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Issue 10, Dec 2000 - Jan 2001

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Wesley Harris is a retired Salvation Army officer. He served as leader of The Salvation Army in three countries: Scotland, New Zealand, and Canada. In retirement he has written six books aimed mainly at non-Christians, which have sold remarkably well and even been reprinted in India. His website can be found at <http://www.salvos.com/harris>

Column: BATTLE LINES

“For this cause...”

Commissioner Wesley Harris

A SENTENCE in a Salvation Army periodical triggered a train of thought in my mind. It suggested that a corps should not merely offer a culture to die in but a cause to die for. Now I like the Salvation Army culture; it is my comfort zone. Bands, banners (and bonnets?) are all right by me. Wearing the appropriate uniform suits me - and most other people - better than anything else. While not averse to some of the new, so-called ‘plastic choruses’, I also love many of the good, old Army songs and value them not merely for their literary merit but for their theological substance as well.

There are idiosyncrasies which are part of our culture too - funny expressions which are peculiarly *Army* - like ‘going to the open-air’ or ‘being promoted to Glory’ - and I love them. Other people may scratch their heads or give superior smiles or want to exchange our terms for others which sound more ‘churchy’. So be it. The Army culture suits me and probably it always will. Hopefully I will die in it, although not too soon, I trust!

But the writer said that our corps should not merely offer a culture to die in but a cause to die for - and he was right! *The cause is more important than the culture.* The ‘why’ matters more than the ‘how’ and it is encouraging that many Salvationists are rediscovering the reason for which The Salvation Army was brought into being in the first place. Our cause is to honour God, win people for Jesus Christ and serve the needy. If we lose sight of those aims we will have lost the plot and will deserve to be consigned to a museum for religious relics.

As an Army editor I interviewed the late Commissioner Catherine Bramwell-Booth (a granddaughter of the Army’s founders) when she was approaching a hundred years of age. She surprised me by saying that she was all in favour of Army pop groups adding ‘as long as they do what they do for Jesus and not just to show off’. So far as she was concerned it was the *cause* which mattered most.

It has been said that there is not such thing as sacrifice if the cause is big enough. Recently, when conducting meetings in the Philippines I met officers

living and working in terrible districts and exulting in the challenges which they faced. Similarly, in Brazil I saw women officers who wanted nothing more than to be allowed to work in appalling shanty towns where drugs and violence were the order of the day - every day.

Years ago my wife and I were appointed to an English corps and I took an early opportunity of speaking to members of the youth fellowship. What a crowd of spoilt kids they were! They grumbled about everything! They had a catalogue of things which the corps did not provide for them. Eventually I could take no more and suggested that they should try to forget about themselves and do something for other people. "Like what?" they asked glumly. Off the cuff, I suggested that they might organise a dinner and entertainment on Christmas Day for people who would otherwise be on their own. Remarkably, those youngsters took the idea hook, line and sinker. With a bit of help they organised the meal, the entertainment and the transport and had the time of their lives doing something for others. As a group they found themselves through finding a cause.

That was the secret of the verve and vitality which characterised the early Salvationists. They may have been as poor as church mice but they had a great cause and a mighty God and simply had no time to be bored or sorry for themselves. Literally, they were ready to live and die in order to fulfil their mission which, of course, was the case with Jesus himself. On trial before Pontius Pilate he said, "To this end was I born, and for this *cause* came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth..." (John 18.37 - KJV).

During the civil war in China a communist was about to be executed by nationalist forces. Somehow he managed to tear the bandage from his eyes and, just before he was riddled with bullets, he shouted, "I'm dying for an ideal. What are you living for?" That is a challenge for all of us, whatever our age or stage.

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Captain Sandra Ryan, known in Canada as the “angel of Yonge Street” and in Russia as the “Army Mother”, has four children. She was one of six original pioneers in the reopening of The Salvation Army in Russia.

Interview with Captain Sandra Ryan

JAC: Please tell us a little about your conversion.

SR: I first accepted Christ when I was ten years old at a junior music camp. It was during cabin devotions, and I remember opening my eyes having made this decision, expecting the world to look all shining bright and new. I was rather disappointed and remember feeling bit skeptical of the whole thing, wondering if I had 'done it' right. It was either due to this lingering skepticism or perhaps my rather strong and stubborn self-will that my holiness experience did not happen until quite later on in my life. My holiness commitment happened in my second year at training college, at a conference led by Commissioner Ed Reid. He explained simply that both salvation and holiness were choices of the will. I then was able to finally put my strong will to good use and committed myself and my life utterly to the Lord, promising that there would never be anywhere I wouldn't go, or anything I wouldn't do for the Lord. Only lately, however, I am more and more realizing that by far the hardest part of holiness is promising that there will never be anything I will not be for the Lord. 'Going' and 'doing' are far easier than being 'when the requirements for 'being' mean to actually change your very self and nature. This would be what I am presently working through with the Lord.

I perhaps have not kept exactly to theme on this question, but as this journal is particularly for soldiery, I am focussing more on the holiness experience. I believe that this is the vital question we as soldiers should be asking one another and holding each other accountable for. Too many soldiers, I fear are still left recounting their salvation experience as the last real spiritual crisis or development in their lives. I would love to think that our soldiers meetings are spent sharing our sanctification experiences with one another.

JAC: You have served in extremely different parts of the world (northern native Canada and post communist Russia). Please comment on how this has impacted your Salvationism.

SR: I am a fifth generation Salvationist and grew up in the Army in what could be considered a large traditional suburban corps. I have also had the

privilege of serving in an inner city ministry in Toronto. Both my appointments as an officer have caused me to look closely at my Army 'heritage' and forced me to ask some hard questions about what were essentials to the Army's mission and calling and what were simply tools which had been useful at a specific place and time which we had then wrongly canonized and imposed where they were not only not useful for mission but actually impeded mission. These are very hard and sometimes scary questions for an 'Army' girl to have to ask. But in not asking them Salvationism quickly becomes a matter of perpetuating an image rather than efficient and serious mission. I'm very thankful to the Lord that He has always kept me in situations where I have had to constantly keep my Salvationism under the scrutinizing eye of "Is this essential to the mission or not?" Particularly in Russia, where there was no Salvation Army, no structures, no systems, we had to really define the principles we saw as essential to our Salvationist calling and stick by those unbendingly while being willing to try anything, or sacrifice anything that was not essential.

JAC: You pioneered the Army's return to Russia after some media vocerage of your efforts in downtown Toronto. How can the Army exploit media opportunities for the Salvation War?

SR: Now you are going to uncover one of my prejudices. I am quite jaded when it comes to media coverage. There are two factors that come in to play in my attitude and choices in this. The first is our calling to the suffering and needy. I can't stand the thought of a camera or a microphone being stuck into the face of a person who is at a particularly bad point in their lives. Intellectually, I understand that this may help others to understand their situations, but I consider it a conflict of interest for us who are serving to be the initiators of media and PR coverage. The second factor is that we have been more than twice burned by media coverage, particularly since our appointment to Russia. We are constantly confronted with inaccuracies, lies, exaggeration, or simply a gross misreading of the whole situation. I even wince inwardly doing an interview such as this one to be honest, because it is still not in the context of everyday life and ministry. I prefer people to see for themselves and draw their own conclusions. I will not usually prevent my soldiery from doing most media or PR initiatives (although there are many that I have not allowed), but I also do not seek or encourage these.

JAC: You and your husband have created a burgeoning primitive Salvation Army in South Russia. Please comment on the distinctives that have made it successful.

SR: On of the distinctives we have tried to build into the corps in the region is the concept of corps as mission centre. This doesn't sound very

unique, or distinct, but it isn't really how corps are done in many areas of the Army world. The concept of corps in the South is that people are called there to be trained in mission. This means that the corps will ideally never grow extremely large, but that it will be able to replicate itself in new corps constantly being opened. People are disciplined and trained and then placed in the area that they can be most effective, that may be in a team for a new corps plant, that may be in a ministry within the corps where they were converted.

