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## **The Mechanical Bride (of Christ?)**

James Pedlar

Although we try to distance ourselves from ‘the world’, the intellectual, cultural, and organizational trends which can be seen in the social world can often also be seen in the life of the Church. Therefore it is highly important that we in the Christian community maintain a critical eye towards the culture around us. We must begin not with a simple dismissal of the world, but with a genuine attempt at understanding contemporary culture, if we are to discern cultural trends which have made their way into our own lives, thoughts, and actions. It is with this in mind that I will attempt to outline two key features of contemporary culture which can be seen, not only in the world, but in Christian culture. These two features are symbolic seduction, and technicization, or technologization, as seen in consumer capitalism, popular discourse and current social practices. I wish to argue that the development of technological methods for seducing an audience of consumers, who are eager to distinguish themselves through the consumption of symbolic commodities, has found its way into Christian culture, and engenders a thoroughly unspiritual discourse of church health and growth.

### **Sign Value, Technology, Seduction**

I begin with an early (1951) bit of media analysis, from that enigmatic father of media studies, Marshall McLuhan. The work is titled, *The Mechanical Bride*, and presents us with an uncharacteristically concerned reading of popular cultural artefacts. I don’t care much for McLuhan’s later, more famous work, but *The Mechanical Bride* comes before he turned to his

somewhat deterministic emphasis on form, to the exclusion of content ('the medium is the message'). In this book he argues that the intent of the advertising world is to get inside the public mind "in order to manipulate, exploit, control...and to generate heat, not light."<sup>1</sup> He aims to reverse this propagandizing process by turning the advertisements on their head, teaching the reader how to 'read' ads.

McLuhan's analysis centres on a series of advertisements and other 'exhibits', such as comic strips. The title comes from his exposition of an ad for the Gotham Hosiery Company, which features a pair of women's legs on a pedestal. His concern is not only with the objectification of women in general, but with the objectification and compartmentalization of certain parts of a woman's body. The message to women is that their legs are tools with they ought to "tailor...as parts of the success kit."<sup>2</sup> That is, legs are disassociated from the whole person or body of the woman, and given a symbolic value all their own.

"As such, her legs are not intimately associated with her taste or with her unique self but are merely display objects like the grill work on a car. They are date-baited power levers for the management of the male audience."<sup>3</sup>

The message McLuhan extracts from the ad culture of the late 1940s is that "a car plus a well-filled pair of nylons is a recognized formula for both feminine and male success and happiness."<sup>4</sup> Of course, today's symbolic formulae for success would be different in their specifics, but his analysis is remarkably relevant, given the cultural and technological changes which have taken place in the past 50 years.

Another issue, betrayed by the title, is that persons come to see themselves, and others, as machines, made up of constituent functioning parts which only need to be tweaked or replaced to ensure the efficient and proper functioning of the whole. Advertising, which many feel has become the dominant form of mass communication in contemporary Western society, can lead to

an understanding of the human body as a “love-machine capable merely of specific thrills.”<sup>5</sup> The amoral image of the machine, detached, manipulable, and automatic in its functions, is clearly a depraved concept of the human person, and seems humorous when discussed openly.<sup>6</sup> McLuhan even asserts that the human subject can “only be freed from this trap by the detaching power of wild laughter.”<sup>7</sup> But rarely is it discussed or laughed at, because the message of the advertisers is not overt, and most of us passively ingest these images without considering their inferred meaning. Or, worse still, we assume ourselves to be immune to the influence of advertising, thus granting it all the more power to effect us, even as we dismiss its effects.

If the message of advertising was slightly disguised in the mid twentieth century, it has become all the more obscure at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup>. Current advertisements rarely deal with the actual commodities they are trying to sell. Rather they try to create a positive sign-value for those products, or the companies that produces them, or the place where they can be purchased. Wal-Mart ads don't scream ‘Sale! Sale! Sale! Save Cash Here!’, they try to convince you that Wal-Mart is a fun, warm and inviting environment, the kind of place you will want to be when you shop. Another example is a recent ad for Shell Oil, which touts an environmentalist on the company's payroll, apparently working to develop renewable sources of energy. Many will have also seen the ads for Tobacco giants such as Phillip Morris, which show how the companies support charitable programs. Products are no longer being marketed. Lifestyles are marketed, and products are constantly shown in association with those lifestyles. Sign value is emphasized, rather than use-value. Success, family, money, happiness, apparently are all to be sought in the consumption of commodities, according to the marketers. Advertising is thus a sophisticated practice, a “popular dream art which works trance-like inside a situation that is never grasped or seen.”<sup>8</sup>

All of this is to say that we have seen a rise in the importance of the sign in the past few decades. Jean Baudrillard is another mysterious character who has written on this extensively. *Simulations* (1983) makes wild postmodern claims about contemporary culture: the virtual is more real than the real, the map precedes the territory, and “the age of simulation thus begins with the liquidation of all referentials - worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs.”<sup>9</sup> He asserts that the world of signs and simulations is now more ‘real’ or important than the world of being and truth.<sup>10</sup> The increasingly mediated world in which we live is one in which duplicates are made without any need of an original or ‘real’ object. There is no referent, only signs which refer us to an endless amount of other signs. Most of us, of course, are not concerned with this phenomenon. We actually joy in seeing the latest simulation technologies, in seeing the hyperreal simulations of special effects and video games. We prefer the virtual.

Politically Baudrillard has brought this situation home through his discussion of seduction in his 1979 work, *De la Seduction*. Much of the book is dedicated to a critique of feminism. He posits that, although women are “ashamed of seduction” because it represents “vassalage and prostitution,” they need to realize that “seduction represents mastery over the symbolic universe, while power represents only mastery of the real universe.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, in a rather alarming endorsement of the trend which McLuhan identified as troubling, Baudrillard suggests that women should embrace their seductive ability, for that is their strength:

“How can one oppose seduction? The only thing truly at stake is the mastery of appearances, against the force of being and reality. There is no need to play being against being, or truth against truth; why become stuck undermining foundations, when a *light* manipulation of appearances will do? ...Instead of rising up against such ‘insulting counsel,’ women would do well to be seduced by its truth, for here lies the secret of their strength.”<sup>12</sup>

Seduction, in this context, is not restricted merely to sexual desire, but implies a presentation of appearances which aims to play on the desires of others. The power of seduction thus lies in the

reversibility of signs. That is, signs and symbols are easily manipulated, while power structures are very difficult to upset. Power, he argues, is only validated when it achieves irreversibility, when its relations are fixed. Therefore, Baudrillard states, “Seduction is stronger than power, because it is reversible and mortal, while power, like value, seeks to be irreversible, cumulative, and immortal.”<sup>13</sup>

On the basis of these conceptualizations of seduction, desire, and power, Baudrillard moves into a more focused assessment of political and economic relations. Mass seduction, he argues, has now eclipsed the old political order, and we live in a world that is “driven no longer by power, but fascination, no longer by production, but seduction.”<sup>14</sup> The possibility for such mass seduction, he argues, is rooted in the Enlightenment, and the resulting political upheavals which resulted. It was at this time that ‘the people’ began to see themselves as a group of subjects who should be able to govern themselves according to their own desires. Whereas previously their domination was overt, they were now able to be controlled through the subtle power of seduction. Thus he characterizes “politicians, advertisers, and organizers” as “the ‘strategists’ of mass desire,” and intellectuals and journalists as “analysts of their strategies.”<sup>15</sup> McLuhan similarly states at the outset of *The Mechanical Bride*: “Today the tyrant rules not by club or fist, but, disguised as a market researcher, he shepherds his flocks in the ways of utility and comfort.”<sup>16</sup>

It is significant that Baudrillard sees this new order as one in which politicians and advertisers are considered to be on the same level. He is thus granting that the advertising industry holds great power in a world where signs are easily manipulated, and social agents are constantly seeking to consume symbolic value. From this Baudrillard concludes that “an entire religion or culture can be organized around *relations of seduction* (as opposed to relations of

production).”<sup>17</sup> Seduction, for Baudrillard, has come to be an organizing force in contemporary society.

Zygmunt Bauman places Baudrillard’s ideas in a more useful sociological framework in his 1988 work, *Freedom*. His argument concerning seduction as a new type of social control is based upon an historical contextualization of contemporary capitalism. Modern notions of freedom had their basis in two key concepts - individualism and capitalism.<sup>18</sup> Individualism in the modern western world has been marked by a particular “ambiguous position towards society, one pregnant with ever-subsiding tension”<sup>19</sup> That is, the individual has come to see ‘society’ as a controlling force, and she continually asserts her individual rights and freedoms, which, it seems, must be protected from social or state intervention.

Modern freedom and capitalism are also related in such a way that Bauman argues that it is difficult to separate the two conceptually. He states that “choice and means-ends calculus (namely, motivated, purposeful and reason-monitored behaviour),” while being the “essential, defining characteristics of freedom as understood in modern society,”<sup>20</sup> are also the defining characteristics of free market capitalism as understood by modern society. Bauman asserts that it was in the marketplace that the idea of freedom was really “cultivated, to be later grafted on other branches of increasingly ramified social life.”<sup>21</sup> Yet freedom in the capitalist system always comes through the restriction, or ‘unfreedom’, of others. Industrial capitalism can never engender the freedom and individuality of all. Rather, competition leads to the elimination of competitors and the centralization of power. And so Bauman defines this relationship between industrial capitalism and individualism as ambiguous.

