army that is rooted in tradition and flowering in contemporary relevance. I dream of an Army that increasingly makes an effective two-pronged thrust into humanity; on the one hand an unstoppable, vital, evangelical force, and on the other a compassionate movement dedicated to binding up the wounds of the world. I don't dream of "countless serried ranks" of Salvationists. A Gideon-Army can be victorious!

J.A.C.: You have written about recipients of the Order of the Founder in FIGHTING FOR HIS GLORY. Other than those worthies, who has been most influential in shaping you into who you are today?

A.B.: They are legion! Many "unknowns" as well as "the knowns" influenced my life for good. I was taught to appreciate good music by Jack Green, OF. I was taught the writing craft by Colonels Hawkins, Webb and Putt, under whom I worked. I was taught pragmatic leadership by Commissioner Wycliffe Booth during his 9-year stay in the Canada/Bermuda Territory. I was taught statesmanship by General Erik Wickberg. I am still teachable, and, hopefully, still learning! In my private, domestic world, my greatest "teacher" has been my wife, an unfailing example when it comes to living by high and holy principles.

J.A.C.: You are known as a widely read man. Which books have influenced you most?

A.B.: At the top of the list, of course, is the Bible. Next (and strange as it may seem) the dictionary! For literary style, Gibbons' "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." For character-sketching Tolstoy's "War and Peace." For information the 8 volumes of Will Durant's "History of Civilization." For the elements of effective preaching Dr. John Oman's "Concerning the Ministry" (a book I acquired before becoming an officer and which I've re-read many times). The foregoing comprise only a short, short list.

J.A.C.: Can you tell us of any memorable preaching you have heard, and what made it outstanding?

A.B.: As a youth, on a visit to London, England, I attended a summer series of sermons on the Gospel according to John delivered in the Westminster Chapel by the Rev. Campbell Morgan (1). His preaching affected me deeply, as did the preaching of Dr. W. E. Sangster of Westminster Central Hall. Both preached with a blend of scholarship and soul-winning passion. In Canada two outstanding preachers, both friends of mine and of The Army, are Dr. Leonard Griffith and Dr. John Gladstone. Both are now retired but still occupying pulpits throughout North America. Both are skilful users of illustration in a way that all of us could well emulate. So far as Army preachers (though he wouldn't use that term about himself) are concerned, General Albert Orsborn (with whom I traveled for some weeks as his ADC) could grip and move a congregation by his eloquence when dealing with a Calvary-related subject.

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

A.B.: To remember that "He's got the whole world in His hands." The confusion of the world, the decay of moral standards, the "inhumanity of man to man" in so many places, the decline in church attendance (which has to be balanced against an increased interest in things spiritual), could be fatally upsetting were it not for one's faith in God's omnipotence. I'm sure the Holy Spirit is reminding me of this when surprisingly often I hear in my head the song, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He cares for me."

J.A.C.: You have written of Canadian pioneers and Major Yin. Who are your own heroes?

A.B.: In first place, Jesus. After Him, the Apostle Paul. After Paul, all who are like him in endurance and sacrifice for the Kingdom's sake. Among them, in recent times, must be rated Major Yin Hung Shun, the last leader of The Salvation Army in China. The more I learned of his persecution and witness, the more towering a figure he became in my estimation, and the smaller I felt myself to be. In the book

I wrote about him, "YIN - The Mountain the Wind Blew Here," his spiritual greatness and heroism are conveyed, though perhaps inadequately.

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

A.B.: Apart from my own conversion and sanctification, watching the streams of people from varied cultural backgrounds making their way to the Altar, either seeking Salvation or in re-consecration, during the massive Centenary Congresses in London, in Kansas City, in Adelaide and in Paris.

J.A.C.: Please comment on the state of Aggressive Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How relevant is primitive salvationism?

A.B.: The dictionary defines "primitive" in its theological use as "adhering to strictly traditional interpretation of doctrine and Scripture." We live in New Testament times and I believe that the prayerful, habitual study of the New Testament will leave us in no doubt as to how to make relevant all we are and all we do in respect of our own times. One hopes that the 21st Century, now taking its first infant breaths, might be a century of global spiritual revival in the primitive sense that brought the early church into being. God grant that it may be so!

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

A.B.: Yes! See Song 810, verse 1.

March on, salvation soldiers,  
March on toward the fight,  
with Jesus as our leader,  
We'll put the foe to flight;  
In spite of men and devils  
We'll raise the banner high,  
For the day of victory's coming by and  
by.

(1): Dr. Campbell Morgan, in his youthful years, considered officership, but was dissuaded by Catherine Booth who felt that his extraordinary expository gifts marked him for a special ministry.

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## **The Man of the Century**

by Bramwell Booth

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Chief of the Staff of The Salvation Army, W. Bramwell Booth examined the world and the Army of his time and tried to anticipate what the new century would bring. Writing in the February 9, 1901 issue of *The War Cry*, he reminded readers about what would be crucial to every aspect of life in the new century. As we today ponder the direction to follow in the next century, Booth's words ring hauntingly true.

The new century will be marked by a universal demand for knowledge.

One of the most remarkable facts of the present time is the extraordinary thirst for knowledge all over the world. It is not confined to this continent or that. It is not peculiar to any special class or age. It is universal. One aspect of it, and a very significant one, is the desire for knowledge about life and its origin, the beginning of things, the earth and its creations, the work which we say God did, which He alone could do.

Oh, how men search and explore! How they read and think! How they talk and listen! Where one book was read when I was a boy, I should think that now a hundred are read; and where one newspaper was read then, now there are a thousand. Every man is an inquiry agent seeking news, information, instruction, seeking to know what will make life longer for him and his and, above all, to know what can make it happier.

Jesus is the Man for the new century. He has knowledge to give which no other can provide. I dare say that universities, schools, governments and a great press can do a good deal to impart knowledge of all sorts to the world. No doubt they can and will. But when it comes to knowledge that can serve the great end for which the very power to acquire knowledge was created namely, the true happiness of man – then, I say that Jesus is the source of that knowledge: that without Him it cannot be found or imparted and that with Him it comes in its liberating and enlightening glory.

Oh, be sure you have that! No amount of learning will stand you in its stead. No matter how you may have stored your mind with the riches of the past or tutored it to grapple with the mysteries of the present. Unless you know Him it will all amount to nothing. But if you know Him who is Life, that is Life Eternal.

Knowledge without God is like a man learned in all the great mysteries of light and heat who has never seen the sun! He may understand them perfectly – the laws which govern them, the results which follow them, the secrets which control their action on each other – all that is possible, and yet he will be in the dark. Knowledge and learning, education and wisdom – they are all possible to man. He may excel in them all and be a wonder to his fellows by reason of his vast stores of knowledge and be also marvelously adept in the theory of religion and yet alas may never have seen the sun – may still be in blackness of gross darkness, because he does not know Jesus, the light of the World, whom to know is life eternal.

## **Government**

Every thoughtful person who considers the subject must be struck by the modern tendency toward personal government all over the world. Whatever may be the form of national government prescribed by the various constitutions, when it comes to be carried into practice it tends to give power and authority to individual rulers. Whether in nations like England, where Parliament is really the ruling power; or in republics like France and the United States, where what are called democratic institutions are seen in their maturity; or in empires like Germany and Austria, the same leading facts appear. Power goes into the hands of one or two who, whether as ministers, presidents or monarchs, are the real rulers of the mass of the nation.

Perfect laws, liberal institutions, patriotic sentiments, though they may influence, can never rule people. A crowd of legislators, no matter how devoted to a nation, can never permanently control, though they may instruct it. Out of the crowd will come forth one or two, generally one commanding personality strong enough to stand alone, though wise enough not to attempt to do so, in whom will be focused the ideas and ambitions of the nation, to whom the people's hearts will go out and from whom they will take the word of command, and who will be their virtual ruler. It has ever been so. It is so today. It will always be so.

And as with nations so with individuals. Every man must have a king. Call him what we will, recognize him or not, be he a little or a great one, every man is the subject of some ruler. And this will, if possible, be more manifest in the future than in the past. Men will not be satisfied to serve ideas, to live for the passing ambitions of their day; nay? They will cry out for a king to follow and serve.

Am I wrong when I say that Jesus is the coming King? In Him are assembled all the great qualities which go to make the King of Men. And so the new century will need Him, must have Him; it cannot prosper without Him, the divine Man, for He is the rightful Sovereign of every human soul.



## **A New Force**

The new century will demand great moral forces as well as high ideals. Nothing is more evident than that the forms and ceremonies of religion are rapidly losing – even in nominally Christian countries – all real influence over the lives of men. The form of godliness without the power is only the greatest of all shams, but it is the most certain to be found out, and a large part of mankind is either disgusted or utterly estranged from real religion by theories and ceremonies which, though they continue to exist in shadow, have lost their life and soul.

For example, the old lie that money paid to the church can buy “indulgences” which will release men in the next world from the penalty of sin committed in this, and the miserable theory which made God the direct author of eternal damnation to those who are lost, are among the theories which, though they are here and there, have long ago influence over men's hearts or a there are multitudes who still conform to the outward ceremonies of confirmation upon those salvation from sin or separation from the world that ceremony has absolutely no influence whatever, although, for custom's sake, they submit to it.

But a greater danger than this lies in the fact that it is possible to hold and believe the ignorant of its power. Sound doctrine will, of itself, never save a soul. A man may believe every word of the faith of a Salvationist, and yet be as ignorant of any real experience of religion as an infidel or an idolater. And it is this merely intellectual or sentimental holding of the truth about God and Christ, about holiness and Heaven, which makes the ungodly mass look upon Christianity as nothing more than an opinion or a trade, with which they have no concern.

The new century will demand something more than this. Men will require something beyond creeds, be they ever so correct, and traditions, be they ever so venerable, and sacraments, be they ever so sacred. They will ask for an endowment of power to grapple with what they feel to be base in human nature, and to master what they know is selfish and sinful in their own hearts

And right here The Man for the Century comes forward. The doctrine of Jesus is the spirit of a new life. It is a transforming power. A man may believe that the American republic is the purest and noblest form of government on the earth, and may give himself up to live and fight and die for it, and yet be the same man in every respect as he was before; but if he believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and gives himself up to live and fight and die for Him, he will become a new man; he will become a new creature. The acceptance of the truth, and acting upon it in the one case, will make a great change in his manner of life – his conduct; the acceptance of the truth, and acting upon it, in the other, will make a great change in the man himself – in his character. Again I say, this is what we shall need for the new century. Not good laws only, but the power to observe them. Not beautiful and lofty ideals merely, but the power to translate them into the daily practice of common lives. Not the glorious example of a pure faith

merely, but the actual force which enables men to live by that faith amid the littleness, depression, contamination and conflict of an evil world.

### **Mankind's Most Enduring Fact**

The new century will demand an atonement for sin. The consciousness of sin is the most enduring fact of human experience. From generation to generation, from age to age, amidst the ceaseless changes which time brings to everything else, this one great fact remains, persists – appears with men in the cradle and goes with them to the tomb; without regard to race, language or creed it is ever with us – the condemning consciousness of sin. This robbed Eden of its joys, makes life a round of labor and sorrow, gives Death his terror and makes Hell a place of torment– for the consciousness of sin will be “the worm that never dies.”

All attempts to explain it away, to modify its miseries, to extract its sting – whether they have come from the party of unbelief or of education or of amusement – have greatly failed. No matter what men say or do to get rid of it, there it is – staring them in the face! Whether they look amongst the most highly civilized peoples or amongst the lowest savages; whether they look into the past history of mankind or into its present condition, there is the stupendous fact of sin, and there is the incontrovertible fact that everywhere men are conscious of it.

