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‘A Little Vertigo’:

Millennium Three Urban Worship with Commitment and Integrity.

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(This article is excerpted from the forthcoming book, BETWEEN TWO THIEVES: A FIELD THEOLOGY FOR URBAN MISSION. ed. Geoff Ryan).

In conspectu angelorum psallam tibi. (‘In the presence of angels I will sing to you’)

Psalm 138:1

In conspectu angelorum: What a thrilling phrase to find in the psalms, one to be inscribed on the mind and burned into the heart. These words disclose a startling truth: when we come before God to offer our praise and adoration we do so in the company of angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven. In the liturgy earth joins heaven to glorify God... The greatest gift the Church can give our society is a glimpse, however fleeting, of another city. But we can only do that if our worship is self-consciously, confidently, and unmistakably oriented to God. If someone wanders in off the street as we pray, he should sense that there is a double Church, as Origen put it: the one that is seen and the other that is unseen. Indeed if the visitor does not feel uncomfortable, out of place and out of step, something is terribly wrong. The visitor should experience a little vertigo, because something is going on that is beyond his ken. Yet one would hope, as he listens to our faint voices and feeble songs, that he would also hear, if only as an echo in the distance, the thunderous sound of the heavenly host singing, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy.’ (Robert Louis Wilken, a church historian at the University of Virginia, originally in *Antiphon: A Journal for Liturgical Renewal*, but cited in *FIRST THINGS*, January 2002)

Whew! I feel a little vertigo just ingesting that. It is difficult to reconcile such dizzying divine images with the drowsy exigencies of a typical Sunday morning (A.W Tozer put it this way, in 1954: “In my opinion, the great single need of the moment is that light-hearted superficial religionists be struck down with a vision of God high and lifted up, with His train filling the temple. The holy art of worship seems to have passed away like the Shekinah glory from the tabernacle. As a

result, we are left to our own devices and forced to make up the lack of spontaneous worship by bringing in countless cheap and tawdry activities to hold the attention of the church people.”).

Evangelicals decry the fact that Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. Fair enough, but we should be hearing a lot more complaining about the fact that it is also the most boring hour! Where are the angels? Where is the wonder (Thomas Carlyle said, “The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder and worship, is but a pair of spectacles behind which there is no eye.”)?

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

We probably need to agree on terms before we can excavate new understandings on worship. There are some sharp distinctions and strenuously held opinions on what, at face value, should be a fairly innocuous subject.

“Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1 NIV). Much of the broadening of the understanding of worship derives from the New International Version translation of this verse, which has the Greek word *latreia* as *worship* (see as varied sources as John Piper, “Becoming a Spiritual House and a Holy Priesthood”, preached February 20, 1994, PIPER’S NOTES ONLINE; Warren Anderson, “Beyond the Lip Service,” WORSHIP LEADER, May/June 2001; and Chris Jack, “Understanding Worship- 6,” February 12, 2002, heartofworship.com. Jack, a lecturer at London Bible College, also explains the crossover use of pertinent Old Testament words to make his point: “Comparing the NIV with the RSV in passages where *abad* occurs with God as the object is instructive. It reveals the flexibility with which this word (and this is true of course of many other words) can be translated. So, for example, in Deuteronomy 8:19 both *abad* and *hawah*... are used. The NIV translates the former as *worship* and the latter as ‘bow down’. The RSV does the reverse, translating *hawah* as *worship* and *abad* as *serve*. The same happens elsewhere; see, for example, Deuteronomy 29:26 (cf. Joshua 23:7, 16; Judges 2:19; 1 Kings 9:6 for similar incidences). What this shows, quite simply, is that to worship God is to serve him:

to serve God is to worship him. Worship is service.” However, this flexibility goes both ways.). Both the AV and the NKJV translate it as the standard dictionary for New Testament words does, *service* (Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, ed. THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, 1985). NASB sits on the fence with ‘service of worship’. According to Strathmann, *latreia*, which has connotations of ‘service for reward’, ‘labour’, and ‘bodily care’, refers to ‘sacrificial ministry’ (in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, ed. THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, 1985).

Here is a word that is translated both *worship* and *service*. However, it seems to be more accurately rendered *worship*, for the reasons suggested above (We need to recognize that we have some interpretation done for us by the translators. This is partly a factor of the richness of meaning of some of the original language words, but also the result of transferred bias. The word ‘worship’ (in its various forms) occurs 176 times in the OT in the NIV but only 112 times in the RSV, just to take one example of a comparison. Chris Jack, “Understanding Worship, part 4,” heartofworship.com, 2001). Why is this important? It rescues us from slovenly thinking and living, sloppily suggesting that ‘everything we do is worship.’ This just isn’t the case. If we don’t know what it properly is, then we cannot properly engage in it.

There are other Greek words that mean *worship* in the New Testament. One is *proskyneo*- to bow down, worship. It also means to kiss. “It is an ancient term for the adoration of the gods, which in the case of chthonic deities would mean stooping to kiss the earth. The Greeks abandoned the outward gesture but keep the term for the inner attitude. Later the word takes on a much more general sense expressing love and respect” (C. Maurer, in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, ed. THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, 1985).

Through the New Testament (Matthew 2:2,11; 4:19; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:2; 28:9; Acts 10:25,26; Rev. 19:10) worship is falling down in reverent expression of adoration and affection to God. That is why Peter rejects it in Acts (cited above) and the angel does in Revelation (cited above). Would either reject service?

Sebazomai is the other Greek word for worship. It has the sense of 'to fall back from' and meant originally to shrink from. In classical and hellenistic use, it still means that sometimes, but includes respect. Josephus and Philo use it in the sense of reverence (W. Foerster, in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, ed. THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, 1985). It occurs in Romans 1:25: "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things." To maintain that worship equals service would render this verse illogical: "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and served and served created things." It seems apparent that worship and service, while complementary, are not synonymous (That said, we must note that, "Words are tricky things. They can be quite slippery at times, not least in translating from one language to another. Very often a word in one language has a range of meanings which is not exactly paralleled by any one word in another language. This absence of absolute one-to-one correspondence means that translators have to make judgments about what they consider the most appropriate word to use in any given context. Translators may differ in the judgments they make; hence the variety of modern English translations." Chris Jack, "Understanding Worship, part 4," heartofworship.com, 2001).

In its Latin form the word is applied to the emperor (Augustus), meaning sacred or holy Chief, not 'Servant Caesar' (W. Foerster, in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, ed. THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, 1985). Worship is clearly a comprehensive human experience, comprising physical actions like falling, bowing, and kissing, as well as volitional expressions of love, adoration, and reverence. It is only limited by the size of your God. "The Jesus you see is the Christian you'll be" (Nolan Clark, jesusfeast.ca). This directly impinges upon our worship. Instructs Graham Kendrick; Pursue the biggest vision of Christ you can. My reference Bible records 101 different names and titles by which he is revealed in the Bible, each one a key to knowing more of who we are worshipping, and why. Worship is a response and will grow or shrink in direct proportion to our view of him. We love to worship him

as Saviour and Friend - how often do we worship him as Judge, or Author of Life, or Desired of all Nations?

Seek out, use and, if you are able, write truth-saturated songs that stretch the minds and hearts of the worshipping church to grasp as much as we can of his incredible glories and cosmic purposes. God is bringing all things in heaven and on earth together under the headship of Christ. This is the mystery of the universe (Ephesians 1:10). There can be nothing greater. If you plan to live there then, live there now. (Graham Kendrick, *Make Way Music*, 2001. Graham, a member of Ichthus Christian Fellowship, is a co-founder of March for Jesus. This prayer, praise, and proclamation event became global on June 25th 1994, with over 12 million people from 177 nations taking to the streets to proclaim their faith in Jesus Christ. He trained as a teacher but launched out as a singer/songwriter in 1972. His songs and hymns are sung by millions of people in numerous languages around the world. Since he made this great point there has been released a popular song that called Jesus 'Desired of the Nations"!)

The dual trend toward individualistic interpretation of the world and tribal pursuit of belonging that we call postmodernism has met its match in worship... not the brand that your grandmother endured. Her rationalistic affirmation of the character and works of God was legitimate in the modern era. But the postmoderns are less interested in truth than they are enamoured with experience. And worship offers all the multi-sensory bill of fare of new age delusion without the spiritual hangover and deleterious consequences of sin. It's a little vertigo without the disagreeable physical and emotional aftereffects of chemical binging. And it has the added attraction of purity, love, acceptance, warmth, and truth.

Worship involves an encounter with deity, engagement with the supernatural. Your imagination is captured. Your mind is edified. Your energy is invested in expressions of adoration and affection (Tony Baso said, "If you're not sweating, it's not worship!" at Primitive Salvationist Network, March 2001. Worship leader Baso has written such songs as 'Can You Wonder?', 'Shout', and , available at salvopcola.org). Your body is sometimes wrapped up in ebullient gesticulation. And it can all take place in the community of saints and angels ("A painting

speaks, a flag releases praise, a tambourine sets people free: In the hands of the ultimate Creator, all creative expression can become a prophetic declaration of His presence and release worship to Him.” David Ruis, “Releasing Life in Worship,” Strang Communications. 1996).

You’d think people would cross the street for such an experience.

Traditionally, they have.

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING

In the good old days Jews and Gentiles crossed the street to experience it.

Worship had a quasi-Jewish flavour to it, embracing the *Shema*, a reading of the Ten Commandments, the eighteen prayers and benedictions, known as the Berachoth (Schaff, Philip, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 1997.

http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch09.htm). “The prayers and songs were chiefly taken from the Psalter, which may be called the first liturgy and hymn book” (Schaff, Philip, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 1997.

http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch09.htm).

The didactic and homiletical part of worship was based on the Hebrew Scriptures. A lesson from the Law (called *parasha*), and one from the Prophets (*haphthara*) were read in the original, and followed by a paraphrase or commentary and homily (*midrash*) in the vernacular Aramaic or Greek. A benediction and the ‘Amen’ of the people closed the service. (Schaff, Philip, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN

CHURCH, 1997. http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch09.htm; the *Thorah* was divided into 154 sections, and read through in three years, afterwards in 54 sections for one year. The *ajnagnwsi* “*tou’ novmou kai; tw’n profhtw’n*, Acts 13:15).

“The sexes were divided by a low wall or screen, the men on the one side, the women on the other, as they are still in the East (and in some parts of Europe).

The people stood during prayer with their faces turned to Jerusalem” (Schaff, Philip, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 1997.

http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch09.htm). Of course, as the Gospel spread and the Kingdom expanded, Gentiles outnumbered Jews, and the Jewish roots of worship grew more and more remote. Festivals of Passover and Pentecost translated smoothly into Festivals of Resurrection and Holy Spirit (birth of Church)

as smoothly as the ritualistic blood sacrifices were replaced by a celebration and appropriation of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Singing was an early drawing card. "The Christian Church was born in song" (Ralph Martin, *WORSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH*, 1964, p39). Songs were addressed to God, "in the festive dress of poetry and the elevated language of inspiration, raising the congregation to the highest pitch of devotion, and giving it a part in the heavenly harmonies of the saints" (Schaff, Philip, *HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, 1997. http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch09.htm).

These were best-attempts at following the lead of Jesus, who, during His last Passover, led what must have been an intense worship session (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).

While the Psalms were undoubtedly the first songbook of the 33AD Salvos, it was followed by a new covenant sequel that included hits such as the song of the heavenly hosts at the birth of the Saviour (Luke 2:14), the "*Nunc dimittis*" of Simeon (Luke 2:29), the "*Magnificat*" of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:46), the "*Benedictus*" of Zacharias (Luke 1:68), the thanksgiving of Peter after his miraculous deliverance (Acts 4:24-30), the speaking with tongues, which, whether song or prayer, was always in the elevated language of enthusiasm (Schaff, Philip, *HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, 1997.

http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch09.htm), the fragments of hymns scattered through the Epistles (Ephesians 5:14; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 Peter 3:10-12), and the lyrical and liturgical passages, the doxologies and antiphonies of the Apocalypse (Revelation 1:5-8; 3:7,14; 5:9,12,13; 11:15,17,19; 15:4; 19:6-8, and other passages. They lack the Hebrew parallelism, but are nevertheless poetical, and are printed in uncial type by Westcott and Hort; in Schaff, Philip, *HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, 1997.

http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/1_ch09.htm).

Jesus did prophesy that we would worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Some interpret this to mean that all ritual and external practice is obsolete. However, Jesus and His people celebrated religious festivals, underwent water baptism, and attended Temple and synagogue meetings. The change foreshadowed has less to

do with form than with motivation (THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, Volume XV, 1912, Robert Appleton Company; Online Edition, 1999 by Kevin Knight).

Details of the external changes that did take place are frustratingly sparse in the New Testament. This is understandable in light of the fact that Christianity was a revolutionary movement destined to overthrow the empire! It was expedient to keep some things outside of the public purview (Richard C. Leonard, "Worship in the Early Church," 1997, Laudemont Ministries). This is probably one of the reasons the OG Jesus Freaks (original gangsta!) worshipped in each other's homes.