One of the practical outworkings of this is that our local officers covenant for ministries for only a year, and part of this covenant is that they will identify and train someone to work alongside them and potentially replace them. At the end of the year, or upon some new development in needs or ministry, the ministries will be reassessed and people will either continue in their covenanted ministries, or move to a ministry where they can be more effective at this point in time considering reinforcements and available soldiery. This ideally prevents a sense of unhealthy territorialism, and keeps people thinking mission and growth. The other practical outworking of this concept of corps as mission centre is that every soldier must at all times have a clearly identified and covenanted ministry for which they are accountable. The corps is the resource centre for the ministries of the soldiery.

Another of the distinctives would be standards. Our standards of soldiery are necessarily high. It is not easy to be a soldier in our setting, it should not be made to appear easy: this only creates disillusionment and casualties. People need to know clearly what is expected of them, and they need to believe that this is worth living up to. Very often standards are not set clearly, and perhaps not at all within the Army. The great myth is that high standards will scare people away, when in fact people want to be the best that they can be and will only commit their lives to something with a high value, and therefore a high cost.

JAC: The 10/40 Window is glutted with billions of people who haven't heard the Gospel, many of whom are Muslim. God has given you a burden to reach the Muslims. How do you see The Salvation Army strategising and mobilising for this challenge?

SR: I believe that The Salvation Army is still the best suited branch of the Christian church to meet the challenge of reaching out to Muslims. The Islam faith is itself, quite militant, and very social in its expression and involvement in people's lives. Obviously, these aspects of the religion meet a real need in these countries where it is growing at a startling rate. The Salvation Army should be the positive Christian response to these needs. If we are to be effective in this role, however, we must regain a real sense of our unique calling within the Body of

Christ, as the Army of the Lord, and begin to live this out to the full, in a way that wasn't even realized in the early Army. I also believe that we will have to reexamine our safety boundaries in terms of decision making. There is no doubt that this is a physically dangerous mission field in a way that mission fields have never been. This should not be a deterrent, but must be wisely and scripturally approached so that fear is not the deciding factor in our mission decisions. I also believe that we must reexamine how we do 'Army'. We should be looking more along the lines of guerilla warfare models and less at the 'standing-army' model that we have used for years.

JAC: What books have had the greatest impact on you? Why?

SR: Le Marechale - The Heavenly Witch presented me a view of true primitive salvationism.

The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallace Willard gave me some really practical discipling.

Prayer by Richard Foster really clarified and intensified my prayer life.

Les Miserables by Victor Hugo was an inspirational portrayal of one man's conversion and of how self-righteousness can destroy

The Brothers Karamazov by Dostoevsky has some amazing insights on love and ministry and forgiveness

JAC: Who are your heroes? Why?

SR: My life has been full of heroes, from childhood. I really try and find a hero in virtually everyone I meet. This sounds weak, but it's true. You can find something exemplary and worth imitating in so many people. I wouldn't find it easy, or perhaps even beneficial to give specific names. The general "why" would be faithfulness, single-mindedness and commitment. I also love it when there's a flash of creativity and unusual intelligence. This really wins a place in my heart.

JAC: General Catherine Booth went on record, stating, "The great fundamental principle of The Salvation Army is... the law of adaptation" This comment has been used by many salvos at many times toward diverse ends. What is the proper understanding of this fundamental principle for us today, in light of tensions between priestly versus prophetic roles?

SR: Unfortunately, this word adaptation has been used by those who either don't understand, or don't want to own our unique calling in the Body of Christ. They want to become like everybody else and feel that this is doing some kind of service to the greater body. Paul speaks out against this kind of thinking very strongly in Corinthians 12 saying

that we must understand and live out our role and calling very specifically and faithfully for the good of every believer. I would be even more specific than you when you speak of a priestly versus prophetic role. I think our role is definitely militant. I don't own this simply as a nice descriptive metaphor. We are called to be God's Army. This is something that I believe is integral to God's plan for His body, and that this goes beyond The Salvation Army. In other words, this is His plan that He has entrusted with us, but if we don't want to fulfill this role and calling, I believe that He will find others who are willing to be His Church militant. We see this already in the Church that other denominations are accepting this identity more and more. Adaptation is the principle of sacrificing anything that in anyway detracts from this calling and mission, and not merely blending in with everyone else. No one needs that.

JAC: You are in the midst of changing appointments. What is the most significant part of your ministry today?

SR: Actually, I am presently in a role that is not a natural or easy one for me. I love frontline ministry, but at this point in the development of our corps in the region, I am the coordinator of the ministers, and not the minister myself. This means that I work to resource, encourage, strengthen, and coordinate those who do the frontline ministries in our region. I love the fact that I can see people who were once so young and dependent in the faith, being strong for others and leading the way. Virtually all the people we have ministering with us, however, are, nonetheless, relatively new in the faith, therefore, one of the most important and vital parts of my ministry is still prayer - to protect them, and to undergird their ministries.

JAC: What are your dreams for The Salvation Army?

SR: My dream for The Salvation Army is that we would understand and own our calling and mission, and live it out with joy and without apology or regret.

I also dream that there would be a real cleansing process in the Army so that those remaining, would be truly serious in their commitment and understand the life and death nature of this ministry we have.

JAC: What new challenges do you foresee for The Salvation Army in the 3rd Millennium.

SR: I see our major challenges being financial, relational, and organizational. We are too much in debt to too many outside sources,

and have really become confused with necessities and desires. We need some real testing and purifying in this area as it has become in many cases, the defining variable of our decisions and choices, as opposed to ministry imperatives. The relational challenges are tied in very closely to this first challenge. We have become debtors to too many. Because we have accepted their money, we are obliged to allow them to make choices and ministry decisions for us. This particularly applies to government. The final challenge, I have referred to as organizational. The structure of the Army must change. I think that everyone is in agreement with this. How that change will look, and how well we will be able to bend with this change will be a huge challenge.

JAC: What is God teaching you these days?

SR: He is teaching me humility by being in the background constantly while my soldiers, and colleague officers take the front lines. He is also teaching me about the issue of healing. This is an area of my life and ministry that I feel necessary to the mission of The Salvation Army, but I am presently struggling to understand and live out my particular role in this.

JAC: Can you tell us of any memorable preaching you have heard, and what made it outstanding?

SR: The most memorable preaching I have heard has always been from people who I could not name, and who had no particular "gifts" in this area. What made this preaching so amazing for me is that it helped me to understand how important openness and the Spirit are to the breaking of the Word. At first, when I listen to people who clearly do not have a natural talent for public speaking, I find myself immediately becoming critical. But if I can check that attitude in my own heart and with prayer really concentrate on what the Spirit can say through them, it can be a truly incredible process. I think what makes preaching like this so notable for me is that the speaker himself becomes almost incidental to what is going on. But not really, because, if nothing else, they must be pure and prepared. I believe that these are the prerequisites to being used by the Spirit. Then the rest depends upon the receiver and the Spirit Himself. This is a good lesson to remember before I go up to speak. As Paul said, "so that your faith may rest on God's power and not on the eloquence of man".

JAC: What is your most memorable spiritual experience?

SR: You like these "most" questions don't you? That's not really how I live or take in the experiences of my life, so I find them almost impossible to answer. In fact, I would feel sorry for a person that

could answer this question in a few words. It would take me a book, perhaps many to answer such a question. Many days, I can have several experiences that at that point in my life would easily qualify for the most memorable, but I pray that tomorrow they will be preempted by the latest experiences.

JAC: Please comment on the state of aggressive Christianity in the 21st century. How relevant is primitive salvationism?

SR: I think as Christians we have to stop giving away so much of our ground. I believe that the battle of this century will not initially be one of direct attack but of steady insidious stepping back until we find ourselves well within enemy territory. We must be unapologetic about our calling and our salvation. So often by even the 'nice' people of society we are made to feel guilty, or intolerant. We must remember that they need clarity and surety from us.

The focus on primitive salvationism is valid as long as it speaks of essence and not of historical perspective. I think we must be constantly looking for and reaching for new models of ministry that express our calling purely and uncompromisingly. The focus must be forward and beyond who we were in our beginnings. What we must take from the past is the passion, the single mindedness, and the sharp focus on the neediest of the needy - and translate this in to new forms and methods.

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Geoff Ryan has walked and lived where most would choose otherwise. A nineyear pioneer of the re-opening of The Salvation Army in Russia, and most recently leading humanitarian relief efforts in the dangerous and war-torn region of Chechnya, Geoff has earned a doctorate in the school of experience.