It is going to be so in the new century. If God, in His mercy, allows the families of men to continue during another hundred years, this great fact will stand out in the forefront of life. Sin will still be the skeleton at every feast, the horrid ghost haunting every home and every heart, the specter, clothed with reproaches, ever ready to plunge his dripping sword into every breast.

Sin. The world's sin. The sin of this one generation. The sin of one city. The sin of man – my sin! Ah, depend upon it, the next century will cry aloud, “What shall be done with our sin?”

Oh, thanks be to God, there is an atonement? The Man of whom I write has made a propitiation for ours sons, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. He stands forth the Only Savior. None other has ever dared even to offer to the sin – stricken hearts of men relief from the guilt of sin. But He does. He can cleanse. He can pardon. He can purify. He can save. He has redeemed.

Will you join in our great world mission of making that atonement known? Will you turn your back on the littleness, selfishness and cowardliness of the past, and arise in the strength of the God Man, to publish to all you can reach, by tongue and pen and example, that there is a sacrifice for men's sins – for the worst, for the most wretched, for the most tortured? As you pass the portals of the new century, and set your face with the high resolve toward to unknown years, will you take your stand with The Man for All Ages and let this be your

message, your confidence, your hope for all people – :Behold the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world?”

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## **Sanctified Realism**

by Joseph Smith

Captain Joseph Smith has served in Russia for the past six years. He currently is the leader of The Salvation Army for the Russia Northern Region, residing in St. Petersburg with his wife and two daughters. He can be contacted by e-mail at [regional@salvationarmy.spb.ru](mailto:regional@salvationarmy.spb.ru)

As an Officer in The Salvation Army I am trying to find an alternative to the way of the idealist or the way of the pragmatist. My reading of Scripture and my experience as a Christian both tell me that neither of these attitudes is adequate to my responsibilities as a Salvation Army Officer. For example, when I seriously look at the life of Jesus recorded in the Bible I see none of the idealists' narrowness and indifference to the reality of our personal fallen-ness and the social, political, and economic factors (not to mention diabolical factors i.e. those originating emanating from evil/satanic influence) which limit human potential in our fallen world.

When I think about the number of officer I know who have resigned their Commissions I have to conclude that many them were idealists in the above sense. Perhaps we need to help our cadets to more clearly think through their approach to Ministry. To see it as much more of a dynamic moment by moment walking in the Spirit rather than the striving to achieve a predetermined set standards and levels of achievement? Please understand that by this I do not mean the adoption of a Situational Ethics approach.

On the other hand when I seriously look at the life of Jesus in the Bible I also perceive that while his activities, teaching and approach to situations were very goal directed they were not simply targeted at what was achievable, in the way that pragmatists' would have been. For example by accepting the temptation to jump off the Temple he could have arguably made a much greater impact in wooing over the religious and political leaders of the day. By turning the stones in the desert into bread and feeding the countless hungry poor people he could have made a much greater impact on the ordinary folk of the that day. And by accepting the temptation to simply set up an earth - based kingdom under Satan he could have brought about a great number of very useful benefits in the way society, economics, politics, and personal relationships were manifested. But he decisively rejected all of these. In doing so he rejected the way of the pragmatist as I would understand that term.

My experience within officership and before this as a soldier of the Salvation Army is that the officers I least want to emulate are those who have lost their Vision and their faith in the God who intervenes in the lives of His children and Church and who promises to Act to bring about His will in this world. They appear to have simply become managers of resources (people, time, money, things) and people persuaders, in order to achieve what can be achieved without needing to ask God for His intervention. They can be very effective in producing visible results but one has to seriously question whether such results really mark any real growth in the Kingdom of God.

So what is left if idealism and pragmatism are inadequate for me as a Salvation Army officer?

I suggest a possible third way, which I called "sanctified realism". I am still at the beginning of my journey in understanding what this means in practice. As a starting point I outline here a few of the contours of this idea as it is beginning to take shape for me.

1. Sanctified Realism means operating in full recognition of the "here and now", in all it's fallen-ness and corruption around us and within us and at the same time not allowing the hopelessness of this to determine our attitudes. Rather we should "keep our eyes fixed on Jesus" and all the resources, promises and potential that are available through him to his followers.

2. Sanctified Realism brings not only hopefulness in an apparently hopeless situation but also "motivation to act decisively" in Christ's name. Following the example of Jesus we will not be overwhelmed by the size of the task before us.. But keeping the ultimate victory of God's Kingdom (rule) before us we will be empowered to behave both proactively and strategically.

3. Furthermore Sanctified Realism means not only hope, and motivation to act decisively but also confidence that our Gracious, all-powerful God will make up for our deficiencies if we remain true to our Mission. Jesus demonstrated this so many times and our history as a movement has proved this to us so many times that I hope you can accept this without me filling lots of pages giving examples of this.

4. Sanctified Realism helps us understand that the things our five senses can perceive are only part of the whole picture: That there are dimensions and outcomes within the outworking of Gods plan which are just as certain as the 'facts' which our five sense can verify, but which we can only apprehend by faith. This helps us to cope with the truly awful knowledge of the dire consequences of sin in this world by reminding us that this world is only temporary stage in the eternal existence of those who find Salvation through Christ.

5. Sanctified Realism helps us to have courage to do what is right, even if it is unpopular or leads to negative consequences for us. This is because we recognise that while others have real power to produce harm towards us, we also know by faith that Truth will win in the end and we know by faith that God will not let his Plan of Redemption be thwarted.

6. Sanctified Realism means we will value our traditions and distinctives as a cherished part of our identity as a group and perhaps some of them are still helpful in assisting us to complete the tasks we have been given by God, but we will not value these traditions and distinctives above the importance of completing our Mission. Our eleventh doctrine reminds us that there will come a day when all of our distinctives pass away without any regret on our part. It also reminds us that the consequences of us failing in our Mission will persist forever in terms of countless numbers of souls who are lost forever.

7. Sanctified Realism will make us much more sensitive to our changing world and consequently more responsive to our changing Mission Field. We will praise God for the past, but recognise that we are called to "serve the present age".

Idealism tells us to keep aiming for the standard we have set regardless of success or failure or other reality based considerations. Pragmatism tells us to concentrate merely on what is achievable in the short time in our present assignment or to think about our careers or what others may think about what is happening.

Sanctified Realism tells us that God knows our weaknesses and sinfulness and yet in His grace He still chooses to use us! Sanctified Realism tells us that the Salvation Army world is longing to see a spiritual revival. Sanctified Realism tells us they know this will mean calculated risks and they want us to have courage to take those calculated risks for the sake of the Kingdom. Sanctified Realism tells us that God wants us to make a real and eternally significant difference!

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## **Sex with Hagar**

by Stephen Court

No, this is not going to be rated 'R'! You can all read it - it'll even pass the editorial censor! This IS about having sex with Hagar though.

Like a steamy A&E BIOGRAPHY, things started off well for Abe. God promised to bless his socks off. Abe was going to become the father of a great nation that would bless the world. He would have as many descendents as there are stars in the sky! And God did not stop there! He promised Abe and his progeny a great land in which to live (known from then on as the Promised Land!). What promises! What a sensational God, who cares so intimately about details in our life, and gives so generously, even when we don't deserve it (which is always!)

Do you remember what happened next? Abe and Sarah got out of bed the next morning, after a night lost in intoxicating dreaming of the ramifications of these promises, and looked in the mirror! What stared back at them were two wrinkly old faces. This couple was way too old to have a baby- Sarai, anyway.

How was God going to fulfill His promises to them of all these generations of descendents if they could not even start the ball rolling with a kid of their own?

Abe and Sarai mulled over this one for awhile. They considered making their servant an heir, but God wouldn't have that. They probably thought about adopting- no good either. It seemed clear they had only one option left. Sarai rolled over one morning and jiggled Abe awake: "Go sleep with my maidservant? Abram agreed with what Sarai said (Genesis 16:1-2).

And that was that.

WHAT WAS WHAT? She told her husband to go have sex with Hagar? And he agreed? What were they thinking?

Well, how am I supposed to know? What can I say to you to explain that silly, crazy, doubting behaviour? It's brutal! Pathetic! It makes for popular TV episodes, but? How could two sane adults, one of whom is the father of our faith, act with such absence of sense?

God's made promises to us, some general, and others specific. Let me tell you, sometimes it's a pretty big stretch to think that God's going to be able to pull them off! So, what we normally do, is help God come through on His promises. We take things into our own hands and manipulate circumstances and situations to help God so that the promises will come true.

We have sex with Hagar.

We're no better than Abe.

Why do we do it? Blatantly, we don't believe God. Sarai was convinced she was too old to have a kid. She laughed at God's prophesy. Sure, God is able to create the universe, He's up to maintaining the intricate balance that allows life to persist, but He probably can't keep His word in MY situation.

Don't be too quick to jump in and say, 'that's not me- I'd never do that!' You'll be slipping into Sarai's failure. She topped it all off by lying to God and denying her disbelief!

And think for a second about the consequences of having sex with Hagar. For Abe it meant messed up fellowship with his wife, fractured family relations (especially once the 'promised son' arrived), and much regret. Messed up fellowship, fractured relationship, and much regret are things we'd all rather avoid.

We've probably all done it- had sex with Hagar. And it's not satisfying. It doesn't work. When we take God's things into our own hands we're guaranteed to mess up. Let's stop having sex with Hagar and start relying on God to fulfill His own promises.

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## Daniel: Dead Meat or Dead Right

### Part 3: The Writing on the Wall

#### Daniel 5

by Chick Yuill

Major Chick Yuill recently took leadership of the Manchester Divisional of The Salvation Army in England. He is an internationally known author and speaker.

Time flies, as they say!

And it's flown since we last visited Daniel.

You'll remember that he and Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego went into exile in Babylon as teenagers.

In the year 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar was king.

The events of chapter 5 took place in 539 BC over 60 years later - and a great deal has happened in the Babylonian Empire.

**NEBUDCHADNEZZAR** was succeeded by his son **EVIL-MERODACH** in 561 BC

He lasted only a couple of years before he was murdered by **NERGAL-SHAREZER**

He in turn succeeded by his son who reigned only a few months before himself being murdered by **NABONIDUS**

**NABONIDUS - the last king of Babylon and another son of Nebuchadnezzar - spent a lot of his time on foreign military expeditions trying to shore up his failing empire**

**That for many years caused some scholars to say that the story of Belshazzar was an invention since there never was a king Belshazzar of Babylon**

**But more recent discoveries have made it clear:  
Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus  
Reigned in Babylon as his regent**

That's why the record is seen to be absolutely accurate when Belshazzar promises his wise men that anyone who can interpret the letters on the wall will be third ruler in the kingdom

But we're getting ahead of ourselves...

This is one of the great dramatic stories in the Bible  
And like all great dramas it not only tells us a story from a bygone age  
It tells us about our own time and our own lives.

#### The party at the palace

*King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.*

*So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.*

*As they drank the wine they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.*

*Daniel 5:1-4*

#### There's nothing wrong with parties

Sometimes I've heard preachers preach as if parties were wrong  
The good news is there's nothing wrong with parties.  
Jesus loved two things above everything else - people and parties  
He turned funerals into parties  
He turned water into wine  
There's nothing wrong with parties  
The question is Why are you holding the party?

