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In This Issue
JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY
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Editorial Introduction *page 3*
Guest Editor, Captain Andrew Clark

Raison d'être *page 5*
Captain Andrew Bale

Blessings and Curses *page 10*
Captain Lynne Davis

Living Out Salvationist Charism *page 18*
Eleanor Burne-Jones

Vintage UK: 'Tears' *page 20*
Commissioner George Scott Railton

The Army Bride *page 22*
Captain Tanya Dooley

Poem: Fed Up *page 39*
Captain Tanya Dooley

The General's Keynote Address at International Leaders Conference:
one Officer's Response *page 41*
Major Stephen Poxon

Time for Action *page 44*
David Lumm

Unleashing the Apostolic Genius in The Salvation Army *page 50*
Captain Andrew Clark

Editorial Introduction

by Guest Editor, Captain Andrew Clark

Welcome to this special United Kingdom and Ireland Territory edition of the Journal of Aggressive Christianity. It is most UK Salvationist's privilege to be able to take reasonable length journeys and take walks along the Whitechapel Road, see the Blind Beggar Pub and the old Quaker ground where Booth had his first tent and to read in the histories of our corps stories of the Army's biggest name pioneers. The Army has no doubt changed shape in the UK, but the passion lives on.

The issue kicks off with Captain Andrew Bale's challenging article, 'Raison d'être'. In his though provoking and direct style, Bale outlines what in essence was the UK's gift to the worldwide Army – Primitive Salvationism – and challenges us again to get back to the trenches, to keep the fundamentals alive amongst us.

Taking us to the core roots of spiritual warfare, we have Captain Lynne Davis sharing some teaching on 'Blessings and Curses.' In our UK context we work against a background of active occultic practice in many of our cities but also in a cynical nation with a careless tongue. Captain Davis provides some thought provoking challenges to ensuring we are free in Christ and standing firm against the enemies schemes.

From her background in Franciscan Orders, Eleanor Burne-Jones wades in with some big questions about how we promote, in whatever context we are in, the core mission passion that is ours as Salvationists. Against the backdrop of the confusion of post-modernism, Eleanor asks if the best way to capture our founding vision is to capture and own Salvation Army charisms instead of cold statements which may never find their way off the pages they are written on. She talks about Salvationism embedded deep in the heart of the soldier.

It would be senseless to have a UKT edition without a contribution from one of the 'Founders.' Instead of looking to the Booths, we've included an article entitled 'Tears' by Commissioner George Scott Railton initially published in the Christian Mission days in their magazine. Hear the Commissioner's passion as he urges all followers of Jesus to weep for the lost, from the closest of friends to the strangest of strangers.

Captain Tanya Dooley, and American officer who has adopted the UKI as her home territory offers us an impassioned call to the Army to measure itself against the theological image of the church as the Bride of Jesus and brings forth some great images of covenant, love, holiness and reward. She challenges us to be 'a marching bride!' She then follows this up with a second article, a prophetic poem, a call to arms entitled 'Fed Up!'

Major Stephen Poxon, an accomplished and published Army writer, offers a grass roots response to the General's keynote address at the recent conference of International leaders. Poxon applauds and affirms an Army that marches bravely and consistently through strong tides of secularism and post-modernism but issues a challenging call to

every Salvationist to be confident in our calling before God and secondly, a call to us all to recognise the value, worth and valiant ministry of corps officers and soldiers at the grass roots of our movement.

Talking grass roots, pioneering soldier, David Lumm, shares some of the convictions that have led him and his wife, Lucy, to step out in faith and move to a town with no current Salvation Army corps and seek to serve God as covenanted soldiers there. Primitives to the core, David and Lucy have stepped out to embrace this 'Time for Action.'

Finally, my article identifying 'apostolic genius' in the primitive Salvation Army was written, like Bale's article at the beginning, to re-affirm for our territory and the world's Army that at the root of our movement is the spiritual DNA that catapults every significant move of God in the course of history.