“Not to Reason Why...”

Captain Geoff Ryan

“If knowing answers to life’s questions is absolutely necessary to you, then forget the journey. You will never make it, for this is a journey of unknowables – of unanswered questions, enigmas, incomprehensibles, and most of all, things unfair.”(Madame Jean Guyon)

“The question of why evil exists is not a theological question, for it assumes that it is possible to go behind the existence forced upon us as sinners. If we could answer it then we would not be sinners. We could make something else responsible. Therefore the “question of why” can always only be answered with the “that” which burdens man completely.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall / Temptation)

“Holiness is the solution to every problem.”
(Slogan in an online evangelical Christian prayer letter)

* Names have been changed

Fatima was three years - a year older than my daughter, a year younger than my youngest son. She had two days to live. She lay in the middle of a hospital bed, arms and legs straight like a stick figure, wrapped in blood-stained gauze to cover the burns on 70% of her body. Her face was burned too. Tubes snaked out of her nostrils. The only movement, the only sign of life, came from her eyes. They were wide open and followed me as I moved around the room, large and brown and wet. Her breath came in short gasps as drawn out breaths caused too much pain.

Fatima was a Chechen and she died in that hospital bed in the city of Nazran in the Muslim Republic of Ingushetia, Southern Russia. The Second Chechen War as it is becoming known, is a brutal conflict with a history behind it stretching back several hundred years. It is a particularly nasty example of the religio-ethnic, semi-nationalistic “peoples war” that have characterized the declining years of the 20th century. “There is no one to root for in

this mess of a war” wrote Colin McMahon of the Chicago Tribune. He is dead right.

Fatima was in the kitchen of her house in a small village in the Chechen interior when a flying piece of shrapnel from a rocket exploded into the hot water tank spewing boiling water all over her. At the border crossing into Ingushetia, the soldiers would not let her mother cross with her for three days. During those days, winter days, she lay in the open air, on the side of the road, with her open burns. By the time they were permitted to cross and made it to the hospital in Nazran, it was far too late.

As the nurses changed the bandages for the last time on the day she died, silent tears flowed out of Fatima’s eyes to stain her pillow. She never complained and died with her eyes open, they simply stopped blinking, stopped watching, stopped seeing. One final, painful breath.

I fled the hospital that day and stood outside gulping in the fresh air on the street. I breathed in huge drawn-out breaths to compensate for what Fatima wanted to do, but could not. My project manager for the relief effort we are running in Ingushetia and Chechnya, was quiet and tense. He is a Chechen, a Muslim, a refugee like Fatima. “I have a daughter her age”, he stated. I knew his story and knew that he has, in fact, five daughters. At the beginning of our acquaintance I foolishly asked, “no sons?”, knowing how important sons are in the patriarchal Chechen culture. “I had two sons”, he replied stonily. “Twins, both 1 ½ years old. During the first war* they were hiding in our basement with their grandmother during an attack. A trooper threw a grenade into the basement.”

I can still see Fatima’s small face at night sometimes. Bright child eyes - much like my daughter’s. I can hear the short, sharp struggling gasps of air. I can smell the presence of death in the hospital room. I can see her mother slumped in the corner of the room, unblinking with Islamic resignation. “If Allah wills...”. I think of the soldiers in the planes who bombed the village and the ones at the checkpoint who rejected the small amount of money that Fatima’s mother offered them as a bribe. How much is the life of a three-year old worth? Does the price go up in a war zone? I imagine what I would do to them if I could get my hands on them.

In spite of my theological training, in spite of myself, I could easily wonder where God was. I do not allow myself to. I never said a word further to my manager about this. We were silent together. He as a fatalistic Muslim. Me - a realist who has made a deal with God.

* (1994-1996)

* * * * *

I am 38-years old, have lived in three different countries and have seen something of life. For the past nine years I have lived in Russia. I am a Captain in The Salvation Army and am presently responsible for all Army operations, evangelical and social, in nine cities in the south of Russia.

Since arriving in this land, a month before the coup that ended Communism, I have changed much, learnt much. As one writer has noted, Russia marks people. Some it makes exquisite, others it cripples.

I like to think of myself as a realist and as such, have come to a firm realization, a firm conviction, on three matters. I have “worked them out” over the years of my life to date, in a hundred engagements with the enemy, with much “fear and trembling” as required by the Scriptures.

The first conviction is this: “Not every problem has a solution.” The second one is: “Life is not fair.” The third one is with regard to the existence of evil in the world: “The question is not to ask ‘why?’, but rather, ‘what now?’ There is no point on speculating ‘why’ it exists and ‘why’ God allows it. Far better to acknowledge the facts before one and deal with these.

These are more than convictions of mine, to me they are proven facts - slow in coming but steadily forged over years as a soldier in the fight of faith. They cannot be disproved to me. They form a paradigm that allows me to fight the battles God has sent me into. They allow me to survive, to get through the night. Bear with me as I continue the retelling of three encounters of recent months by way of explanation.

* * * * *

“I’m afraid to say it...to say what I am really thinking.” It was quiet and warm in the car and snow was falling outside. Tears formed in the corners of her large eyes as she bowed her head and stared unseeing into her lap.

I have known Natasha for almost nine years now, starting from the time she wandered into one of our first services in the city then known as Leningrad, now called St. Petersburg. It was early autumn 1991. She got saved and stayed on to join the Corps and then eventually working fulltime for the Salvation Army. She was eighteen. Born and raised in Kazakhstan in Central Asia, at seventeen Natasha left home to become an actress. She did not make the stage, instead she found us. In 1994, Natasha moved south to Rostov-on-Don as part of a team assisting my wife and myself as we church planted in the region.

Three days after arriving in Rostov, Natasha received a call from home - her

Father had died of alcohol poisoning. She went home to bury him and then returned to us. The other team members went back north after a year while Natasha stayed.

I have never met anyone with a gift for working with children like Natasha. She can work magic with them, becoming one with their world yet remaining apart, moving easily in and out and never really belonging in either. Now aged 28, she remains to me the most perplexing combination of childish innocence and worldly guile. She exudes simplicity yet at times comes out with the most profound thoughts. She needs people, an audience - yet is almost painfully shy. She remains alone in the biggest crowd and her dazzling smile is marred only by the sadness in her eyes. She is an enigma. She is also now an orphan

In September the rest of her family died - her elderly mother, her older brother and his wife. Wiped out in one afternoon by a man as yet free. If Americans choose to kill mainly with guns - Russians use knives, and Natasha's family died a Russian death with no clear motive, blood splattered walls and lingering agony in the ill-equipped emergency ward of the local hospital.

At the time of our conversation, Natasha had just returned from burying the rest of her family. "I think I hate God", she continued. I had noticed that during meetings she did not sing anymore and that her eyes remain open and staring during prayer. "I can't sing, I can't pray, I can't even think of God without..." The inevitable 'why?' remained unspoken, but everywhere present.

She had a point. Since consecrating her life to God almost a decade before she had served faithfully, doing what we asked of her, going where we wanted - a gypsy life with no real fixed abode in often difficult places, working long hours, minimal pay. "No personal life whatsoever" was one of her habitual sayings, said only half-jokingly. "...what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." What more? Why then?

Her mother would visit from time to time - a simple soul, a nice lady, benign. Not asking much from life and never having received much. She believed in God, as all women her age in Russia seem to nowadays. She smiled much, like her daughter. I remember her singing a folk song one night during a campfire at one of our summer camps. "My mother was believer", Natasha whispered, "but my brother..." The tears came again.

Very briefly I considered defending God by explaining the complicated relationship between free will, the Sovereignty of God and the terrible implications of God's refusal to win by coercion and thus the sin within and

the evil around. My heart was not in it. It would not have helped.

I wanted to hold her close, comfort her and tell her that I would look after her and that nothing bad would ever happen again. This would have been a lie, though, and was not appropriate in any case. So I bought her an ice cream, assured her that the culprit would receive his punishment (if not here, then in the hereafter). "Nothing will change what has happened", I said, "the issue now is not why, but what next?"

I offered my help in a practical manner with the legal details. We talked no further about God.