#### A celebration of a great event

That's good, But this is a party for another reason

#### An evasion of the big issues

The Babylonian Empire is in its last throes  
But this party is just one more attempt by Belshazzar to evade the truth that's all around him  
It's not unlike the culture of the closing moments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

*Family of four watching TV*

*Mom and Dad sat on the couch*

*The little girl tucked in between them and the little boy sat on his dad's knee*

*The artist has drawn it as if he was stood behind the TV looking at the family*

*The light of the TV is casting their shadows on the wall.*

*There's only one unusual feature*

***There are no heads, no faces***

**So much of the entertainment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is an evasion of the issue**

**But back to this party**

**It's lethal cocktail**

***Arrogance***

**Belshazzar thinks nothing can touch him**

**City wall built of brick**

**300 feet high**

**15 miles square**

**wide enough for 4 chariots to travel abreast on the top of this wall**

**in other words, the size of Californian freeway!**

**Supplies of grain and water sufficient to last for several years**

**Canal had been dug from the Euphrates river and flowed right thro the city**

**How like the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

**Our technologocial wizardry**

**More micro processing power in my lap top than all the computers that**

**landed the first man on the moon.**

**The man who invented the word DIST**

During the Battle of the Wilderness in the Civil War, Union general John Sedgwick was inspecting his troops. At one point he came to a parapet, over which he gazed out in the direction of the enemy. His officers suggested that this was unwise and perhaps he ought to duck while passing the parapet.

*"Nonsense," snapped the general. "They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist--." A moment later*

***Sedgwick fell to the ground, fatally wounded.***

***Alcohol***

**They're drinking the wine at this party!**

**When you mix the power of alcohol with the weakness of human beings -  
you never know what will happen next.**

**Marijuana, crack cocaine, all the designer drugs**

**I chaired a meeting in inner city Bristol where the senior police officer  
present said:**

**"If alcohol was invented today it would be a prohibited drug'**

**I sat in the highest court in England and heard the judge say that in 90% of  
the cases alcohol was a major contributing factor.**

Audacity

Belshazzar takes the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather, had  
captured from the temple in Jerusalem  
An act of startling audacity  
It was a challenge to the God of Israel.  
Now isn't that like so much of 20<sup>th</sup> century culture  
Get a little more audacious Push the limit  
Let's see if we cannot do just a little more to shock people  
It is invariably a sign of a culture in terminal decline

Occult

Then they worshipped the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood  
and stone  
A world that rejects God does not choose atheism  
It chooses false gods  
That's why in our sophisticated, technological, computerized age we have  
seen an upsurge in occult activity  
From witches to ouija boards  
From magic to freemasonry  
From horoscopes to Hallowe'en  
From silly superstitions to serious spiritualism  
From trendy new age personalities to old style eastern gurus  
There's a party at the palace of the dying 20<sup>th</sup> century and it's turning ugly  
and dangerous

The writing on the wall

*Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the  
plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king  
watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so  
frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.  
The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to  
be brought...but they could not read the writing or tell the king what  
it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his  
face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.  
Daniel 5:5-9*

A dramatic turn of events  
Its an orgy of Babylonian drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll  
It's the mother of all parties  
Until...

Reality breaks through

The hand writing on the wall  
Through the alcohol-induced haze Belshazzar sees something that sobers  
him up quicker than a vat of coffe could ever have done

A terrible reality has broken through  
The phrase has come into the language  
The Littleton massacre has been America's writing on the wall  
And always the same result  
*Festivity breaks down*  
Celebration becomes confusion  
Belshazzar trotted in the wise men to answer but they're totally confused  
Newsweek May 3, 1999  
Cover: Photo of four teen age girls holding each other in grief  
With the banner headline: WHY?  
Inside the terrible events of that tragic day are presented chronologically  
and diagrammatically  
But no-one can explain it  
They've got photographs of human brains  
They've got an article by the father of a kid who went on a shooting spree  
But like the Babylonian gurus they don't know why

The man for the moment

*The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall.  
O King, live for ever. Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have intelligence, insight and wisdom like that of the gods...Call for Daniel and he will tell you what the writing means.  
Daniel 5:10-12*

Enter Daniel  
Or rather the queen mother - Nebuchadnezzar's wife  
She remembers Daniel  
Probably half forgotten by the present regime  
And look how she describes him  
*...who has the spirit of the holy gods in him...*  
*filled with the spirit*  
when the party stops and the writing's on the wall  
the world needs men and women filled with the Spirit of God.  
But I want you to hear this  
God does not fill us with His Spirit primarily so that we can have a great  
*experience*  
God fills us with His Spirit so that can be an *example* to the world of how  
God means us to live.  
God fills us with His Spirit so that we can give an *explanation* to the world  
of the things God wants us to know  
God fills us with His Spirit so that the world can hear his voice.

We need to know the language of God and the language of men

Faithful to the Lord

Daniel now old, thrust aside, but faithful  
This is a message young adults need to hear  
It isn't all going to be glamorous  
And you're not always going to be young  
And you're not always going to be in IMPACT  
And Daniel's faithfulness is seen in his

Loyalty

All thro the years he has been loyal to God  
Even when he has been out of favor.

Integrity

***Then Daniel answered the king, 'You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards for someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.***

***Daniel 5:17***

The man who would not eat the king's food is not about to accept his favors of high political office.

Some people lose their idealism as they get older

Don't lose yours.

Remember, people don't really change when they get old.

They just get more like what they've always been.

***1959 Ted Williams of Boston Red Sox was the highest salaried sportsmen in America eraning \$125,000 a year. But he was suffering from a pinched nerve in his neck and had not had a great season. For the first time in his career he hit under .300 and only ten home runs. The next year the Red Sox offered him the same contract. He refused to sign until they gave him the maximum pay cut allowed – 28%. 'They were offering me a contract I didn't deserve. He took a paycut of \$35,000!***

The word of the Lord

Principles

***Daniel first tells Belshazzar how God raised up his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar and then humbled him when he became arrogant  
Then he speaks the terrible words:  
But you have not humbled yourself...instead you have set yourself up against the God of heaven...therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.***

Prophetic

***This is the inscription that was written***

***Mene mene tekel parsin***

***Mene = numbered God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end***

***Tekel= weighed You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting***

***Peres=divided Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians***

The enemy at the gate

***That very night Belshazzar king of the Babylonians was slain and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of 62***

## ARROGANCE

In 1969, in Pass Christian, Mississippi, a group of people were preparing to have a "hurricane party" in the face of a storm named Camille. Were they ignorant of the dangers? Could they have been overconfident? Did they let their egos and pride influence their decision? We'll never know.

What we do know is that the wind was howling outside the posh Richelieu Apartments when Police Chief Jerry Peralta pulled up sometime after dark. Facing the Beach less than 250 feet from the surf, the apartments were directly in the line of danger. A man with a drink in his hand came out to the second-floor balcony and waved. Peralta yelled up, "You all need to clear out of here as quickly as you can. The storm's getting worse." But as others joined the man on the balcony, they just laughed at Peralta's order to leave. "This is my land," one of them yelled back. "If you want me off, you'll have to arrest me."

Peralta didn't arrest anyone, but he wasn't able to persuade them to leave either. He wrote down the names of the next of kin of the twenty or so people who gathered there to party through the storm.

They laughed as he took their names. They had been warned, but they had no intention of leaving.

It was 10:15 p.m. when the front wall of the storm came ashore. Scientists clocked Camille's wind speed at more than 205 miles-per-hour, the strongest on record. Raindrops hit with the force of bullets, and waves off the Gulf Coast crested between twenty-two and twenty-eight feet high.

News reports later showed that the worst damage came at the little settlement of motels, go-go bars, and gambling houses known as Pass Christian, Mississippi, where some twenty people were killed at a hurricane party in the Richelieu Apartments. Nothing was left of that three-story structure but the

foundation; the only survivor was a five-year-old boy found clinging to a mattress the following day.

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We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. A. Lincoln, Proclamation of a day of National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, 1863

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## **Jesus Purposed Ministry**

by Michael Drew

### Model for Ministry - Jesus Purposed Ministry

I have a dream. “I can see God saving thousands and thousands of people from the Australian community through the ministry of the Salvation Army. I can see a vital and active army of people wholeheartedly reaching out in love and service to a hurting, lost community. A “Salvation” army that doesn’t consider the cost to itself but is willing to do whatever it takes to help people find true value and meaning in relationship with Jesus. An army which, saturated with the values of God’s kingdom, drives away hopelessness and despair and provides a ‘Safe Haven’ to which people can run and find God’s love manifested in our faith and hope. I can see our Sunday services packed with people wanting to find answers and meaning for life. I can see the lonely, befriended; the broken, restored; the rejected, loved; the homeless, housed; the sick, healed; and the empty, filled. I can see the very person and purpose of Jesus manifested in our army – an army who can honestly answer his question ‘Do you truly love me more than these?’ and does whatever it takes to fulfil his request ‘Feed my lambs’.”

This is a dream that’s realised, not by correcting what’s wrong, but by doing what’s right. The aim in writing this essay is to explore the concept of a Jesus Purposed Ministry and it’s use in realising this dream within the framework of the Salvation Army and more specifically Bondi Salvation Army. It covers a number of areas including:

- (1) The importance of purpose in ministry
- (2) God’s purpose for Jesus
- (3) Jesus Purposed Ministry - definition
- (4) A heart for Jesus and his purpose – true “Salvationism”
- (5) Practical outworking of Jesus Purposed Ministry

## The Importance of Purpose in Ministry

As the corps assistant at Bondi Salvos my work takes me into Kings Cross every Friday night where I collect money from numerous pubs and seedy places frequented by a diverse and colourful spectrum of people. There are a lot of things that really disturb me about Kings Cross. But there was one incident not so long ago which challenged my thinking on living with purpose. When I first arrived I saw a girl hunched over in the gutter of the main street ... obviously she had taken drugs and she didn't look healthy at all. I walked on by. When I came back 5 minutes later, a big man with really dark rings under his eyes was sitting next to her with an arm wrapped around her. Now seemingly this guy had the girl's best interests at heart, but it was obvious to me that he had ugly selfish intentions and was waiting until she became coherent enough to take some more from her. This is an all too familiar picture in Sydney today. People are all too quick to selfishly take something at the expense of others. However, there's another really worrying sign. As I watched these happenings, I chose to keep on walking – not to get involved. With the sort of lifestyles we live we choose not to involve ourselves in these sorts of situations when we see them happening. We stand back and perhaps feel sorry for those involved, but we keep on walking. There is very little sense of responsibility for the greater good of those around us.

In contrast to this attitude, Jesus lifestyle was filled with meaningful interaction with people who were really broken and lived with a spirit of despair. He deliberately engaged himself in the lives of the desperate with a purpose, he delivered them from their misery, he healed them, he brought genuine smiles to faces, providing new life, new opportunity and true value. His life was filled with life changing purpose.

At first glance, purpose in the light of Jesus ministry involves a measure of responsibility for the welfare of others, selfless commitment to actively engage in the lives of others and a heart to see God's best realised in the lives of others. It's not difficult to pick the Christian communities that exist without this broadly defined concept of purpose today. They are the sort of places in which an individual can be lost amongst the crowd – unwelcomed, lonely and leaving feeling emptier than when they've arrived. They are the sort of places that are dogged by stale routine and confined to Sunday services or Wednesday night bible study, band practice and so on. A Christian community without purpose is at risk of becoming introverted, club-like and only inclusive of certain classes of people.

Ministry needs purpose if it is to be vital and life-giving; if it is to impact and enable transformation of lives. The task before us at Bondi Salvos is to continue the purposes of Jesus.