But the fact that Christians worshiped in secret gatherings had aroused public suspicion. They were being accused of killing infants, eating human flesh, and having incestuous relations, and were considered atheists because they refused to honor the pagan gods. (Richard C. Leonard, "Worship in the Early Church," 1997, Laudemont Ministries)

Within Christianity's first century, the best evidence of Christian worship comes to us from Roman sources. Pliny the Younger was a Roman administrator for the Emperor Trajan in Asia Minor. He wrote his emperor for advice as to how to handle the growing sect of Christians who were emptying the pagan temples. Pliny initially rounded up Christians to ask them if they were, in fact, Christians. An affirmative response was met with execution. But this policy was untenable because of the massive numbers of Christians. So he began to give them opportunity to change their mind by sacrificing to pagan gods, worshipping the emperor, and cursing Christ (Charles H. Talbert, THE APOCALYPSE. 1994, p10). This method was effective in exposing numbers of people who claimed to having been Christians in the past, but no longer! It is from these backsliders that we learn about Christian worship in this era.

The turncoats described that, "on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god (followed by the Latin *sacramentum*, or oath) to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and breach of faith" (Richard C. Leonard, "Worship in the Early Church," 1997, Laudemont Ministries). They got back together for lunch.

We'd have even more details than this but Pliny complained that he couldn't coax any more information about the ceremony even after torturing two deaconesses (Richard C. Leonard, "Worship in the Early Church," 1997, Laudemont Ministries). Of course, what we learn from this is that worship was a very serious practice, something of great value.

By mid 2nd century, Justin Martyr is able to describe an order of meeting that has persisted through the ages: The Sunday assembly combines the service of the Word, or reading and teaching from Scripture, with the Eucharist or service of the Lord's table (Richard C. Leonard, "Worship in the Early Church," 1997, Laudemont Ministries). By the start of century 3, the Roman clergyman Hippolytus had compiled a manual of order and worship called THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION, which institutionalized the emerging trends in worship.

Worship in the Middle Ages was caught up in the transcendence of God and human sinfulness, emphasizing the distance between God and humankind. The people could not be trusted with participation in worship because of their sinfulness, so worship became an elaborate spectacle to be observed with fear and trembling. The Lord's Supper of the early church, in which the faithful participated, was replaced by 'the Mass', which was said for the people by the priest. (John Throop, "Ending The Worship Wars!" WORSHIP LEADER. Jan/Feb 1998)

Protestant Reformation may have brought the Bible back to the people, but it left worship to the professionals (John Throop, "Ending The Worship Wars!" WORSHIP LEADER. Jan/Feb 1998). The revivalist and holiness movements emphasized a response from the people, which is what was originally connoted by the Latin form of the word *liturgy*. In the late 19th century, the primitive Salvation Army, derisively labeled 'Corybantic Christianity' by T.H.Huxley (who also coined the term, 'agnostic', according to the 1986 ORDERS AND REGULATIONS FOR OFFICERS OF THE SALVATION ARMY) for its wild worship, wrenched the pendulum to the other extreme (Here is an extended critical description of a Salvation Army 'all night of prayer' by a newspaper correspondent during which all of these things occurred:

So great was the commotion in the centre of the room, so terrifying was the din that this incidence (four rows tipping over), which would have thrown an ordinary congregation into uproar, passed almost unnoticed... Several figures are bent double near the platform, groaning and wringing their hands. The 'Hallelujah Lasses' have surrounded them; the tall figure of the proprietor of the 'Hallelujah Fiddle' gyrates around them; the sweep is dancing and shouting 'Glory be to God;' and the 'General' is smiling placidly and twiddling his thumbs.

Penitents! Are these penitents who kneel on the form and wring their hands? Or are they persons struck with the contagion of over-wrought enthusiasm?

As may be seen from what I have written, until penitents 'throw themselves at the feet of Jesus,' as it is called, a meeting of the Salvation Army is a tolerably sane affair. The fat is at once in the fire, however, when penitents come forward.

Half a-dozen crop-headed youths are praying vociferously, with their faces towards me. Did I say praying? It was vociferous shouting, with closed eyes. Their bodies sway to and fro; their hands are lifted, and brought down again with a thump on the form; they contort themselves as if they were in acute agony.

The converts retire to their seats with red faces. Let us follow one of them. He is a broad-faced, shock-headed youth, of about twenty. A few minutes since, he was foaming out of a well-developed mouth. Now he is dancing about the floor, shouting 'hallelujah' and wringing the hands of all those who will yield their arm to him. Anon he will mount one of the forms, and shout his experience into the middle of a hubbub, which condemns him to remain unheard. Then he will waltz round again, alternately laugh and cry, and go through a new course of hand-shaking.

He has in fact been converted. *NEWCASTLE DAILY CHRONICLE*, 21st MAY 1879). "The Pentecostal movement, and the post World War II charismatic movement, introduced the immediacy, even the urgency, and certainly the joy of the Holy Spirit in worship" (John Throop, "Ending The Worship Wars!" *WORSHIP LEADER*. Jan/Feb 1998).

All of this brings us to urban postmodernism. Craving an experience with God, searching for some kind of existential connection, people have come to the right

place (Brian Onken, "Making the Connection," WORSHIP LEADER. May/June 1996).

Millennium Three Worship, postmodern urban worship, is really nothing new. It is the ever-attractive, always-scary approach to the King of Kings that engenders a little vertigo in all of us.

WORSHIP WITH COMMITMENT AND INTEGRITY

This worship is characterized by commitment and integrity.

What can this mean but that we do not casually, flippantly, hypocritically worship, that we worship with a pure heart consistent with who we are?

If this is the measure of our worship, then many of us never engage in it.

Often the accusations of Malachi apply to us. We happily and sloppily offer up blemished sacrifices, thoughtless words, defiled food, unkept promises, crippled or diseased animals, fleshly gesticulations, and useless fires, all the while holding worship in contempt (Malachi 1. Or listen to God's response in Isaiah 1:13-16 (*The Message*):

Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings- meetings, meetings, meetings- I can't stand one more! Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out! I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning. When you put on your next prayer-performance, I'll be looking the other way. No matter how long or loud or often you pray, I'll not be listening. And do you know why? Because you've been tearing people to pieces, and your hands are bloody. Go home and wash up. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings so I don't have to look at them any longer).

Nearly a century and a half earlier than Malachi's diatribe, God demoted the Levitical priests for their sin. While they could continue to do, "the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be done in it," they were expelled from the presence of God, from serving or coming near God (Ezekiel 44:13,14). In their place, the Zadokites were promoted. These faithful servants were given access to, "come near to minister before Me... to stand before Me... They alone are to come near My table to minister before Me and perform My service" (Ezekiel 44:15,16).

The people of God incline towards the sins of the Levites, being satisfied with receiving instructions and words in the outer court from those who go beyond the veil. This is the sin of the Israelites, who were given opportunity to meet God face to face, but preferred to send Moses.

The opportunity to serve at His table, to minister in His presence, is offered to all of us. 'Holiness to the Lord' is the password to get us into the inner court. The blood of Jesus ripped open the veil. We must throw off everything that entangles: our own mindsets, wrong allegiances, laziness, apathy, etc.

We are to minister before the Lord and hear the King's pronouncements to our very own soul. Too many serve in the Levitical priesthood and offer Levitical worship. God is calling us to come near (This Levitical/Zadokite section is based on a word given by Elaine Gillingham at the end of a conference called ISRAEL AND WORLD DESTINY in Williams Lake, B.C., November 24,25, 2001).

In the sense of the term as it is used here, Levitical worship is that characterized by lack of commitment and lack of integrity. Levitical worship is that which is content with the least, happy with the easiest, settled with what is convenient. It is offered in a cavalier manner, unconnected to the character of the worshipper.

While it may, on its best days, serve God out of duty, it never really engages the commands of God seriously, never 'prays 'til our soul sweats' (in Revivalist Samuel Logan Brengle's graphic phrase), never puts itself out to encounter God. Levitical worship is the epitome of mediocrity, and is of a lukewarmness that God traditionally spews out of His mouth (Revelation 3:17; Isaiah 1:11-16; 43:22-24; 66:3,4; Haggai 2:14; Jeremiah 7:9,11; etc. "Do you think I feast on venison? Or drink draughts of goat's blood? Spread for me a banquet of praise. Serve High God a feast of kept promises," Psalm 50, *The Message*).

Another danger is a sense of performance (Kelly Carpenter, "Breaking the Spirit of Performance," February 4, 2000, Kelly Carpenter's Worship Resources. Kelly wrote such songs as 'Draw Me Close', 'Holy Spirit Come', and 'Arise O Lord.' Also, Matt Redman, "Reviewing Where We're At," heartofworship.com, 2002. Matt is the lead worshipper at Soul Survivor, in Watford, England, and the composer of songs

such as 'Heart Of Worship,' 'Once Again', and 'Better is One Day'). But composer Len Ballantine offered a different perspective in his watershed article, "Audience of One" (Len Ballantine, "Audience of One," THE OFFICER, circa 1994-7. Len wrote such songs as 'For God So Loved The World,' 'There Is A Fountain', and 'I Will Wait For You'). Ballantine persuasively depicts the spiritual reality of performing solely for the pleasure of God. For an accomplished musician, who has played on some of the great international stages, this is a powerful point. The world's audiences are not the people for whom he performs. No matter how great the crowd, the audience is always, only One. This understanding of worship as a performance to God is supported by the New American Standard version of Nehemiah 12:45: "For they performed the worship of their God and the service of purification, together with the singers."

Worship with commitment flows out of a covenantal relationship with God. As someone from my Corps recently noted, "Sometimes I don't feel like getting up and coming to worship. But then I remember that He loves me and gave Himself for me, and that He enjoys when I sing and dance before Him. So I do it" (Jeremy Biffert). There is a reason they call it a sacrifice of praise, because it requires some sweat on our behalf.

It isn't always easy to worship God. And yet Rick Joyner has suggested that God enjoys our worship just because of that. It is eminently easy to worship God in heaven. All the angels and all of the saints are up there worshipping Him non-stop. It is the best music, the best ambiance, the best leading, the best scenario (no distractions). And yet Joyner suggests that God hushes all of heaven when He hears the first hint of our feeble attempts at worshipping Him from down here. His heart quickens (see Zephaniah 3:17 for the song leader role that God plays, rejoicing over US!). We have a myriad of distractions, doubts, and sometimes even sin (sorry, I couldn't keep the Ds going there- 'disappointments' didn't really convey the connotation of intentional transgression of a known law of God that I intended) that can hinder our attempts at worshipping God. It takes commitment, a little like the Zadokites!

I used to think and say that it was preferable to be on earth than to be in heaven because it is only while on earth that we can see people get saved. I've since learned that sins and conversions are not the only things excluded from heaven. In heaven there will be no more tears, no more wars, no more suffering, no more scars, and no more choice to worship (Nolan Clark, "Perhaps," at the Lion of Judah Conference, Cariboo Bethel, February 23, 2002). We can actually *choose* to worship! In the midst of the wicked, godless generation, we can deliberately, intentionally worship God. This will be a non-issue in heaven. But here it is a big deal. What an opportunity for us to express our affection and adoration of our great God and Saviour (Kelly Carpenter, "Facing Reality," Kelly Carpenter's Worship Resource, February 4, 2000, suggests appropriate means of expression: When we face the reality of who God is in our worship, I believe the following responses are natural and appropriate:

We are in awe of His majesty

We exalt Him (i.e. we place Him in the highest place in our hearts)

We praise Him for His greatness and His many attributes

We thank Him for all He has done in our lives, in others, and throughout history

We are aware of our shortcomings in light of His perfection, holiness and glory

We confess our shortcomings, which produces in us an attitude of contrition and humility

We re-consecrate our hearts and our lives to Him

We experience the loving presence of our Heavenly Father

We express our devotion to Him

We gaze upon and adore His beauty

We exchange tender, intimate moments of love with Him

We allow ourselves to be completely vulnerable to Him by opening ourselves to Him

We pour out our hearts to Him

We allow Him to love upon us

We listen to His voice

We align our hearts with His heart

We cry out for the things that He has placed in our hearts

We intercede for the advance of His Kingdom

We dedicate our time, talents, and resources to His Lordship

We rejoice in Him, for He has made us glad

We celebrate; we are jubilant; we make a joyful noise

This list is not all-inclusive, obviously. And it may not be necessary to have all of these elements present in every worship time. But, I wish to challenge each and every one of us (including myself) with the following question: If we do not experience the above responses in our worship times, is it because God has not “shown up,” or is it because we have not shown up? God does not change.

Therefore, the reality of who He is does not change. The real question is, do we choose to worship Him in truth and in spirit, fully considering all who He is, and appropriately giving all that we have to Him? Song writer Mark Hood has wryly noted, “What makes a good worship leader is a good worshipping congregation! Mark has written songs such as ‘I’ve Got Faith,’ ‘Spirit Lead,’ and ‘Dance Like David.’)! One guy I know has captured this truth as one of the key elements of his life. He is an insatiable worshipper. What others think is not even a consideration for him as he pours himself out before his God. He chooses to worship the Lord with all that he is (Revivalist Nolan Clark is a model that increasing numbers of worshippers are following. To get a taste of this, obtain his preaching CD, “The Army of the Lord” from armybarmy.com or his wife Heather Clark’s worship CDs from jesusfeast.ca).

“Worship does not satisfy our hunger for God – it whets our appetite” (Eugene Peterson, *A LONG OBEDIENCE IN THE SAME DIRECTION*, 2000, IVP). What Matt Redman called ‘the unsatisfied worshipper’ is really without relief before the grave. As C.S. Lewis explained, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world” (C.S. Lewis, *THE WEIGHT OF GLORY AND OTHER ADDRESSES*. 1980. Prentice Hall, cited in Matt Redman, “The Unsatisfied Worshipper,” heartofworship.com, 2002).