* * * * *

Olga is not the type to "rage, rage against the dying light", though I would if I were her. She is placid by nature, docile some would say, certainly calm and quiet. Maybe things like this happen to people like her because of this, because she lets them happen. Who can tell?

She is 21 now and came to us after having made contact with our HIV/AIDs, Drug & Alcohol Rehab Program. She came for counseling. She was eighteen. Her live-in boyfriend was an addict and infected her in bed. Olga became HIV positive. The counseling helped and she started attending church.

She got saved, became a member, left her job selling in the local market, took discipleship training with another Christian agency in the city then entered our own mission training program. She changed from an emotional flatliner to a smiling, cheerful follower of Jesus. "I can't believe how I lived before," she said, "I feel like it was all only a dream and only now have I woken up to life!"

One night Olga's old boyfriend came calling, one thing led to another - he raped her. She became pregnant. Her grandmother insisted she get an abortion - she refused as a Christian. We suggested she put the child up for adoption - she refused as a mother. The corps council allowed her to remain as a soldier in good standing. She had done nothing wrong, nothing at all.

The boyfriend now attends Sunday meetings, his motives unclear. I shake his hand resentfully, not wanting to meet his gaze lest he read in my eyes what I truly think of him. How could he? How could God let him ruin it all - everything was going great. Olga finally, for the first time in her short twenty years had the chance at life. She had taken hold of hope and was fashioning a future. All now ripped out and stamped out like a cigarette butt in a ten-minute scuffle in a dingy apartment on an autumn evening. The dream turned into a nightmare.

Olga has stopped smiling these days. She is due in the next month. How long will she live? Will her child be HIV positive? Where does the boyfriend fit in? Olga does not ask these questions, she is too placid, too resigned. She simply does not smile anymore.

I could rage for her, it is in me - this is beyond unfair, a no-win situation for everyone, no answers in sight. But I do not rage. I shake my head and move on. I am a soldier, I know there is little point in lingering over a casualty. The medics have been called. There is nothing more for me to do here.

* * * * *

As a Westerner and therefore a child of the enlightenment, I am a product of rationalism. As a Protestant I am therefore uncomfortable with mystery. Every question has an answer, every problem a solution, there is always a way to figure things out and satisfy the need to know. We were given this understanding with our mother's milk.

But nine years in Russia, close engagement with the Eastern Orthodox tradition and with a nation whose thinking patterns are more Eastern than Western and who are therefore comfortable with mystery – all this has had an effect. I have changed, I think differently now.

Somewhere along the journey I stopped trying to figure out how evil came into the world; why God allows little children to suffer; why life is so unfair to some and so generous to others. I stopped asking 'why?' To wonder 'why' is a luxury it turns out, one that I indulged in when I had the time and space, when I could turn the problem over at arm's length, rationally and objectively weigh all sides of the issue, when it mainly only theory that I had experienced. Then I wondered 'why?' and I wondered much about it. That was a long time ago.

Theory gave way to experience, to reality, and I found things different on the battlefield, with the enemy pressing hard and the ground slick with blood; when you are bone-tired with the fear that has been throbbing through your veins so fast for so long that it seems you will split open; when the stench of sin and evil and pain clogs your nostril and invades your lungs. When this happens, you could care less 'why' this is all happening. You are in the middle of the 'what now?' and there is no other reality. To think otherwise would be fatal, the enemy waits for such an opening. So you follow orders, parry and thrust and slash and leave the philosophers to contemplate 'why?'

And so I compromised and made a deal with God. I would no longer ask 'why?' I would live with mystery and paradox and a hundred unanswered questions and

unsolvable problems. I would forget my upbringing and my heritage and learn my lessons from the long-suffering Slavs among who God has sent me to live and work. I would put aside my ruminations and work with the 'what now?' I would fight evil and unrighteousness with all my might and save as much of the world as I could. I would focus and not allow any distractions, any luxuries, I would no longer ask 'why?'

"Ours is not to question why, but to do and die", goes the verse. And I have died a hundred deaths since I made that deal - in hospital rooms, bedsides, darkened cars, back alleys and lately amid the carnage of war. But I have not gone back on my deal. I have fought and will continue to fight, to the very end.

When all is finished for me, however. When I have fought the good fight to the end and I stand before the Lord, bloody and scarred no doubt, but hopefully unbowed. Then I will ask of God to keep His end of the bargain.

I will talk about Natasha and Fatima and Olga and the hundreds and hundreds of others - and I will want some answers.

I will ask 'why?' I will scream it out until it fills the heavens and shakes the earth. I will deafen the angels with my 'WHY?'

Where was I when He laid the earth's foundations?

Where was He when Fatima was shivering on the ground as the infection spread through her body?

I really do not think that it will come to this, however. God is good, He keeps His promises. After all, we made a deal.

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Major (Dr.) Graham Harris is the Dean of Studies of The Salvation Army College of Further Education, in Sydney, Australia. He holds a few master's degrees and a Ph.D., mainly in English and Religious Education. The Major teaches regularly in New Testament Studies and Christian Ethics. He has four children, and six and a bit grandchildren.

“SOUP, SOAP AND SALVATION” OR ARE THE SOUP AND SOAP, SALVATION?

Graham Harris

I read it again – in *The Officer* (April '98, p 40), “The twin missions of evangelism and social work”. I wish that it had not been written for it is a mistake to see the Army as having two missions – one of evangelism and another of social work – for all areas of our work are evangelical. They are vehicles for the salvation of God which is in Christ Jesus.

If this is not so then what in the world is the officer who labours in the Adult rehabilitation center about? Is he simply involved in some form of very well organised social amelioration? If he is then he is not true to what should be the basic motivation of all of our efforts – delivering to persons the salvation of God.

Some eight years ago I was appointed to the managership of “Miracle Haven” – a part of the Australia Eastern Territory’s rehabilitation services. With me I took my ideas that salvation was concerned with the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The men within this program had only a limited idea of such concepts, but had some very strong ideas of their own as to what constituted “salvation”. They saw the salvation of God in such categories as, “Having the missus and kids back”, being clean and sober for days and weeks at a time, not being in jail, having a decent job, and many other similar ideas.

During the first year that I was at Miracle Haven sixty-four men accepted Christ as their saviour. Some eight years later a considerable number of these men are members of churches and are possessed of both mine and their ideas of salvation. Perhaps we might also make the point that each of these persons who opened their lives up to God were adult males – a section of the community in which it would seem that we have been singularly deficient in winning to Christ. There should not be a division of work into two groups – there is one work.

Who can doubt the reality of the categories that these men espoused as salvation? They are, in fact the categories and ideas that our Lord had.

It is false to manufacture a dichotomy of service. The couple who use every talent of earth and heaven that they can muster in an effort to toilet-train a

retarded person are extending the salvation of Christ just as truly as the territorial evangelist who calls to repentance from sin and faith in our Lord in a campaign meeting.

The performance of miracles by our Lord was the carrying out of his saving responses to hurt humanity – to the blind, lame, the withered and even the dead – just as truly as His declaring a man to be forgiven of his sins. In fact, such miracles as these appear to be considerably in the preponderance in the gospel account as the immediate response of our Lord in His incarnation. Such are the salvation of God reaching to hurt humanity. One is simply not the precursor to the other. The soup and the soap is salvation – and should never be thought of what leads to “real” salvation.

It is most unfortunate to think in categories of “evangelism” and “social services” because, not only is it wrong in evangelical theory it can tend to make people think that they are in either a prime or secondary form of officership. For a long while many persons have smarted under these unwise classifications. It is simply not true to say that an officer must be either more spiritual or better informed to serve in any area of our work. All require of us a singularity of purpose – to declare the good news of Christ Jesus.

In *Salvation Story* (pg 93) the following is said:

The Gospels reveal that Jesus cared about every dimension of human life and how sin has distorted it, and that his ministry demonstrated a healing response to human suffering and disease in all its forms. ... The restoration of the covenant required the restoration of health in every relationship of human life: spiritual, emotional, social, physical.

That is a very wise word and indicates a total doctrine of salvation which does away with false and unwise dichotomy.