However, Bauman is among those theorists who would argue that economic conditions have shifted from industrial capitalism to ‘consumer capitalism.’ Bauman compares models of

success and competition in earlier industrial capitalism to those seen today. The idea of the “independent entrepreneur” has passed due to the increasingly convergent locus of power in the corporate world.<sup>22</sup> Competition for the powers of production is no longer pursued by the average person, but “a wider than ever space has been opened for it at the new ‘pioneer frontier’, the rapidly expanding, seemingly limitless, world of consumption.”<sup>23</sup> Here Bauman finds the resolution of the above mentioned ambiguity between capitalism and individualism. In achieving success as a consumer, one can participate freely without having to eliminate the other players. Thus, while the struggle for production leads to a smaller and smaller number of powerful competitors, in the realm of consumption, “the number of its participants may indeed grow, instead of shrinking.”<sup>24</sup>

Bauman argues that this is accomplished through moving the arena of competition from the struggle for wealth and power to the quest for symbols:

It is the signs which are coveted, sought after, purchased and consumed. We can say that the goods are desired not for their capacity to enhance one’s body or mind (make them healthier, richer, more fulsome), but for their magic potential to give a particular, distinguished and hence desired, shape to the body or the spirit (a particular look which serves as a badge of belonging on the right side of the difference).<sup>25</sup>

And so the ‘rags to riches’ myth of the entrepreneur who strikes it rich through hard work has passed on, and been replaced by the new model for success: “symbolic distinction, attainable through consumer rivalry.”<sup>26</sup> We can see how the emphasis on rationality, choice, and means-ends calculus renders technology a powerful organizing force in this consumer market system. The machine offers the ultimate expression of predictability and control, two things we desire insatiably in our efforts to manage our lives, to narrow the field of choices in a system which supposedly offers unlimited choice and freedom.

Advertisers, in this view, are indeed the strategists of desire and seduction, developing



elaborate techniques for the manipulation of mass audiences who are seeking to distinguish themselves through their possessions. Of course, what is frustrating about this unreal world is that the ‘symbols of success’ and the ‘badges of belonging’ are empty signifiers, and have no ‘real’ basis. They only refer us to other signs, other associations, and are worthless when considered outside the symbolic code of contemporary culture. Thus while millions are seeking to find happiness and fulfilment through the consumption of goods, they are ultimately only participating in a perpetual cycle, circling around the object of their desire,<sup>27</sup> continually seeking to find more signs to add to their portfolio as they realise that these goods don’t actually have any ‘magic potential’. Under these conditions there is a great hunger for authenticity, for an encounter with something real. Yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to reach that reality in a world driven by the seduction of sign-value.

### **Technologies for Selling God**

It is not surprising that Christians would be affected by these developments, given the prevalence of advertising and mass media, even within Christian culture. Church marketing is not a new phenomenon, especially in North America, as R. Laurence Moore has shown in his historical survey of American Christianity, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (1994). Today churches are being built on successful advertising campaigns. Countless books and resources are available to help us in this endeavour. Even in circles where concepts of the ‘marketing’ of the church in terms of advertising are not being used, it seems that our discussions of church growth and evangelism are increasingly fixated on our image, the easily manipulable and always reversible sign.

This trend is evident in such resources as *The Inviting Church: a Study of New Member*

*Assimilation*, by Roy M. Oswald and Speed B. Leas. They list the top characteristic of an inviting church as a “Positive Identity”, which includes a sense of energy, inclusiveness, and a unique sense of identity.<sup>28</sup> Within the Army, I am sure that many of us can identify with the common themes I have encountered in my discussions with other Salvationists: music style, greeting, seating, parking, and of course, the uniform. These are all seen to be major barriers to the growth of our congregations. Often times we spend time and energy changing these practices, focusing on making ourselves more ‘seeker-friendly’, making the newcomer feel as comfortable as possible. This is, of course, a well-calculated response to the culture around us. As Canadian sociologist David Lyon has argued, in today’s consumer culture, religion is viewed more as a resource to be used than as an institution to be obeyed.<sup>29</sup> Religion has been ‘deinstitutionalized’ or deregulated, leading to a great proliferation of religious and spiritual expression. Yet, it seems that this spirituality is extremely shallow for the most part, even though it is pervasive. It now seems possible and desirable for many consumers of religious signs to belong without believing; to mark themselves off with that badge of belonging to the church without actually having a faith commitment.

I cannot say that it is bad thing for a church to have a good image. Nor do I wish to state an opinion as to the relevance of the uniform, or worship style, or the importance of adequate parking. Yet I must say that it is troubling that these would be seen as the most important issues relating to the health and growth of our church. First, the concern which must be raised in a Christian culture which is fixated on ‘selling’ itself to the consumer society is raised at the close of Moore’s book: “Where are the real religious prophets? Can there be any in a country whose self-image rests on fast, friendly, and guiltless consumption?”<sup>30</sup> Can the church play the game of symbolic bantering and seducing, and maintain its’ integrity as the Bride of Christ?

Secondly, the application of these ideas tends to lead to situations which are symptomatic of our modernistic tendency to seek technical or technological solutions to our problems. This is not to say, of course, that we seek to use actual pieces of machinery. Technology, rather, has become such a part of our culture that it is quite appropriate, and useful, to speak of social practices as technologies. That is, social practices can be technological in so much as they take on the same character as their mechanical models (automization, neutrality, replaceable parts, etc). We wonder why our churches don't grow, so we try to break them down into constituent parts and root out the problem in the system. 'It must be the music we use.' 'No, it is the uniform - it's so imposing and threatening to the uninitiated.' 'No, we need a better system of greeting.' The church is viewed atomistically as an aggregate of parts, which, if all oiled and operating well, will produce those automatic, efficient, predicable, and controllable results that can be produced by any good technology. And the parts to which we look for answers are often these trivial ones. What is needed, we would seem to think, is another technique (program?), a procedure which will operate to bring new Christians into the fold. For the Army, not only must our new technique be operational, but it must be generalizable at a territorial level, abstract enough that the operators and social contexts in which they operate can be interchanged without much consequence to the workings of the system.

Examples of this technological approach are many and varied. One Church growth book offers a formula, including mathematical equations, to determine the "Maximum Mission Potential"<sup>31</sup> of a congregation. This involves such steps as "calculate the average trip time (ATT) of your community", and step 5, "compute 15% of unchurched population (from step 4) to discover homogenous potential for mission."<sup>32</sup> This perfectly embodies the technological imperative of predictability and control. Mission potential can be quantified and 'discovered'

through a calculator! The book it is taken from is entitled *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*, and it is not unlike a more the many pseudo-sociological studies that the Salvation Army and other denominations have thoroughly embraced in recent decades.

I say that they are pseudo-sociological because there is no other way to describe many church growth studies. They are simply based on bad social research and fallacious interpretation of statistical findings. These studies employ a methodology in which they survey churches to discover which ones are the most successful, then create models for other churches to follow based on the most common characteristics of the successful churches. Again, predictability and control, ‘means-ends calculus’, are the driving forces behind such research. ‘What makes a church grow? We’ll do a ‘scientific’ analysis and figure it out.’ The problem with this approach is that there is a slip between descriptive and normative reasoning. Statistical analysis can only tell us the way things are, or give a snap-shot description of current conditions. This is useful, but we cannot simply take the best of ‘the way things are’ and turn that into a measure of ‘the way things should be.’ We can’t take a current measure of the ‘characteristics’ of ‘successful’ churches, and then turn that around and prescribe those characteristics as the ideal for all. Foundational sociologist Max Weber maintains this distinction clearly in relation to all social scientific<sup>33</sup> research: “‘Science is meaningless, because it gives us no answer to our question, the only question important for us: ‘What shall we do, and how shall we live?’” That science does not give an answer to this is indisputable.”<sup>34</sup> The sociologist who equivocates the status quo with the ideal creates a dangerously uncritical sociology, one with no potential for critique of social relations, and the same can be said of such methods when applied to the church. The difficult normative questions must take the status quo into account, but not let the status quo define the field of possibilities. Those familiar with the field of sociology will recognize that the

structural functionalist paradigm of Talcott Parsons typifies this problematic approach.

Take for example the above-mentioned allusion to “homogenous potential for mission.”<sup>35</sup> The statistical research indicates that the members of congregations are most often socio-economically homogenous, and that churches thrive in homogenous environments (Callahan notes that if a congregation is situated in a homogenous area they should increase the 15% to 20%<sup>36</sup>). Researchers turn this around and tell the churches that they *ought* to be homogenous, that they should seek to minister to those who are like themselves. Never mind those troubling texts like Galatians 3:28, or the evidence that the early Christian communities cut through the typical social divisions of Greco-Roman society and were made up of people from diverse backgrounds.<sup>37</sup> Statistics show that homogeneity works in successful churches, so why not go with it? Simply put, because the existence of such trends as common features of successful churches does not justify their perpetuation.

All in all, the discussions of church growth and marketing are often quite superficial. They focus on the easy manipulation of surface traits in an effort to put on an attractive appearance for the outsider, and they posit technological solutions to the identified problems. I will carry this even one step further and say that all those efforts of Christians to ‘make’ their church more attractive, to make it more vibrant, to add something that will bring in newcomers, are going about things in the wrong way. I am following Geoff Ryan in his discussion of evangelism as more about what we *are* than what we say.<sup>38</sup> Church growth ought not to follow the logic of seduction. It ought not to be based on creating sign-value for the congregation, or manipulating the image of the body of believers to create the appearance of attractiveness. We must leave this Baudrillardian practice behind and return to the realm of the real, to the realm of being, to the existential rather than the instrumental questions about the health of the church.

If we try to beat the world at its' own game, most of us are sure to lose. It is not likely that we'll bring people to our congregation because of good music, or well run worship services, or the presence or absence of uniforms. If people want to hear good music, they can get it in ample supply, digitally reproducible, without the church. If they want to see a well-run program they can find that on television, or at the theatre. We can't beat the entertainment business at entertaining the mass audience (although it seems that some big budget megachurches are able to sustain this level of quality production). To be more precise, I'm not saying that these practices will not work at all, but that they lead to a thoroughly unspiritual, and therefore inadequate way of approaching church growth. Samuel Logan Brengle makes a similar distinction in the relationship between the personality and the heart of a preacher:

“That a man may by personal magnetism, grace of manner, power or persuasiveness of speech, and a certain skill in playing upon the emotions or self interest of the people, create an excitement that fairly *simulates* a revival, and yet have a divided heart, I admit; but that he can bring men to a thorough repentance and renunciation of sin, a hearty embrace of the cross, an affectionate surrender to Jesus as a personal Saviour and Master, who requires deep humility and meekness and tender love as the marks of his disciples, is yet to be proved.”<sup>39</sup>

A church may, though it is unlikely, bring people in to its building through the seductive techniques of advertising and image management, through the keeping up of appearances and the strength of technologies, but even this may be nothing, only a simulation, a virtual move of God. Just as we would say that personal magnetism and persuasiveness of speech are desirable characteristics in a leader, and yet cannot accomplish the work of God on their own, we must say that no list of characteristics can be simply introduced technologically into a congregation in order to accomplish the mission of that congregation, although these characteristics may be desirable. The real problem with this technological way of thinking is that we *rely* on our technologies, we come to see them as the quick solution to our problems. And the Spirit of God

is all too easily forgotten.