Worship with integrity sanctions intimacy. Our sin is what separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2).

Leviticus 16 relates the detailed preparations and rituals that the priest must follow to come near to God into the Most Holy Place. Among other things, Aaron had to ceremonially wash himself, put on sacred garments, offer a personal sin offering, offer a corporate sin offering, burn incense so that a cloud would protect him, sprinkle bull blood as atonement, and symbolically lay the sins of the people on a scapegoat. Commitment meets integrity here. There is a Biblical basis for integrity and commitment in worship. (Barry Giffing outlines a whole list of requirements for worship with commitment and integrity, including the following:

1. Teachable Spirit: The Levites were to serve under the high priest; young Levites were to learn their craft by being apprentices to the older retired Levites (Numbers 8:19, 23-26); In 1 Chronicles 25:6-8, we see that the Levites and musicians continued this apprenticeship system;
2. A Sanctified Lifestyle: Before they could begin their public ministry, the Levites had to go through a specific voluntary cleansing ceremony (Numbers 8:5-7) which included:
 - a. Sprinkling (Studying God's Word daily): Ephesians 5:25-27),
 - b. Shaving their flesh (Applying God's Word daily to their behavior): Hebrews 4:12,
 - c. Washing their garments (keeping their attitudes untainted by renewing their minds daily): Revelation 3:18;
3. According to 1 Chronicles 15:12-16, David used only those musicians who took the initiative to go through this sanctification process.

After applying these special spiritual qualifications, David then began to apply musical qualifications to the prospective appointees.

1. Musical Flexibility: Notice that Asaph's music ministry included singing, percussion, orchestrating, brass, strings, composing, prophesying and teaching - 1 Chronicles 15:19 16:7, 37-42; 25:1; Psalms 73-83;
2. Musical Virtuosity: Excellence in musical technique was a hallmark of the Tabernacle of David.

a. Chenaniah, “instructed about the song because he was skillful”; 1 Chronicles 15:22. ‘Song’ means ‘a burden; specifically, tribute...; figuratively, an utterance, chiefly a doom, especially singing’; and ‘instructed’ means ‘to chastise, literally (with blows) or figuratively (with words); hence, to instruct. So, this is serious stuff!).

LET WORSHIP AND JUSTICE KISS (This phrase is an application of the metaphor of a kiss in Psalm 85:10 with the movement upward of faithfulness - worship - from the earth meeting righteousness (Tsedakha, justice) coming from heaven. Nathan Rieger, personal communication, March 18, 2002, Winnipeg Centre Vineyard. This is the motto of WCV).

Renowned worship leader David Ruis has led the way in helping us understand that worship and justice are inextricably linked (Mike Pilavachi, “Worship And Justice”, February 26, 2002, heartofworship.com. David Ruis has written many of the songs of our generation, such as ‘Wide Wide World,’ ‘Lilly of the Valley,’ and ‘Every Move I Make’). Of course, he’s not the first. Amos jumped to that conclusion when he quoted God, “Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:23,24. “As David released musicians in the tabernacle, they were encouraged to prophesy in voice as well as on instruments (1 Chron. 15:22; 25:1). When Elisha was cornered into prophesying for Jehosaphat, he couldn't even begin without a musician present (2 Kings 3:15). In the New Testament, it was as prophets were gathered in Antioch that we find them worshipping the Lord and fasting” (Acts 13:1-2- David Ruis, “Releasing Life in Worship,” Strang Communications. 1996).

God is furious about the hypocrisy epitomized by a people who sing of their love for God while they demonstrate no love to their neighbour. “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

Motivational speaker Phil Wall has suggested that although not many Christians lie with their words, they often lie in their songs.

Worship with integrity dictates that our lives back up our words. Love expressed for our neighbours is essential if we are to offer up worship with integrity.

HARP AND BOWL

With all of the development in worship throughout history the irony is that the goal is actually something of a throwback. You'd think we'd progress to something ultra-postmodern, to some brand of big shiny worship. You'd be surprised.

THE FALLEN TENT

After all these years, it seems the best that we can imagine, the best that we can hope for, is the worship of the fallen tent. In the 8th century BC, the herdsman and fig tree dresser Amos prophesied, "In that day, I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be" (Amos 9:11). But it is more than just a fixed up tent. During the Council of Jerusalem, James quoted this word, clarifying, "I will restore it that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear My name" (Acts 15:16,17).

What is prophesied here is a restoration of David's tabernacle and the inclusion of the Gentiles in Davidic worship! This is a restoration of history's most intimate and intense worship combined with global harvest. This is the wedding of worship and mission. This is the culmination of world history.

And it all flows out of David's tabernacle, the fallen tent. It all traces back to when David brought the Ark of the Covenant back from Kiriath-Jearim (1 Chronicles 13). You may remember that it caused quite a stir. For Uzzah it was much more personal than that- he died because he broke God's rules concerning the handling of the Ark. And David was scared almost to death with the prospects of continuing the journey to Jerusalem. So he left it at a priest's house, the home of Obed-Edom. You will know of the potency of the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God. During the Ark's short, three-month stay in Obed-Edom, God prospered the man's, "household and everything he had" (1 Chronicles 13:14). This had two direct effects. First of all, David decided that he wanted in on the blessing and so determined to bring the Ark back to *his* backyard. And secondly, Obed-Edom, having had a taste of the glory of God through the Ark of the Covenant, decided to sell the farm and become a doorkeeper at the new

tabernacle (1 Chronicles 16:38). He figured that he'd sell everything just to be close to the presence of God!

David did the trip right this second time (1 Chronicles 15). Every six steps, everyone stopped while they sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf (2 Samuel 6:13). Can you imagine that scene? You've got a massive parade of people rollicking forward for a few steps before tumbling to a stop almost before they get going (In David's first attempt there were 30,000 chosen men, 2 Samuel 6:1)! Meanwhile priests are butchering animals right out in the open to the glee of the children and the alarm of the herds awaiting a similar fate. Blood is spurting all over the place, joined by that unmistakable slaughterhouse odor. And through it all, the king is dancing around like a drunken barmaid! Wow. Estimating that the distance from Obed-Edom's to David's was about four miles (We have to guess a little here. The first attempt at returning the Ark started at Kiriath Jearim, which was situated about 8 miles from Jerusalem; NELSON'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE DICTIONARY, 1986. No one is sure exactly where Obed-Edom's town of Gath-Rimmon was, so we're placing it halfway to Jerusalem), we can guess that they stopped 1,066 times and sacrificed about 2,132 animals (just doing the math of the stops/6steps and the 4 miles, etc.). Talk about committed worship!

The end of the journey was the start of the tabernacle. David determined to set up the Ark of the Covenant in an appropriate setting. No 'Holies' and 'Holy of Holies' for David. He wanted to experience God's presence face to face, without any barrier of hindrance. And so he commissioned worshippers to dance and sing and pray in the very presence of God, 24 hours a day, seven days a week (1 Chronicles 16:4-6,37-42;1 Chronicles 9:33)!

This revolutionary decision had revolutionary consequences. If Obed-Edom was blessed during his temporary billeting of the Ark, David was swamped with the endorsement of God. He made plans to extend and institutionalize this 'round-the-clock' worship:

When David was old and full of years, he made his son Solomon king over Israel. He also gathered together all the leaders of Israel, as well as the priests and

Levites. The Levites thirty years old or more were counted, and the total number of men was thirty-eight thousand. David said, “Of these... four thousand are to praise the LORD with the musical instruments I have provided for that purpose.” (1 Chronicles 23:1-5)

As we know, this uninterrupted intimacy before God, this taste of the ‘heavenly symphony’ (Mike Bickle, *THE PLEASURES OF LOVING GOD*, 2000, p167) did not last throughout history. But there were attempts to return to this unfettered worship at various times, and with marked success. On each occasion, revival and national victory accompanied the reinstatement of the Davidic order of worship. Eight specific leaders embraced the Tabernacle of David and dimensions of the priestly ministry of David: David (1 Chronicles 15-16 - 1050 BC); Solomon (2 Chronicles 5-7 - 1010 BC); Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20 - 896 BC); Joash (2 Chronicles 23-24 - approximately 835 BC); Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29-30 - 726 BC); Josiah (2 Chronicles 35 - 623 BC); Ezra (Ezra 3:10-13 - 536 BC); and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12:28-47 - 446 BC. Bob Johnson, “The Tabernacle of David: The Church's Model for Glorious Praise,” ZionSong Ministries, 2001, www.tabernacle-of-david.com. For other examples of this unquenchable worship, see Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 29:25-31, Nehemiah in Nehemiah 12:27,38,40-43, David in Psalm 27:4-6, and the prophetic, intercessory worship of Psalm 149:1-9).

James and Amos prophesy that this tabernacle worship will be restored for the whole world. Who would have thought that ‘millennium three worship’ refers to three thousand year-old style? This is the Biblical model for worship. It is described in great detail in Scripture. It is the source of most of the Psalms (Bob Johnson, “The Tabernacle of David: The Church's Model for Glorious Praise,” ZionSong Ministries, 2001, www.tabernacle-of-david.com. Of course, it will be much better than Davidic worship because, “David only touched the best of the Old Covenant earthly reality.” Mike Bickle, *THE PLEASURES OF LOVING GOD*, 2000, p173).

James and Amos are joined by John in Revelation, who depicts for us what has been tabbed ‘Harp and Bowl’ worship (by Mike Bickle, of Friends Of The Bridegroom, and the International House of Prayer, fotb.com). “And when He had

taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8).

The harp represents worship and the bowls represent intercession. Harp and Bowl wed worship with prophetic intercession in the intimacy of Davidic Tabernacle worship. “Ministry around the throne incorporates God's songs and God's prayers flowing together” (Mike Bickle, cited in Elisabeth Farrell, “Integrity Music Sound Bytes: Craig Smith, Intercessory Worship”, <http://www.integritymusic.com/new/artist/7-00.html>). And the next verse says, “And they sang a new song” (Revelation 5:9).

The new song is that mystical, nebulous essence that the Army of God has sought for centuries, mostly in vain. Instead, we often settle for amateurish imitations of the world's popular music. The new song is almost a holy grail of unquenchable worship. It doesn't have to have anything to do with melody or harmony. It can be a measure of 'heartitude' and passion.

But the new song can be actually that- a new song. While we worship, we let loose in new words and melodies to find fresh and pristine ways to express adoration and affection to God (see the discussion on Ephesians 5 below). This is *prophetic* in the sense of inspiration from God (“When the atmosphere of heaven is imparted on the singers and the musicians, the intercessors simply explode in the revelation of God's heart.” Mike Bickle, THE PLEASURES OF LOVING GOD. 2000, p198): Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should *prophesy* with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. (1 Chronicles 25:1; italics, mine)

This is the prophetic new song that Harp and Bowl detonates.

Harp and Bowl may be the worship form of the new millennium. Watch the method of Ezra, who reestablished the Davidic pattern of antiphonal, responsive worship (Nehemiah 11-12):

And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord: “For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel.” Then all the people shouted

with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. (Ezra 3:11)

One person interceded, then all of the people joined in. In its ideal form, Harp and Bowl creates a score on which the heavenly symphony can compose.

Harp and Bowl provides for scheduled spontaneity. Songs and Bible texts are chosen ahead of time as a facilitator of the new song to the Lord (So it might look like this: several songs are sung during the worship session and the Bible text is the apostolic prayer of Ephesians 3:14-20. The accompaniment of the last song sung will continue as someone reads the text. Everyone begins to pray a prayer based on the first thought of the text. Then the singers kick in. The first singer will sing a prayer flowing from that first phrase. After 30 seconds or so of that, the second singer will sing a new prayer based on the same phrase. After the singers sing, then everyone joins in to pray their own prayers based on the text to their own tunes. And the cycle continues with the next phrase. This note relies on conversations with lead worshipper David Danielson of Fort Worth's James Avenue Church. We've been blessed in doing Harp and Bowl in a variety of settings and sometimes with the addition of other kinds of worship, including painting, graffiti, flagging, and dance).

This is not just a neat idea. Kansas City's Metro Christian Fellowship has been doing it non-stop since September 1999, 24 hours a day. They have trained teams including musicians and intercessors from 20 churches in KC who minister in two or three hour segments before handing off the baton.

"Worship is agreement with who God is. Intercession is agreement with what He's going to do. In both, you are telling God what is true about Himself. Worship gives faith and longevity to intercession" (Mike Bickle, cited in Elisabeth Farrell, "Integrity Music Sound Bytes: Craig Smith, Intercessory Worship", <http://www.integritymusic.com/new/artist/7-00.html>).

Harp and Bowl provides the model for intercessory worship that will help fulfill the prophecy of the nations enjoying unhindered intimacy before God.

URBAN WORSHIP

In the last century the number of people residing in cities has increased from 232 millions to almost 3 billions, a three-fold increase from 15% to nearly half of the world's populations (David Barrett and Todd Johnson, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2001," *International Bulletin* 25, no. 1, pp 24-25). Our mission to win the world for Jesus must necessarily travel through the cities. Urban worship takes on more importance in light of the statistics.