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THE KING'S GIFTS AND THE EMPEROR'S CLOTHES

Stephen Court

"Eagerly desire the greater gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31). This culminated his discussion of apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helps, administration, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (14:27-30). These are some of the King's gifts.

The Salvation Army is a holiness movement. Holiness is essential to our success.

Holiness presumes implicit obedience to God. If, at any point, we are disobedient, then we are no longer holy.

Inasmuch as we do not eagerly desire these gifts, to that extent we are disobedient and have ruptured fellowship with God. Insofar as we deny the King's gifts, to that degree we are wearing the emperor's clothes, we're naked and we're fooling ourselves that we're clothed in the righteousness that characterizes The Salvation Army.

WHY DENY?

Gifts represent the power of God. Frequently a manifestation of the power of God has effected opposition. Gifts represent the presence of God. Sometimes the presence of God is uncontrollable and so has provoked fear. Gifts represent the grace of God. Occasionally this is bastardized such that it spawns pride. In our concern to avoid these human responses, opposition, fear, and pride, The Salvation Army has retreated from obedience to God's command. It has bullied us into rupturing our fellowship with God, into forfeiting our holiness. In denying the King's gifts, we've put on the emperor's clothes.

We desire unity. Inauspiciously, unity is often won at the lowest common denominator. So as not to exclude the 'weaker comrades' we compromise on the gifts of God. To desire unity is good, but not at the expense of desiring gifts.

Some time after General William Booth walked the earth spiritual authority somehow underwent declension to a spirit of control. A spirit of control is offended when gifts evincing the presence of God take matters out of our hands.

Opposition, fear, pride, unity, and control take their places in battle

array against healing, helps, administration, tongues, and interpretation of tongues primed for an engagement that will determine the Army's destiny.

IS IT ARMY?

This is the first question most Salvationists ask when confronted with something outside their experience. Despite what our more recent history of excommunicating officers with more visible gifts and forbidding the use of some gifts in public meetings might suggest, these more 'outstanding' gifts are certainly Army. General William Booth explains:

"For this reason they were important to the world, and their possession today might be a great blessing to mankind. There is not a word in the Bible which proves that we might not have them at the present time, and there is nothing in experience to show they would not be as useful today as in any previous period of the Church's history. No man, therefore, can be condemned for desiring them, and the recent remarkable signs and wonders wrought amongst us not only demand, but shall have our most profound and sympathetic consideration" (GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT, in the WAR CRY. March 14th, 1885).

EAGER DESIRE

I know several people in my Corps who are looking for work. One is particularly eager to find a job. He has more than 50 resumes out and calls on prospective employers weekly. He eagerly desires work.

John Wesley comments on the gifts: "they are all worth your pursuit" (on 1 Corinthians 12:31, NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY- THE SALVATION ARMY Edition).

According to Wesley, pursuit is eager desire with legs on. If we eagerly desire something we will pursue it. We will continue to call on the prospective employer to ask for a job. We will continually call on the King to ask for His gifts. If we don't eagerly desire the gifts, then we act in disobedience to God, and break fellowship, waiving holiness.

ARE WE FOR OR AGAINST?

General Clarence Wiseman argues that we must not seek personal aggrandizement from gifts (LIVING AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT. p5). This is definitely a real temptation. But such a truth, used at the service of arguing against tongues, is no more a reason to forbid its exercise than to note that excellent musicianship also brings with it the temptation to personal aggrandizement and so conclude that cornet solos should be forbidden in public meetings.

Wiseman admits, "Not a few Christians have found release from personal inhibitions and new freedom and joy in the Lord through the exercise of the gift of tongues, and no one would wish to deny them this liberating experience" (LIVING AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT. p8).

In 1907, General Booth noted, "It appears that two or three corps are divided on this question of tongues and it will be a good thing if abiding evil does not ensue" (in Wiseman, LIVING AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT. p6). Agreed. What is abiding evil in this case? Surely it is that these corps shut out the Holy Spirit so that they can maintain a fleshy unity.

On the gift of healing, General Bramwell Booth explains: "For we have not merely recognized that the healing of the sick by the power of God has from the beginning been associated with the office of prophets, priests, teachers, and apostles, but it has always seemed to us in perfect harmony with the views and experience of the Army itself that God should heal the sick after this fashion... We have insisted that in fact God does raise up the sick in answer to our prayers; and numerous instances... of this healing ministry have occurred throughout our history" (ECHOES AND MEMORIES. p71).

Turning specifically to tongues, he continues: "We have to be suspicious of any voices or gifts which make men indisposed to bear the Cross or to seek the salvation of others; and although some of our people have received what is spoken of as the gift of tongues, we have almost invariably found that one of the consequences has been a disposition to withdraw from hard work... I believe that these things, as I have witnessed them, are divine in their origin" (ECHOES AND MEMORIES. p71,72). General Bramwell Booth's handling of the issue is a model for us today. First, he recognizes that the gift of tongues is from God. Second, he only disciplines those who slack in their duty. The discipline itself has nothing to do with the tongues; it has everything to do with those who are slack in their duty.

Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle takes a different approach to Wiseman and Booth. He argues that the gift of tongues is the seventh of nine gifts mentioned and that it will eventually cease (RESURRECTION LIFE AND POWER. p180. He intimates on page 183 that prophecy and tongues may already have ceased. This is not an official Salvation Army position). Brengle mentions the order to suggest that it is not important. However, its importance results not from its priority in Paul's list but in the fact that it is a gift of God. And while it is true that tongues will cease, it is also true that prophecy will cease, and every other gift of God- but not until Jesus comes back.

General Wiseman asks, "What should be the Army's attitude toward the gift

of tongues? Surely the answer is that it should be the attitude of Paul" (LIVING AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT, p6). Tongues have their place in the Bible and therefore should not be ignored. Wiseman reminds us that Paul said, "Forbid not the speaking of tongues," adding the cautionary word, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1Corinthians 14:39,40).

The arguments of Generals Booth, Booth, and Wiseman, and of Commissioner Brengle, if not their final decisions, lead consensually to the conclusion that we are for the exercise of all the gifts.

ANSWERING THE WRONG QUESTIONS

And finally, Brengle falls into the same trap that the Army has been stuck in on the issue of sacraments, answering a question no one is asking, defending a position that no one is challenging. For sacraments the mistake is that the Army argues that it is not necessary for salvation. The vast majority of Christians will grant this point. On tongues, Brengle argues that it is love that is important, not tongues. Of course, no Christian is going to argue that the gift of tongues is important and that love is not important!

With humility, we have to recognize that our heroes didn't have the complete understanding of everything Christian. That goes for two of my heroes, Brengle and Wesley. Wesley can only guess at what the word of knowledge is: "perhaps an extraordinary ability to understand and explain the Old Testaments types and prophecies" (THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY- THE SALVATION ARMY EDITION, 1 Corinthians 12:8).

BY ALL MEANS, TO SAVE SOME

Wesley does agree with Scripture that tongues are for unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22), "to engage their attention, and convince them the message is of God." One of the difficulties in the Army's more recent tradition is that we cannot engage sinners' attention and convince them the message is of God through the use of tongues in public meetings if we cannot use tongues in public meetings. Now, in my experience, seeing people saved is hard enough as it is. But to limit us from exercising a God-given gift for the purpose of publicly convincing sinners is to handcuff our soldiers in their battle with satan. No wonder he has the upper hand.

Tragically, since Scripture is not received by Salvationists on this issue, General William Booth leaves us with this exhortation:

"By all means let us aspire after higher gifts. Far be it, my comrades, from me to say one word that would stay the longing of any heart for the

extraordinary gifts already mentioned. I long for them myself. I believe in their necessity, and I believe they are already amongst us. By all means let us have the perfection of the Divine method of working. The poor infidel world should be made to see all of God that is possible, in order that it may believe" (GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT, in the War Cry. March 14th, 1885).

If we do not accept the King's gifts, we are stuck wearing the emperor's clothes.

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NOT IS IT TRUE?, BUT DOES IT WORK?

John Norton Jr.

The church has some really good answers....

Should we baptize by sprinkling, complete immersion, or not at all? Does the Holy Spirit come from the Father and the Son, or the Father only? Is it wrong to drink and smoke? Are we saved by faith and good deeds, or only by faith?