Read and be blessed, challenged and inspired.
yours from the home of Primitive Salvationism,

Andrew Clark
Captain

About the Editor

Captain Andrew Clark was rescued by brave local Salvationists who dared enough to get involved in his life as a young complicated teenager from a broken home. Inspired from the beginning by anyone who would reach out to him, he is determined to be the hero to many who share his roots. He currently works in Torry, an urban priority community in inner city Aberdeen, Scotland with his wife Tracy where they are currently working to re-establish a floundering corps with a small soldier team. Committed to incarnational living, cell-based community and unapologetic proclamation of the Kingdom, they seek to be good news to the poor and live to rebuild, restore and renew Torry by a ministry pattern based on Isaiah 61, Jesus-style.

Andrew is the author of a couple of self-published books: 'Who would have guessed?' (testimony), 'Salvationism Out Loud!' (collection of short articles from his blog, Army Renewal) and 'Blood and Fire', currently being considered for publication by IHQ.

Raison d'être

by Captain Andrew Bale

Sometimes a nation invents a phrase so perfect in its ability to describe something that the phrase transcends the normal boundaries of language and becomes international in usage. The French phrase, *raison d'être*, which literally translated means "reason for being", is a good example.

This simple phrase goes far beyond mere description, providing us with a methodology that can be used to measure how well an object justifies its existence. Once we have established an object's *raison d'être* it is relatively easy to assess its success or failure in fulfilling that purpose. For example, it may be said that the Church exists to love sinners into God's kingdom and thereby bring glory to Him. Some Christian denominations meet this goal better than others do. A comprehensive understanding of its *raison d'être* will enable a denomination to identify whether or not it can justify its existence and, if it can, to what degree. If areas of failure are identified then strategies can be put into place to increase efficiency and thereby bring it closer to the fulfilment of its *raison d'être*.

With this simple phrase, French philosophers have given us a means whereby we can measure current performance against the ideal benchmark that lies at the heart of any organisation. The phrase succeeds on four levels: first of all it questions whether our reason for being still exists. Secondly, if the answer is yes it reminds us of where we ought to be in fulfilling that reason. Thirdly it shows us where we actually are in meeting that objective. Finally it produces within us an urgent desire to take those steps required to achieve everything we were raised up to accomplish.

In my second paragraph I was very careful to use the words 'it may be said' in relation to the Church's *raison d'être* – although I believe the aims of the Church are unequivocal, there may be some who have other opinions. However, when it comes to The Salvation Army I can declare without any fear of contradiction exactly what our *raison d'être* is. The Salvation Army was raised up to save sinners and to promote holiness and it achieves its aim through offering all people everywhere, regardless of their race, gender, prospects or social status, unconditional love. The primitive Salvation Army saw itself as the cutting edge of the Church, militant and in every way different from the chapels and Churches that existed at the time. It sought to take the gospel to the un-Churched, those on the very edge of society, the oppressed and prostituted people who populated the dark underbelly of polite society.

William Booth, Catherine Booth and George Scott Railton, the founding triumvirate used by God to establish The Salvation Army, were all very clear about The Salvation Army's *raison d'être* and the dire consequences of failing to fulfil the same:

"If God bases any hopes on anyone for the salvation of the world it must be on The Salvation Army. If we are unfaithful, God will take our candlestick out of its place. There

are quite enough lifeless organisations in the world without adding one more. I hope that God will sweep it off the face of the earth if it should ever become so”¹

“But, thank God, He has not abandoned our nation to its fate. On the contrary, we are able to show that He has during the last few years, been raising up from amongst the publicans and sinners of our day an army of deliverance, fired with His own burning love for dying souls, and mighty through His power to the pulling down of Satan's strongholds... there is not anywhere today another organisation professing to undertake throughout the whole world, a scheme of evangelisation especially directed to meet the need of the most abandoned and godless part of the community; and surely, therefore, we may fairly claim to be the Lord's special force raised up for the emergency.”²