Christ's reference to the tree and its fruit in Matthew 12:33 is instructive. "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit." The quality of fruit that a tree produces is a result of the qualities of the tree itself. This cannot be altered externally. We cannot say, 'a good tree will have fruit of size  $n$ , and branches arranged by  $x$  geometrical pattern and spacing,' and then go about managing the tree according to this pattern. The tree itself must be made good, and this requires a miracle. I feel as if Christ is telling us to make the tree good, and we're desperately attempting to duct tape juicy red apples to our branches. This, of course, gives the crude appearance of a good tree, a simulation of a good tree, but certainly does not make the tree good.

How do you make a tree good? This is not physically or humanly possible, and that is precisely the point. Rather than looking at the fruit of the Spirit, or the fruit of healthy churches, as a list of characteristics that we ought to 'put on', we need to allow this to occur through the radical regeneration of the Holy Spirit. It is, after all, the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of the Salvationists, or the fruit of the corps. The corps cannot generate vibrant worship or meaningful small groups or any other such characteristics in its own strength. But that is precisely what we try to do when confronted with such lists of key characteristics. We rationalize, we plan, we design programs. What I am stating is that the growth of a Church ought to be understood as a *result* of the work of the Spirit, not the result of systems and techniques built on predictability and control. Yes, possibly it is true that most successful churches have 9 out of 12 characteristics as identified by a certain researcher, but we will not achieve anything by simply mimicking these characteristics and trying to introduce them into our fellowship in a programmatic fashion. We may possibly offer a simulation of success, but it will be an empty

one. The Spirit of God does not move according to principles of predictability and control, and He does not move according to already existing statistical patterns. The radical move of the Spirit will rather affect something much deeper than those quantifiable data, something internal, something unprogrammable; something which goes to the heart and makes the tree good. Then we will indeed see fruit, and it will not be for all of our striving after those things which make us appear successful.

In this vein, Robert Linthicum has noted that ‘First-World’ churches could learn something from ‘Third-World’ churches. He summarizes it this way:

“North American and European Christians mistakenly assume that the way to build a church is through programs. Our churches are full of committees meeting to plan projects - from selecting church school curricula to the planning of a church social, from developing a food distribution project for the hungry to devising an evangelistic campaign. We organize through programming. And we are rewarded for such effort with overly committed people, jammed church calendars and burned-out workers. There must be a better way.

There is, and it is found in those Third World congregations that have avoided modeling themselves on the First World church...Christians have discovered that the basis of church life must not lie in programming, but in celebration. What they perceive the church is about is the task of building and sustaining Christian community. It is Christian community that forms the backbone of their church life. It is the foundation upon which all worship, Christian nurture, support of one another, evangelism and social activism are built.

Relationships are given a higher priority than production. What you are in relation to each other is more important than what you accomplish. This is a style of being church that First World Christians desperately need to experience.”<sup>40</sup>

It is that *being the church* that I am trying to emphasize. Not what we do, what ‘characteristics’ we possess in relation to the most common statistically successful churches, not this striving to improve ourselves through predictability and control. Rather, a state of being which is in constant formation by the Spirit. A state of being which is also a state of becoming, which is radically Spirit led and empowered, and is therefore somewhat indeterminate,<sup>41</sup> though we know it will bring glory to God. In a world of simulations, where people longing for authenticity are



continually frustrated by the endless cycle of consumption, we need to offer more than a virtual salvation, more than a virtual Christian fellowship. We need to deny the logic of consumer capitalism, embodied in the 'light manipulation of appearances,' and indeed 'play being against being,' and 'truth against truth.' We need to be an authentic Christianity, and this is not a symbolic commodity, nor can it be created technologically, because it is a matter of the Spirit.

**Pilgrim's Progress**  
*(with apologies to Bunyan)*

Captain Stephen Poxon

"...And all the time the Lord went before them,

by day a pillar of cloud to guide them on their journey, by night a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel night and day. The pillar of cloud never left its place in front of the people by day, nor the pillar of fire by night"

*(Exodus 13: 21,22, New English Bible).*

"Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land...  
Let the fiery cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through..."  
*(William Williams, SASB 578, from verses 1 & 2).*

One of my favourite Army songs, to which I was introduced by none other than General John Gowans at Westminster Central Hall, London, a couple of years ago, is SASB 383; "Songs of salvation are sounding..." I like the tune, I like the note of praise that is resonant throughout, and I like the sequentiality of the words in that they tell the gospel story in a nutshell.

What appeals to me most, though, through all of that, is the penultimate line of the chorus; "Sinners to Jesus now clinging". These are truly marvellous words, and I would go so far as to say that they describe exactly what The Salvation Army is, so far as I understand it. That is to say, for all our pomp and ceremony, this is what we have always been, and this is what we need always to be – a bunch of sinners, clinging to Jesus for dear life and any hope of glory. What say we abandon the ribbons on our caps and have new ones made up with those five words embroidered on them? What say we order some fresh notepaper that is headed, "The Salvation Army, A Christian Church and a Registered Charity, Sinners to Jesus Now Clinging"?

For me, the appeal of those words lies in the reminder of our daily need to abide in Jesus (both individually and corporately, as a Movement). The Lord said, in John 15:5, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (NEB). I have no dilemma in re-phrasing those words as "Apart from me, The Salvation Army can do nothing".

Outside of his mercy, we remain utterly lost and dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-10). Maybe Lieut.-Commissioner Arch Wiggins understood our state of absolute dependence when he wrote, in SASB 171, "Thou canst the breath of man bestow or canst behold (see also Psalm 104:29). In other words, we can't even breathe by ourselves, without God's grace!

What a starting point in our pilgrimage that is – the realisation that we are unable to inhale without help! As individuals, we cannot take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide unless God decrees it so, breath by breath. Arguably more importantly, as a Movement, we cannot absorb any of the breath of God without first acknowledging our need of same. The lungs of The Salvation Army remain flat and lifeless unless we plead with God – sinners clinging to Jesus – for him to breathe life into us. Job knew full well the life-imparting qualities of God's breath (see Job 27:3 & 37:10) – not to mention Adam! (Genesis 2:7), and The Salvation Army must be similarly aware, and careful to

practice deep breathing all the time.

Exodus 13:17-22 gives us the account of the Israelites departing from Egypt. They move from one place to another, from Egypt through the wilderness towards the Red Sea, from Succoth to their camp at Etham, all the time following the guidance of the Lord as revealed in instructions to Moses and as shown by the cloudy and fiery pillars.

Throughout their journeys, they remained utterly in need of instruction, and grace abounding was theirs as God saw fit to manifest the pillars (or “the Angel of the Lord” – see Exodus 14:19) to lead and direct. Who is to say that such help will not be given to every corps or centre or headquarters or individual if it is sought? Who is to say that The Salvation Army need be without such thrilling intimacy with The Divine Navigator? In our planning, in our deciding, in our goings out and comings in, I have to believe that we too can experience a level of care and control that will see us safely through our wanderings.

I took my little boy to see a collection of fleas once. They were long since dead (one hopes!), and encased in glass as part of a large collection of insects, scorpions, spiders, butterflies and moths.

Being a voracious reader, I bid young Alistair remain still while I read the accompanying notes about the history of fleas, and was astonished to discover that the little creatures only started to become a problem for humankind when cave people took to settling down, and establishing permanent homes. Until that time, man had been relatively untroubled by flea bites. To paraphrase the official information at the flea exhibition, it was only when men and women decided to stay put that the parasites moved in! Apparently, our more nomadic ancestors came and went without a bite to report.

Is this not some kind of parable for The Salvation Army? All the while we keep on the move – following the pillars – we can expect to live adventurous lives of exciting holiness and obedience. When we think we know best and choose to stay in one place (because it’s more comfortable, as were the caves), we can expect to have our lifeblood sucked out of us.

If God is calling his Salvation Army to follow him, here, there and everywhere, then follow we must, for parasites find it much easier to feed on and irritate that which is stagnant (for which read dying). It might not be comfortable to follow a moving God (in fact it will probably be extremely uncomfortable at times, according to Matthew 8:20, in which we read of a transient Jesus), but if the alternative is to abandon his leadership and huddle ourselves away in our little caves of personal preference and routine, then I don’t see we have any choice. We follow, and live, or we go our own ways, and slowly but surely, the life that we have drains away.

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## Revival praying

**If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7: 14**

What a fantastic verse, but we need to remember that a text without a context can be a pretext. If you read the preceding chapters of 2 Chronicles you will see that Solomon had completed the temple and in Chapter 6 and 7 he has dedicated the temple. Chapter 7: 14 was then a response from God to Solomon's amazing prayer in Chapter 6 pleading with passion for the restoration of the people of Israel. We cannot look at this verse in a legalistic way and say God must heal *our* land because He said He would heal Solomon's in 2 Chronicles! This was a specific and conditional answer to a specific prayer from Solomon. We can however discern certain principles in this verse that will help us to understand that God longs to bring forgiveness and healing to us, not out of some legalistic obligation but because in the words of the missiologist David Bosch 'He is a fountain of sending love.'

2 Chronicles 7:14 would suggest that humility is a prerequisite for the moving of God amongst us. This may be a puzzle to some but as C.S. Lewis once wrote,

So we can see that pride is like a roadblock which prevents us from reaching the intimacy with God for which we were made. We are frantically seeking other ways to achieve satisfaction rather than seeking His face which is our true home. Sadly consumerism, which is totally absorbed in self-satisfaction, has permeated our society so thoroughly that even the Christian community can be subtly influenced by it. Our times with the Lord become times when our 'batteries are recharged' so that we have the strength to continue to chase our own agenda rather than times when we can be changed by being in the presence of God. 2 Chronicles 7:14 is a healthy antidote to consumerist Christianity in that it encourages us, not only to seek God's face, but to repent which means changing the direction of our lives. Repentance then is about changing our minds about anything that keeps us from drawing closer to God. Consumerist Christianity is delighted to ask God for strength but less willing to ask for redirection. When by the grace of God we are freed from this all pervasive and idolatrous consumerism, we are forgiven, healed and refreshed.