The good news is that we are not alone. "God is in the midst of the city" (Psalm 46:5; see an expansion of this truth in Maggie Shreve, "Where is God in the City," *URBAN MINISTRY*, volume 4, issue 1.

<http://www.mccormick.edu/urban/Vol4no1/page1.htm>).

In the West, the city is ruled by the passions. Pleasure is the chief. Hedonism is attired in various garbs, as graphically detailed by the latest commercials and ads. Unexpectedly, the pervasive bombardment of the pleasure motive has resulted in a numbing of our senses. Instead of a heightened awareness, we're left with a cynical, gun-shy acceptance. A generation ago, in the middle class city, John Piper described it this way:

That's it isn't it? Our desire for happiness is too weak. We have settled for a home, a family, a few friends, a job, a T.V. and microwave and Apple... an occasional night out, a yearly vacation. We have accustomed ourselves to such small, unexciting, short-lived, inadequate pleasure that our capacity for joy has shriveled. And therefore our worship has shriveled. (John Piper, "Worship: The Feast Of Christian Hedonism," September 23, 1983, Piper's Notes. The late John Wimber, who helped shape this generation's worship through his Vineyard movement, said "Our heart's desire should be to worship God; we have been designed by God for this purpose. If we don't worship God, we'll worship something or someone else." Wimber wrote such songs as 'Isn't He?' and 'The Spirit Song'.)

In a less comfortable, more contemporary urban setting, these perks are updated by or replaced with cell phones and pagers, late movies and later one night stands, the fleeting rush of fighting and fleeing the law, and the seductive deliria of crack and alcohol. True desires are dulled by incessant media and peer demands to conform to the world's best imitation of real bliss (Ralph Waldo Emerson said,

“What greater calamity can befall a nation that the loss of worship?” The same thing might be said of the city.)

In the face of this anesthetized attitude toward pleasure, we can offer vivid worship of God. Now note, “Christian Hedonism does not make a God out of pleasure. It says that you have already made a god out of whatever you find most pleasure in” (John Piper, “Worship: The Feast Of Christian Hedonism,” September 23, 1983, Piper’s Notes. C.S. Lewis said, “Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.”). We give opportunity to experience real pleasure, unadulterated joy, unmitigated awe in the presence of the Eternal. And so, urban worship must not only fill the gaps of the urban culture, but fill the deepest desires of urban hearts. In situations of hopelessness, our worship must be characterized by hope. In the current of general malaise, our worship must generate optimism. In a context of marginalization, our worship must be inclusive. Urban worship, “both fundamentally and prayerfully, (is) designed to be an enjoyable, inspiring, and quality praise and worship... that ministers to the heart of the (worshippers) and enables them, through the music, to enter into the presence of God” (Stan North, “Fostering Praise and Worship in the Urban Church- Interview with Joe Pace II,” gospelflava.com, 2001).

We’re not advocating a universal song list here.

“It is important to remember that (the West) is a multi-cultural society and increasingly local congregations have roots in a variety of cultural traditions, and we should be aware of the need to reflect this in the expression of our worship” (Les Moir, in Tim Hughes, “Interview with Les Moir,” [heartofworship](http://heartofworship.com), 2002. Les works with Survivor Records in England as a label manager. Curtis Butler explains,

Culture itself is neither good nor evil. Culture simply defines you as a part of people, tribe, tongue, or nation. All culture systems have good aspects that serve to govern a people by a certain implicit code. However, all cultural systems are subject to the fall and as such need to be subjected to God through Christ. ‘Cross Cultural Mission,’ in *SALVATIONISM* 301. 2001. p4. David Ruis asks, “Cultural expression--what is redeemable? More wars have been fought over this issue than

almost anything else in the church. Whether it is 'African beat,' alternative sound, or the place of dance, issues of culture must be addressed. Godly parameters and godly freedom must be encouraged if we are to remain relevant and real to new generations within the church and the world that is watching," in David Ruis, "There Must Be More," Strang Communications. 1996).

And it is certainly not the same song list week after week...

Worship, like prayer, is conversation with God. We address our God. And although there are certainly a number of truths that we need to embrace every time we meet with God, if we only ever say the same things to God when we meet, the conversation of our hearts may well run dry. God is constantly speaking to us, changing us, revealing His amazing character and love in our lives in new ways. If our conversation with Him fails to acknowledge this dynamic relationship we have with God, it can mean that we have stopped participating in the life of grace He calls us into, or that our corporate worship simply doesn't reflect the 'grace that is all around us'. So introducing new songs reflecting the truths and acts that God is constantly revealing to us really helps us as a congregation stay 'fresh' as we worship together. They open our eyes to what God is doing. New mercies need new songs... (Brenton Brown, Interview, heartofworship.com, 2001. Brenton lives in Oxford and also works there as the worship leader of the Cherwell Vineyard. He is the producer of "Surrender," as well as the writer of "Lord Reign in me," and "Your Love is Amazing")

One of Stanley Granberg's eight characteristics of the effective 21st century church is celebratory worship:

This is worship which touches the heart and gives voice to the full range of human emotions. It predominantly expresses positive emotions such as joy, thanksgiving and serenity. But, celebratory worship is also bold enough to call for sorrow, brokenness and contrition with tears. Celebratory worship, much like the Psalms, is unafraid to touch all the emotions of life. The church which practices celebratory worship must be focused on the current activity of God in the lives of its people, it must be sensitive to the needs of its people and it will be aware of the emotions of the times as people respond to the events of life. (Stanley E. Granberg,

“CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTIVE 21st CENTURY CHURCH,” Church Planting Northwest. 2001. www.churchplantingnw.org)

Worship with integrity connects our adoration with our service, as enterprise complements reverence to accomplish redemption lift, or community transformation. Stacey Campbell prophesies:

And so I believe that God is going to call people into deeper levels of worship that involves loving Him with all of our strength and that the Church is going to begin to move in these days into a depth of worship that encompasses the poor, that begins to take on His heart, that begins to die to themselves, and pick up their crosses and follow Him wherever He goes, and that they’ll worship Him with all their strength... And as an act of worship, with the Bridge getting herself ready, that the righteous acts of the saints will involve the whole movement out of the Church, into the highways and the byways. (Stacey Campbell, ‘JAMES 1:27,’ in SALVO P.O.P., Salvo Songs, 2002. This is a prayer CD available from armybarmy.com. Stacey wrote THE BOOK OF PRAYERS, with her husband Wesley, available from revivalnow.com)

Reverend Pedro Winsor tells of a wonderful example of this wedding in the drug death of one of his parishioners and how worship overflowed into the streets of Chicago to begin to transform a neighbourhood (Pedro Winsor, “Prayer, praxis, and Public Liturgy,” URBAN MINISTRY, volume 3, number 3. Here is an excerpt of the story, picking up after the funeral:

Immediately following our Sunday worship service the mother, who committed to asking the Lord what to do, took hold of my arm pulling me outside of the entrance to our church. “Look pastor”, she said, pointing towards the corner, “you see the gangbangers selling drugs?”

Before I knew it, she was heading toward the corner. I followed along. What occurred next was simply amazing. She approached the drug dealers, introduced herself and began to talk about her son’s killing. These guys knew her son. Wrapping up she said, “As a mother I don’t want what happened to my son to happen to you.” It felt as if time had literally stopped. Then she said, “Pastor Pedro is now going to lead us in prayer.” On that day a new ministry was born.

The Street

“Sharing Christ On the Corner” is an ecumenical, friendship, neighborhood evangelism program. Low impact in terms of presentation, this model utilizes the medium of music and one on one contact within a block party environment. The wonderful thing about all of this is that the people are having so much fun they do not even realize they are having church!

As the festivities take place (face painting, music, games, food), teams of two (male and female) fan out into the area inviting, conversing, discerning and getting to know the community residents. As they do, they make mental notes of what is happening on and around the block. This is a great way for the community to become acquainted with the church and the church with the community.

After each event we debrief. Neighborhood concerns go on a prayer and work list. Our congregation and community residents gather together for prayer every Monday evening. The work list translates into opportunities for doing some type of community mission outreach. Whether it is cleaning an empty lot, painting a senior citizen’s apartment or tutoring neighborhood kids, it is an opportunity for the church to be visible in the neighborhood).

The American ideal of government by the people, of the people, and for the people should be adapted for urban worship. It should be worship by the people, of the people, and for the people. So it will taste and smell and sound akin to the sights and sounds and feelings of the neighbourhood. And each neighbourhood is different.

Winnipeg Centre Vineyard is one example of a church that is stubbornly reaching the community in which it exists. In 2001 WCV released an album by its innovative North End Artist Collective that features native prayers, song titles including the name ‘Manitou’, and a compelling poem of salvation on the streets (North End Artist Collective, NO FIXED ADDRESS. 2001. The poem, by Bud Parson, is called ‘Passion of the Downtown Eastside’. The worship songs include lines such as the following: “I am a throwaway, love is an empty well”; ‘Cold street, shivering, trembling...’; ‘Here comes that feeling again, that endless aching need, the hunger I feel inside, when my spirit needs to feed.’). There is a,

Desire to give a voice to those in our community and our society who would normally be left unheard... these songs (are) a reflection of our community. We are from different social, racial, and economic backgrounds, but Jesus brings us together. Jesus makes us one. And through this, Jesus demonstrates to us His Kingdom. He whispers to us that we should listen to the small voices, the ones being drowned out by the noisy processions led by the priests of a thousand other gods. He shows us that those with no fixed address have a lot in common with Him. And so, we want to get to know these people, the princes and princesses of the Kingdom. Jesus, we are driven by Your whispering, and we thank You for this rooftop. (Andrew Smith, producer, North End Artist Collective, NO FIXED ADDRESS. 2001. This CD features several artists in the community that Winnipeg Centre Vineyard serves. Worship Leader Andrew Smith has written such songs as 'Have You Seen My Beloved', 'Send Some Mercy', and 'All Your Promises'.) Cultural integrity looks like a divine reflection of societal reality. Importing the latest greatest songs and styles isn't always the best idea. Instead, if people feel like they're coming home, or at least a dream version of it; if people wander in and feel like they've stumbled into they're own wedding, or at least birthday party, filled with friendly people who seem to care; if people join others in singing the songs of their heart, with words expressing their longings in ways they've never quite been able to conjure up, to tunes that just seem to belong; if people are aided and abetted in encountering God by the presence or lack thereof of incense or candles or coffee tables or video projection; if people are able to be vulnerable *and* comfortable, then the worship has integrity.

The postmodern world is replacing rationalism with existentialism. People are not much willing to enter into extended conversations based on logic and linear thinking. Rather, they seek to experience the truth of the issue within the context of their personal lives. In short, when it comes to religion people are more inclined to seek out answers with their hearts and less with their minds. They want to experience the life-giving vitality of religion first. Then they may be willing to discuss the reasons behind the religious experience.

WORSHIP AND MISSION

Worship and mission definitely relate with each other. Worship is an end in itself, whereas mission is a mean to an end. As John Piper explains it, "Mission only exists where worship doesn't" (John Piper, LET THE NATIONS BE GLAD, cited in Matt Redman, "Words That Shaped Me," heartofworship.com, 2002).

It sounds good. It also lines up with what has been the general consensus on the issue. Marva Dawn posits:

Another misconception frequently touted is that worship should be user-friendly... God is not easily understandable, nor is it cozy to be a disciple. User-friendly worship seems to me to sacrifice an awe-full lot of God... Nowhere in the Bible does it say, "Worship the Lord to attract the unbeliever." Nowhere. (Marva Dawn, of Vancouver, Washington, is a theologian and musician who teaches under "Christians Equipped for Ministry." She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in Christian Ethics and the Scriptures and has spoken for clergy conferences and seminaries, both nationally and internationally. She is also an author of several books, including REACHING OUT WITHOUT DUMBING DOWN: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture. The article is printed by permission of CROSSACCENT, the journal of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians © 1997)

Or, as Sally Morgenthaler recounts:

The popular eighties phrase, "Worship and seekers are like oil and water: they don't mix," had spread at hyper-speed through North American churches and, among certain circles, had attained something close to the level of Scriptural canon. (Sally Morgenthaler, "Worship Evangelism," www.regenerator.com - re:generation quarterly. Sally Morgenthaler functions as on-site worship consultant for Denver Seminar and Pathways Church. She has written books and articles, and has taught in numerous churches and universities on worship in a post-modern culture. Visit www.sacramentis.com to find out more about Sally and her book, WORSHIP AND EVANGELISM)

Piper's truism, 'Mission only exists where worship doesn't,' catchy and pithy, seems to fail at only one point- during a real worship service. On the one end, the postmodern urban generation really goes for a little vertigo, as suggested by

Paul's meeting outlines of 1 Corinthians 14:24,25, in which the unbeliever is convicted, experiences a little vertigo, hits the deck, and worships God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" (see also Psalm 40 and Acts 16 for support of the evangelistic impact of worship). On the other end, worship is part of the battle (Mike Bickle says, "We must seek to be extravagant worshippers as well as to be anointed servants of God fulfilling the Great Commission. I believe that the more we worship, the more we will fulfill the Great Commission with apostolic power from heaven." Mike Bickle, *THE PLEASURES OF LOVING GOD*, 2000, p193). Jehoshaphat was right (For Jehoshaphat, worship was the battle. "After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated." 2 Chronicles 20:21-22)!