## God's purpose for Jesus

God's purposes for Jesus can be seen in the writings of Luke who wrote with an emphasis on the poor and disadvantaged. In Luke 4, Jesus returns to his home town Nazareth after being tempted in the desert by the devil. On the Sabbath day he goes to the temple as he was in the custom of doing. He stands up to speak and he deliberately chooses a passage from Isaiah 61. In doing so he publicly declares who he is (the fulfilment of prophecy – the promised Messiah) and what his purpose is.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

Jesus makes it immediately clear that the raw materials for his life saving work are the poor, the heartbroken and those who are enslaved. His reference to the 'poor' does not necessarily mean those in financial poverty. Jesus uses the word 'poor' to refer more broadly to: people who are distressed, or in trouble for any reason, including sin; people who understand their inadequacy without God; and people who see the need for dependence on God. The “good news” that he's purposed to preach (Luke 4:18) is not simply new teaching: it's the proclamation of a new event – the dawning of the promised salvation era.

*So what is the purpose of Jesus?* Luke 4 suggests that Jesus purpose is to take those who recognise their inadequacy and need from their world of despair and give them a new life as a valuable child in God's kingdom. Further reading of Isaiah 61:1-3 suggests that his purpose doesn't stop with just seeing a person saved. Jesus also enables transformation and development of that person into an “oak of righteousness”.

This can be summarised as: ***Jesus purpose is to take those who recognise their inadequacy, from their world of despair and give them new lives as valuable children and potential leaders in God's kingdom.***

The revelation of this purpose is described throughout the rest of Luke's book as Jesus heals the sick, shows great compassion and love for the 'poor', teaches with an authority never before experienced and is crucified and brought back to life by God on the third day.

## Jesus Purposed Ministry - definition

The concept of “Jesus Purposed Ministry” can be understood as the endeavour as the Bondi Salvos to continue the purposes of Jesus in:

- (1) Actively involving ourselves and responding to the needs of the 'poor'
- (2) Helping people find new life through Jesus, as valuable children of God
- (3) Enabling the development and realisation of God's best for those we interact with

This presupposes soldiers having a robust, living and active faith and devotion to God, which spurs them on to the mission of seeing people become complete in relationship with Jesus. It's not a ministry that's willing to stop at maintaining, but rather is driven by the process of building, with a part to be played by all who are included in the community. By inviting and empowering people to take part in the mission or "building" (the outworking of Jesus purposes), both the individual and the community are strengthened.

Undergirding the endeavours of a corps like Bondi Salvos to continue the purposes of Jesus is a firm commitment by the individual to continue growing in relationship with Jesus. God isn't relying on my cleverness, my counselling ability, my strength to carry people through their problems. Jesus is the power behind salvation and life transformation. Fruitful ministry results from healthy relationship with the source of life. In relationship with Jesus we capture his heart and purposes for individuals and the community around us.

### Capturing the Heart of Jesus and His Purpose – true "Salvationism"

Capturing the heart of Jesus for the 'poor' is something that happens over time. As I look back through my life I see stages of development based on the different life experiences God led me through. I used to be an apathetic, powerless adherer to the Salvation Army. My answers to difficult questions were simple repetitions of what I'd been fed through the years. There was nothing of substance and nothing all that well thought out to offer anybody who was genuinely questioning the Christian's belief. Things were comfortable and I seemingly had everything that I needed. I'd deceived myself into thinking that my answers were good enough.

But it was as I was placed into uncomfortable circumstances that I really began to question what I believed. It was only in "deep water" that I realised that my superficial faith wasn't enough to fix the aches in my heart and mind for personal meaning and mission. Connection with broken and suffering people has challenged me to find answers. It has challenged me to ask where the cross of Jesus fits in when faced with the most horrendous of situations. Is Jesus some sort of fictitious character that I cling to, to provide for myself some sort of false security? Is the cross just a blind hope for people who need security or is the cross the power of God to draw all people to himself? Is God really able to

deliver the most broken of people from their suffering? It's my belief that as we wrestle through these really tough questions (that needy people and foreign sorts of situations demand answers for) in relationship with God, Jesus gives us his heart and provides us with the means to continue his purposes within the "lost" communities in which we live.

I recently visited Silverwater prison and took part in the Sunday morning Chapel service. I was deeply challenged by a message given by an American speaker to perhaps 15 or 16 of the inmates. It was based on 1 Corinthians 1:27 " God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." After he had finished speaking I understood that although the world views prisoners as nobodies, as convicts forever marked with the stamp of 'criminal', God viewed them as potential leaders in his kingdom. Capturing the heart of Jesus for the seeming nobodies, means relating to them as if they're to become the somebodies God very much wants to make them. Society is very quick in shrugging off the 'rejects', but ironically it's these very 'rejects' God has chosen to work with. This is at the heart of Jesus purpose and he brings it into being to bring glory to his Father. Capturing the heart of Jesus changes the entire way in which I view the world. The dishevelled, dirty and smelly teenage girl I encounter on my pub runs is not to be viewed as a prostitute, but rather a potential leader of the Salvation Army dearly loved by God.

It is not necessarily the professionalism of a slick church program, or the adoption of the latest "relevant to the day" outreach techniques that will see thousands saved. God is quick to confound the wise. I can't explain how an aboriginal girl who's spent most of her life living in squats around Sydney has been coming repeatedly to services, after swearing, by God, she'd never enter a church again. Or how a 71 year old eccentric man who continually harassed people in our services with his extreme political views and insisted on wearing a Nazi badge on his coat until John Howard was kicked out of office, could become our first soldier after an amazing conversion and life transformation. Or how a 20 year old male friend of mine, whose history includes armed robbery, prison, violence against his family etc. can be completely changed through an encounter with Jesus and is the fastest developing future leader in our Corps.

It feels so right having to walk into the church building through a cloud of cigarette smoke as people have there last one before coming into the service. If the heart of Jesus and his purpose is captured then a Christian community surely becomes a place of "salvation" filled with all sorts of people from very diverse backgrounds. The sort of people Jesus is pleased, as we should be pleased, to use as his raw materials for his life saving purpose.

**The prayer that captures Jesus heart may go something like: "Jesus I am determined to develop your heart for the people. I am determined to see with your eyes. I sacrifice me so that I can more fully know you Jesus and**

**can be part of your ongoing purposes to see lives saved and turned into something more beautiful than I can ever imagine.”**

### Practical Outworking of a Jesus Purposed Ministry

The practical programs and activities that are developed to fulfil the three-point endeavour, discussed in the section on Jesus Purposed Ministry, are derived from personal relationship with Jesus and an understanding of his heart for the community. Programs and activities inspired by God respond to the needs of individuals and community – Non-Christian and Christian. There is no questioning the relevance of a ministry that responds to and serves needs. There are too many churches that set up programs that are self-serving and self-justifying. These are programs that are developed in isolation of the true points of need within the ‘world’ and then cast out into the world to see who’ll bite. If the world doesn’t bite, then the church satisfies itself with the thought that they’ve truly represented Jesus and they continue working with those who fit nicely into the culture they’ve fostered. Opposed to this is the practical outworking of a Jesus Purposed ministry. This is the ministry of a Christian group that is willing to step out of its comfort zone and become vulnerable in a lost and needy world. The programs and activities will reflect a willingness to share in the lives of the ‘poor’. The outworking of this ministry is by its selfless nature costly to people, who involve themselves in it.

At Bondi Salvos God has led us into areas we wouldn’t have at first thought possible. These areas include:

(1) Connection with the OASIS Homeless Youth Support Network

Links have been established with many of the homeless teenagers that access OASIS. Spending time with them and taking an interest in their interests has increased the awareness we have about the many issues they have in their lives. In response, motivated by the purpose of Jesus, we have developed a creative arts and drama group that allows them to explore how it is that Jesus fits into their situations, which typically include problems like rejection, loneliness, drugs, suicide, child abuse etc. We have encouraged their participation in Sunday services that’s included ‘rap’ items, testimony, singing (the most rough and tough songster brigade I’ve ever seen), taking up the offering and so on. As a result it’s not unusual to have anywhere up to 20 of these young people coming to church on Sunday morning. Many of these young people are exposed to Jesus as they’ve never understood him before. Even those who have been banned from Youth Refuges come and are normally the first too arrive 45 minutes before the 10:00am service.

(2) Development of Court Ministries

The Waverley Courts are amongst the busiest in Sydney. For many people Court is a harrowing experience and it became obvious after a few visits that there was a real need for a compassionate and understanding ear. Many personal relationships have developed through contacts made in the courts. There were lots of opportunities to pray that God would enter into the lives of people and their experiences. As a result people have found a spiritual home at Bondi Salvos, responding to the love and care of the community there. Some of our most “fervent for Jesus” members have come directly from this valuable and God inspired ministry.

(3) Community Services Program

Every day people enter into the church hall seeking welfare assistance. Many churches go to extraordinary lengths to attract people and we’re fortunate enough to have them come to us on a daily basis. In response to the needs of the “welfare” community, which go much deeper than the need for money, God is challenging us to look at creative ways of assisting and exposing these people to the relevance of Jesus. One idea, which is soon to be put in place, is opening the Welfare Centre on a Thursday night. This is an idea that the whole church will be involved in. Coffee, tea, and cakes will be provided. Various activities will be available for the children. People will be driven home. Music and video will also be used. We hope to be able to provide a warm and friendly environment where those looking for welfare assistance are accepted and valued as important. Thursday night should become a time when people are free to share what’s going on for them and encouraged to ask questions.

Many other exciting opportunities are available for Jesus purposed ministry in the area of community service. Funerals, hospital and nursing home visitation, home removals, surf life saving and police chaplaincy, weekend evening coffee bus runs, liaison with the local council and other community groups and churches, are just to name a few.

(4) Street Work

Street work, which includes stationary street collection, pub collections, station collections etc., is also an entry point into meaningful relationship and ministry.

These are four areas that fall loosely into the “Contact and Engagement” category. Each of these areas are entry points into the lives of people who Jesus values just as much as he does us. Jesus purpose ministry boldly interacts with the lives of people such as these, connecting them into relevant activities that will expose them to the life transforming person of Jesus. These activities can take

the form of small groups, which cater for Non-Christians, new believers and developing believers or soldiers. Jesus purposed ministry empowers people, no matter where they are in their Christian walk, to take an active role in areas of ministry such as the Contact and Engagement areas already discussed, or hospitality, or maintenance of the facilities. There is a limitless number of ways people can be exposed to the person of Jesus when the Christian community is wholly devoted to relationship with him and his purposes. It's impossible to predict where the opportunities will come from, but they will come in ever increasing amounts to the people who are inspired by healthy relationship with God.

## Conclusion

Jesus purpose is to take those who recognise their inadequacy from their world of despair and provide them with new lives as valuable children and potential leaders in God's kingdom. If a Christian community is to continue the purposes of Jesus in contemporary society, it must be willing to: (a) actively involving themselves and respond to the needs of the 'poor', (b) help people find new life through Jesus, as valuable children of God, and (c) enable the development and realisation of God's best for those they interact with. This is the essence of Jesus purposed ministry.

The inspiration and outworking of this ministry in the form of program and activities comes not from cleverness of mind, but rather from Christian communities that have active and vibrant relationships with the source of life transforming power – Jesus.

Jesus purposed ministry grounded in Jesus, will produce a limitless number of ways to expose people to his life transforming power and empower them to actively involve themselves in the ministry.