The truth is that God longs to hear us, forgive us and heal our land and there is much evidence in history that when God's people begin to seek His face with earnest and humble prayer and are willing to give up any agenda other than His

then individuals, local congregations, denominations and even whole nations are changed. This is exactly what happened in the Hebrides in 1949. A small group of people were so troubled about the state of their churches and their communities that they began praying, After several months of fervant interecessory prayer this is what happened:

In 1949, a small group of people went to a nearby cottage and about thirty knelt in prayer and began to travail before the Lord. About 3 am God swept in and a dozen or so were laid out prostrate on the floor, and lay there speechless. Something had happened - God had moved into action as He had promised. Revival had come. Revival had come and men and women were about to find deliverance. As they left the cottage they found men and women seeking God. Lights were burning in the homes along the road - no one seemed to be thinking about sleep. Three men were found laying by the roadside in a torrent of conviction, crying out for God to have mercy on them! On the second night buses came from the four corners of the island, crowding into the church. Seven men were being driven to the meeting in a butchers truck when suddenly the Spirit of God fell on them in great conviction and all were saved before they reached the church building!

'In His body and blood is the wildness of God. With a passion of love He comes to bring fire to the earth.'  
Philip Newell

R. Eugene Pigford, Lt. Colonel, is a former Training Principal in USE Territory. This article offers a convincing prophetic interpretation of Biblical ritual in relation with spiritual reality. It provides an important component to an integral SA prophetically non-sacramental position.

## The Encounter of Sacrament

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" Genesis 1:1.

Perhaps in no other verse in scripture are the coordinates of our existence so succinctly and so specifically spelled out. "In the beginning" is the reference to time. Without referring to duration, it confirms its finiteness. "The heavens" is the reference to space which the created order occupies and through which it moves. "The earth" refers to matter and all form of physical substance from which all of the created order is formed.

As part of the created order, man as a physical being, exists in matter, space and time. By contrast, God exists above and beyond the created order. His existence and self-sufficiency are apart from, prior to, and beyond the

creation.

Yet God sees his creation as good. This phrase is repeated frequently through the opening verses of Genesis. Subsequent to the creation of man, God pronounces his creation as very good.

The prevailing question related to encounters of sacrament is, How does God communicate himself to us through his creation? One can engage in scientific study on both an astronomic and microscopic level and discover order, balance, and precision bespeaking a technology far in excess of our own. But this merely reflects the mind of the Creator. It is not synonymous with it.

Similarly, one could study the interrelatedness of the food chain and dependency of one life form on other life forms for its existence. But once again, while God is the conceptualizer, initiator and sustainer of these processes, He does not incarnalize Himself in them.

The word Sacrament is of Latin derivation and has to do with the concept of oath. A Roman Soldier being sworn in to military service would declare the "Sacramentum", thus swearing his allegiance to his government and his role. In the history of the Church, it has come to mean certain specific religious exercises, through which special blessing or spiritual

edification is dispensed. It has been the subject of much debate whether or not these observances are efficacious in and of themselves, or whether they become the associated vehicle through which special blessing is channeled and dispensed, along with but separate from their practice..

And, if the latter is true, are they really necessary?

To fully consider these matters, some identification of ancillary issues would appear to be important, namely;

1. What is the nature and evolution of sacred symbols in scripture?
  
2. In what ways in scripture is spiritual life conveyed by material substance?
  
3. How does one's philosophy of hermeneutics (scripture interpretation) impact the development of theology concerning the sacraments?
  
4. What is the text and context of scripture related to the sacraments?
  
5. What is the role of the church in celebrating and communicating spiritual truth?



6. What significant "rites of passage" are intertwined with a particular church heritage thus forming strong emotional linkages with some sacramental practices?

After some consideration of these points, some integrative and personal observations will conclude these considerations.

I. What is the nature and evolution of sacred symbols in scripture?

A. Circumcision-

When the Lord reveals himself to Abram as El-Shaddai and his name is changed to Abraham, the practice of circumcision is introduced with the following direction;

"Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep. Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come

every male among you who is 8 days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner - those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or brought with you money they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant." Gen 17:9-13

In the Old Testament, circumcision was periodically reinforced. Moses was required to circumcise his sons before going to Pharaoh in Egypt (Exodus 4:24). The Israelites circumcised all their males immediately upon crossing the Jordan and prior to taking possession of the Promised Land. (Joshua 5 )

During the establishment of the early church, there was a contingent seeking to make circumcision a prerequisite for new believers. Paul confronted this error in his letter to the Church at Galatia, "Mark my words, I Paul tell you that if you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.....For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." ( Galations 5:2&6)

While the rite of circumcision was not practiced by Gentile believers,

the term was applied to them in a spiritual context as may be noted in Col 2:11, Romans 2:29 and Phil 3:3. Thus, the importance of the meaning of the practice became a priority over the practice itself.

## B.Devoted Things

Periodically, in scripture, the instruction was given to the Israelites that every living thing in a conquered city was to be utterly destroyed and absolutely none of the spoils were to be kept. (Joshua 6:21).

The Israelites loss of the battle of Ai and King Saul's loss of his monarchy were both related to disobedience concerning this issue.

Samuel the prophet declares,

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord.

To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed  
is better than the fat of rams I Samuel 15:22

The apostle Paul is perhaps building on this concept when he declares,  
 " But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of  
 Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the  
 surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I  
 have suffered the loss of all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may  
 gain Christ and be found in him...(Phil 3:7-8). Once again the spiritual  
 truth takes precedence over the earlier  
 physical act.

### C.The Brazen Serpent

During the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites, they periodically  
 engaged in grumbling and complaining. Numbers 21:6 describes how God  
 sent venomous snakes in judgment upon them and, when they confessed  
 their sin and requested forgiveness and healing God made a provision for  
 them. A bronze serpent was made and fastened to a pole. Anyone who was  
 bitten would be healed if he would look at the bronze snake.

2 Kings 18:4 reveals that this bronze serpent eventually became the  
 object of idolatrous worship and had  
 to be destroyed by King Hezekiah as part of  
 his spiritual reforms.

Jesus, in his discourse with Nicodemus uses the analogy of the serpent in the wilderness to describe the necessary death of the Son of Man.

The spiritual lesson and analogy of the wilderness serpent continue to be important. The physical representation of the serpent itself has long since been destroyed.

#### D. The Ark of the Covenant

This was the most sacred object of all the tabernacle furnishings. It was a wooden box overlaid with gold. Inside of it was a pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of stone received by Moses on Mt Sinai. It occupied the central place in the Holy of Holies. It was carried at the head of the procession when the children of Israel were on the move.

There were specific instructions for the covering and transporting of the Ark. Any carelessness with regard to these instructions was usually fatal to the transgressor.

The Lord had instructed Moses that He would focus his Presence between

the cherubim on the Mercy Seat or the lid of the Ark.

We might logically assume that with the specific instruction and severe penalties associated with proper regard for the Ark, that it would have a place of permanence in the worship setting of the Israelites.

However, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Jeremiah prophesies that "Men will no longer say, 'The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord' It will never enter their minds or be remembered, it will not be missed, nor will another one be made." Jeremiah 3:16

From the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, the children of Israel had no access to a temple, tabernacle or any worship setting that would have had any of their religious symbols. It was during the Captivity that synagogues developed, not as places with the religious symbols that had been so characteristic of the Hebrew faith, but as meeting places where the scriptures could be read, studied, and expounded.

The period of the Captivity was a difficult time for the children of Israel but a time of learning and spiritual discovery as well. Though they could not encounter Jahweh through their historic religious observances, including Passover, they did discover His overruling hand on their

circumstances.

The New Testament introduces radical change to the theological assumptions of the Jewish culture of the day. Although, the springboard for the Christian faith is very Jewish in its character, the essential spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God is prominent throughout the gospel writings and the epistles.

At the onset of his ministry, Jesus emphasizes to Nicodemus (John 3) that the transforming experience of conversion is best likened to a spiritual birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Similarly, he says to the Samaritan woman, "A time is coming and now has come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

In fact, some of the Jewish rites themselves become teaching models utilized by Jesus in interpreting the deeper spiritual truths of the Kingdom to the new followers of faith in Him. This is certainly true of the rite of baptism and observance of Passover along with several other Jewish festivals. While intermittent practices of these rites or some modification

of them continues into the early church, it should be noted that their continued practice was not without difficulty as may be noted with regard to baptism in I Corinthians 1:13-17 and communion in I Corinthians 11:17-33.

References to the word baptizo in Jewish usage appear several times in the Mosaic laws of purification (Exodus 33:17-21, Leviticus 11:23, 15:8, 17:15, Numbers 19:17&18, 31:22&23). Its meaning is that of "washing" or "cleansing" in these instances. In the Septuagint the word is used three times; II Kings 5:14, Ecclesiastes 34:25 and Isaiah 21:4. In all of these references the most likely meaning is one of cleansing.

John the Baptist introduces a new ethical dimension to the practice by associating it with the necessity for personal repentance. It became a public declaration of a personal decision to change one practices and manner of thinking in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom. In and of itself it is an incomplete act as may be noted in Acts 18:25 and 19:3-5.

But Jesus, himself, affirms the new emphasis on repentance John has brought to this Jewish rite by himself participating in the baptism of John. The participation of Jesus in the baptismal event can be most easily understood as the Son of Man, as Jesus often referred to himself, anticipates the day when he will become the Sin-bearer while simultaneously endorsing the preparatory process of John's ministry in announcing Christ's



kingdom.

In the Septuagint, the greek word "baptismos" is used to refer to the Jewish rites of the act of washing itself. In the New Testament the word used is "baptisma" which "always incorporates into its meaning the entire scope of the redemptive significance of the incarnate presence of Christ"(Dr. Clarence Bass)

In the New Testament, the same word is used in an entirely spiritual context. For example, Jesus (subsequent to his baptism by John says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with" (Luke 12:59), and "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? (Mark 10:38, Matt 20:22).

The New Testament makes a strong contrast between John's water baptism and the subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit. Passages such as Mark 1:8, Matt 3:11, Luke 3:16, Acts 1:4, and 11:16 all show this emphasis.