Amos's prophecy, repeated by James, weds worship and mission in such a way as intimated by revelation 5 and realized in nascent form by today's Harp and Bowl. Watch this sampling of Psalms that really epitomize 'battle hymn':

Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle... I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword. (Psalm 144:1,9,10, in which God's training of David's fingers and hands quite likely was musical training that allowed him to execute spiritual warfare)

Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints... Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the LORD. (Psalm 149:1,5-9)

The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The LORD's right hand has done mighty things! The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!" (Psalm 118:14-17)

Gone is the, "unspoken ambiance of 'enforced happy,'" of seeker target services (Sally Morgenthaler, "Worship Evangelism," www.regenerator.com - re:generation quarterly). Instead, the unbelievers are welcome to join as we worship God. We will be doing battle as we worship. As Stacey Campbell explains:

I was just asking the Lord about worship and what it is about worship that He likes and I felt like the Spirit of the Lord just came out of nowhere and said this:

"Worship Me with Your hands." And instinctively I understood that when He said, "worship Me with your hands," He is asking for a depth of worship- not just loving with your mind and loving Him with your heart- but loving Him with your whole being, loving Him with your strength. (Stacey Campbell, 'JAMES 1:27,' in SALVO P.O.P., Salvo Songs, 2002. This is a prayer CD available from armybarmy.com. Stacey wrote THE BOOK OF PRAYERS, with her husband Wesley, available from revivalnow.com)

Mission and worship are inextricably linked. Let's worship with all our strength.

LAST WORD

Millennium Three worship, postmodern urban worship, is composed of authentic encounter with God. It is authentic at various levels.

It is authentically urban. It looks and sounds and feels consistent with the environment.

It is authentically redemptive. It fills the gaps in individual experience and cultural frameworks while transforming spirit, soul, *and* body.

It is authentically reverent. Holy fear shakes the foundations of self, will, and worldview ("I will worship toward Thy holy temple in the fear of Thee," Psalm 5:7).

It is authentically postmodern. We all feel a little vertigo.

Daddy Needs a New Pair of Shoes!

Doug Burr

Have you ever noticed that you can never get a new pair of shoes as comfortable as your old ones? The old ones have been broken in just right; they conform to your feet. New shoes are usually stiff and hurt your feet.

So why in the world do we ever get rid of the old ones? Why not just keep them forever? Well, I've got a couple of pairs of old shoes and if you'll let me, I'll tell you about them:

1. They are falling apart! After years of excellent, but hard service, they have taken a beating. They are battered and scratched; they are worn through and parts of them are missing. Laces are broken and repaired and water always seems to find its way through the soles!

2. They are no longer up to date. This is a relevancy issue- not so much that I am tired of their look. New technologies have developed so that my old shoes are no longer good for my feet- at least as good as the new ones. Now shoes are designed specifically for every different activity. I want the best for my feet after all!

3. Frankly, I'm a bit tired of them! They served me well for a long time, but something new and exciting is always ahead. Besides, I like being at the cutting edge of shoe convention.

4. Finally, they no longer fit. I have grown (in more ways than I care to admit). They crimp my toes, pinch my heel and give me blisters. I see no need to suffer when, leaving them behind, I can experience long-sought-after comfort.

There you have it. I should just drop them like hot potatoes and go for the new ones, you say? The problem is, despite the issues above, I still LIKE the old ones! So life goes on and I keep those old shoes in the back of the closet or wear them to cut the grass. I guess there's a lot to be said about staying with what's worked in the past. Or is there?

I have discovered that in many ways, life is like our old shoes. Human beings tend to get comfortable with the familiar and avoid change. We are

usually happier with what we know to the unfamiliarity of what we don't know or haven't yet experienced. Sometimes when the new is foisted upon us, we just keep the old around for comfort, like an old blankie toddlers drag around behind them. And we lament for the good old days.

At the end of Luke 5, Jesus is speaking about the new kind of ministry He is modeling. He is doing things dramatically differently! He says, "no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the fresh and the new." The pharisees are totally mired down in the old way of doing things. They are legalistic and comfortable in what they know. That's the blankie syndrome: "Of course, there's new, but I just want the old." Or perhaps you've heard it said this way: "But we've never done it that way before!" That may be true, but is it worth the gamble?

Gamble? What are you talking about?

I'm talking about gambling that we miss what God is doing now and become Pharisees. Jesus' greatest critics in verse 9 become His enemies in verse 11. You really want to roll the dice and gamble that God is not doing a new thing?

C'mon baby, Daddy needs a new pair of shoes!

Are you gambling with serious spiritual issues? Gambling you're right and God isn't? These three truths may help you see clearer.

1. Growth Means Change.

In our corps we are watching two new babies grow up. Everyone thinks they are just the cutest. And they are! Watching them reminds me of my own kids- my how they've changed! I remember when they used to be that way. I remember when they used to be small (they're still cute, but my 13 year-old son would just die if he knew I called him that!). The thing is, they didn't stay that way. They grew up. In fact, they continue to change as we all do. Babies can't remain babies. If they do, it indicates something is wrong!

Spiritually, we should be growing too; changing. If we're staying the

same, something's wrong.

When the Israelites left Egypt, they complained: "we want to go back!" However, if they had gone back, they would have discovered that God wasn't back there anymore. He was out in the desert. That was evidenced dramatically by the pillar of cloud/fire that constantly led them. If they wanted to be with God, then they needed to keep moving (in the direction of His leading, preferably!).

We sing a wonderful old chorus in The Salvation Army (we sing many of them), in the back of our Songbook. It's number 40 in the chorus section:

"Go back to the old wells where the waters are sweet;
Go back to the old wells where joy and duty meet.
The waters of the old wells will your spirit restore;
Go right back to the dear old wells, leave them no more!"

In the "Concordance to the Songbook of The Salvation Army," we find the scripture reference for this chorus is Genesis 26. So let's go back to this passage for a moment and look at what's happening.

12 That year Isaac's crops were tremendous! He harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the Lord blessed him. 13 He became a rich man, and his wealth only continued to grow. 14 He acquired large flocks of sheep and goats, great herds of cattle, and many servants. Soon the Philistines became jealous of him, 15 and they filled up all of Isaac's wells with earth. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

16 And Abimelech asked Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he said, "for you have become too rich and powerful for us."

17 So Isaac moved to the Gerar Valley and lived there instead. 18 He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death. Isaac renamed them, using the names Abraham had given them. 19 His shepherds also dug in the Gerar Valley and found a

gushing spring.

20 But then the local shepherds came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it with Isaac's herdsmen. So Isaac named the well "Argument," because they had argued about it with him. 21 Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a fight over it. So Isaac named it "Opposition." 22 Abandoning that one, he dug another well, and the local people finally left him alone. So Isaac called it "Room Enough," for he said, "At last the Lord has made room for us, and we will be able to thrive" Genesis 26:12-22 (NLT).

Here's a recap of what happened: God blessed Isaac so much, the people around him got jealous and asked him to move away. Isaac moves and reopens some old wells (long ago filled in) of his father Abraham. Isaac has "gone back to the old wells" and even gives them the same names his father did.

Now the locals here are upset and they argue over the well so much that Isaac renames it "Argument." He moves on to dig another well only to find the same problem. He calls this old well of his father, "Opposition," abandons it and moves on again. This time he digs his own new well and the locals finally leave him alone. He is grateful and names his new well "Room Enough," because God is now happy with his situation and causes him to thrive again.

Now I'm not trying to be argumentative here, but are the words of this chorus really based on this passage? I mean, "spirit restore?"; "leave them no more?" Sounds to me like the very opposite is happening and who wants to stay where there's fighting?

Isaac goes back thinking of all the wonderful old memories, but finds nothing but problems! Only when he digs his own new wells is God happy and blesses him again. In other words, God didn't bless him until he moved on to a new thing. I've actually crossed that chorus out of my songbook! I don't believe it anymore.

You see, Isaac didn't find God there, because God wasn't there anymore.

He had moved on as any living being would. God is alive and we cannot expect to go back to where we once met Him and find him sitting there. He moves on to new things; bigger things; better things.

To grow spiritually, you cannot stay where you've been. You must move on with God and what He is doing now. Growth means change.

2. God Never Does Anything the Same Way Twice.

I am fascinated with the way God led His people in the Old Testament battles. God gave them orders, but never told them to do the same thing twice! "Use a small army." "Shout at the walls (one of my personal favorites!)." "Split into two groups and surround them." "Don't fight at all. I'll take care of them (another great one!)." These are wild! Who would ever think of some of these tactics?

I play computer games. One of my all-time favorites is "Age of Empires 2." It's a game of ancient battles and you control one civilization to dominate the world. I'm fairly good at this game, because I've discovered a way to control my people and win. But I nearly always do it the same way. Come to think of it, I do many things the same way all the time, because I've found a way to make it work. Why mess with success?

I've found that God isn't like me (I know, hallelujah!). He has a vast mind and can do things in more than one way. In fact, it appears that even in nature He always likes to do things differently. Think about fingerprints or snowflakes. Look at the leaves or clouds. Even identical twins are minutely different. Why would a living God who is eternal, always do things in the same way? He wouldn't. He doesn't!

Still, our tendency is to pigeonhole God and expect Him to do everything the same way He always has! "If we can just go back to where we once met Him, everything will be like it used to be." Sorry, doesn't work that way. Never has. When we get back there, we find that God isn't there. He's moved on.

I've heard it said, "there is no future in our past." That's exactly what

I'm saying. What I'm not saying is that we can't learn from our past or the past is bad. Not at all. The past is just gone and we cannot recapture it no matter how hard we try.

God does not live in the past- Jesus said "He's the God of the living, not the dead" (Mark 12:27). God never does anything the same way twice, so don't expect to find Him where you left Him yesterday. He's already moved on.

3. The Old CAN be Renewed (the wineskin issue).

We have the tendency to think of the Pharisees as the bad guys (come to think of it, they did do some awful things!). They started out as God's chosen spiritual leaders of the day, yet when God began changing things, they were the ones who balked. Just when they should have been rejoicing at the emergence of their Messiah, they rebelled against His revamping of their settled religious system.

So to get their attention, Jesus told a story about wineskins (Matthew 5).

We can get many points from of this story (typical of Jesus' ministry). The basics are that you put old stuff in old containers and new stuff in new containers.

In the context of this article, this can sound harsh. But it's not so much about where the master puts his new wine as it is about the old wineskin refusing the new. Above, we mentioned that people say they like the old better (the old blankie syndrome, remember?). Is Jesus saying that the old is left in the past? No! We just need to understand wineskins better.

New wineskins are flexible; supple. New wine bubbles up to stretch and expand the wineskin. New skins can handle that, because of their flexibility and suppleness. But after a time, the skin has expanded to its limit and it gets brittle. It cracks easily and can't handle the new wine's stretch on its limits. So God specifically says NOT to pour new wine into the old skins, because He cares about breaking them.

However, it is possible to keep the wineskin supple by caring properly for

it. If you regularly put oil on it and work it in, it retains its flexibility. That kind of wineskin can receive new wine.

Oil is a biblical representation of the Holy Spirit. Often the Bible references anointing with oil which symbolizes the Holy Spirit. This anointing is done to effectively keep the person "supple" and "flexible" as the Spirit stretches and expands the person's ministry. I don't know about you, but God is always stretching me! Without the Holy Spirit, I'd be in serious trouble.

So while the Pharisees received God's old wine, they hadn't kept up on "oiling" themselves. They were not capable of receiving Jesus' new ministry. I say "they" carefully, because there were some Pharisees who kept themselves open to the Spirit of God and received what Jesus had to say. They became His followers when He began pouring out new wine, because they could handle it. They allowed themselves to be oiled with the Spirit.

If we let the Holy Spirit act on us like oil, we will remain or become supple again; able to see and appreciate the new things God is doing.

New things? Hasn't God already done everything He plans on doing? Hasn't He revealed all He plans on revealing until that last day? Simply, no.

God has new gifts and new blessings in store for each of us if we are willing to let go of the comfortable past and join Him in the now.

Frankly, I don't want what God had for me yesterday- I've already got it.

I want everything new He wants me to have. For today and tomorrow.

Imagine getting the same birthday present you got last year. Or how about the same present every year? Pretty boring, right? God doesn't work that way. His grace and blessings are "new every morning."

Got any old shoes you need to get rid of? Are you gambling that God always stays in the same place; that you'll always find Him just where you last left Him? That the way you used to do things is the way you should always do them? Too risky for me. Daddy doesn't need a new pair of shoes that bad!

Society has changed. George Barna tells us that the church is no longer in the top ten list of influences in people's lives. Television, movies, music, books all have a higher place of importance. That means we're no longer relevant to the people of this day; they are no longer listening to what we're saying in the way we're saying it. If we're to reach them, something's got to change.

I don't want to be a Pharisee!

If my excellent, but old way of doing things is no longer relevant or not working in this day and age, I need to open myself to what God wants to do today. He's revealed new information about people, principalities, warfare, worship, etc. that have changed the way we do spiritual business. Things will certainly be different, but we will have God's presence and blessing all over us.

I believe an old wineskin like me can be renewed. I count on it and pray desperately that I will never get dry and cracked; that I will always be open to the oil of the Holy Spirit to renew me and make me able to receive God's newness every day.

BREAKING OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Captain John Evans

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John Evans is currently serving in the Australia Southern Territory as editor of *On Fire* magazine. He is married with two girls, rides a Honda VFR 750 to work and plays golf with alarming mediocrity.