“Oh!” people say, “you must be very careful, very judicious. You must not thrust religion down people's throats. Then, I say, you will never get it down. What! Am I to wait till an unconverted, godless man wants to be saved before I try to save him? He will never want to be saved till the death rattle is in his throat. What! Am I to let my unconverted friends and acquaintances drift down quietly to damnation, and never tell them about their souls, until they say, 'If you please, I want you to preach to me'? Is this anything like the spirit of early Christianity? No. Verily we must make them look--tear the bandages off, open their eyes, make them bear it, and if they run away from you in one place, meet them in another, and let them have no peace until they submit to God and get their souls saved. This is what Christianity ought to be doing in this land, and there are plenty of Christians to do it. Why, we might give the world such a time of it that they would get saved in very self-defence...”³

Generally speaking, far from being a radical ground-breaking evangelistic invading force, the contemporary Salvation Army (at least in the western territories) is in serious decline. Of course, praise God, there are always notable exceptions to the rule but the general truth that cannot be ignored is that we are in decline.

In the UK the decline in officers has become a serious concern and featured in a rather dramatic front page in the 25th February 2006 edition of *Salvationist*. A page containing nothing but worrying statistics, printed in large contrasting fonts, effectively drawing attention to the serious decline in those responding to ‘the call’. The page made the point that if things stay as they are, then by 2016 just under 600 ‘officer-units’⁴ will be trying to oversee 800 corps appointments. This ‘shock’ front page was sadly not the precursor of an article setting out how this decline would be reversed but simply a sad statement of the truth, perhaps designed to shake us out of complacent lethargy and into action.

When we seriously consider our *raison d'être* we are prompted to ask many difficult and deeply personal questions and our potential answers provide us with opportunities to

¹ William Booth on leadership, an article in *The Officer*, July 1894.

² GSR in *Heathens England*, Chapter 2 – ‘Why the people don't “turn religious.”’

³ Catherine Booth – *Aggressive Christianity* – Chapter 1 ‘Aggressive Christianity’.

⁴ A married couple were counted as one unit in this analysis.

improve and progress. However, the practical restraints of space allow this article to address only three:-

- Does our *raison d'être* still exist? Are there still poor, isolated, disenfranchised people whom no one else is reaching with the gospel? In other words, have we become obsolete as a consequence of our success?
- Is there a more effective way of meeting our *raison d'être*? In other words, are we becoming obsolete simply because we refuse to evolve?
- Or, does our *raison d'être* still exist, but for a host of reasons we are unable or unwilling to fulfil it?

I'm assuming that I need not waste too many words answering the first of these questions. William Booth calculated the un-churched masses to consist of 10% of the population. Could anyone effectively argue that the figure is not substantially higher today? In the UK today what the early Salvationist pioneers called the 'working classes' might more aptly be called the 'benefit classes'. In Dartford, where my wife and I currently serve God, the un-churched are all around us. A walk down Dartford High Street on market day produces a scene that would not be all that unfamiliar to Railton or Cadman. Those we help on a daily basis and those we lead to Christ are nearly all poor, marginalised and almost forgotten. Could anyone really argue that our *raison d'être* has been fulfilled? Can we rest on our pitchforks content that 'all is safely gathered in'? Without doubt our *raison d'être* remains – so does the prevalent decline within our ranks point to our failure in trying to meet it?

When I was about seven years old my father took me to Campfield Press in St Albans (the Army's own printing works). The busyness of the place together with the noise and the smell worked together to create a lasting memory. In particular I remember how one of the typesetters using the type at his disposal, interspersed with slivers of metal from the crucible of molten lead attached to his work station, carefully spelt out my name. The image of his typesetting machine conjured up by my memory looks like a cross between an antiquated typewriter, a primitive telephone exchange and a loom! Imagine my delight as my 'set' name progressed along the production line and was finally printed on proof reader's paper. A typesetter in the late 1960s possessed an envied occupation. From apprentice to pensioner the craft of typesetting promised both steady material reward and job security. The typesetter's *raison d'être* still exists, but modern technology has provided us with infinitely more effective methods of publishing than laboriously messing around with molten lead. Because there is a more effective way of meeting the typesetter's *raison d'être* both he and his craft have become obsolete.