Throughout the epistles there is growing emphasis on the redemptive, transformative and empowering dimensions of spiritual baptism. (Romans 6:3-5)

Finally, scripture emphasizes the essentials of faith including the dimensions of "one baptism" Eph 4:5 which we would understand to be the

essential baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest challenge to the salvationist today, is to reverently respect, the various manners in which God the Holy Spirit is pleased to work through a variety of understandings of doctrine and sacramental practice throughout many denominations, seek and encourage fellowship and spiritual growth among all of God's people, and humbly assert not the supremacy of non-sacramental observance, but simply the validity of it as a legitimate posture within the various expressions of Christian faith and practice.

# What Are You About?

Stephen Court

"Hi, how are you?" "Good, you?" "Not bad!" "How 'bout that weather?"

"Beautiful."

Have you ever had a deep conversation like that? Or better yet, have you ever lived a day WITHOUT a conversation like that? Or how about the next segment...

"So what do you do?" "I'm a lawyer"/ "I'm a plumber"/ "I'm a deli girl"/

"I work at the Mall"/ "I'm not working right now."

So why is it that, whenever we can get beneath the surface manners of Western Society, talking of the weather, we are defined by what we do to earn money?

Why do we define ourselves by what we do? And even more narrowly, by what we get remunerated to do? I mean, it's not as if the doctors in our midst answer the question, 'what do you do?' with, "I fish" or "I watch the Rangers."

As a society we seem to value ourselves economically rather than ethically.

The British have a turn of phrase describing someone who is known for camping out on a favourite subject: "She's always on about..." You can tell a lot about person by what they are always on about!

To modify the turn a little more, 'what are you about?' How much deeper than 'what do you do?!' When I worked on the Blue Jays ground crew growing up, I was so much more than just a member of the ground crew. That identification didn't even begin to let you in on what made me me, what made me tick, what I was passionate about. I've determined to live with others at a deeper level than the economic. I try not to ask people what they do (although sometimes I catch myself!). Instead, I'm trying to ask them, 'what are you about?'

My wife is pregnant with our first child. I am putting this into practice here, as well. I won't assume you're talking about gender when you ask, "Do you know what it is?" When queried thus, I reply, "Yes, a passionate, zealous, covenanted, apostolic, prophetic endtime warrior, named Zion."

This still doesn't tell them if the baby is a boy or a girl! It's not that I'm being obstinate- I just don't know, yet.

I just asked a lady I met this 'What are you about?' question. Granted,

her initial response was, 'what do you mean?' But once we got that out of the way, I got to find out that she likes arts and crafts, enjoys drama, and writes short stories. Isn't that a lot more interesting than, "I'm a early childhood educator" (no offence to early childhood educators!)?

I encourage you to shift from the economic to the ethical in your interactions with people. I help you start.

"Stephen, what are you about?"

"I am about over-indulging in a passionate relationship with Jesus, and spreading that with so many others that our whole world tips over (in a Bible turn of phrase- being turned upside down). I'd love every single person to find forgiveness of their sins through Jesus. How about you?"

I mean, if anyone should emphasise the purpose of our lives ahead of its pecuniary aspects, it is Salvationists! Listen to General William Booth:

"A good soldier makes war his business. He may do something in other lines of duty; he may be (an accountant, a teacher, a plumber, a student) or what not, but after all, fighting is his trade. He has chosen it, and made secondary all other business, connections, relationships, and pleasures of his life" (SALVATION SOLDIERY, p50,51).

The war is what we're all about. It is time we starting identifying ourselves accurately.

## Battlelines

### **My dreams for the Army** Commissioner Wesley Harris

Walt Disney said of the enterprise which bears his name, ‘If you can dream it you can do it. This whole thing was started by a mouse’. The Salvation Army was another great enterprise which started with a dream and under the blessing of God, with prayer and passion and hard work, the dream came true.

Many of us have shared the dream of our founders and have been concerned that no-one should steal it from us. Now it may be important to do a little dreaming of our own and consider the shape of things to come.

I have been asked to write about my own dreams for the Army and I respond on the strength of the Scriptural promise that if young men can have visions old men can have dreams! In brief, my dream for the Army is that it should be what it is at its passionate, innovative and effective best. Of course, because it is comprised of people like the writer and readers of this article, the Army is not always at its best. Sometimes it seems to have lost the plot.

But my dream is of an Army that is true to its history and true to its destiny. I want this movement to be actually what it already is potentially for I am an incurable Salvationist and believe passionately in what the real Army is all about and feel that its best days may be yet to come.

Memories can contribute to dreams so allow me to share a few of mine.

I think of a retired woman officer I am proud to call a friend. She pioneered innovative social work in the red light district of Amsterdam and I have in mind a picture of her in that place conducting an open-air meeting in pouring rain. One of her arms is crooked around an Army flag; a very drunken man is trying to drape himself around her neck and rivulets of rain run down her radiant face as she proclaims her joyous gospel to people sheltering in nearby doorways. As an observer I can only murmur to myself, ‘This is the army!’

My wife and I visited a clinic for about thirty very young, dark skinned children in Swaziland. In charge was a single Australian officer - the only white woman in a huge area. All her little charges were doomed to die from AIDS but, far from her homeland, that woman was sacrificing her years and her health in order to make their short lives a little happier. She too represented the Army at its best.

Another vignette is of a scene in Toronto. Zealous young Salvationists had scoured the city streets and brought to the Army hall a great crowd of street kids and other young people for what was billed as ‘Soul busters’. As the speaker I rejoiced in the attendance but wondered

what kind of reception might be expected! However, when the appeal was given there was a steady response to the Mercy Seat and glory shone on the young Salvationists as they sought to point their peers to the Saviour. That scene too contributed to my dreams and my hopes for the future.

The shanty towns or 'favelas' in Brazil are places of indescribable corruption and filth where children play in open sewers and violence is the order of the day. As congress leaders my wife and I paid a fleeting visit but the territorial commander introduced us to some radiant young European women officers who were there to stay. He said, 'These girls beg to be allowed to live in these places and love the people for Jesus' sake'. I was humbled and yet filled with hope for a movement which included people like that.

The Army has been called 'a mosaic of grace' and one of my dreams could be that larger numbers of Salvationists will discover more of the movement in which they serve and, of course, the Spirit without whose gracious presence all we do could be empty show.

Sometimes there is a predisposition on the part of Salvationists to think that the grass is greener on the other side of the denominational fence. Now of course, we should always be ready to learn any better means of cultivation practised by the neighbours but it may also be good if we could rediscover the charm of our own garden and then bend our backs (and our knees) to make it even more fruitful. That means not only having a dream but being down to earth.

Sometimes the notion is that if the Army is to improve *they* will have to fix it - 'they' being people at headquarters. But without taking anything away from the influence or responsibility of those engaged in Army administration (of whose number I was one for many years) the 'Army' is not merely some vague body at Queen Victoria Street, London or wherever. The 'Army' is us and if progress doesn't take place where we are it is unlikely to take place at all. Only team work can make the dream work and so I don't merely look forward to bigger and better buildings with more and more pew sitters but 'an Army mobilised by God' with 'every soldier a soul winner'.

It is sometimes felt that if we changed our structures and altered our systems our problems would be at an end. Certainly our structures and systems should facilitate not obstruct our essential mission and as an Army leader I have played a small part in some fairly big administrative changes. But my dreams now would transcend these things. I would hope that in some ways we may go back in order to go forward!

Of course we cannot relive our past either personally or corporately. Nor can we ignore the fact that times are changing. But my dream would be that more of our people might rediscover some of the timeless principles which characterised primitive Salvationism. Our forebears in the faith had tremendous conviction, compassion and commitment which is why, under God, a lot of quite ordinary folk helped to make an extraordinary branch of the Christian Church.



The late Commissioner Catherine Bramwell-Booth said to me, 'The things which made the Army will go on making the Army'. She was right. Fervent prayer, boundless love, holy joy and an entrepreneurial spirit cannot fail to be effective. Numerically, the Army in the world is larger than ever but to employ an Americanism, 'We 'aint seen nothing yet!' The best is yet to be. The dreams of God[s people will surely come true - in God's time and in his way.

## UCBONES – ICANARMY

Paul Mergard,  
Australia Territorial Mission Team Coordinator

I've been extremely privileged during the passed 18 months as I've served God through The Salvation Army on three different continents. In July/August 2000 and again in June/July 2001 I was part of two mission teams to South Africa – the first with an Australian team and the latter with a UK team. Then between August 2000 and September 2001 I worked with the UK Mission Team based in London. Since September 2001 I have been back in Australia, working for The Salvation Army Australian Eastern Territory as the Territorial Mission Team Co-ordinator.

It has been an incredible opportunity to see first hand what God is doing in The Salvation Army across the world. And I tell you, it is very exciting. God is moving in a massive way – there are stories of people getting saved, saints being mobilised and suffering humanity being served.

These are very exciting days for The Salvation Army. Times are changing. New seeds are shooting. A fresh passionate and energetic generation is rising up to take the mantle of leadership.

*These are the days where God is calling The Salvation Army forward to its Eternity! We look back too much in the Army. It is time that we look forward to see what God is doing. We can learn from the past, and there has been some incredible things happen in the past, but the Army of today and tomorrow rests in the future. God is bringing a fresh anointing, he is recasting the vision he has always had for the Army, and is reminding us to get back on track.*

I want to say right from the outset that our past has been amazing, especially in the early days of The Salvation Army. There are some incredible men and women of God in our past (and present) and they have accomplished great things for the Kingdom. These people have fought an awesome fight, but for much of the time, it has been a very hard battle with a small number of soldiers fighting with them. I do believe however that we have lost the way somewhat since the second world war as we focused on peace time issues and settled with the comfortable instead of continuing to forge new roads to see people won for the Kingdom of God. God has done some incredible things through individuals in our past, but I believe that God is now doing a new, fresh things with the emerging generation.

So what do I perceive God is doing in the Army? I believe there are three main areas God is calling us to.