“Ease and comfort and safety and security and luxury produce tremendous spiritual stagnation and inertia in the church.”

John Piper

2 Corinthians 11:23-30

I have a confession to make: I value comfort.

In a driven and chaotic world I often find myself craving times of peace and tranquillity. I enjoy the solace of my study; the knowledge of a weekend without any formal commitments; the beauty of a silent phone; the luxury of surround-sound DVD system. My guess is I am not the only one.

Being a follower of Jesus in the Western world – certainly in Australia – is relatively easy. As a member of The Salvation Army in this country the general public holds me in high esteem. The Army here has something like a 96 per cent approval rating. When I walk down the street in my uniform I receive smiles and greetings that don't normally come my way when I'm dressed in jeans and a T-shirt.

The church on the whole here is either well accepted or, perhaps more accurately, ignored. This adds to my level of comfort, enabling me to live out my faith with relative ease and little opposition.

But despite the magnetic pull of an “easy” life, there lies within my heart and mind the dream of a life in which comfort is an anathema; in which my life is consumed by the call of Christ to be his hands, his feet, his voice.

That dream came to mind again recently when I came across an online opinion poll on the Christianity Today (CT) web site.

“Which of these historical church-state relationships do you think is the healthiest for the church?” asked *CT*. It then listed options including persecution, communism and democracy.

In essence *CT* was asking readers to consider the political and cultural climate in which the church operated best. Thirty-six per cent of respondents thought the healthiest environment for the church was one of persecution.

The poll confirmed my thinking that a comfortable spiritual life and the fulfilment of my dreams are incompatible, for my kingdom-inspired vision involves the real possibility of persecution and certainly personal discomfort.

Comfort causes spiritual stagnation; it dampens the flame of vision, starving it of the power it needs to be turned into reality. As US pastor and author John Piper writes, “easiness anaesthetises”.

“It is a bad sign for Christianity of this day that it provokes so little opposition,” writes Catherine Booth in *Aggressive Christianity*. “When the church and the world can go along comfortably together, you may be sure something is wrong.”

If Piper and Booth are right, then something is wrong in much of Western Christianity. Or more pointedly, something is wrong with me, for I am an integral part of the body Christ.

If I want to grow – spiritually, relationally physically – and if I want to realise my dreams then I have to be prepared to be troubled, inconvenienced, disturbed. If I want to grow I have to sacrifice comfort.

I haven’t always been so attracted to comfort. In my youth I had little regard for such thoughts, but as I have got older, settled and, to the amusement of some, “respected”, the scales of life have slowly tilted to the side of cosiness.

In my late teens I remember having a having a T-shirt custom printed with the motto “Idealism Rules”. It’s a project I remember with both embarrassment and pride. More importantly it was indicative of the early, vibrant stages of my dream to make a difference for God.

I also have vivid pictures of my daily walk from the train station to university.

Weaving my way through the back streets of the inner-city Sydney more often than not there would be a person lying in the gutter, passed out from an evening of

binge drinking. These were my pre-Army days, but I remember asking myself, “What can I do?”.

And in my early in my officership many late nights were spent talking about ministry dreams; of making a difference in the local community for the sake of Christ.

What happened? It’s not that I haven’t been involved in fruitful ministry, for I believe I have.

I could claim my dreams have become subjugated to the system, but that’s just an excuse. Maybe I am suffering from “male in the mid-30s” syndrome, but I have a gnawing feeling it is deeper than that.

My fear is that I have become too comfortable.

Ironically I see parallels between my life and the lifecycle of the Army. My struggles are the struggles of the movement. The passionate fire of youth becomes the smouldering embers of middle age, and “progression” to being middle-class brings with it an increasing sense of self-protection.

It is with a wry smile that I acknowledge that perhaps my passion to confront and challenge the progress of our movement is really me having a shot at myself. There is no space here for personal or corporate pity parties. Underneath the exterior flab of my 36-year-old body and our 132-year-old movement beats a determined heart focused on a Christ-centred purpose. The original dreams still hold their place.

God is prodding. The time has come to step out of the comfort zone, and under the Holy Spirit’s prompting and empowering turn kingdom dreams into reality.

“God, like the mother bird, sometimes has to break up the comfortable, downy nest, letting us drop into empty space,” writes Canadian missionary A.B. Simpson.

“There we must either learn to use an entirely new and higher method of support or sink into failure and loss. We must do or die, fly or fall to our destruction.”

By the grace of God, I’m going to fly.

NEW GENERAL: Announcement and Interview

With a nod to SALVATIONIST (visit this great paper at <http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/salvationist>)

Commissioner John Larsson elected seventeenth General

COMMISSIONER John Larsson is to be the Army's next General. Currently Chief of the Staff, Commissioner Larsson was elected by the 2002 High Council by an overwhelming majority in the first ballot – becoming the first General-elect to achieve more than the required two-thirds majority at the first vote since General Arnold Brown 25 years ago.

Commissioner Larsson will assume responsibility as the Army's world leader on 13 November, on the retirement of General John Gowans. He will be installed as General by General John Gowans at The Salvation Army In Celebration meetings at the London Arena on Saturday 2 November and the Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow, on Saturday 9 November.

In 1977 Commissioner Arnold Brown was one of two candidates. This time, Commissioner Larsson was one of three – the others being Commissioners Shaw Clifton and Hasse Kjellgren.

Six other members of the High Council received at least the two nominations necessary to qualify as a candidate, but chose not to stand. They were Commissioners Paul du Plessis, Israel Gaither, Alex Hughes, Mohan Masih, Philip Needham and Donald Ødegaard.

The decision was reached on the eighth day following the public welcome of the High Council members. The first anyone outside the High Council knew of the result was when the doors of the conference chamber in the grounds of Sunbury Court opened and the High Council President, Commissioner Brian Taylor, and Vice-President, Commissioner Linda Bond, led Commissioners John and Freda Larsson to a microphone on the Sunbury Court lawn.

Also waiting was a video camera which enabled Salvationists around the world to view the announcement of a General-elect live for the first time via the internet.

Following Commissioner Taylor's formal announcement of the result, the first words from the General-elect were of gratitude to God for the way the Holy Spirit had so obviously guided every moment of the more than week-long proceedings. 'We felt his presence every step of the way,' Commissioner Larsson declared.

The commissioner paid tribute to the other nominees for their invaluable involvement in the process, and to Salvationists around the world for supporting the High Council in prayer. He then embraced both the past and the future in his declaration: 'The Army has been greatly blessed by God in recent years. There has been renewal, and I hope by God's grace to lead the Army in further renewal.'

It had been a privilege, he said, to serve as Chief of the Staff to General Gowans. 'There hasn't been a single dull day!' he said, declaring that it was his intention to build upon John Gowans's achievements.

Then came words from General Gowans himself, who had travelled to Sunbury Court for the announcement (incumbent Generals play no part in High Council activities).

Recalling that he had been the best man at the wedding of John and Freda Larsson, the General declared that the election of John Larsson was 'the marriage of a good man and [indicating Commissioner Freda Larsson] a good woman to The Salvation Army. 'I pray that God will bless the union,' he said.

At this point nine-year-old junior soldier Bethany Parker of Staines came forward to present Commissioner John Larsson with a single yellow rose on behalf of all

the junior soldiers of the world, and Commissioner Freda Larsson with a bouquet of yellow, red and blue flowers.

Commissioner Bond then prayed words of gratitude to God for the one who had been chosen to be the Army's next international leader. 'We have no doubt in our minds that he is a man filled with the Holy Spirit,' she declared.

The High Council had formally commenced its electoral activities exactly a week earlier, following the public welcome meeting at Regent Hall (reported in last week's issue).

Under the initial chairmanship of the Chief of the Staff, the day began with prayers, led by the Chief, who challenged the Council members with texts from the Acts of the Apostles describing the selection of individuals for specific leadership tasks. This was followed by a season of fervent prayer for divine guidance in the process of discernment.

The first order of business following prayers was to elect the President and Vice-President of the Council. The President subsequently issued a number of procedural assignments, including that of High Council Chaplain to Commissioner Brian Morgan.

On the second day Commissioner Morgan led morning prayers before the High Council began a thorough review of procedures.

The last order of business was the election of tellers (vote counters) and members of the Questions Committee, who would prepare questions for the candidates.

The third day of the High Council, Sunday, was spent in prayer, worship and testimony.

The fourth day began with prayers led by Commissioner Augustina Watilete before the Council became a 'Committee of the Whole' for the purpose of developing questions to be answered by candidates. The remainder of the day was spent discussing the questions.

The fifth day commenced with devotions led by Commissioner Rolf Roos before the council members conducted a final review of the questions.

During the second morning session, in an atmosphere of quiet reverence, each member was invited (but not required) to nominate by ballot any officer, other than himself or herself, for the office of General. Then came the announcement of the nine members who had received at least two nominations.

Following a period of reflection led by the Chaplain the Council met to receive the responses of the nine nominees. Each was asked to inform the Council whether he would stand for election and to give assurance of the spouse's full agreement with the decision taken.

When all the responses had been given, Commissioners Clifton, Kjellgren and Larsson had accepted nomination.

The following day was set aside for the candidates to spend in meditation and in preparation of their responses to questions and their speeches, and for the other Council members to support them in prayer.

On the following morning Commissioner Lalkiamlova led devotions before the President reviewed the procedures, beginning with the three candidates reading their answers to the questions, and their wives responding to the specific questions prepared for them. The remainder of the morning and the first part of the afternoon were taken up with this exercise, giving members insight into the views, convictions and leadership styles of the candidates.

The late afternoon session was devoted to speeches by the three candidates, giving them opportunity to express themselves on any matter of their choice relating to the Army, their priorities and their approach to leadership. Following the speeches the President announced his decision that the voting would commence the following morning. The Council, led by Commissioner Morgan, then entered into a time of intercession.

The final day of the High Council again began with worship, led by Commissioner June Kendrew. The international leaders then joined together in prayer Korean-style, each lifting his and her voice at the same time, filling the council chamber with intercession.

During the counting of the first and only ballot, members sang the song, 'Thou Art The Way'. Then came the announcement that Commissioner John Larsson had received more than two-thirds of the vote and was thereby duly elected as the 17th General of The Salvation Army.

A member from each of the Army's geographical zones was asked to pray for Commissioners John and Freda Larsson as they knelt, surrounded by the President and the other candidates and their wives. Congratulations were then extended to the General-elect and Commissioner Freda Larsson, and the necessary legal documents were signed, confirming and authenticating the election.

The General-elect was then invited to address the Council. Commissioner Larsson noted the deep sense of God's presence that had permeated every day and the warmth of prayer. Appreciation was expressed to the President and the Vice-President for their excellent leadership.

The commissioner then spoke of the awesomeness of the responsibility which had fallen to him to follow in line of succession to the distinguished Generals who had preceded him, and pledged not to attempt to imitate any of them but to be the unique person and leader God had called him to be.

He concluded with a reference to his grandfather, Commissioner Karl Larsson, who took as his motto, 'Work, for the night is coming.'

'I want to dedicate every day, every hour, every power,' said the General-elect, 'to advance the Lord's work through the Army.'

Commissioner Taylor then dissolved the High Council and the man who will be the Army's 17th General walked out into the sunshine for the public announcement. - Charles King, Captain

'My task is to encourage renewal'

THE INTERVIEW

Tara Fairclough interviews General-elect John Larsson minutes after his election.

TF WHAT are your feelings just minutes after being elected 17th General of The Salvation Army?

There is a huge sense of awe, especially when one thinks of the people one is following in this particular appointment. There is also a feeling of privilege in being chosen to have the opportunity of leading such a Movement.

TF How have you enjoyed this year's High Council proceedings?

It has been a truly international event. One of the things that was said right at the beginning was that in times of prayer everybody should pray in their own language. And what freedom this has given people! They weren't struggling with English, they were praying in whichever language was best for them.

There has also been a wonderful spirit. Our text has been taken from a verse in Acts: 'The Holy Spirit and we have agreed ...' (Acts 15:28 Good News Bible). We have constantly prayed that the Lord would guide us.

TF How do you think your life will change when you become the Army's world leader?

Having been Chief of the Staff for three years I feel, in a sense, I've been practising for the role. However, the tasks are different, with considerably more travel involved. But I've had a taste of that, and have enjoyed and been stimulated by it. My wife Freda and I are hugely looking forward to meeting the Salvation Army world.

TF What will your first priority be on taking office?

My central concern will be to encourage the renewal which I believe the Lord is bestowing on the Army at this time. There are so many thrilling things happening in the Army – new initiatives, a new openness to change, a new desire to engage in mission – that I really believe the Lord is sending renewal and it is my task to encourage this.

TF Which aspects of the role are you most looking forward to?

Being General will involve a good deal of public work, of proclaiming God's word, and I look forward to communicating this message. It's also very thrilling, when meeting Salvationists across the globe, to find the same faith, the same

expressions of salvationism. So I'm excited about encountering Salvationists on the front line.

TF Which of your predecessors do you most admire?

That's the million-dollar question! My answer would be Frederick Coutts. He was my training principal. I worshipped the ground he trod on, and when he became General I worshipped him even more! He was a wonderful man, and if I can come anywhere near to him in what he was in this role, I shall be greatly humbled.

TF How important, in your opinion, is the right choice of General for the Army as a Movement?