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## **The Almost Christian**

### **A Sermon**

by Victor Shepherd

Victor Allen Shepherd, Ph.D., served for close to 21 years at Streetsville United Church, in Ontario, Canada, where he became known for his powerful biblical preaching. He is recognized as the leading voice, albeit a minority voice, in his own United Church of Canada, calling the Church to repentance and return to its historical evangelical roots. Dr. Shepherd is now at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto as professor of Historical Theology in addition to occupying the Chair of Wesley Studies. His other writings and sermons are available at [www.victorshepherd.on.ca](http://www.victorshepherd.on.ca)

Many well-known preachers have preached well-known sermons on the person who is "almost" Christian. We can understand why. After all, the church has always been fringed with those who seem almost Christian! They appear to be on the cusp of the kingdom. They are sincere, zealous, concerned, committed, even though what they are committed to is less than the gospel; for if they were committed to the gospel (that is, committed to Jesus Christ, him whose gospel it is) they would no longer be "almost" Christian.

No doubt the well-known sermons by well-known preachers have used the text of Acts 26:28, where King Agrippa says to the apostle Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Note the archaic English: "Almost thou persuadest me...". It's from the old King James Version of the Bible (1611). Actually, the meaning of the Greek text underlying the English is ambiguous. Modern translations therefore read quite differently. Look at the Revised Standard Version, for instance: "In a short time you think to make me a Christian." The sense here is entirely different, for there is no suggestion here that Agrippa is "almost persuaded". On the contrary, he sounds defiant, intransigent, and perhaps even slightly mocking: "What makes you think you are going to make a Christian of me?"

The background to the text is this. Paul is on trial before Festus, the Roman Governor. Paul defends himself before Festus, telling the governor of his vocation and his mission to the Gentiles. Paul includes his seizure at God's hand on the road to Damascus. When Festus hears all this -- especially the Damascus road episode -- he says, "Paul, you are mad." Paul then turns to King Agrippa, the puppet Jewish ruler in the Roman province. In his exposition of the gospel

(which Agrippa has overheard) Paul has argued that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfilment of the Hebrew prophets. Now Paul says to Agrippa, "Do you believe the prophets?" Agrippa knows that Paul has backed him into a corner. If Agrippa says, "No, I don't believe the prophets", Paul will reply, "You don't? You are a Jew and you don't believe the prophets? What kind of a Jew are you?" On the other hand, if Agrippa says that he does believe the prophets, Paul will reply, "You tell me you believe the prophets and you have heard my reasoning as to why Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophets; so you too must believe in Jesus too. Then why am I on trial?" Agrippa knows he's been cornered. Warily, even slightly mockingly, he says to Paul, "In a short time you think to make me a Christian."

Those well-known sermons of yesteryear on the theme of the "almost" Christian; they often appealed to a misunderstanding of the text of Acts 26:28. But no matter! Regardless of how the text may have been misread, many people are "almost" Christians. Our Lord admitted as much himself when he said of an earnest seeker, "You are not far from the Kingdom." Not far from the Kingdom, to be sure, but also not quite yet in!

Today I am going to preach the sermon you have asked for: the "almost" Christian. Never mind the text in Acts 26; think instead of the text in Mark 12, "You are not far from the Kingdom". Surely it means, "You are almost a Christian."

Who are the "almost" Christians?

**I:(i)** -- In the first place, they are those people who view the gospel as a trustworthy guide to personal morality. They deem personal morality to be the most significant aspect of anyone's life. They know what overtakes a society when personal morality is undervalued. Chaos overtakes such a society.

Billions of dollars have been poured into the innermost inner cities of the U.S., into what is now called the "urban jungle". There is virtually nothing to show for the billions spent. Robbery, murder, extortion, drug-trafficking; all these thrive, even proliferate. Not to mention the "graft". Not to mention the indescribable violence. And no one knows what to do about it.

American cities? The last time I was in criminal court a judge was sentencing two 19-year olds who had jammed a knife against the ribs of a Brompton teenager and had stolen his Chicago Bulls jacket. As the judge pronounced sentence he told the two 19-year olds that they were despicable, loathsome in fact. "We don't want a society where someone is going to be physically threatened and psychologically traumatized just because he's wearing an item of clothing someone else wants", the judge hissed as he locked up the two fellows. But of

course such a society is the one we are certainly going to have when personal morality breaks down.

Moralists are correct in reminding us what happens when morality is set aside: no one can be trusted, everything breaks down, society crumbles.

In primitive societies a man often had more than one wife. Yet regardless of how many wives he may have had, he wasn't permitted another man's wife. The most primitive society knew what would happen to the society if wife-raiding were permitted.

Is cheating on examinations a small matter? If we think it is, then we should be prepared to be represented by a lawyer who knows nothing, be operated on by a surgeon who wouldn't know an artery from an eyeball, sold drugs by a pharmacist who is just as likely to poison us, and drive on a bridge whose engineer builds collapsible bridges. To say that cheating on exams is a small matter is, to say the least, that professional competence is unimportant. Not only is this ridiculous; it's lethal. (Strictly speaking, these considerations are not even moral, but rather merely utilitarian. The moral issue is that cheating on examinations is simply wrong.)

Moralists who look on the gospel as a trustworthy guide for personal morality are not far from the Kingdom.

**(ii)** Who are the "almost" Christians? Those who regard the gospel as a program for social improvement. Surely a major factor in social improvement has been high-quality public education. Egerton Ryerson (who preached from this pulpit last century) was the father of Ontario's educational system. I maintain that his vision was grand. He envisioned quality education for all children, not merely the sons and daughters of the rich, not merely the sons and daughters of Anglicans (the established church). He envisioned public education which was not at all inferior to private schooling, available to all regardless of financial status or religious affiliation. It was to be paid for by the taxpayer, since the entire society would benefit.

I am aware that there are problems with our health-care system. Nonetheless, I admire the populist prairie Methodism which eventually gave Saskatchewan quality health care for everyone, the remaining provinces soon following Saskatchewan's example. Does anyone want to return to the days when hospital bills loomed as the biggest threat to any family? My mother was hospitalized for 75 days with a heart attack. Had she sold everything she owned (and thereafter become a ward of the state) she still couldn't have paid the bills. Does anyone want to say that quality medical care should be available only to the most affluent?

"Almost" Christians recognize that it was the gospel which accorded women a place they were denied in ancient Greece and Rome. They recognize that the gospel inflamed those who led campaigns on so many social fronts, such as child labour and working conditions in mines and factories.

(iii) Who are the "almost" Christians? Included among them are those who recognize the Christian inspiration to the arts. Whenever I walk through an art gallery which features the history of painting I am startled at the gospel themes depicted. The annunciation to Mary; the boy Jesus "stumping" the clergy in the temple; the crucifixion, the return of the prodigal son.

My favourite musical composition is Handel's Messiah. Close behind are Mozart's Requiem and Masses. What about Michelangelo's sculpture? And the gospel themes of countless novels! "Almost" Christians know that the gospel has inspired those art-expressions without which we should be humanly impoverished.

"Almost" Christians, those not far from the Kingdom, in a word, are the people who have seized one implicate or aspect of the gospel; they then identify the whole of the gospel with this one aspect. To be sure, they have skewed the gospel by doing this, and because they have skewed it they are near the Kingdom but not yet in it. Then how do "almost" Christians cease being "almost"? How do we simply become citizens of the Kingdom of God?

**II(i):** -- First we need to see that the core, the hub, the essence of what the Christian church is about is the living person of Jesus Christ himself. To be sure, a moral code is useful. We'd all rather have moral neighbours living next door than immoral. Nonetheless, a code, however moral, is qualitatively different, categorically different, from the living person of the risen one himself.

We often fail to grasp this point, I think, inasmuch as we are misled by the word "believe". In everyday English "believe" has the force of "admit the truth of a statement". "Do you believe what you read in the newspaper?" means "Do you admit the truth of the statements in the newspaper?". "Do you believe in Jesus?", on the other hand, means eversomuch more than "Do you believe statements about Jesus?". Our Lord did not first ask people to believe a statement about him, however true. He first asked people to follow him, live with him, love him, know him, trust him. The emphasis is always on him; the living person himself; nothing less, nothing other.

Mark tells us that the purpose of our Lord's calling disciples was "that they might be with him". What was the point of being with him? There is no point in addition to being with him. In view of who he is, being with him is the point! It's as though someone were to ask, "What's the point in loving one's spouse?" In view of who our spouse is, loving her is the point. It isn't the case that the point of loving our spouse is to gain something beyond loving her. To be looking for something beyond loving her is not be loving her at all.

"Almost" Christians assume that Christianity is helpful or useful somewhere, somehow. Christians, however don't think first of usefulness; we think first of truth. Christians know that Jesus Christ himself is real; that he loves us, longs for us, calls us into his company. Once in his company we know that life with him needs no justification beyond this, just as loving one's spouse is not a means to anything else and needs no justification in terms of anything else.

**(ii)** To say all of this slightly differently. We move from being "almost" Christian to actually being Christian as we come to see that life is finally, ultimately, profoundly, not a matter of codes or schemes or artistic inspiration but rather a matter of relationships; as we come to see that faith is simply a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

I often think we are confused by the different meanings of the English word "faith". The word "faith" can mean either "that which is believed, the truth to which we subscribe", or "our ongoing trust and love and loyalty and obedience." When the Apostles' Creed is recited the clergyman conducting the service usually prefaces it with something like, "Let us stand and repeat the historic expression of the faith." "The faith" here refers to the notions, the ideas, the opinions, the views which people are asked to subscribe to. Everyone knows, however, that anyone at all may indeed subscribe to all the right ideas, even acknowledge them as true, yet be possessed of a heart which is far from God. Did not God himself say through the prophet Isaiah, "This people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote"? Listen to another translation: "This people has approached me with its mouth and honoured me with its lips, but has kept its heart from me, and its worship of me has been a commandment of men, learned by rote." Isaiah's people use the correct theological vocabulary, but all the while they neither fear God nor love God. Yes, they go to church, but their worship (so-called) of God is but a "commandment of men learned by rote". They have not yet worshipped God because they have known themselves overwhelmed by God. The commandment of men is but learned by rote, having not yet been written on their heart. The apostle James says that the devils espouse an impeccable theology; it is entirely orthodox. Nevertheless, they remain devils.

If we are to understand the "almost" Christian and how we move from "almost" to "Christian", we must differentiate between the two meanings of the word "faith". After all, someone who can subscribe to every last item in the Apostles' Creed is said to be possessed of strong faith, while someone who can't is said to be possessed of weaker faith. The truth is, both of them could be possessed of no faith at all inasmuch as both of them could subscribe to right ideas yet be possessed of no trust in our Lord, no love, no obedience. We move from "almost" Christian to "Christian" as come to love our Lord, honour him, trust him, fear him, thank him, obey him. We commit as much of ourselves as we know of ourselves to as much of him as we know of him. And if for awhile there are items in the orthodox expressions of Christian belief concerning which we have reservations, then we can wait until our reservations are dealt with; but we cannot wait, must not wait, to commit as much of ourselves as we know of ourselves to as much of our Lord as we know of him.

(iii) All of which brings us to a point I have mentioned several times in the last few minutes: obedience. Jesus maintained that this was a major distinction between pseudo-disciples and genuine disciples. With, I imagine, a peculiar combination of exasperation and grief Jesus says to some would-be (i.e., "almost") disciples, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord', and not do what I tell you?" Then he adds immediately the parable of the man who built his house on rock (which house survived a flood -- flood being the biblical symbol for chaos) and the other man who built his house on sand (which house collapsed into ruin). The point to note is this: it is obedience which spells the difference between thriving and dying.