### ***Firstly, it is an Army focused on Radical Prayer.***

For the past 10 years, I have heard sermons on prayer. I have heard our leadership motivate us to pray. I have heard lone voices call us to prayer. And we have preached sermons based on 2 Chronicles 7:14 – *'If my people, who are called by my name, will*

*humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (NIV)*

But corporately, we haven't prayed many radical prayers. Individuals have been on their knees seeking God's face and calling out to him to heal our land, but as a movement, we haven't been on our knees seeking God's face. However, this changed on the 4 May 2001 when the UK Territory began a year of 24 hour a day, 7 day a week prayer. Now, this radical and extreme prayer (where corps are committing to pray 24 hours a day for a whole week) is sweeping The Salvation Army world! The Australian Eastern Territory will begin a whole year of non-stop 24-7 prayer on Friday 28 June 2002. And I have also read that the USA Western Territory is also going on the 24-7 prayer journey. There have also been corps in South Africa, Russia, Sweden, USA, Australia and Canada that I am aware of participating in 24-7 prayer. God is doing something amazing.

Prayer is turning the tide in the Army. For many years, even decades, there has been a flowing tide of people out of the Army, especially in the western world. But this radical prayer is turning the tide. People are turning to Christ. The prodigals are coming home. New disciples are being made. God is answering our prayers big time.

Some people might ask where the evidence is for this. At the moment, it is too early to have a statistical trend of God turning the tide, however a look at the UK Territory's 24-7/SA website ([www.missionteam.co.uk/24-7sa](http://www.missionteam.co.uk/24-7sa)) or the 24-7 international website ([www.24-7prayer.com](http://www.24-7prayer.com)) will give you many reports of lives and corps being changed by 24-7 prayer. And I have also been involved in 24-7 prayer weeks when prodigals have returned and where deep emotional wounds have been healed. In February I was involved in a 24-7 prayer week in Sydney and during that week one person committed their life to Christ and many others had their faith renewed.

***Secondly, it is an Army focused on Extreme Holiness.***

For too long, the church in general has not lived out its faith to the extent that we are called to. There have been many slips of integrity. There have been many high profile Christians who have fallen. I am aware that none of us are perfect and by God's grace we can be forgiven and come back to him, but, I believe that God is ushering in a new wave of holiness. And it is holiness that hurts the eyes. God is calling us to live transparent lives and to take up the call to be holy people.

This is not an easy road to travel. But it is essential if we want to see a generation of lost people return to Christ. It is essential if we want to see God restore The Salvation Army to the place we were created for.

***Thirdly, it is an Army focused on extreme mission.***

God raised us up in the mid 1800's with a mantle to rescue a dying, lost people. I love the passion William Booth had for lost people. These words have been shared time and time again over the past decade. It is a cry echoed from passionate Salvationists desperate to get back to where we started. I see these words being lived out in the days ahead:

*While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll*

*fight; while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight - I'll fight to the very end! William Booth.*

We have lost the mission edge we once had in the Army. It is time we all rediscovered it. In the early days of The Salvation Army, people went to extremes to reach lost people with the Gospel. Can you imagine a group of people today (in the Western World) having stones thrown at them because they were on the street preaching the Gospel? It certainly wouldn't happen in the places I've lived in over the past 2 years. People in other churches used to look at us to set the example in how to attract unbelievers to Christ. Today we look at places like Willow Creek and Saddleback Church and many other church growth organisations to see how to do mission.

This extreme mission is rising up in many areas, but I long to see the whole Army take hold of mission and see our communities reached for Christ. I have heard and seen new mission projects begin over the past couple of years which are being led by people with a deep heart to reach the lost. I know of Salvationists who are living out incarnational mission by moving into some of the poorer communities of their cities so that they can reach the people around them – right where they live. They are giving up their right to live in a comfortable suburb where it is safe and are taking the risk to make a difference in a hurting world.

### ***A new generation.***

God is raising up a new generation of Salvationists all around the world. And it is an Elijah generation. It is a generation with the anointing of Elijah and following in the footsteps of John the Baptist.

*'Zechariah was in the sanctuary when an angel of the Lord appeared, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was overwhelmed with fear. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! For God has heard your prayer, and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son! And you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice with you at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or hard liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will persuade many Israelites to turn to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah, the prophet of old. He will precede the coming of the Lord, preparing the people for his arrival. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will change disobedient minds to accept godly wisdom.'* (Luke 1:11-17 NLT) (Italics mine)

"Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6 NLT)

It is a generation of people committed to the cause of Christ, just as there have been individuals in the past that have committed themselves to the cause of Christ.

It is a generation that is passionate about lost people, just as there have been individuals in the past that have been passionate about lost people.

It is a generation that God is anointing for great things, just as there have been individuals in the past that God has anointed for great things.

It is a generation that is full of the Holy Spirit, just as there have been individuals in the past who have been full of the Holy Spirit.

It is a generation that will go to extremes to see the Kingdom of God come in our day. Sacrificing their lives, worldly desires and pleasures all for the Kingdom. *To live is Christ. To die is gain.*

It is a generation that is full of extraordinary character. This generation will hold tightly to their integrity.

And it is a generation that is tired of fighting over the style, look and feel of the Army. It is a generation that only wants to fight the war of Salvation. These other issues are distractions. We want to see a world won for Jesus.

*But it is not a generation that is limited to age.* Anyone is able to be a part of this generation – whether you are 18 or 80! It is for young and old. However the young people of our Army are answering the call of God and are wanting to lead the way. They need to be empowered and equipped through training, funding and encouragement. They need to be mentored. They need the wisdom of the older generation. They respect what has gone on before, and want to learn from the past, but they are not satisfied until all the world is won for Jesus.

I believe God is saying to us – ‘Rise up and become the Army I created you to be!’ Wake the sleeping giant up. Commit to the cause of Christ. Let the Spirit breathe life into your old, dry bones.

I love one of the slogans of 24-7 prayer. There is huge significance in it for the body of Christ, but I believe the slogan is even more pertinent to us because for a long time, I believe people have looked at us and have seen an army of dry bones.

### **UCBONES – ICANARMY**

**(You see bones? I see an Army!)**

It is taken from Ezekiel 37:1-14 where Ezekiel is told to prophecy to the valley of dry bones.

God is calling us to prophecy to the Army – to the valley of old, dry bones and call it to rise up. And then to prophecy to the wind and call the four winds to enter the bones. These are the days of hope for The Salvation Army. God is doing a new thing.

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:18-19 NIV)*

These days of hope are tremendous. Are you a part of them? Are you a part of the new generation? I hope so. Let's pray it in. Lets live out our mission statement.

Saving Souls!

Growing Saints!

Serving suffering humanity!

### IT'S TIME

It's time, time for the dead and gone  
 Time for the broken ones to live again  
 It's time, time for the dead to rise  
     Time for the wings to fly  
     Time to live again  
     I can hear the calling  
     I can hear the sound of rain  
  
 Over the mountains and over the valleys  
     I hear the calling it's time  
 Over the nations and all through the cities  
     I feel the shaking it's time  
  
 It's time, time for the dead to sing  
     Time for the walls to ring  
     With the songs of freedom  
 It's time, time for the numb to feel  
     Time for the wounds to heal  
     With the songs of freedom  
     I can hear the calling  
     I can hear the sound of rain  
  
 It's time, time for the tide to turn  
     Time for our hearts to burn  
     With a desperation  
 It's time, time for a sacrifice  
     Time that we paid the price  
     For our generation  
     I can hear them calling  
     I can hear the sound of rain  
  
 Over the mountains and over the valleys  
     I hear the calling it's time  
 Over the nations and all through the cities  
     I feel the shaking it's time  
     © Garry McDonald

## Towards the World of Jesus

Bramwell Pearce

Recently the Canadian men's Olympic hockey team thrilled our country by winning the gold medal in Salt Lake City. This was something very special for Canadians as hockey is such a part of our heritage. After the final buzzer went off and the Canadian male team beat the favoured United States team something strange occurred throughout our nation. People hit the streets celebrating, honking their horns, yelling greetings to one another, and we're waving our flag with pride. In Toronto, on Young Street, the party went on for hours. It was something spectacular to be a part of, but then it occurred to me that as a Christian I'm a part of something so much greater than my country. There is no fellowship in this world compared to the fellowship I have found with Jesus.

As I turn off my television to watch the daily news I am fascinated by the violence in this world: the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Israel-Palestinians conflicts, the violence in Pakistan and India. There are so many conflicts occurring, and it seems all of these have to do in one way or another with land and religion. "Christians" are not guilt free from these conflicts either as the hostility in Northern Ireland continues today. Despite all this present chaos I believe there is hope for our world.

Some aspects of hope are being offered freely and can be found in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not just an ideology or a god among many gods. Jesus is God; active, intimate, real, and true. His sacrifice is something that brings all humanity together. Paul understood this when he wrote to those in Galatia stating,

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal. 3:36-38 NKJV

As populations increase, our world rapidly shrinks, and people fight all the harder to keep their precious borders, these words ring all the more true. If we call ourselves

followers of Jesus then we have become a part of something greater than our country, our social class, or our sex. We who have been crucified with Christ now have the role of bringing His kingdom here to earth. This is where hope becomes costly for the believers.

Hope is something quite difficult for the believer as the believer must give himself over completely to God's Son. This will inevitably result in some loss of the individualism that Western society grips so tightly. Despite our cultural indoctrination, we must freely give over aspects of our individualism to become a part of something greater than ourselves. By allowing Jesus to take over our lives, He/we can influence humanity to love God and love each other. The second chapter of Galatians deals with this. There is a difference of opinion between Peter and Paul in regards to how believers should live together. Paul rebukes Peter for removing himself from associating with the new Gentile believers in his community. Peter was more concerned with his past national and religious allegiances than he was with participating in Jesus. Jesus transcends our allegiances that we are born into. We become born again, meaning we become one in Christ as Christ becomes one with us. Paul states,

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”(Gal. 2:20)

Once Christ comes into our lives we are changed. The status quo is no longer an option as Jesus transforms us into a new creation. The challenge for the Christian is to acknowledge this, to give up so many societal norms, and adopt the things in our lives that best express Christ living in us. In Jesus our Country is much larger than the country in which we presently reside and our families are expanded to include all believers, not just father, mother, and siblings. Jesus says,

Here is My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother. (Matt 12:46)

There is hope in for this world. Amongst all the chaos God's people coming together to do His will. Our job is to view people in this world as children of God. The Church and



our homes are not exclusive social clubs for members only. These are places for people to see Jesus, the ultimate manifestation of God's love. God is calling to the world and we are His mouthpieces. Our work is to implore people to return to their Father. This is what will change the world.