Because of the way we are constituted, the right choice for General is exceedingly important. He or she is the 'glue' that binds the Army together internationally.

The High Council prays about its decision a great deal, and God gives to the Army someone who seems to be the right person for the time.

To suddenly be cast in the role, and to be speaking about myself in such a way, is almost frightening, but I have a sense of peace at this moment and gradually the awesomeness of it all will sink in.

TF Which of your personal qualities will help you be an effective General?

I have been in leadership for many, many years. I became a bandmaster when I was 17, and I've been in a leadership role of some kind ever since. I know that a General is called to lead, and Paul says that if you are a leader you should exert yourself to lead. I will do my best to use that gift and, together with Freda, we will seek to give direction to the Army.

TF Which personal traits might need working on?

There has never been a General who possesses all the qualities necessary for the task, and therefore one has to build on the team one has in assistance. We have a team of leaders who are exceedingly good.

Of course one thing I have to do fairly soon is to select a Chief of the Staff. There I will be guided by God to choose someone who will complement my particular gifts. I've only been General-elect for a few moments, so I'm still working on that one! (General Larsson has since chosen Commissioner Israel Gaither for this position).

TF Is there any country you haven't yet visited that you would like to see?

Freda and I have been to Africa, but there are large parts of it we haven't seen, along with some Indian territories. It would also be lovely to return to South America, which we know so well but not fully.

TF Is there anyone in particular you would like to meet on your travels?

No name comes immediately to mind. I know how honoured General John Gowans was when he had the opportunity of meeting Nelson Mandela. That made a great impression on his life. One of the privileges of being General is that often one is introduced to the most exceptional people.

TF With your new position will come a hectic work schedule. How will you unwind on occasional days off?

Freda and I are used to leadership, and we have found ways of coping with the pressures which come with it. We try to live a balanced life. We walk regularly, we try to eat sensibly and we have quiet times. Through this structure we have found ways of handling the stresses and enjoying life. We look forward to every day.

TF What, do you believe, are the unique attributes the Army possesses which continue to make it a relevant and vital global force in the 21st century?

Possibly the chief attribute the Army has is that it is proactive. We're not a movement which sits and waits for people to hear about Christ. We have a mission to reach out to people. One of my hopes and prayers is that we will recapture something of that original vision, and I believe the Army is rekindling its sense of mission more and more.

Additionally, we are a highly visible organisation. We make a noise in the world and it's very important we do that, and not just settle back so society doesn't know about our message.

TF Would you like to offer a post-election greeting to Salvationists worldwide?

Indeed I would. The amount of prayer there has been for this High Council has been absolutely humbling. I think of the UK Territory that has had a group praying non-stop. I want to thank Salvationists for their petitions, and I want to express my appreciation for all they do to accomplish the Army's mission of reaching out to the world with the wonderful message of Jesus Christ.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Graham Harris, Major

I can remember that a succession of Salvation Army officers who came to the corps that I attended as a child and youth endeavoured to engender into me what they felt to be the 'fear of the lord' The certainly scared the wits of me and were already assured of getting one person to the mercy seat with their preaching.

Unfortunately, "the fear of the Lord" is one of the most misunderstood and misquoted ideas in the Hebrew Scriptures.

There are two passages in the second book of Chronicles which give some of the meaning for the important term. Both of these concern appointments made by Jehosaphat, king of Judah. The first is about the judges (perhaps petty governors and/or war leaders in Israel who exercised temporal authority) and tells them how they ought to carry out their work.

*Let the fear of the Lord be upon you;
Take care what you do, for there is
no perversion of justice with the Lord
..... or partiality (2 Chronicles 19:7)*

These judges were not to 'judge' in only a human way but they should remember that they served in their offices as representatives of God. Having such a 'heavy' task they were also given a promise - that God would assist them in carrying out their sacred work:

*Consider what your are doing, for you judge
not on behalf of human beings but on the
Lord's behalf; He is with you in giving
judgement (2 Chronicles 19:6)*

The second of these statements about Jehosaphat's appointment concerns itself with Levities. It indicates how they are to act:

*..... in the fear of the Lord, in faithfulness
and with your whole heart (2 Chronicles 19:9)*

Leaving aside the last two qualifications of that phrase and focussing attention on the first the Levites were to act 'in the fear of the Lord.' They were to be responsible to God. This was not a freelance activity nor was it to be done in a lassiz-faire manner - rather their activity was to be done under the judgement of who was in the equation with them.

Scripture gives further help on the meaning of 'fear.' In Isaiah 2:10, & 19 & 21 the 'fear' is that of an unrepentant sinner before the justice of God. In the original Hebrew word 'pachad' there is a clear indication of terror and dread. Yet one may have yirah, which denotes pity and reverence and this is why some modern translations say 'revere the Lord' rather than 'fear the Lord.'

So, what content was there within the term 'fear of the Lord' for these judges and Levities? It would seem that reverence and awe were two of the basic elements of this Psalm 33:8 says:

Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. (RSV)

This does not mean that people who have a right standing (reverence) with the Lord are prevented from having a communion with Him. God is transcendent but he is also immanent. Indeed, Scripture indicates that He most earnestly desires fellowship with us:

*For thus says the high and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
"I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with Him who is of a contrite and humble Spirit (RSV)*

God certainly is transcendent but He is also immanent and most earnestly desires fellowship with those who have a right attitude toward Him.

A proper respect for, and awe of, God in worship, is not only possible it is necessary for a right and developing relationship with Him. This is not an opportunity for anyone to say that someone else's form of worship is lacking in some basic ingredient which makes that form invalid. What is a reverent form for one would be unacceptable nonsense to another. We need to be very careful in this matter especially in those days when there are a multiplicity of worship forms being carried out.

One other important consideration of 'the fear of the Lord' is to examine our motivation for obeying. Some obey God because they fear divine wrath if they don't obey Him. There are many who live in mortal fear of a punishing God who is poised with a sword to punish them if they step out of what they feel to be 'theologically correct' methods and ways. There are some who serve God because they feel that if they do not He will do something unpleasant to them. So, serving God is in their best interests. Such is hardly a perfect motivation for serving or worshipping God.

Jesus said:

They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them. (John 14:21)

In fact due reverence for God flows out of love for Him. In that way 'the fear of the Lord' is seen to be the outcome of a right relationship with Him.

THE REVIVAL OF POWER, SIGNS & WONDERS

Evangelist Todd Bentley

(Todd Bentley, featured in CHARISMA Magazine this summer, is being used by God to see many people saved, delivered, and healed in various parts of the world. For more information on his dynamic ministry, visit freshfire.ca)

In the last years around the world that the Fresh Fire Team and myself have been ministering, we have witnessed the power of God and many confirmed healings and miracles. I believe that the increase and focus on the ministry of healing, healing rooms and signs and wonders today is a prophetic sign that we are entering into an unprecedented time of God's power. I believe that this healing anointing is transferable and that the flames of healing and revival are igniting quickly around the world.

I want to send out several articles I wrote some years ago about the coming healing revival. I have added and updated some revelation that has been progressive and more understanding that is coming to me about what God is restoring to the church. God is really re-digging the wells.

Several years ago I returned from healing revival meetings in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. I was ministering in the former Abbotsford Revival Center in Canada and during the Sunday morning service the Holy Spirit brought me back to a prophetic word that I had given in the Whitehorse meetings. God began to speak to me about the coming healing revival in Canada and beyond. During the last few years in ministry I have come to understand that revelation can be progressive. This outpouring of miracles, signs and wonders is apart of the apostolic move and will touch the four corners of the earth, even though I know that much of what I saw will take place in North America.

During the worship that morning I was caught up in the Spirit over what I thought was primarily Canada, but have now come to understand that God is talking about North America. I saw many rain clouds of healing and miracles. They were individually set up over many churches, cities and ministries across North America pouring down healing rain. The rain clouds looked like they do in the cartoons on TV where the cloud and rain would be pouring down upon one person or one place and follow them wherever they went.

The Transferable Tangible Healing Anointing

Then I saw many ministers, ministries and churches that are already flowing in this miracle healing anointing, beginning to go into different cities, towns and churches throughout North America. As they were leaving these

places of ministry the healing miracle cloud would remain upon that church or city, and continue to pour down healing rain there long after the ministries leave. It was a transferable, tangible anointing of healing being transferred and imparted to other ministries, churches and even cities. It spread like fire. Everybody who came in contact with the healing wave started to minister the power of God. Many places are going to receive such an outpouring of healing rain, that pools of water are going to form like in John Ch 5, at the pool of Bethesda.

(John Ch 5:1-4)

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

The Healing and Miracle Centers

In my spirit I didn't just see one pool, I saw many pools across North America. I believe there will be over a hundred. The literal meaning of Bethesda means the house of outpouring and grace. The grace of God will give us an outpouring of the rains of healing and miracles, until the power of God increases and we have a flood of miracle rain and many pools of healing. I call the Pools of Bethesda, healing centers and places of healing and miracle revivals in geographical locations. The pool of Bethesda was in a geographical place called Solomon's Porch. The sick came from all over the nation.

Once again great multitudes will come from all over the world to geographical healing centers just like God did in Spokane in the early 1900's with John Lake's ministry. In 5 short years of ministry John Lake's ministry, they documented over 100,000 healings and miracles from people who came from all over the world. The Mayor of the city of Spokane WA, called Spokane the healthiest city in America. There won't be just one pool of Bethesda or one Spokane, but over a hundred different cities that will be internationally known for the ministry of healing just like God did in Spokane and Israel.

Who is going to receive it?

The Holy Spirit spoke to me that these rains of miracles and healings are for those churches and ministries that would fervently cry out for the rain, like Elijah on the mountain in 1 Kings 18:41-46.

Then Elijah said to Ahab, Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. So he went up and looked, and said, there is nothing. And seven times he said, go again. Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea! So he said, Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.' Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah in verse 41 "heard the sound of the abundance" of rain. He knew in his spirit that the famine for Israel was over, and it was time for the rain to fall. We know today in Church its time for the Power of God. In

Chapter 17:1 As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word. Chapter 17:1 said that the rains would come according to the word of Elijah, and so with the coming rains of healing. It will be at the word of the hungry people for healing revival in intercession and prophetic proclamation that the rains of miracles will fall.

Though Elijah knew it was time for the rain to fall he still in fervent prayer on the mountain had to birth and call it forth (18:41-46)

Though Elijah saw nothing he persisted in fervent prayer calling the rain. If you are to be in the rain and the storm front moving across North America of healings and miracles, you need to preach healing and though you see nothing, preach healing and preach, when you pray for the sick and nobody gets healed, pray again and if I pray for a 1,000 and nobody gets healed, I pray for another 1,000. Elijah seven times persisted and he saw nothing and when he did it was still only the size of a small hand.

Gods Promise to fill Healing rooms

In North America today we now have numerous healing room ministries, I know of over 60. We are getting ready for the power of God and just like in (2 Kings 3:17-20) "Thus says the Lord: 'Make this valley full of ditches.' For thus says the Lord: 'You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water. And this is a simple matter in the sight of the Lord; Now it happened in the morning, when the grain offering was offered, that suddenly water came by way of Edom, and the land was filled with water."

God told them to prepare in the famine for the the water, by digging ditches (water canals) and then one day, could be today or tomorrow with no sign of wind nor rain, when it seem like we aren't getting the breakthrough and level we are looking for in healing, and we continue to persist in prayer, preaching and prayers for the sick "boom" The water canals are full!!!

I hear the sound of the abundance of rain and I know in my spirit IT IS TIME!!! Climb up on the mountain, call for the rain, call for the storm. When the rains first began to come the cloud was but the size of a man's fist, but it grew to the place where Elijah said to Ahab get your chariot going lest the rain stop you upon the way. God spoke to my heart that first there would be healings but then the rain would become torrential rains and we'd move into creative miracles. Will your church be a pool of Bethesda for the sick and the lame? Well, then let it pour and the Lord says that truly they'll come from miles around.

A Prophetic Sign It Is Coming!!

Later that morning in worship after God had given me this word, two Africans walked in. I called these two men to the front of the church for them to prophesy the healing rains in the church in their native language. That morning in the service we had many healings including a couple of people healed standing at the altar, one of them was one of the Africans. Praise the Lord!

Confessions of a Halloweeneer

Geoff Ryan

Why should the devil have all the good parties?

Captain Geoff Ryan and his wife, Sandra, are corps officers at Corps 614 in Regent Park, Toronto. Commissioned in 1990, they served nine years in Russia. They have three children: Anya, Sasha and Sergei. This article appeared in HORIZONS MAGAZINE, a Christian Leadership Journal.

“To confront the Empire is not to fight against it but to live beyond it.” —Seminar leader at Messiah College, May 2002, speaking on living counter-culturally

“Because we love something else more than this world, we love even this world better than those who know no other.” —C. S. Lewis

It is said that confession is good for the soul, so ... here it goes. I celebrate Halloween! I allow my kids to dress up and go out trick or treating. I carve pumpkins and buy candies to give out to children who come to our door in their spooky costumes. Now, allow me to offer a reasonable defense before the collective wrath of my fellow Christians descends upon my head (or at the very least, piles up in my mailbox).