.... that no one is asking.

These questions, and similar ones, were in generations past the cause of serious debate and division among Christians. They have relatively no meaning to the non-believing world we are trying to reach.

Unfortunately, the church is often diligent in giving right answers to questions no one is asking. The issues of yesterday are not those of today.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTION

[The church needs to begin addressing the right question, again.](#)

Christians have spent the last two to three hundred years dealing with rationalism. The single most important question for Christians to answer in that time was this – “Is Christianity true?” People wanted to know the truth about Jesus and whether or not he really existed, whether he really died and rose again. People wanted to know if the Bible was true, did it really contain the sayings of Jesus, and was it a reliable source of God’s exact thought and intention for our lives. The questions and challenges got very detailed, wondering whether or not every single statement in the Bible was literally true. The resurrection of Jesus was cross-matched to secular history to determine if it was a real possibility. Every question revolved around truth, the ultimate measure of science. Many good and valuable questions were asked. The church spent a long time answering these questions. In the end, theologians became experts in reason and logic.

Just as we got the answers down pat, the questions began to change.

The problem today is that Christians have learned to answer the questions of science and reason really well but that people are no longer asking it. The question of today’s Baby Busters and Generation-Xer’s is this – “Does Christianity work?” The question today is not so much whether or not Jesus died

on the cross but whether that event can make any practical difference in our lives. The question then is not 'Is it true?', but 'Does it work?'

We are placed squarely between the times of modernity and that which is yet to come... Making the right choices is crucial.

Daniel J. Adams, "Toward a Theological Understanding of Postmodernism"

We can bemoan the post-modern rejection of absolute truth and continue to preach answers that no one is asking, or we can embrace the challenging question before us: Does Christianity really work?

DOWN, AND ALMOST OUT

Christianity has taken a beating. The last few centuries have not been kind. If you go back three or four hundred years, Christianity reigned supreme. There was a time when kings dared not disagree with the church, when people lay in bed at night concerned about their eternal souls.

If Christianity has learned a lesson in humility, than perhaps some good has come out of its fall from popular grace. I would not want a return to the time when Christians ruled society but were unable to restrain themselves from abusing their power.

As a result of the church meddling in areas it did not belong, Christianity by the seventeenth century came under heated intellectual attack. By the nineteenth century Christianity was spending most of its time internally bickering and dividing, and outwardly trying to muster up some kind of defense. Eventually it would be put on the endangered species list. People had had enough. The twentieth century began with skeptics declaring God dead and with critics writing the church's obituary. To make matters worse, hypocrisy was exposed in some churches and stupidity in some Christians. The critics had an easy job hunting.

Making fun of born-again Christians is like hunting dairy cows with a high powered rifle and scope.

American pop-humorist
P.J. O'Rourke

Although Christianity was to continue as an institution, it was nevertheless increasingly outside the mainstream of culture and society. It would be disgraced in the halls of intellect and its life and issues would lose significance to the populace in general. It was being ignored, a fate worse than death. For the most part Christians responded by either withdrawing into self-centered spirituality

(fundamentalism) or abandoning their principles (theological liberalism).

The new thinking was that rationalism and the Industrial Revolution meant an end to superstition and the need to believe in God. The argument was that from here on in society would believe only what could be proven by science, trusting in the human power of reason and goodness to solve every problem. There was no place for the supernatural and spiritual. In practice, religion would be kept as a kind of social institution, for morale and conscience, but without any real purpose or contribution to progress.

AN AWAKENING

While preparations in Western culture were being made for the church's eventual funeral, there began to develop a new interest in things spiritual. This new awakening had root in two world wars separated by global economic depression, which was the beginning of the end of the great dream of a better world through science, reason, and so-called universal human goodness. I believe this new spirituality was birthed somewhere during the height of the material prosperity of the 1950's. People began to ask themselves if there was something more to life than just the promise of science.

The new spiritual awakening began to reject the 'intellectual-only' religion of 19th century Christianity. This came about for many reasons, not the least of which included a realization of the emptiness of material prosperity. The psychedelic 60's, with their social changes, saw a new search for meaning in life. At times the old and the new have clashed but there has continued to the new millennium an ever increasing interest in spirituality. Each succeeding generation has looked to deeper and deeper ways to find an answer to their spiritual needs.

The new awakening in all things spiritual is not an awakening necessarily to Christianity. It does not mean that there is an interest in organized religion. Rather, polls in Western nations now suggest that the majority of the population are interested in spiritual things and even believe in the supernatural, yet church attendance in North America and Europe continue to slide. Interest in UFO's and the 'spirituality within' grab more attention today than debates about the Trinity.

A new spiritual awakening is occurring in human culture, an awakening brought about by a critical mass of individuals who experience their lives as a spiritual unfolding, a journey in which we are led forward by mysterious coincidences.

From the New York Times bestseller
"The Celestine Prophecy" by James Redfield.

This new awakening is reaching mainstream culture and society. It is linked closely with Hollywood and the film industry, theatres being the new

temple and movies the new sermon.

Theologians and Bible students are by and large still being trained in the world of modern (not postmodern) thought, being taught answers to questions that no one is asking. If Christianity is as true as we passionately believe it to be, let it stand on its own now without us working to prop it up. I believe a shift in theological education is required to bring Christian thought to the postmodern mind.

MATERIALISM, INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION ARE OUT

Western culture has concluded that material goods are boring. Everyone has seen those bumper stickers that read, "The one with the most toys at the end wins," or "Wealth is not everything – health is 3%." So for a while, before we finally grew up at 21, or 39, or 52 years of age, we buy into this philosophy of finding a bigger and better toy. We buy a car, visit abroad, purchase a house, buy things to put in the house, buy a cottage, go on big trips, then get a bigger car, a bigger house, buy more things to put into the bigger house, and then we are bored. How much of that can you take? Granted, it is nice for a while. The priest may tell us, "Blessed are the poor," but we all know that the rich are not exactly missing out on many blessings. It is not so much that being rich is a curse but that it is ultimately not satisfying in and of itself.

Most people have also concluded that institutional religion is boring. Maybe we got dragged to Sunday school by our parents to listen to old Mrs. Smith preach at us on the evils of rock and roll. Or we tried out church on our own when we were a bit older but found that those in the pews were not much better morally than our neighbors who never go near the place. In the end, it may just seem like a way for weak people to find a few friends, or for the strong-willed few to gain the control and recognition they cannot get in the real world. So by and large Western culture has given up on institutional religion.

With little fulfillment in material goods or organized church, many turn inward to find meaning in family or close friends. The desire is there for relationships. However, the latest generation's attitude to relationships can be summarized in television pop-culture's now standard menu of cynical humor, revolving around a small cliché of friends, living in a big city, afraid of commitment.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES, PERSONAL CHALLENGES

All of these facts seem to point in the following direction: Christianity as an institution lost credibility and its place in society a long time ago. But a door has been opened, just a crack, in which Christianity is being reconsidered. Alongside the practice of yoga and aroma-therapy, the world is looking at us one more time. They want to know if Christianity works. They want to see the power of God.

They want to experience the peace that comes from having an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

It has been easy to hide behind yesterday's scientific truth questions. They are intellectual and allow us to stand back from them personally. What proof is there that Jesus rose from the dead? Is the Bible infallible? And usually we responded with giving a good answer, as long as the questioning did not get too personal.

Now the questions are quite different: What can God do for me? Where was God when your spouse died of cancer? Doesn't God care that I don't have a job? What can help resolve your anger within? Doesn't God see that I am addicted? These questions – Does God work? – are much more personal.

Personal questions are much more intimidating, yet pregnant with opportunity. If God is real to us, we have nothing to fear. We have every reason, like the Christians of centuries before, to hear the questions being asked at this time and to give an answer for the faith within us.

The challenge then for us to answer today is this: Does Christianity work? (How? When? Where? For who? In your life? In my life? . . .) We have a lot of answering to do.

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Joseph J. Noland, B.A., M.S., has served in the USA West and Australia Eastern Territories. He is the author of "A Little Greatness" (Crest Books, 1998). He was a pioneer officer in Micronesia.

Interview:

Commissioner Joe Noland

Territorial Commander, USA Eastern Territory.