## A Provocative Lifestyle

Stephen Court

General John Gowans recently challenged me (and you, if you're a salvo) to live a provocative lifestyle. This kind of life is certainly contrary to how we are inculcated and acculturated to live. Provocation is antithetical to tolerance, the sum and substance of the postmodern ethic.

His thing is that if we are sold out to a purpose in life, one that shines in stark contrast to the prevailing worldview, then we should, by our living, provoke a reaction from the majority.

Most of us in this world have the same ends. Most of us desire peace, love, and joy.

The cause in question about which Gowans stirred me is the cause of Jesus Christ. Jesus' whole purpose was to awaken a somnolent people to an overflowing life full of the peace, love, and joy for which most people are searching. However, when the pervasive mindset is that a coalescence of materialism and consumerism forms the highway to peace, love, and peace, it is difficult to coax drivers to change direction. When the emerging trend is down the path of pantheistic obsolescence (\*) it is problematical to convince travelers to switch their course.

And so my General directs me to live a provocative lifestyle. He insists that my words and actions kindle questions from those who do not share my views. Too often, I've been willing to settle in on cruise control as I follow Jesus. I've figured that people know from the uniform I wear that I belong to Jesus and experience the peace, joy, and love for which they are hunting. I've assumed that opening the doors at 3rd and Borland on a Sunday morning at 10:30 to worship Jesus Christ lets people know there is provision for the needs with which they struggle. I have inferred that my beliefs, divergent as they are from the norm in Williams Lake, would generate a response. I've even thought that the transformation of people's lives by Jesus, through forgiveness, physical healing, and spiritual deliverance and freedom would arouse some questions in people in Lake City.

I guess we need to turn up the volume in our love, joy, peace, holiness, compassion, justice, and grace that people experience when we meet them. I am determined to live a more provocative lifestyle, in hopes of raising questions in their minds and on their tongues about how they, too, can experience the wonderful life through the only means that will get them there, Jesus Christ.

Will you join me in my determined obedience of the General to stir a response from the world that has largely marginalised us? Will you join me

in resolving to obey the wildly radical of our great Commander-In-Chief to live lives causing 'very earthquakes of sensation'\*\*, that topple the topography of hell? Will you join me in launching out in dare-devil, Jesus-obsessed warfare to finally win the world? Here's to world conquest!

\* Pantheism, the belief that God is everything and everything is God, is hopelessly obsolete. At one point it was, of course, true. But then "God created." To the chagrin of stubborn reiki masters, wiccans, channellers, new agers, and pop eastern religionists everywhere, God created (thanks to C.S. Lewis for this thought, and thanks to God for that thought!).

\*\* George Scott Railton, in C Swift, THE HEAVENLY WITCH, p77.

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## The Practice of Holiness and the Practice of Law: Are they mutually exclusive?

Dani Shaw-Buchholz

It should not come as a surprise to suggest that we live in a rather litigious society. What is it about our society that leads to this? Why do people run to lawyers and judges to resolve their disputes? How might we as Christians counter this cultural trend?

### **Contributing Factors to a Rights-Based Culture**

There are several factors that support the resolution of conflict through litigation. First, we live in an increasingly secular culture, which means that God and His laws are no longer supreme. Despite this, people still want to believe in a higher power, and they want to be able to turn to an objective standard outside of themselves when things go wrong. In our society, this higher power and the objective standard are the courts and the law.

Second, Professor David Wells has argued that we as a society have lost the capacity to understand ourselves as moral beings. As such, he argues, "Responsibility for much of life [has been] handed over to the government, and private life [has become] dominated by the belief that each citizen [has] the unencumbered right to individual autonomy." Wells states, "What was once an open space between law and freedom, one governed by character and truth, is now deserted, so law must now do what character has abandoned." The law has become our conscience and the courts have become our higher power.

Third, we live in a very individualistic culture and in such cultures, individuals are willing to assert their rights over and against the group. Dr. Jonathan Raymond argues that "The culture of individualism glorifies the drive for and preoccupation with personal prosperity, materialistic gain, personal freedoms without obligations, and one's general wellbeing at the expense of others. It reflects competition against others and a preoccupation with 'me' and 'mine' and with 'us' and 'ours.'"

Fourth, we live in a very rights-based society and rights is largely the language of lawyers and judges. In his book entitled *The Rights Revolution*, Michael Ignatieff, argues that "rights talk has transformed how we think about ourselves as citizens, as men and women, and as parents."

Finally, we live in a very fragmented society. As Dr. Jonathon Raymond states "Globally, we witness fragmentation of a world immersed in legal conflict and litigation in the courts, families locked in conflict, between-group stereotyping, racism and discrimination, harassment, abuse, and violence across lines of gender, age, occupation and faith." Domestically, Quebec holds the constant threat of succession over our heads, aboriginal peoples still live with the scars of decades of abuse at the hands of both the Church and the State, marriages break down at record rates and families are being torn apart almost daily.

### **How has our culture affected the Church?**

We would be naïve to think that the broader culture has not affected the Church. Without engaging in an exhaustive analysis of the extent to which the Church has been affected by the broader culture, I would like to make four observations.

First, in recent years, there have been more lawsuits against religious institutions. Second, there are more lawsuits against religious leaders. Third, there are more lawsuits between believers. Finally, as a result of the trends in our society, and the courts' willingness to hold churches liable for the actions of their members, churches have begun to second guess their actions and are afraid to engage in important ministries for fear they will be held liable for their actions.

How might we as Christians seek to counter these cultural trends? What, if anything, might our faith traditions have to say about how we handle conflict?

### **Holiness and Legal Issues**

One of the most important observations we can make is that legal issues are fundamentally about relationships. Legal issues may arise at the beginning of a relationship, when parties are articulating their rights, obligations and expectations. They may also arise upon breakdown of a relationship, when parties are looking to punish one another or to go their separate ways.

While there are several ways to define the concept of holiness, I have chosen a definition offered in Salvation Story, The Salvation Army's Handbook of Doctrine. It defines holiness as "a radical ethic of love" in which we "treat all our relationships as holy covenants." Perhaps more than anything else, a Christian perspective on the law reminds us that through the saving work of Christ and our reconciliation with God, we can be reconciled to one another. We do not need to live as isolated individuals with a wall of rights to protect us. We don't need to live in alienation from fellow human beings. The concept of holiness stresses the importance of a radical ethic of love, in which we humbly serve God and humankind.

### **How do we counter the cultural trends?**

In seeking to counter the culture trends, we must recognize the inherent limitations of the law. Speaking in the context of families, Michael Ignatieff points out that "rights talk doesn't begin to capture the web of love and trust that makes real families work." He states, "Trying to capture these values in the language of rights only makes for confusion. It doesn't make any sense to talk about kids enjoying a right to love.... love isn't a juridical thing. It's not an enforceable duty or even an obligation."

Second, we must make a commitment to personal holiness. Each one of us must strive for personal holiness, that perfect love of God and neighbour that does no harm. We must echo the prayer of the Psalmist who prayed "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Third, we must make a commitment to institutional holiness. We should attempt to root out sin and evil within our institutions and make a corporate commitment to holiness. We cannot turn a blind eye to the wrongs and injustices we see within, nor should we hide behind the "corporate veil."

Fourth, we must practice humility. We must be willing to admit that we may be wrong or that in some cases, we are wrong. We must also be willing to make amends. One lawyer has argued that if the United Church of Canada had issued an apology for the abuse perpetrated against aboriginals in the residential schools, it might have been legally liable for that abuse and forced into bankruptcy, but it would have emerged a much stronger organization, and one that had spiritual integrity. How do we approach the resolution of legal disputes? Are we prepared to admit when we are wrong?

Fifth, we must be willing to compromise. Too often people become entrenched in their positions and are not willing to compromise. They fight their battles on principle and they are not willing to back down. Speaking about the rights revolution within our society, Michael Ignatieff points out that an

assertion of one's rights is not usually an invitation to compromise. He states, "Give me right rights' is not an invitation to compromise. It's a demand for unconditional surrender."

As we reflect on the intersection between holiness and the law, perhaps we should meditate on the words of the Apostle Paul, who stated, "The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers."

1. David F. Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) at 9.
2. *Ibid.*, at 63.
3. Dr. Jonathan Raymond, "Creating Christian Community in a Fragmented World," The Salvation Army International Theology and Ethics Symposium, at 5.
4. Michael Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution*, (Toronto: Anansi, 2000) at 1.
5. *Supra*, note ii.
6. *Supra*, note iii at 21.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Psalm 139, NIV, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).
9. *Supra*, note iv at 17.
10. I Corinthians 6:7-9, NIV, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

## **Letter to young officers** *(with apologies to J.B. Phillips)*

**Captain Stephen Poxon**

As commissioning approaches, once again (for which annual miracle we give thanks), it seems timely for me to write an open letter to those who will very soon be young officers; not necessarily young in terms of years, although that will probably be the case for most, but young in terms of officership.

I write not because I know all the answers, and am therefore eminently qualified to dispense advice, but because I am: a) An officer, b) Young (come on, 36 is young!), and c) I am young in officer-years (a mere eight year old). Furthermore, I write because I have eight years worth of mistakes to reflect upon, and if anything I have to share can help at least one young officer avoid the pitfalls I have crashed in to (heavily, at times – I still have the bruises!), then that will be to the good.

Here then, for what it might be worth to future colleagues out there, are a few modest pointers, in no particular order. Doubtless, there are more, but my more experienced colleagues can touch them upon if they wish.

- 1) “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Timothy 5:22, NIV). That is to say, allow yourself time to assess your appointment and the people who make up your appointment before making any major decisions, particularly with regard to building (or re-building) the team of personnel you want to work with most closely.

Time is deceptive. It would have you believe you need to snatch at every moment in order to make any progress. That is not necessarily the case. Allow, use and govern your time for thought, meditation, prayers and discussion – “wisdom is found in those who take advice” (Proverbs 13:10, NIV) - before deciding on important matters. So far as you can (and so far as is



responsible), avoid the tyranny of the urgent, especially in announcing major news. Be content to wait on God – this is his Army, after all!