Have you ever heard of George MacDonald, novelist and poet? C.S Lewis wrote of George MacDonald, a 19th century Scottish writer, "I know hardly any other writer who seems to be closer, or more continually close, to the Spirit of Christ himself." I think Lewis was correct: to read George MacDonald is to gain great affinity to the Spirit of Christ. What did MacDonald say about obedience and its place in our moving beyond the "almost" Christian? "Obedience is the one key of life." This should be etched into our minds forever. "Obedience is the one key of life." "Whoever will live [that is, truly live] must cease to be a slave and become a child of God. There is no halfway house of rest, where ungodliness may be dallied with [flirted with], nor prove quite fatal." When a young man complained that he did not understand when Jesus commanded him to do this or that, MacDonald commented, "Had he done as the Master told him, he would soon have come to understand. Obedience is the opener of eyes." Again, MacDonald writes, "It is simply absurd to say you believe or even want to believe in him, if you do not do anything he tells you." And finally, "To say we might disobey and be none the worse would be to say that **no** might be **yes** and light sometimes darkness."

**(iv)** The last point has to do with sacrifice. As we have seen so far we move from being "almost" Christian to "Christian" as the living person of Jesus is accorded first place in our hearts and minds and motivation, as we see that life consists in relationships, and pre-eminently in a relationship with him, as faith is seen to entail obedience; and finally as our obedience even goes to the lengths Jesus himself speaks of when he says, "If anyone wants to be mine, let him, let her, take up her cross and follow me." In other words, the sign that our following is genuine, sincere, whole-hearted and not merely a romp or a picnic is this: our following entails cross-bearing. There is genuine sacrifice we make -- gladly make -- for him who first sacrificed everything for us.

At this point the "almost" Christian has become "the real thing". At this point, says our Lord, there is indescribable joy in heaven. Not to speak of the joy in some individual's own heart.

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## **Can I Ever be Free?**

### **A Study in Romans 7:1 to 8:4**

by John Norton

Romans has been able to inspire many of its readers toward a greater understanding of the Christian life. Often those same readers have stumbled over the seventh chapter, having found what appears to be a confusing parenthesis around Paul's presentation of victory in the surrounding chapters. Edward Read admits that "Romans 7 is not a pleasant chapter. It sounds pessimistic, and for the most part, it is." Struggle seems to be the predominate thought in the mind of Paul as we follow his argument against sin and the old nature. The previously rejoicing Christian now seems plagued with failure and doubt about her ability to rise above mediocrity, shame seems dominate her knowledge that she cannot live the kind of life that is to be expected from a child of God. The humiliated Christian, forced again to submit in bondage, desperately cries out "Can I never be free?" Paul takes us to this reality in chapter seven and proclaims freedom for the enslaved, peace for the troubled mind. The human predicament of captivity to a cycle of sin and law has been broken in the redemptive act of Christ. The apostle encourages us not to despair but to acknowledge our inability to subdue the "wretched man" that once dominated our life. The inner conflict that rages between what we know to do and what we actually do is not because we are still judicially guilty but because we feel guilty. Christ, the new master, has provided responsible freedom from both God's law and man's sin, so that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1).

Paul's letter to the Romans was most likely written from Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey. Prior to departure for Jerusalem, the Apostle directed this epistle to Rome partly as a means for securing support for his future planned mission into Spain. However, F.F. Bruce considers the majority of the letter to be Paul's formulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is clearly the closest exposition towards a comprehensive theology available in the Pauline corpus. It was written to ensure orthodoxy in Rome, the church that would later assume leadership over all Christendom. The epistle has been heralded as the Cathedral of the Christian Faith and the "greatest book of the Bible". Romans has influenced the lives of Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and Barth who have in turn "launched great spiritual movements which have left their mark in world history." At the heart of this great letter, in chapters five through eight, one can detect Paul's own experience with the Christian life and we can recognize the able



teaching of a man acquainted with holiness. Many who have matured in their faith have testified to their growing appreciation and intrigue for this gospel according to Paul.

## **APPROACHING THE LAW AND ROMANS**

A cursory glance through some various leading commentaries on Romans can lead to frustration if seeking after a universally accepted outline on Romans. Paul's style and structure does not naturally divide itself, his thoughts building upon what he has previously stated. Paul Achtemeier argues that Paul "introduces each of the three parts of his discussion with a formulaic question, repeated in 6:1, 6:15, and 7:7." While this outline is valuable it tends to underestimate the progressing themes of sin, law, and Spirit identifiable in each of chapters 6-8 respectively. With this in mind, commentators like F.F. Bruce and John Calvin have simply followed the chapter divisions as outlined in most Bibles. John Stott's study of Romans 5-8 proposes "Freedom from the Law" as a title for his outline from 7:1-8:4. Stott's framework is at least as valid as any other and likely aligned to the Apostle's own thoughts.

More crucial than the disparity over an outline is the disagreement among scholars about an exegetical approach. There has been two principle opinions which have historically prevailed concerning the application of chapter seven. Some interpreters have understood Paul to imply that the struggle between flesh and spirit in verses 14-25 are representative of Christian growth. However, other Biblical scholars have had difficulty in accepting the possibility that a devout Christian could experience the kind of conflict that Paul describes. Charles G. Finney, America's most well-known nineteenth century evangelist and Bible teacher, was convinced that Paul was referring to a non-Christian throughout his use of the first person pronoun in Romans 7:7-25.

*This passage describes the experience of a sinner under conviction, who was acting under the motives of the law, and not yet brought to the experience of the gospel.*

This approach, popular among some Wesleyan perfectionists, is not universally held and seems to depend upon the sympathy of a particular theological system that denies conflicting experiences for the sanctified believer. Some Calvinists would argue in contrast that the struggling Christian will be perpetually hounded by the sinful nature, unable to achieve victory in this life. "But does not this debate miss the point? To decide either way does not affect the truth that Paul is concerned about; he wants us to see the nature of carnality, and the way it hinders holiness." A better exegetical approach would allow the meaning of the text to be derived from within itself and in light of other scripture, avoiding eisegesis and biased presuppositions. The Apostle is persuading us to realize that our sinful nature has not prevented God from releasing us from bondage to

the law. Therefore we should not condemn ourselves to a life enslaved by guilt feelings and works righteousness.

A bird's eye view of the whole chapter helps put into perspective the guiding theme -- freedom from the law of condemnation. Paul seems to divide his argument into three sections, beginning with verses 1-6. To the legalist, Paul uses an illustration from marriage to demonstrate that the law no longer exercises lordship over the believer. In verses 7-13 "he defends the law against the unjust criticisms of those who want to be rid of" the law altogether. Paul argues in this paragraph that the law is not responsible for Man's sin and death. In 7:14-8:4 is described the inner conflict of the regenerate person in whom "the remains of the flesh dissent from the law of the Lord...". The secret answer for living is found in the promise of freedom for those who live according to the Spirit.

### **FREEDOM FROM THE LAW (7:1-6)**

In order to grasp the full meaning of this opening section we must understand the preceding flow of thought in chapter six. The Apostle has argued that the believer is free from sin and its inevitable enslavement and death. The regenerated person has been given the opportunity, through identification with Christ, to claim freedom from the condemnation of sin.

*For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

These words of Christ are revolutionary, suggests Bruce, because "to be under grace is to be liberated not only from the dominion of sin but also from the regime of law." While the believer remains objectively guilty he has been declared by God to be judicially not guilty. Having put sin into its rightful place, subject to Christ, Paul is able to march into the seventh chapter prepared to present our new relation to the law in light of the cross.

Paul elaborates upon his premise by insisting that in God's grace people are now able to claim freedom from the law. Using the symbol of marriage he argues that "the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives" (7:1), for if a woman's husband dies than she is released from her obligation to him and is free to marry another man. In agreement with Karl Barth we can conclude that "the dominion of law stands and falls with this life." Death breaks both the marriage bond and a person's relation to the law. While in the illustration the believer is compared to the wife and it is the husband who died, F.F. Bruce notes that "in the application it is not the law that has died, but the believer; the believer has died with Christ." The implications of this are realized when one comes to understand Paul's distinction between sin and the law, explained in verse 7. Whereas sin was defeated by Christ, the law was fulfilled and continues in its old ways legally declaring unregenerate sinners impotent to the standards of the righteous God. So it is in our connection with the resurrection, symbolically represented through baptism, that we are freed from the old relationship and wed to our new husband -- the Christ. The spiritual marriage between Christ and His Church is more clearly delineated in Ephesians 6.

It should be remembered that Paul is directing his words to believers, toward those who are spiritually alive but find it difficult to accept the truth. Those who continue living under the law find that it faithfully reflects the truth of their sinful condition, like a mirror reflects our image without bias. In verses 4-6 Paul confronts the many converts who are plagued by the discovery of their continuing depravity and failure to live up to the standard set by Christ. These type of Christians employ legalism, and use it in its extreme, to imagine that they have kept all the laws perfectly and that God is pleased by their achievement. Bruce Narramore, Professor of Psychology at Biola University, has suggested that an inability to measure up to an expected standard is often repressed into the subconscious, thus providing the individual with a false sense of relief. "Struggling to keep potentially guilt-producing thoughts from awareness, the legalistic person maintains a continued focus on external actions, works, and effort." This unwillingness to accept responsibility is a major source of self-inflicted psychological pain. "Legalism cannot and does not sanctify. It is one of the ways by which sin seizes the opportunity afforded by the commandment and deceives me. (Romans 7:11)"

Is there no escape from this cycle of condemnation? Paul has woken the slumbering legalist from his futile search for freedom in humanistic and existential philosophy. Now, while holding his attention, Paul explains that freedom from the confines of the law has already been granted.

*But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

What joyous news and exaltation awaits the man or woman who realizes in these few words the truth that in Christ they have been freed from the bondage of the law. Truly, though sometimes nearly impossible to accept for those entrenched in years of legalistic condemnation, we are free to ignore the restraints of the old law and begin service in the new way of the Spirit. John Calvin urges us to "note, therefore, that we are delivered from the law, when God looses us from its rigid demands and its curse...".

#### **PURPOSE OF THE LAW (7:7-13)**

Paul pauses to consider a hypothetical query, "Is the law sin?" (verse 7) Some had concluded that the law was synonymous with sin since Christ had come to set his people free from both sin and the law. Paul's reply, "Certainly not!", demonstrates his horror at the suggestion that the law was responsible for our separation from God. John Stott suggests that this issue is important and that "if we are thoughtful Christians, we need to know what place God's law should occupy in our lives today." Stott points out that Paul is confronting antinomianism, which is "opposition to law, specifically, a rejection of the idea that the Christian's life need be governed by laws or rules." The antinomian believes that the law is flawed and therefore attempts to live his life free from any type of governing regulation or principle. But Paul attacks this deviant philosophy by insisting that

"the law is holy... righteous and good" (verse 12) and "produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful." (verse 13) Jesus Himself revealed that His purpose was to fulfill the law and not to abolish it.