Are there better ways of meeting our God-given objectives? Are there other organisations better equipped than we are at reaching the lost? Has our 'candlestick' been removed from its place and given to some other more worthy denomination? Are there examples of best practice that we would do well to follow? Dare I say that most of the advances within the contemporary Church in recent years are nothing more than the rediscovered weapons that we as a movement once used effectively but discarded in the name of progress?

We were using the ward system long before cell Church poked its head out of the womb! As for Alpha our system for making and following down converts (welcome sergeants, recruiting sergeants, rolls, visitation sergeants, recruits classes, soldiership classes) surpasses anything Alpha has to offer! Add to that our Directory and Corps Cadet Classes, our open-air meetings, pub-booming, slum and gutter brigades, prison gate visitation, safe houses for prostituted people, shelter for the homeless underpinned by solid Christian pastoral support and pub raids and there is very little the contemporary Church has 'discovered' that wasn't used by, or even initiated by, The Salvation Army. If you were a Salvationist between 1878 and 1908 incarnational ministry was the only type of ministry there was. We were doing 'Café Church' and offering a sandwich alongside salvation before cafés had been invented – Railton mentions salvation tea-parties in *Heathen England* in 1877! As for the 'four spiritual laws' how many tracts beginning with 'How to.... Get saved... find holiness... win souls' etc did the early Salvation Army publish? If others are doing it better than us it is unlikely that they have found a new way but simply that they have adopted and adapted the old way just as the early Salvationists and before them the Methodists did. Even today we continue to discard good proven methods of evangelism on the grounds that they are past their sell-by date, when the truth is more likely to be that we are too timid or maybe even too lazy to modernise them and use them again.

Whilst some might consider such a point of view arrogant and insular maybe even incestuous, greater people than myself have defended the Army's unique God-given ability to fulfil its *raison d'être*:

"Salvationism is a clear and well-defined quality that represents distinctive features of doctrine and service which distinguish it from all other organisations and makes of it an entity entirely apart, incapable of being blended with any other people. Any attempt to harmonise it with methods employed by other religious bodies destroys its effectiveness and renders it incapable of achieving its purpose or continuing to develop its special characteristics." ⁵

It would appear that our *raison d'être* still exists and our inability to fulfil its requirements is not simply evidence of our refusal to adapt. This points, painfully, to only one conclusion. That is that circumstances (either beyond or within our control) exist, which are preventing us from functioning fully.

Is our reluctance to reclaim our traditional 'Cathedral' (the open-air) down to the fact that evangelism outside our halls just doesn't work or because taking evangelism outside our halls is a risk we don't want to take? When we look at the success of recent initiatives like 'Street Pastors' can we really argue that open-air evangelism has become obsolete? Is our reluctance to wear uniform born out of a genuine belief that it creates a barrier between us and those we are trying to reach or is it that wearing a uniform makes us both accountable and available? Do we wince at the military metaphor because in a world of increasing militarism it has developed negative connotations or is it simply easier to be a member than it is to be a soldier?

⁵ General Edward Higgins quoted in an online biography, The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre.

When William Booth boldly declared 'send the fire' in his stirring song and cried to God, 'Look down and see this waiting host, give us the promised Holy Ghost, we want another Pentecost!' he wasn't talking about the unsaved but those within the ranks of his newly formed Army who lacked power. Do we need another Pentecost? Has our failure to fulfil our *raison d'être* got more to do with impotent personnel than with outdated methodology? Perhaps we might be encouraged to recall that the first Pentecost happened in a meeting attended by a group of fearful, sinful, doubting men and women prone to denial, failure and cowardice. Although the weaknesses swept away by Pentecost were personal to each individual disciple the benefits were collective and beyond comprehension. Pentecost didn't demolish the temple, or wipe out the Pharisees or edit the law – it dealt with the individual. Revival can only ever be the revival of the individual – the more individuals that are revived, the fiercer the flames of revival will burn.

It is no wonder then, that in spite of our many inquiries, The Salvation Army has been unable to write a strategy for recovery, for the problem lies not in the fabric of our movement nor in our methodology but in the hearts of individual officers and soldiers. Indeed, God can only revive The Salvation Army as he would revive any denomination - one soul at a time.