JAC: Please tell us a little about your conversion.

JN: My first conversion took place at about age 11 during a Decision Sunday in Sunday School. This was several years after some friends down the street invited us to Sunday School at The Salvation Army. During those years, my attendance had been an off-and-on experience. Then along came an officer who took a special interest in me, and, under his guidance, I made my first decision.

The second decision came after college graduation. I had turned away from the Lord and the Army. The call of the world was very strong during those years, and I had succumbed to it. But the seed had been sown earlier in my life, and, through a set of circumstances, I felt myself drawn back, first to The Salvation Army, and then to the Lord. Once again, it was another Salvation Army officer (corps officer) who influenced that decision.

JAC: You are one of a select band of living SA pioneers of new territory -Micronesia. Please describe that unique experience and the spiritual footprints you left there for Salvationists to follow.

JN: Upon being appointed as the divisional commander for the Hawaiian Islands Division, I soon had a vision that stretched throughout all of Micronesia. One trip to the Marshall Islands was all it took. All my life I had been drawn to the South Pacific. I could not have imagined that I would even have the opportunity to travel there, let alone pioneer The Salvation Army in that beautiful yet forlorn part of the world.

When I did arrive there, I found a great contradiction in terms. The landscape was like paradise. The "peoplescape" was one of poverty, hopelessness, and despair. The paradox was unnerving.

Seventy-five percent of the population is under the age of 25. Fifty percent of the population is under the age of 15. There seemed to be no future and no hope. For example, the Island of Ebeye has a population of 12,000. This little atoll is about the size of six city blocks. It consists of shanty

upon shanty, the most humble abodes you could ever imagine. The palm trees are all gone because there was not room for them. On our first visit there, we held an outdoor meeting and people came by the thousands. The reception and response was overwhelming. It didn't take me long to begin the work on that island. We pitched a tent on the only land available, a dumpsite. I immediately identified an officer couple to go. There was no place for them to live, so we found a house on a little island five islands away and bought them a boat to travel back and forth. The Lord has blessed that work.

I felt a sense of great urgency and desire to bring hope to a hopeless part of the world. This spontaneous opening of the work continued to two other Marshall Islands, Pohnpei and Guam. While in Guam, I found that the first church opened there was started by two men who were converted in an open air ministry in Honolulu, Hawaii, and became Salvationists. When they returned to Guam, they wanted The Salvation Army to come, but it didn't happen, so they started their own church. I love that part of the world and have a longing to go back there. You will find my footprints still there in the sand of those beautiful tropical beaches.

JAC: Please comment on how serving in different parts of the world has impacted your Salvationism.

JN: It has broadened my perspective, increased my vision, and humbled my spirit.

JAC: You have a reputation for making things happen. You have shaken up the comfortable and mobilised the discouraged. Where do we stand in light of General Booth's prophesy that, "If The Salvation Army will be true to God, (we will reach the world) in the next fifty years" (THE GENERAL'S LETTERS, 1885)?

JN: In answer to this question, I have claimed Paul's vision as my own, "I am made all things to all men that by all means I might save some." That word "some" is the operative word in this vision statement. I believe that the Lord has raised up The Salvation Army to reach "some." There are "some" who are divinely set apart to be reached by our mission, I believe. We must aggressively do everything within our power to reach that unique "some." With every generation, that "some" will always be waiting for us. Our mission should be conducted with aggressiveness and intensity, as if the Lord were going to return tomorrow. That will take care of the next 50 years, if the Lord doesn't choose to return before that time.

JAC: You have begun publishing books in the last decade. What is your purpose, and what are your hopes regarding them?

JN: I have been writing all my life. Like most creative people, I tend to be

introspective by nature. I feel that I communicate best through writing. The creative process is like a high to me. It is better than alcohol or drugs (and I tried a bit of those in my day). It is a cathartic experience. A lot of my writing is now gone forever because I didn't put it into published form. Thus, I am now committed to communicating my creative expression as far and wide as possible. What good is a vision if it is not communicated? And there is unbelievable power in the written word if it is transmitted properly.

JAC: What books have had the greatest impact on you over the years? Why?

JN: The Power of Positive Thinking, by Norman Vincent Peale and Self Renewal, by James Gardner. Next to the Bible, these two books have influenced my thinking more than any others. By nature and upbringing, I tend to be a bit negative and cynical in my thinking. Pessimism has dogged me all the days of my life. The Power of Positive Thinking set me on a proper course and has proved to me that all power is found in the positive.

When I first read Self Renewal back in the 60s, I purchased copies and sent them to every Salvation Army leader. One of the premises of the book is that organizational renewal cannot take place without self renewal. My copy of the book is dog eared, underlined, asterisked, with large penciled in exclamation marks on every page. Unfortunately, the book is now out of print. I think it is a must for every Salvation Army leader. It was a book way ahead of its time.

One of the most recent books I have read is Threshold of the Future, by Michael Riddell. The byline reads, "Reforming the church in the post-Christian West." This is a radical book that will set even the most liberal among us on edge. I found it refreshing, stimulating, and extremely forward looking. It does make one think beyond the boundaries. I purchased a copy for every member of our Territorial Executive Council.

JAC: You have a Master of Science degree. The current General has no degree; the last General has a doctorate. There are various schools of thought as to the place of formal education in the Army. What is the proper role?

JN: Education was very important for me. However, I don't see it as a panacea for the future. Unfortunately, sometimes education becomes an end in itself rather than a means to an end. This is when it can get dangerous. Some of the finest officers I know have no formal education but their practical experience has educated them beyond the most highly held Ph.D. I have come to believe that the best education is found in the trenches. If that can be coupled with formal classroom work, that can be a plus factor for some people. I have come to believe that a lot of my formal education was

wasted because it was based in theory rather than practical demonstration. I don't think the hallowed halls should be so hallowed in this present day. This is a short answer for a very complicated subject. But I do think education is moving in a more practical direction, as it should.

JAC: USA Eastern Territory now has an aggressive short-term mission. Please outline it.

JN: This is really a ten-year mission. It follows my Vision 7007 model (with the two "0"s forming an "infinity" symbol). Beginning with the year 1998, I have challenged the corps in this territory to strive for establishing 700 corps in total. There are 70 million people in the USA Eastern territory; it seems reasonable to me that we should have one corps for every 100,000 people by the year 2007, with 70 soldiers in each of them. If you breakdown the 7007, you will see embedded in that number 70 for soldiers and 700 for the number of corps by the year 2007. The first "0" also represents a circle of prayer. I have challenged the territory to form 700 prayer circles of seven throughout the territory. The second "0" stands for eternal life, and I have challenged the territory to a mission of aggressive and adaptive evangelism that preaches this "life eternal" promise. Finally, the two sevens together are the "bookends" for this vision. They symbolize holiness; seven is the biblical number for perfection. So the foundation of this vision is prayer, holiness, and aggressive, adaptive evangelism.

Now this really brings me to the next question.

JAC: You state that this USA Eastern Territory mission emerged out of a vision from God. Can you explain this to salvationists inexperienced with prophetic communication, in light of our early Army facility with this practice (note General William Booth's collection called VISIONS).

JN: I have made it clear throughout the territory that this vision is a mandate from God to me personally. One cannot mandate vision. True vision comes from God. It is my responsibility to energize, motivate, and inspire others to catch this same vision. I am His prophetic instrument.

There is no question that this vision came out of the creative depths of my soul. It came easily and naturally. It was not something that I had to work hard at. I am convinced that it is not contrived but inspired. True inspiration cannot be explained. One intuitively knows when it is contrived or when it comes from God. Vision is also always preceded by prayer.

I am not a person who subscribes to "signs and wonders." I look at things in a more practical, unemotional way. I happen to think that this is the best way. I do know, however, the difference between when vision is inspired and when it is contrived. The only way I can explain it is that it comes out of

the depths of one's soul. It becomes all consuming. You know it when the passion is there. It becomes an almost uncontrollable divine force.

JAC: Who are your heroes? Why?

JN: My heroes are the Mother Theresas of this world. The majority do not get the attention and adulation that Mother Theresa did, but they are there. Many of them are lifelong corps officers I have known through the years. They have remained faithful and steadfast in the most difficult of situations.