Then what about the law itself? Is the Christian under obligation to continue obeying it? How should this be worked out in life? In order to answer this question we must come to an understanding of the nature of law. The law does enhance sin, it does "increase sin in the sense that it makes men sin more." The law also serves "in the absence of the Spirit... to inflame our hearts still more, so that they burst forth into such lustful desires." The law establishes the possibility of legalism by giving us a way to pretend that we are not responsible for our failure. It acts on God's behalf by pronouncing His condemnation and curse (Galatians 3:10); this truth being evident in the self-inflicted guilt experienced when people become conscious of their disobedience in relation to the law. However, Paul clearly demonstrates that it is not the law that is liable but that it is sin which is responsible for our death. The Reverend C.E.B. Cranfield ably demonstrates in his essay on "St. Paul and the Law" that "the ultimate goal and the innermost meaning of the law are not the condemnation of sinners, but Jesus Christ." Therefore it is the Christ for whom the law has been established and it is Him alone who can satisfy it. Realization of this truth should be cause enough for both the legalist and antinomian to celebrate and worship God, not because the law has been put to death, but because it has finally been fulfilled. As the law served to bring to light our desperate condition, Christ served to fulfill the law's ambition to make restitution with God. All the meaning and substance of the Old Testament legal traditions and ceremonies point to the greater reality found in Christ. Paul understood that all the Paschal lambs and sin offerings were directed forward in hope to the time when the Father would send His one and only Son to be "a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood." (Romans 3:25)

Paul says that he "would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.'" (verse 7) Paul had taken on the law, under Jewish custom, at the legal age of thirteen. As a boy he had become aware of this tenth commandment and the difficulty that it presented. This last of the ten Mosaic commandments (Exodus 20:17) would be the hardest for Paul to keep because it is the only one which probes beyond outer actions and into our motive and thoughts. Pharisaic Paul must have struggled with this command, faithful as he was in obedience to external laws, because it provided his conscious mind the opportunity to secretly desire and sin. But freedom came when the Apostle finally surrendered himself to the control of God and began living by the Spirit. To be assured of salvation we must be willing to admit that the law, while failing to save us, has made us aware of our depravity and need for identification with Christ.

#### **CONFLICT OF THE LAW (7:14-8:4)**

Paul begins using the present tense in the last half of this seventh chapter. We begin to understand the difficulty and seriousness with which Paul took in his desire to imitate Christ,

*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ...When I want to do good.. I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin...*

Is not Paul reassuring those of us who, having experienced the sanctifying presence of God, continue to know inner conflict? We are to be encouraged by the honesty of Paul in admitting his struggles, we are to "finish the race and complete the task". It would seem that this inner war against what we know to be right is universal in nature and the disease of all humanity. Commissioner Edward Read, teacher and preacher of The Salvation Army, wrote the following words which can be understood by all who have experienced the conflict of holiness,

*Within my earthly temple there's a crowd;  
There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud;  
There's one that's brokenhearted for his sins  
And one who, unrepentant, sits and grins;  
There's one who loves his neighbour as himself  
And one who cares for naught but fame and pelf.  
From such corroding care I would be free  
If once I could determine which is me.*

This "I" spoken of by both Apostle and Commissioner does not refer to the unregenerate sinner but the sanctified believer. Those closer to the brightness of the Almighty are able to see their own blemishes much clearer. Paul's courage helps us to face up to our moral delinquency.

Arriving at the close of chapter seven the Apostle Paul is suddenly reminded of the law and its holy ability to make us aware of our sin. Paul has explained how it has been twisted by the legalist who think they can earn God's obligation and respect. Then he has demonstrated the fallacy of the antinomian who insists that freedom from the law includes a license to sin. Now at last, after further detailing his own conflict with the sinful nature, Paul is able to exclaim, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" It is precisely at this point, when the believer has resolved in her own inability to live a holy life, that the shackles of law are removed through the realization that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (8:1)

"Thanks be to God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:25) Exhilaration rolls over the Christian who experiences release from guilt and the pressure to conform. A new level of maturity is reached and life in the Spirit begins. Not that this implies an end to the conflict but only an unwillingness, as children of God, to live condemned by a guilt ridden conscience. It was while we were in sin that God forgave us and now although we continue to be objectively guilty, we remain forgiven by God; dare we do less? (Romans 5:8) As we come to understand our

status in Christ we are able to accept that we are given freedom in the Spirit to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbour as our self.

### **NO CONDEMNATION**

The message of Paul is one of rich value and benefit that enables us to live knowing that we are not condemned,

*And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

We do not have to attempt any longer to attain what we already have been declared to be. We "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Many believers, after the moment of salvation, live their life trapped by the restraining demands of the law and wonder why they are not experiencing joy and real happiness. They ask, "Can I never be free?" Paul urges them to understand that God has sent His only Son to die in order to set them free. They should expect to continue with earthly limitations and struggles, but live knowing that they are free from condemnation. The human psyche finds lasting peace in the God who is big enough to know even our deepest desires. Quite condemning yourself, quite feeling guilty, and quite living your life by the law. Instead, be free to do anything and everything, constantly being guided by the truth of His Spirit.

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## **What Shall We Do?**

William Booth

This article was written by William Booth for 'The War Cry', 6 January 1900.

### WHAT SHALL WE DO?

The Year of Grace Nineteen Hundred is here and, for certain reasons, claims to be a year of more than usual importance. All the years of our earthly pilgrimage are important - how important we shall never know until we look back upon them from the vantage-ground of Eternity. Of one thing we can, I think, be quite certain, and that is that there will be no periods in the unending ages that lie before us that can ever be as important as the years now passing over our heads. But while all are important, this coming year has features all its own which stamp it with an importance even greater still.

Nineteen Hundred has some importance from the fact of its being the last year of the century. A peculiar interest ever lingers round last things -the last shilling, the last friend, the last year. It may, nay certainly will be, the last year of earthly life to some who read this; it may be to the writer. What shall we do with it? It is an important year in the light of the circumstances that introduce it to us. What a fitful broil is here!

The dogs of war, let loose, are flying at each other's throats, and the strongest men hold their breath as they listen day after day for the booming of the guns that announce that universal conflict so long dreaded, which, should it ever come, will be terrible beyond human conception.

Look at the mad whirl of voluptuous pleasure and luxurious idleness, of shameless vice and insatiable covetousness, that prevails; look at the myriads of human beings who, un-pitied by these sons and daughters of abundance, rot and fester and multiply in helpless and hopeless misery at their doors. Look at the serpent of infidelity hissing out its unbelief in the very temples consecrated to the Christian faith, while the professed followers of Jesus Christ idly wrangle over forms and ceremonies of trifling moment and the bewildered world hopelessly enquires for a religion that shall have some practical hold upon society, or, settling down in indifference, concludes that "one religion is as good as any other" or, worse still, that "it does not matter whether we have any religion at all."

Into this seething whirlpool, with all its responsibilities and possibilities, Nineteen Hundred plunges us. What is our duty during its flight? What shall we do for ourselves as it passes along? What shall we do to make up for the shortcomings of the years that are no more, for the lost hours that are gone beyond recovery? What shall we do to set the pace of the coming century? What shall we do that will most effectively help us forward in our great fight with sin and misery and hell? What shall we do worthy of ourselves that will bear the review of a dying bed and a Judgment Throne? What shall we do worthy of the Christ who has redeemed us with his blood and called us to follow in his track? What shall we do with Nineteen Hundred?

To that question I reply, my comrades - for it is to you that I speak -that we must go on doing all we are doing today that we honestly believe to be good in itself, honouring to God, and profitable to man. Mark you, my comrades, every lawful passion of prayer and zeal and sacrifice that has been practiced by you in the old year will be welcomed into the new. But no habit of thought, feeling or action that your conscience condemns, or your Bible denounces, must pass the boundary line. Beware! Oh, beware of striving to carry into Nineteen Hundred anything that would not be allowed an entrance through the gates of the New Jerusalem! But we must not, cannot - nay, will not - be content with the mere repetition of the devotion and services of the past. Is not the New Year, and such a year, worthy of greater sacrifice and more desperate effort than has been our experience hitherto? Does it not deserve it? I am sure it does.

Suppose that our glorified Saviour had sent a selection of blood-washed multitude straight down from Heaven, with the commission from his own blessed lips: "Go to that world where I lived and died; survey its miseries, compassionate its sins, feed the hungry, visit the sick, reclaim the criminals, restore the backsliders, save the lost, and so deliver the people from going down to the Pit. Fly quickly! Make haste! You have only a year for the enterprise; but I will be with you, and with my cooperation a great deal can be accomplished." What a desperate effort would that year see! Is not that our commission and our work?

But we (that is, The Salvation Army) are not here for a year only, but as long as the sun and the moon endure. As I often say to those who whisper in my ear, "General, you grow old", yes it is true that age is my portion, but The Salvation Army is, and ever will be, young. So, standing here, looking to the future no less than to the present, with this question sounding in my heart: "How can we make the most of the coming year, for the Army in particular - and the world at large?" the answer comes back, as distinct as though sent down from Heaven itself: "Make the last year of the century a soldier's year. By a soldier's year I don't mean that there should be any relaxation of the anxiety and toil now demanded from the officer. Nay, that must increase.

Officer comrades, there is no drawing back in this war. We have to fight it out, right here to the end. I cannot say but that there have been times of weariness in



my own history, when I have longed for some little relief from the heavy and continuous strain of heart and brain which have fallen to my lot - that there have not been occasions when I have wondered whether the additions ever being made to our ranks would not make the burden lighter. But no, it cannot be. The cross must be carried to the end, and then will come not only the crown but the rest.

And who is there amongst us who would have it otherwise? Oh! officers, officers, what wonders you have already wrought - wonders known on earth, published in Heaven, and approved by your General! You will never know my admiration and gratitude for your warfare till we meet above - if then. But, oh, what further marvels are within your reach! Oh that I could make you see and feel what God has shown me of the rich, golden harvests that are just ahead, only waiting for the reaping! Come along, my comrades. You shall make Nineteen Hundred cover your Master with glory.

But if you are to do the fighting the world needs, you must have a fighting Army. Already much has been done by and through our precious soldiers, but an infinitely greater work has yet to be accomplished. We have, in the past, set before them a door of usefulness, perhaps wider than any ever opened to any people before by any religious organization on the earth. That door has to be opened wider still, and what is of even greater importance, every soldier in our ranks must be persuaded and compelled to enter it. It is not enough to say there is work to be done. The soldiers who stand idle must be hired: that is, set on the business. What a number of soldiers who fail in their duty are to be found within our ranks!

On the subject I have had many wonderings of late. Here are some of them. I need not say that they relate to the Army throughout the world:

#### UNIFORM

I wonder how many soldiers there are on our rolls who don't wear a scrap of uniform either on or off duty.

#### CONCERN FOR SINNERS

I wonder how many soldiers there are in our ranks who experience little or no concern because of the dark ocean of wickedness rolling around them.

#### OUR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

I wonder how many soldiers there are on our rolls who feel but little responsibility for the salvation of their own families, neighbours, and workmates, and do little or nothing to save them.

#### MEETINGS

I wonder how many soldiers there are on our rolls who feel under any binding obligation to support their own meetings. They attend or stay away of their own

option, and when there, sing or pray, speak or fish if inclined to do so, and if not, leave the work undone.

## PERSONAL

## DUTY

I wonder how many soldiers we have who are without any fixed duty in their own corps. They have no set task among the juniors, in the open air, the visitation, the bombarding of the drink shops, selling our literature, or anything else.

## GIVING

I wonder how many soldiers there are who are without any engagement to give a fixed proportion of their income or any particular amount at all.

Now, I know that this state of things is not universal. For instance, we have near upon 40,000 local officers, every one commissioned and responsible for some duty, while tens of thousands of ordinary soldiers act immediately under their direction. Still, what I have said applies to sadly too many. Now I call for a change - a revolution. I demand that a post shall be found for every soldier in our ranks, and that every soldier in our ranks shall be placed at his post. And that some officer, local or otherwise, shall be held responsible for seeing that he goes through with it. This done, we shall, at a leap, go further forward in the way of turning the world upside down than has ever been traveled before. Could the year Nineteen Hundred possibly be more worthily employed than in the attainment of such a result?