When Paul speaks about the Church, he uses the metaphor of a body. It is the nature of cells, whether they be healthy or cancerous, to reproduce. Decline will either continue or be reversed according to the health of individual cells. There is nothing wrong with the head or the heart of the Church; it is the unhealthy cells that make up the body, through which the head and heart try to operate, that bring about failure. Christ uses the even more brutal metaphor of a vine where the unhealthy branches are cut off and thrown into the fire.

Our *raison d'être* as a movement is wholly dependable upon our success in fulfilling our own *raison d'être* as individual officers and soldiers as summed up in our covenants.

Until we are doing, in God's power, all we can to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to love and serve him supremely all our days, to live to win souls and make their salvation the first purpose of our lives, to care for the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, love the unlovable, and befriend those who have no friends, to maintain the doctrines and principles of The Salvation Army.. Until we can declare with unequivocal integrity that we have fulfilled our own personal (and voluntarily adopted) *raison d'être* then we will continue our slow limp into obscurity. However, if we face the truth, repent and seek God with all our hearts then he will give us renewed success and greater victory – why? Because that's His *raison d'être*!

Blessings and Curses

by Captain Lynne Davis

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

By Captain Lynne Davis

What is a curse? The dictionary says: "An appeal or prayer for evil or misfortune to befall someone or something. (v) To invoke evil or misfortune upon. (n) A malevolent appeal to a supernatural being for harm to come to somebody or something or the harm that is thought to result from this. A blessing, on the other hand, is "Something promoting or contributing to happiness, well-being, or prosperity."

Today there seems to be an epidemic of people with poor self-image. Violence is growing in much of the world. Health issues are increasing. Sociologists, psychologists etc put various labels on these problems, trying various techniques and remedies to cure our ailing world without success. I suggest a different course, one which would be ignored or ridiculed by many 'experts' in the scientific/medical world. Curses.

Many people accept the Bible as truth, but fail to acknowledge that curses still exist today – seeing them as outdated. Something that happened in Old Testament times, possibly New Testament times. But not today. In the Bible the word 'curse' appears around 165 times; 'curses' 34 times; while 'blessing' appears 89 times and blessings ' around 25 times.

For those few people who accept curses as even a possible reality today, perhaps most think of curses as spells being cast by witches. I knew a woman convinced that her husband had put a voodoo hex on her. And I saw a shaman, outside THQ, presumably cursing The Salvation Army. And a written curse on a wall near Moorgate – again cursing The Salvation Army.

Let's educate ourselves in this matter in order that we can know the schemes of our enemy and stand strong in Christ as we explore blessings and curses. First, we explore several different curses and their sources, then we turn to the tools for dealing with these things in Christ.

Sources of Curses

1 God

Yes, God can, and does, curse His people. This is scriptural. To third and fourth generations. If we go back 4 generations, that is 62 ancestors. Can we be 100% certain that not one of them was involved in anything displeasing to God?

The Bible clearly states that there are occasional situations where/when God curses people. To give them the opportunity to repent, and turn from sin. Only those who fail to do this are eternally condemned.

We find the first curses in scripture in Genesis. In Genesis 3:14 God cursed the serpent for deceiving Eve; Genesis 3: 16, God curses Eve, in Genesis 3:17 God curses the ground. Then in Genesis 4:8 Cain killed Abel and in v 11 he was cursed by God. Then, in v 15, anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.

In Mark 11: 14, Jesus cursed the fig tree and, in v20 they pass the tree again and Peter remembers the curse.

Some say it is not possible for curses to exist today, certainly they cannot affect Christians. They quote Galatians 3: 13, 14 “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” But in Revelation they still exist at the end times. (Rev 22:3 “No longer will there be any curse”). Only after Christ’s second coming will curses no longer exist. Could that mean that Christ’s crucifixion redeemed us, but that we have to choose to accept that redemption? The time the curse will be finally lifted will be after the last judgement.

2 Other people

Other people can, and sometimes do, curse us – whether intentionally or by accident. These curses can be spoken, or by something as seemingly innocent as a gift or souvenir. Or something we buy (whether new or second-hand).