JAC: General Catherine Booth went on record, stating, "The great fundamental principle of The Salvation Army is the law of adaptation." This comment has been used by many salvos at many times toward diverse ends. You have been an initiator of change in three theatres of war over the years. What is the proper understanding of this fundamental principle for us today, in light of tensions between priestly v. prophetic roles?

JN: I think tension can be healthy if it is handled properly. The tension was obviously there when Catherine Booth stated her "great fundamental principle." I believe that adaptation is what made the Army unique, what set it apart from other denominations. This principle is enunciated beautifully in a recent book published here in the United States titled, Red Hot and Righteous. The writer, Diane Winston, grasped this principle beautifully and in context with the beginning of The Salvation Army here in America.

Change and adaptation are synonymous in my way of thinking. Where there is change, there will be tension. The resolution of that tension will result in either adaptation or extinction. Another great little book that came out recently is, Who Moved My Cheese. It has been on the top of the best seller list for a long time; that should say something about the importance of this whole subject. I have just written an article for The Officer that makes a spiritual and organizational comparison to the thesis outlined in this book. The lesson is a very simple one- "we either adapt or we die. A part of my prophetic role is to communicate this truth in a way that will move us forward.

JAC: What is the most significant part of your ministry today?

JN: As the territorial commander, it is my responsibility to cast a vision and then provide an environment for that vision to take hold and grow. Empowerment is a big part of such a nurturing environment. Accountability is the other side of the empowerment coin.

JAC: What are your dreams for The Salvation Army?

JN: My greatest dream is that The Salvation Army will lead the parade in

reaching what I call "the invisible twenty-three percent." The actual figure changes depending upon the country and culture, but it refers to children who are living in poverty. In this country, twenty-three percent of young children live in poverty, where they are often subject to neglect and abuse. These children represent the future. The better we are at intervening to touch the lives of these children, the greater our chances are for a better future.

JAC: What new challenges do you foresee for The Salvation Army in the 3rd Millennium?

JN: The greatest challenge is that of change and adaptation. It must happen quickly if we are to continue as change agents. The continuing challenge for The Salvation Army is to stay focused on being change agents. In my opinion, the recommendations made by the "Commission on Officership" are a very positive step in the right direction.

JAC: What is God teaching you these days?

JN: God is teaching me that I must depend upon Him more. Every day in my morning devotions I pray, "Lord, I cannot do this in my own strength. It can be done only in Your strength." Whenever I have gotten into trouble, I can trace it back to trying to do something in my own strength.

JAC: Can you tell us of any memorable preaching you have heard, and what made it outstanding?

JN: I have always been fascinated with the preaching of Billy Graham. It is so simple, so basic, yet so powerful. I've had the opportunity to meet him. In fact, as the general secretary in Southern California I had the responsibility of organizing and producing his 50th anniversary celebration at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. He agreed to that celebration on the condition that The Salvation Army receive all the proceeds. I met him and talked with him at length. His genuineness and humility impressed me as I have never been impressed before. I believe it is these qualities that make his preaching the force it is.

JAC: How are you a different person and a different Salvationist from when you were commissioned?

JN: Wiser, with many more bumps and bruises. I have always had a tendency to go against the tide. Some of the things I did as a young, exuberant officer were JPS (just plain stupid). I still take risks, but now I practice BDBS (but don't be stupid).

JAC: What is your most memorable spiritual experience?

JN: There are a number of memorable spiritual experiences; it is hard to name one that stands out above the others. When I go to an adult rehabilitation center and listen to the testimonies, I am spiritually moved. When I hear an adult testify about the spiritual intervention that took place in his or her life as a child coming out of a traumatic environment, that really moves me spiritually. It is during these times of testimony when the Spirit speaks to me deeply and emotionally.

JAC: Please comment on the state of aggressive Christianity in the 21st century. How relevant is primitive salvationism? What challenges will millennium three bring?

JN: Please pardon the slang, but the state of aggressive Christianity in the 21st century "ain't what it used to be." I am not sure I like the term, "primitive Salvationism." I don't think we want our Salvationism to be primitive; I think we want it to be progressive. Can we learn something from our roots? Absolutely! Are there "primitive" values that are as relevant today as they were then? No question about it!

The challenge is to take those values and clothe them in a contemporary style. The challenge is to stay progressive without losing sight of our roots, to take those primitive beginnings and adapt them to a progressive now. May it be so!

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Elaine Gillingham is a corps officer and mother. Some would describe her as a prophet. She would describe herself as just trying to live one day at a time in the will of her heavenly Father. Thanks Elaine!

Stepping On Out!

Captain Elaine Gillingham

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." "Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:5-10).

"We need not only our ideals. We need also self-criticism and some prophetic admonition. The key to all success for us as an evangelistic movement is, undeniably, the power of the Holy Spirit" (Arnold Brown, in Henry Gariepy, MOBILIZED FOR GOD, p34).

Not too long ago I was spending some time with the Lord when He impressed upon me some scripture and exhortation to share with a leader in The Salvation Army. It was a word of instruction to address some things that were happening within the ranks. Immediately upon receiving it I began second-guessing what I had heard. Was this from the Lord? How could I give this information to this senior officer? If I emailed him he would think I was some sort of weirdo or zealot. It seemed a lot easier to just be quiet and do nothing. If I stepped out and did it, it would cost me something. I would no longer be anonymous and quiet. I would be taking a stand for the Most High and the person on the other end would have a choice to accept or reject what I was delivering. It was a place of vulnerability that I did not feel comfortable walking into. But I did it. There is one thing that I have come to terms with in my walk with God- I want to obey Him no matter what the cost. Whether I look foolish, radical, wrongwhatever- I want to be an obedient child.

One of the biggest blocks to the prophetic breaking forth is FEAR! Not just any fear - the fear of man! Jeremiah was one of the greatest prophets to Judah but when God commissioned him Jeremiah was not too thrilled with the prospects. Basically God said to Jeremiah, "Before you were even a tiny microscopic entity in your mom's womb I knew you and planned for you

to be My prophet to the nations. I have sanctified you and ordained you for this very purpose. I have plans for you!" Jeremiah's response to this great affirming word from the Lord is, "Lord, I think you have the wrong person. Look at me; I can't even speak. I'm only a young guy. No one is going to listen to me."

"Who am I to speak?" "Who am I to say anything?" Often when the Lord puts something into our spirit that He wants us to share the greatest block is fear. We become gripped with the fear of whether people will listen to the word. Fear of how the people will respond. God sees to the heart of Jeremiah's response and hits the nail on the head. "Do not say, 'I am only a youth,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you." Don't be afraid of the people- just speak what I tell you. It sounds so easy, so uncomplicated: hear the word - speak the word - hear the word - speak the word. It really is uncomplicated when we fix our eyes on Jesus. It starts to get complicated when we start looking around at the faces of the people. We look at their faces and we wonder what they're thinking. We begin imagining all the things that are going on in their minds and the next thing you know, we're consumed with FEAR.

It's just like when you feel that fluttery sensation in your stomach when you know God has called you to do something. Your heart starts beating faster and everything feels so intense. But for some reason instead of doing what you believe you're supposed to do you are glued to your seat or your feet are like cement and you're unable to move. An overwhelming fear paralyzes you. Ever been there?

Well, in order to step out into the prophetic we've got to drive the fear out. We need to lift our focus and vision above what is seen to what is unseen. We need to move from living by the flesh to walking in the Spirit. God will put His words in our mouth just as He did Jeremiah. And He speaks these words to us now: "prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them" (Jeremiah 1:17). Step on out!

The word of the Lord says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). So fear is not something from God and it is definitely not what He wants us to walk in. He also tells us that, "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). There's that relationship word 'love' again. Somehow God's love working in us drives out the spirit of fear so that it does not operate or control us. If I know the love of God in my experience- not just my head- and if I am head over heels in love with Him, all that loving squeezes out the fear so there's no room for it. When God puts something on our heart to do or say then we will step out because we love Him. His love for us combined with

our love for Him compels us to move out in obedience. The more we are in love with Him and know His love the less we will allow fear to rule in our hearts.

Let the love of God reign in you. You'll be amazed at the exploits you'll do with Him!

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