The current evangelical reaction to Halloween is a cultural shift that caught me unawares upon my return from Russia. Having grown up in a relatively strict evangelical home meant that there were many things that were not allowed. We rarely went to the movies, card games were banned, on Sundays we were not allowed to play outside with friends, TV was rationed and certain shows were off-limits, make-up (for girls) was not encouraged ... I could go on. These parameters defined our world, as shaped by our faith and our understanding of Christian practice. They were designed to keep us on the straight and narrow, protecting us from the corrupting influences of the world. It was much the same for many of my Salvation Army peers.

Looking back, it seems like there were a lot of rules and taboos. Some were helpful, while others unwittingly produced the opposite outcome. We were products of our times, and I don't blame my parents or feel any deep-seated

resentment for any of these restrictions. They were doing the best they could and the results are not bad if I look at how we all turned out. My point is that Halloween was never one of the “don’ts.” Everyone I knew in the Army celebrated Halloween. It never even crossed our minds that it might be a bad thing.

Sometime in the late 1980s, however, ideologues of evangelical culture in North America put Halloween on their “hit list.” Being out of the loop for a decade in Russia (where Halloween is not celebrated), I was blindsided by this shift when I returned to Canada in 2000. As October approached, people asked me: “How do you feel about Halloween?” Not knowing that I was supposed to feel a certain way, my admitted complicity in the celebration got me into a fair few scrapes. I understood quickly enough that Halloween was something evangelicals—particularly charismatics—no longer did. Any mention of Halloween inevitably led me into arcane and confusing discussions on the occult, satanic ritual abuse, druids, generational curses, African voodoo and rock music.

Many of those who spoke out against Halloween were card playing, movie going, pierced-ear evangelicals. I noticed that they blithely went about activities that, a few years ago, would have almost certainly consigned them to purgatory, if not the fires of hell. At the same time, they were castigating me for my observance of a celebration that was one of the annual highlights of my early years. I smelt the whiff of cultural Christianity at work and decided to look into the matter.

Finding credible information about the origins of this festival proved harder than I thought. There were plenty of Christian ministries via the Web that offered their take on the celebration. But the more I read, the more suspicious I became. I soon found myself at sea amid an ocean of unsubstantiated charges, unprovable facts, decontextualized Scripture verses and sweeping generalizations. How certain Christians have made discoveries that no other historian or anthropologist have been able to figure out (e.g., the origins and purpose of Stonehenge) or come into possession of certain facts that the FBI has no knowledge of (e.g., occult killings that take place every Halloween) mystifies me. Needless to say, I found this search inconclusive and not overly helpful.

In the end, I realized the issue goes far deeper than whether or not one dresses up and goes trick or treating on October 31. It is about a fundamental approach to mission and living as a Christian in a post-Christian culture. The issue is engagement versus withdrawal, and where one draws the line. When does the prophetic cross the line into compromise?

Jesus advised his disciples that the real trick (pardon the pun) was to be “in, but not of” the world, a difficult balancing act. I purchased a painting in Madrid years ago from a sidewalk artist outside the Prado. It is a mixed medium piece using oils and sand depicting a vulnerable man – he is a naked stick figure, fragile and easily broken. He wears a halo that marks him as a saint and is balancing precariously on a tightrope stretched over the flames of hell. I saw something of myself in that painting which is why I bought it and why it hangs over my bed. I also see it as the preferred “position” on mission: having the courage to walk that razors edge, fully aware of one’s own vulnerability and brokenness, yet struggling on in the midst of danger.

The other “position” on mission takes its cue from Paul’s admonishment in 2 Corinthians 6:17, usually taken out of context and rendered in the KJV: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” The intent is withdrawal rather than engagement. The point of relation to “the world” is an adversarial one, primarily defensive and hence reactionary.

Under Communist rule, things in Russia were so bleak and unrelentingly hostile that theology took a heavenward turn. There was not much to look forward to on earth so, for old Protestant believers, the trick was to get saved, grit your teeth and hold onto your salvation until you made it to Heaven. This was achieved mainly through extreme legalism and the sharply defined dualism of sacred and secular. Fully two-thirds of the songs in the Russian Baptist Hymnal are about Heaven. Apocalyptic themes, the longing for Christ’s return, obsession with “the world” were all standard fare for Sunday sermons. Given the circumstances in Russia prior to *perestroika*, this is understandable. The courage and suffering that these brothers and sisters endured demands our respect and admiration. To

construct such a worldview here, however, is unwarranted and a bit freakish (there are Christians who sit inside their homes with all the lights off on Halloween night, refusing to open their door to halloweeners).

As far as I can understand it, All Hallows Eve is the night when the forces of light and darkness engaged in battle. The good guys win; hence, the following day is known as All Saints Day. Whether this was a pagan ceremony co-opted by the Church and “sanctified” for holy purposes or syncretized in the interests of compromise ... well, it beats me. As it stands today, Halloween is what it is. I’m not sure Satan and his minions need a particular day in order to practise their dark arts. I don’t give October 31 much more credit than I do April Fools Day or even Easter. Celebrating the crucifixion and resurrection is deadly serious, but the fact that the date changes from year to year suggests to me that the value is in the “how” of the observance and not particularly the “when.”

As for all the pagan trappings that represent the “thin end of the wedge,” how far back does one start this wedge? What about Christmas trees—ever looked into their origins? Santa Claus? Rearrange the letters and he becomes Satan Claus! Easter? The word comes from Esthe, who was an ancient Germanic, wood goddess. What about the days of the week? In case you’re wondering, they come mostly from Norse mythology (Wednesday = Wodin, Thursday = Thor, Friday = Frida). As for the symbolism of mystical and magical figures, I grew up on C. S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. J.R.R. Tolkein, of *Lord of the Rings* fame, was a Christian and a mentor to Lewis. One of the best sermons I ever heard was on the fairy tale of Snow White as a resurrection metaphor. “Do you believe in magic?” asks the Disney song. I am afraid I do.

Besides, if everyone around me is celebrating something, I want in. I’m going to get in on the action and see what cracks of opportunity appear. To ignore it is a denial of reality that is not prophetic but may actually border on the delusional. To run away belies Paul assertion to the Hebrew Christians: “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed ... ” (Hebrews 10:39). Why should the Devil have all the good music? Why should the Devil have all the good

parties? Same principle, I reckon. He stole it all from God (and us) first—so why let him keep it?

So my kids dress up. Not as witches or murderers or devils. Why would they? The bad guys are the losers after all, and my kids want to be on the winning side. So they choose a superhero. They become angels, crimefighters, knights, good guys. They go out to party and get candy. I send them out to be “in, but not of.” Then I sit at home and wait for all the opportunities to come to my door. Last year 290 of them came knocking.

Our house straddles the line between the housing project of Regent Park and the upwardly mobile, gentrified Cabbagetown neighbourhood. Sixty-five percent of Regent Park’s 16,000 residents are 18 or under. The kids from Regent don’t trick or treat in the Park. They head north into Cabbagetown where the houses (and money) are. At the north end of Parliament Street is St. Jamestown, a complex of low-rent and subsidized apartment housing around 11,000 people, most of whom are new Canadians (almost 40 percent are Tamil). They head south to Cabbagetown on Halloween. As one beleaguered resident grumbled goodnaturedly to me: “The Jamestowners attack from the North and the Regent Parkers from the South.”

The whole world came to my house last Halloween. Kids of every conceivable nationality, big kids, little kids, kids in costumes and kids without costumes, kids I knew and kids who were complete strangers. We prepared packets of candy, invitations to our Saturday Kid’s Church and glossy evangelistic booklets obtained from Child Evangelism Fellowship. I heard a Somalian girl tell her Chinese friend as they passed by on the street: “Go there—that’s the house where you get the Jesus books!”

So, what shall we wear this Halloween?

Salvation Vandals

Maxwell Ryan*

*Lieut.-Colonel Maxwell Ryan, after a world-wide ministry of more than 40 years in corps, training, publicity and editorial work, in retirement is a hospital chaplain and, with his wife Patricia, a corps officer in Winnipeg, Canada.

Read Ezekiel chapter 34.

Vandals have a long and inglorious history in human affairs – not excluding the Christian Church, of which The Salvation Army is an integral if wishful part. What concerns me is that a spirit of vandalism has invaded The Army. The deconstructionists are hard at work tearing down the delicate fabric of Christly deeds that have made our Movement's name a byword for practical Christian love in action.

No longer is any quarter given to our tried, true and highly successful mission strategies; these vandals eschew the past. They are afflicted with the disease that C.S. Lewis dismissed as the fallacy of thinking the modern is always the best – “the itch of contemporaneity”. They jackboot their way into congregations, dismissing structures that have enabled the Army to present to a disbelieving world the foundation of attractive holiness – if not understood theoretically at least practiced with effective humility.

The vandals have plausible arguments (at least on the surface) for their destructive works. They talk glowingly of a future when the Army will be relevant, hoping vainly that hundreds of unsuspecting sheep from the general populace will flock to worship services at a well-disguised Salvation Army Church. Following their (mostly) American super-church gurus, these Salvation Army vandals will shut down, ignore and throw out anything that smacks of Salvationism. High decibel worship, trite mantra-like choruses with little theological or biblical foundation will rock the bemused worshipers out of their “Army complacency”!

Ten, twenty, fifty years or more of faithful, creative and effective service for Jesus is discarded as being tradition-bound and irrelevant. Those who have steered the ship of salvation during rough waters, who have financed the ship and who have supported too many young and callow Captains to remember are now considered “excess to requirement” by leaders who promised the Army before God that they would care for all their people

Home visitation? Forget it (my time is better used following the dancing cursor on my computer screen). Hospital visitation? Sorry, it’s not my spiritual gift. Ministry of encouragement? No time, I’ve got all my (Army paid for) studies to do, and there’s a couple of (Army paid for) conferences. Besides, I’ve got nothing in common with dinosaurs.

Meanwhile, our highly instructive, “every-t-crossed” Army with stunning computer graphics and specious pronouncements continues to die for lack of true shepherds. The proven tactics are abandoned, the new can’t deliver what they promise, while the vandals continue arrogantly destroying the wonderful edifice and scattering the faithful flock that they were commissioned to protect and lead.

Let us weep, let us repent and let us ponder the words of Salvationist poet Francis Evans:

Every Sunday morning meeting
Found her sitting near the platform,
Listening to the shallow sermon
Of the callow, new-fledged Captain,
As, with bumptious self-assurance,
He explained away life’s problems
With an ease that only comes from
Absolute lack of experience.
There she sat, a frail old lady,
Once a capable school-mistress,

Educated, cultured, travelled.
In her youth she had been lovely,
Blue-eyed, fair, with cheeks like roses;
In her prime, of all the envy.
Now the dread hand of arthritis
Clutched her, crumpling up her body
In its grip. Long years of suffering
Everywhere had left their sign-mark.
But her eyes were pools of sweetness
And her face sang of God's peace.

War College Release

Vancouver, Canada

- Purpose:** To train warriors to win the world for Jesus.
- First session:** September 2003
- Modus Operandi:** Post-modern residential and deployment training
- Advisory:** Board of Reference, featuring established leaders from around the world. As well as lending credibility and visibility, the people will offer input into the composition and operation of **TWC**. So far, such leaders as Commissioners Wesley Harris and Shaw Clifton, Lieutenant-Colonel Don Copple, Wesley and Stacey Campbell, and Major Chick Yuill compose the Board of Reference.
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- Need:**
- a. new leadership system in SA invites new leader training mechanisms;
 - b. we need to use alternative means of training and mobilizing leaders;
 - c. existing alternative SA leader training schools, while offering lessons from experience, also call out for improvement of systems.
-
- Duration:** One year, including two four-month semesters and one four-month deployment (normally at a SA unit).
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- Elaboration:**
Post-modern:
1. some of the teaching will be in pods, not taught throughout the year, once a week (e.g. one intense week);
 2. students will do some of the teaching (we will midrash);
 3. learning will be intertwined with warfare- praxis will be a keyword- we will teach and learn a lot by doing and debriefing. In other words, the learning will have to be grounded in the warfare;
 4. We will engage the culture in our teaching and learning (for example, 'God at the movies' and other cultural windows will be staples);

5. students will be living on location (slum brothers and sisters) and will daily live in community, not only within The War College, but, to some extent, with those in the neighbourhood.

Cost: Costs are \$4,200/year, including tuition, books, room, and board. This breaks down to \$200/month for room, \$200/month for board, and \$1,000 for tuition and books (the SA unit placement will be responsible for the student's room and board for the final four months and in return will be blessed by a zealous warrior on its front). Scholarships will be available to some outstanding applicants.

Living Arrangements: Downtown eastside living, among the people, close to the bone.

Existing Models:

There are several SA leader training schools, including School For Youth Leadership (Australia), Timothy Programme (Mission Team, UK), LEADS (USW), Project 117 (USE), Battle School (several spawned from the Williams Lake original).

Staff: TWC staff will represent the edge of Salvationism, bringing experience in primitive salvationism and real warfare to bear on eager recruits.

Content:

Primitive Salvationism is the only proven brand to accomplish our world-winning mission. Curricular framework is a three-pronged attack consisting of Spiritual Basics, Spiritual Disciplines, and Spiritual Warfare. Various SA training school leaders around the world are currently in dialogue towards the possibility of agreeing on curricula standards and associating in order to accredit the training courses. Intense study will be validated and saturated by live-fire combat.

Information and Application:

The War College website is currently under construction. Stay tuned to armybarmy.com for details. In the meantime, contact Captain Stephen Court at sixonefour@lightspeed.ca for information and applications.