The clamour to appoint this or that individual to this or that position will at times be quite overwhelming. Don't ever be afraid to take a step back and allow time to show you something more of that individual (good or bad) before he or she is warranted, enrolled or commissioned. You will find yourself astonished at the difference six months can make. Avoid being hounded in your thinking. Be prepared to change your mind.

By all means, accept nominations for, say, local officer positions, but don't allow the volume of opinion to be your deciding factor in such matters. Without ever becoming cynical or obstructive, be "as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10.16, NIV). A time for reflection is an important and profitable investment, and can make the difference between appointing the wrong person to work alongside you, in haste, or appointing the right person to minister with you, at leisure. 1 Samuel 16:1-13 is a useful reference for the commissioning or warranting of key workers (fellow ministers). The obvious candidates are not necessarily the right ones!

- 2) Treat yourself to time with God, every day, with prayer and Bible reading, or a quality devotional book or magazine. Be disciplined in this. Go without television if needs be. Sacrifice sleep if time on your mattress hinders time on your knees.

There are those times when the pressures of the day would have you crowd out Jesus. Sad to say, there are those in your appointment who will not care about your spiritual wellbeing so long as you meet their personal (often entirely unbiblical) criteria of what an officer should be like, and should do. Be alert to such time stealers. Keep your diary to hand when they approach, or call you on the telephone. If what they are asking of you can wait, and if it clashes with time you have earmarked for being with God, then tell them you have another appointment.

By all means, fulfil your responsibilities and carry out your duties, but not at the expense of your devotional life, for that is the most precious thing you have. It is so very easy to slide into the trap of running on empty in a spiritual sense, and to spend one's time on worthy matters but

never – or hardly ever - with the Lord. Never forget that without Jesus, we can do nothing (see John 15:5) – nothing that will last, that is, even though we fill our time doing plenty.

Take seriously the advice of Jesus in Matthew 6:33; “set your mind on God’s kingdom...before everything else” (NEB). There is no other way to be a good officer. Be a good fundraiser, by all means. Be a good administrator, certainly. And so on, and so forth. But above all else, stay close to Jesus, and be a good Christian. Explore your own spirituality, with Jesus. As someone once said, “Make sure you spend more time praying than you do preaching”!

- 3) Allow just a little steel to enter your soul. That is not to say one should ever become hard-hearted, not at all, but it is to say that an officer cannot hope to last long in the battle if he or she is badly wounded by every word of criticism or discouragement. There has to be an element of flint (see Isaiah 50:7, NIV) that enables an officer to stand firm when the storm rages. Self-doubt and despair are cunning foes, and need to be resisted with every sinew at times.

Someone once wrote that whoever marries the spirit of the age, soon finds himself widowed. There is a great deal of truth in that. Officers cannot allow themselves to implement decisions or to make policy simply because it is the fashionable (or comfortable) thing to do, or because it carries the popular vote. Look past popularity towards integrity, depth and conviction. And do bear in mind that storms very rarely last too long!

There will come those awful times when nettles have to be grasped, and some nettles can be particularly vicious. The then Captain John Read (now T.P. in New Zealand) once prayed for me to have “holy belligerence” – and I hope he will be pleased to know that his prayer is still being answered! The then Colonel Shaw Clifton (now, by a happy coincidence, T.C. in New Zealand) once advised me to “be strong, but gentle”.

- 4) Try to bear in mind that your appointment probably belongs to other people before it belongs to you! That is not to say that you should abdicate any responsibility, but it is to say that the people who have been Salvationists where you are now appointed for years,

or even decades, should be given maximum respect. Their views should be sought, and listened to – even if you eventually disagree with them. Autocracy has its place (probably more so in The Salvation Army than in other denominations), but there is nothing to beat a team of workers who know their opinions matter to you. Remember that most of them will still be there long after you have moved elsewhere! Respect what they have already done at local level, and do be sure to verbalise that respect in front of other team members. It might not be enough to assume that they are aware of it.

- 5) Be kind to yourself! Be kind to your family and loved ones! Spend time with your friends! One of the saddest testimonies I have ever heard came from an officer whose claim to fame was that he had never taken a day off in years. This, no doubt, was meant to impress, but I'm afraid all it did was depress – especially when said officer received a round of applause.

Not only is never taking time off a direct violation of one of the Ten Commandments, it is foolhardy – spiritually, emotionally and physically - to deprive oneself of quality time for relaxation and re-creation; “What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare...?” It is also dangerous to one's health, and doesn't do a great deal for one's family or social life.

Be sure to take time out (mark it in the diary) for pastimes. Give a high priority to time with your husband or wife, and never ever let your children grow up resenting The Salvation Army – or God - because it/he kidnapped a parent throughout the years when parental attention was most needed. Book a date for lunch out – frequently – even if it is just a sandwich (out of town, ideally). In doing these things, you will keep officership in a healthy perspective, and your officership will be all the better because of it. Believe it or not, it is not the be all and end all of human existence! Read! Swim! Paint! Walk! Play! Picnic! Watch soccer! Enjoy films!

- 6) Be yourself! It is not at all trite to say that there is no one like you; ergo, God intends you to be you! What a tragedy, as someone once said, to be born an individual and to die a copy.

Discover and employ the gifts God has given you – and work hard in the areas where gifting is lacking! Preach as you preach. Lead meetings as you lead meetings. Sing as you sing. Love and enjoy God as you love and enjoy God.

Don't apologise for being the type of officer you are (assuming you are doing your best!). I think it was Major Chick Yuill who once said something along the lines of an officer's calling being the same, whatever the appointment. God will use you to have a specific influence in your appointment, and you may deprive those who come under your influence of something unique and special if you feel obliged to behave like someone else. The accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10) will try very hard to persuade you that you are not up to the job. If and when he does, tell him to take that matter up with Jesus, on account of the fact that it was Jesus who called you to be an officer-disciple!

- 7) Both on a personal level, and in terms of your appointment, remember that “God will supply all your wants out of the magnificence of his riches” (Philippians 4:19, NEB). That is, of course, as long as your motives are right! (see James 4:3). Never allow mere money to dictate. If you are in the will of God, and if the project or scheme you are planning is in the will of God, then he will provide. He can be trusted utterly.

The late Pastor Richard Wurmbrand of Romania taught that money should be the very last item on a church agenda when planning for the future. His philosophy was that a church should pray hard to make sure it was within the will of God, and should never be halted by those infamous words, “but we can't afford it”! How often the Army works it the other way around! We do well to trust and obey when planning. Have enormous faith in an enormous God.

Know too, that God's provision is not only limited to money. He knows all our needs, of whatever nature, and is splendidly capable of meeting every one.

- 8) And finally – enjoy the ride! My mother-in-law, Major Ena Latham, now retired, looks back over decades of officership (some of which was tough) and regards it as a great

adventure. Officership is an immense privilege, like no other. It is so much more than a job. It is a way of life that should be enjoyed. Fight hard. Travel optimistically. Invest yourself, and look back one day to see that most of it was good. Remember the privilege of your high calling. Do it all for Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> McLuhan H. M., *The Mechanical Bride*, p. v.

<sup>2</sup> McLuhan, 98.

<sup>3</sup> McLuhan, 24.

<sup>4</sup> McLuhan, 25.

<sup>5</sup> McLuhan, 99.

<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, there are some who seem to prefer to think of the human as a machine, such as cognitive psychologists. But I would maintain that even this is a ridiculous conception of mind/self.

<sup>7</sup> McLuhan, 28.

<sup>8</sup> McLuhan, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Baudrillard, J. *Simulations*, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> This is a charitable reading of Baudrillard. He seems to argue that there simply is no more real. It is my interpretation that he is over-stating his case to make a point, and that a friendly reading can produce a valuable tool for understanding the role of the symbolic. Many dismiss him for his apparent denial of any reality.

<sup>11</sup> Baudrillard, J., *Seduction*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 174.

<sup>15</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 174.

<sup>16</sup> McLuhan, vi.

<sup>17</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 177.

<sup>18</sup> Bauman, Z., *Freedom*, pp. 36ff.

<sup>19</sup> Bauman, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Bauman, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Bauman, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Bauman, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Bauman, 57.

<sup>24</sup> Bauman, 57.

<sup>25</sup> Bauman, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Bauman, 60.

<sup>27</sup> This conception of the subject circling around the (real) object of her/his desire in the symbolic realm, is based loosely on the Lacanian *vel* or rim, although it is taken out of context here. See Lacan, J., *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, pp. 203-215.

<sup>28</sup> Oswald, R. M. and S. B. Leas, *The Inviting Church*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>29</sup> Lyon, D., *Jesus in Disneyland*, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> Moore, R. L., *Selling God*, p. 276.

<sup>31</sup> Callahan, K. L., *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*, p. xxvii.

<sup>32</sup> Callahan, xxvii.

<sup>33</sup> I try to avoid the term 'social science', because I believe it to be misleading, and a cheap grab at credibility by those disciplines which use it. However, they are scientific in the sense that the quote implies – that they are descriptive, and not prescriptive.

<sup>34</sup> Weber, M., "Science as Vocation", in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, eds. & trns., p. 143. The internal quote is from Tolstoi.

<sup>35</sup> Callahan, xxvii.

<sup>36</sup> Callahan, xxviii.

<sup>37</sup> See Meeks, W., *The First Urban Christians.*, p. 52; also Moltmann, J., “Signs of the Spirit in the Fellowship Community of Christ.” In *Hope for the Church: Moltmann in Dialogue with Practical Theology*, T. Runyan, ed. p. 38.

<sup>38</sup> Ryan, G. “To Be or Not To Be”, *Journal of Aggressive Christianity*, Issue 3, Oct/Nov 1999.

<sup>39</sup> Brengle, S. L., *The Soul Winner’s Secret*, p. 54., italics mine.

<sup>40</sup> Linthicum, R. *Signs of Hope in the City.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>41</sup> This is another loose adaption – of Deleuze and Guttari’s concept of the line of flight, but again it is taken out of context and should not be taken as an endorsement of their thought. See *Nomadology: The War Machine*.

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