Now, I am not desiring to mould every soldier after the same pattern, but I do desire that the most should be made of each one for God and salvation by discovering what talents they possess, how those talents can be best employed and, what is better still, how the employment of those talents can be actually secured.

Among other things, I ask for the following:

That every soldier should re-dedicate himself to the living of a good, holy and Christ-like life.

That every soldier shall be made responsible for doing his share in the work of sustaining certain specified meetings, and shall accept that responsibility.

That every soldier shall accept the responsibility of contributing such portion of his income as he feels to be his duty before God and his comrades to the support of the Army.

That every soldier shall, so far as health and strength will allow, accept the responsibility for doing a certain specified work, for which he shall report himself and be reported upon.

Officers, will you help me in the realization of this purpose? It must commend itself to your judgment. Soldiers, more soldiers are your great want. Soldiers not in name only, or soldiers to look at and talk to, but soldiers in reality, soldiers who are drilled and disciplined, soldiers who all fight. It is soldiers you want. Soldiers will fight your battles, gather your audiences, support your corps, sell your literature, ensure your success, the strength of your hearts, living and dying, and your joy for ever.

Will you help me not only to make more soldiers after this fashion but to bring those you have into line with the object of this paper? Soldiers, will you help me? It is your interests I am advocating. I want you to have the joy on earth and the reward in Heaven of those who turn many to righteousness. I want to make your opportunity and provide the cooperation that will make it easily carried out. You shall have the chance, a big chance, of being soul-winners, and have the comradeship and training and encouragement that will secure success. Will you help me? You can make my task easy and complete. Rise up, my comrades, and say to your officers, here am I, send me. Make me the head, or make me the hand; tell me to lead, or bid me to follow; make me a hewer of wood or a drawer of water, but let me have some wood to hew or some water to draw.

Let me do the work that wants doing, the work for which I am best qualified. Let me be a fighting soldier of the Salvation Army.

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## **Reflections on Ministry within The Salvation Army**

by Phil Wall

Christian youth work is always at it's best when the local context is allowed to determine the flavour, style and culture of it's format and programme. This incarnational mission perspective is at the heart of Salvationism and effective missiological theology (1 Chron 12v32). The following comments are designed to reflect upon the emerging and future context of any Salvation Army Youth Ministries discipleship within the western and westernised worlds and suggestions as to impact of these developments.

### **Context**

The greatest shift that has impacted the way the church has related to young people over the past 50 years has been the emergence of a generation specific youth culture. This emerged as a result of the post war industrial boom allowing many to enter further education, in effect creating a new generation that was no longer a child but had not yet taken on the reigns of adult responsibilities. Into this new paradigm came the powerful genre of rock and roll music and it's associated popular culture. From this has emerged a myriad of youth subcultures along the lines of fashion, music, sport, belief systems and entertainment. Possibly the most powerful expression of this current day phenomena is MTV (Music Television Network) that shows pop music videos 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, all around the world. The impact of this distinctive culture has created numerous challenges to western society and has become a catalyst for the emergence of some of the following trends and the quickening of some others. In truth it is such a dominant influence that it has marked the end of one era and the emergence of a new.

### **'Post' Trends**

**Post Modern Era** - With the end of the colonial era and the cold war, many nation states are re-focusing their energies on self expression and indigenous identity. At the same time there is a globalising of communications and economies which are diffusing the distinctives between such nation states. This has prompted the development of a paradoxical context around the world of both globalisation and localisation. The ubiquitous golden arches of McDonalds are truly global, expressing this consistent icon that is unified around the world. At the same time many tribal groups, nation states and even regions within nations are reacting to this and striving for increased identity and self determination. This

can be most clearly seen in some of the devolutionary moves within in the United Kingdom and Quebec. In one sense these are centuries old issues which are gathering pace in this new context. A fundamental shift has occurred in home life and reality is being viewed, with one age passing (modernity) and another gradually emerging (post modernity).

**Post Christian Era** - Right around the western world the dominance of Christianity as the primary world view has ended with the onset of secularism and pluralism. Christian, theological and ethical dogma has lost much of its authority and credibility and is now perceived purely as the subjective perspectives of a particular sub-culture which can be valued and affirmed only along the same lines as any of the other competing world views. Part of the reaction to this, is a new diversity of spiritualities that has become very much a designer/ pick and mix affair. One of the results of this has been a decreasing knowledge among believers and unbelievers alike of Scripture. At the same time an increasing gap has emerged between the culture of life in the local corps and that lived by young people within the rest of their life. Hence what was already an unhelpful dualistic separation of Army life (Sacred) and school/college/work life (Secular) is now much more accentuated creating an unhelpful fragmentation of their lives. Little if any input is given to the emerging generations as how one might live effectively and authentically in these "two" worlds.

**Post Militarism Era** - The impact of the two World Wars, the Cold War and Vietnam has created very much a post or even anti militaristic culture. National service is almost non-existent around the western world and consequently much of the associated culture is totally alien to the emerging generations of young people. This has created a view of militaristic culture as something to be viewed negatively and even with great suspicion. The result has been a decline of 20% over 15 years in the numbers of young people joining the cadet corps of the various armed services (UK). Tragically the numbers of young people becoming senior soldiers within our own movement has declined at a much more drastic rate. (Between the years 1985 & 1992 the numbers of junior soldiers becoming senior soldiers declined by 70% UK). This shift has been recognised by the military themselves who now in their advertising campaigns use images, not of aggressive fighting forces for recruitment but rather images of benevolence and care. On the most recent Satchi and Satchi publicity campaign run for the British Army there are no images of guns or warfare but merely images of benevolence and care. It would not be true to say that people will no longer want to wear uniforms, in truth every youth subculture has its own uniform that is consistent around the world i.e. like leather jackets for the rockers or designer trainers, baggy jeans and baseball hats for the rappers. What is true is that the "formal" military styles of the current Army is increasingly irrelevant and inaccessible.

**Post Institutional Era** - Part of the emerging context has been an increasing dislike of institutional membership and allegiance. For example The Green Party was quite a significant movement in Europe 10 years ago after the ecological

nightmares of Chernobyl and the Exxon Valdeese. These days The Green Party is very small in comparison, nobody is joining it, but citizens are increasingly green. The emerging generations of young people do not want to join amorphous, impersonal institutions but rather gather round causes and personalities which they can touch and feel. This does not mean that such institutions no longer exist but rather at their point of contact they are much more intimate, engaging and issue specific. The Body Shop would be an example of such personality/issue based organisations.

**The Post Radical Era** - Many young Salvationists have grown up with a hybrid form of Salvationism that sings a song of militant and radical warfare, in the contradictory comfort of a middle class religious sub-culture with little experience of the movements founding radicalism. Conservatism and the status quo are the experienced and perceived forces at work within the movement. The public image is one of quaint religious people, most of whom are of 50 years of age or over. Very few if any, young people would consider the Army in this format as something to which they would desire to commit themselves to. The intransigence of many conservative Corps as well as the low risk sub-culture found in most western contexts, has been struggling for many years to consolidate the commitment of even the children of the regiment. It is interesting to note other Christian groups such as Youth With A Mission, The Jesus Army and numbers of the house churches that have a much more radical expression of discipleship attract significant numbers of YP. These groups are growing around the world, both by conversion and transfer from conservative institutions like The Salvation Army. The afore mentioned trends provide something of the new context within which we have to consider afresh how to approach effective youth ministry within The Salvation Army. What follows are some suggestions as to the consequential moves needed to be made in response to this. Responses

Pre-Scriptive to De-scriptive - In its increasingly diverse context where local distinctives are of greater importance, Salvation Army youth ministry and policy, will need to become de-scriptive as opposed to pre-scriptive. This will make international policies on many aspects of youth ministry increasingly difficult to maintain, due to the phenomenally diverse environments in which people are trying to make them work. One obvious challenge to this is our desire for a unified and uniformed process and product of discipleship, across territorial and zonal borders (CC). This is one of the macro challenges the Army is facing right around the world, as was self evident at the International Youth Forum. Possibly the only uniformity's that may remain will be our vision and values. Pre-scriptive programming often incites creativity and stifles innovation. In truth such pre-scriptive programmes are generally in decline throughout the world as it is. Maximum flexibility will need to be allowed at both Territorial, Divisional and local levels to allow generational/culturally specific ministries to emerge to increase effectiveness of creativity, empowerment and motivation allowing for outreach and discipleship at a local level. I feel the future of Salvation Army youth ministry must focus around it's global vision of winning the world for God and the values

of radicalism which we say we own. Within these values and vision driven parameters, localised freedom will need to be facilitated.

Specialist Youth Personnel - The current system of appointment for Divisional and Territorial Youth Officers mitigates against the development of specialist personnel. These will be increasingly important as diversity expands and issues faced at grass roots increase in their complexity. With the breakdown of family and community life and social fragmentation increasing; and with moral and ethical absolutes in decline, the need for specialist long term personnel in youth ministry will increase. This requires either youth ministry careers to be allowed within officership or the facilitating and development of specialist lay personnel. I believe the absolutes for youth ministry in the western world are local knowledge creativity, flexibility and longevity of relationship.

Personality/Causal allegiance - As in the early days of the Army I believe young people will only gather around personalities that drive and carry specific causes. The magnet of William and Catherine Booth drew many, around the vision God had given them. In the new context that we are facing, young people are decreasingly relating around our systems, structures and programmes at both Territorial and Divisional level, but more around personalities within their framework of reference. This being so, the normative doorway to involvement within The Salvation Army as active members in terms of soldiership (membership of an institution), is in need of serious review. Previous paradigms of allegiance whereby young people would commit to the bigger picture of an international institution may well have gone, being replaced by localised relational allegiance that provide the outworking for their loyalties and commitment.

One current manifestation of this is the increasing numbers of "youth congregations" emerging. These are generationally, specific, worshipping communities that meet on Sunday evenings after a Salvation meeting. For some Young People this is their only point of contact with the Army. The consequences of this upon soldiership and involvement in a normative senior corps are obviously significant. Global Salvo's - Remembering the previous paradoxical development of globalisation and localisation, the need for global awareness is also increasing. With increased cultural diversity within certain territories (such phrases as the Los Angelisation of America demonstrate the increasing diversities of that particular country) demonstrate the need for more cultural understanding amongst young Salvationists. Futurist Tom Sine talks about the culturally impoverished of the next millennium, being young people being brought up in a mono-culture. For instance young UK Salvationists will, by necessity, have to begin to think of themselves as European Salvationists, as opposed to those from merely nation state territories. Part of the answer to this particular challenge is a massive increase in cross cultural mission opportunities and education within our discipling programme. This not only increases global/cultural understanding but from those who had been running such programmes for some

years, the common testimony is that it increases commitment to mission at home as well. Thus much energy must be focused on providing such opportunities for increasing numbers of our young people.

## **Conclusion**

Sullivan and Harper comment in their book "Hope is not a Method" about the re-development of the US military forces, on the importance of roots and values, "Shared values are the foundation of today's Army...knowing that our roots give us a sense of identity. I knew I could draw on that Army's history to find symbols of it's enduring values today they are our roots, tomorrow they will be our legacy. There is strength for us in our Army's history. The values embedded in our history are the foundation on which change must be based". It would seem to me that the same philosophy would be required for our own movement. It is in going back to the roots, our founding dream, that our future success can only be secured. As stated at the beginning, we have a need for effective cultural engagement allowing for maximum flexibility in the field. We must model and lift up once again the militant radicalism which expresses our holistic theology that fights for justice or environmental policy as much as it does for souls. This may be the only means whereby we have any future in securing the commitment of young people and releasing them as effective soldiers of Jesus Christ out into the world.

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