People who curse us can be either amateurs, or professionals.

We can think of amateurs as most of the people around us: family, work colleagues, friends, neighbours, etc, etc. They can curse us when they speak without thinking and say a curse over us. People in authority – parents, teachers, etc, have a terrific responsibility when they speak to those in their care as it is so easy for them to say what is in effect a curse over someone without realising it.

But we also encounter those who curse us in a professional capacity. Witches DO exist. They can, and do, come into our churches. We probably don’t know they’re there. They may be coming in because they want to leave their old ways behind. But (and perhaps more likely) they are coming in to curse the building, the leaders, and the congregation.

In a way, their presence is a compliment. The enemy would be unlikely to deploy his forces against us unless our work was concerning him. So we must be doing something right.

3 Ourselves

In the same way, we can curse ourselves, by saying negative things repeatedly about ourselves. The enemy just loves us doing that – really, we’re doing his work for him. An example of this is in Matthew 26: 74 where Peter disowns Jesus.

Sometimes we do things that bring down curses on our heads. It is currently 'fashionable' to practice yoga, feng shui, all kinds of martial arts. But these can lead us into idolatry, whether we realise it or not. And idolatry will bring a curse upon us.

4 Generational

Can affect many aspects of our lives. Relationships, health, finance, etc. Is there a recognisable pattern? Multiple divorces, hereditary illnesses; female problems' financial problems' etc, etc. Multiple incidencies may indicate the presence of a curse. Remember our 62 ancestors!

Each of us has a history, a family history. Today's interest in genealogy can show up surprising results. I've always been interested in the social aspect of history – how it affected the ordinary people. I was fortunate enough to study social and economic history, rather than political history. But now my son is working on the family history – and he is finding some surprising things. Some people studying their family tree merely look for the lists of names – a bit like the Biblical genealogies. A begat B, B begat C etc. But we're often fortunate enough to discover something about the people in the family. Not always nice stuff. But it makes the people more real, not just names on a piece of paper.

And as I look back through the generations, patterns begin to appear. They may not be good events. But, at least when I see a recurring pattern those alarm bells sometimes ring, alerting me to the fact that this set of circumstances could be the gateway that has allowed a particular curse into my life. I always thought I was only the second person in my family to divorce. Now I know of many others. Now my son is divorced. As well as divorce there are at least two incidences of 'multiple marriages' or bigamy at a time when divorce was out of the reach of most people.

5 Soul Ties

Some are Godly. But others are not. Sometimes we have to accept that a particular relationship is not what God wants for us. Perhaps that person is trying to turn us away from our relationship with God. Perhaps they are adversely affecting our lives in other ways. We probably all know people who we think are 'just not good to be around', and we avoid them or, at least, limit time spent with them.

But if we are linked to someone in an ungodly way, we need to sever the soul-tie, the link between us. And to destroy anything that they have given us. Why? Because any souvenir of that ungodly soul-tie we kept would attract a curse back on us.

Curses can also be passed to us by our sexual partners. The Bible tells us that the man and the woman become one flesh. At that moment any curse on one partner is passed to the other partner. In today's society, how many people have just one sexual partner? For someone has been engaged in sexual activity with multiple partners, the implications are serious – not only for their physical health, but also for their spiritual well-being. Anyone who has been sexually active with someone of a non-Christian faith takes on the curses placed on their partner.

6 Tongue

Words are powerful. 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me' is just not true. Words can, and do, hurt people. Sometimes irreparably.

If we say, repeatedly, to someone that they are stupid, or clumsy, that they'll never be successful, that their marriage will fail, etc. We are, in effect, speaking a curse over their lives – opening a gateway for evil spirits/demons to enter them and make our statement a reality. That places terrific responsibility on each and everyone of us to be aware of what we are saying to others.

So many teachers tell children they can't..... This can become self-fulfilling. Children who are told they are stupid, or clumsy, or can't do a particular thing will, eventually fulfil what was spoken over them.

7 Objects

Things can be cursed, just as much as people. The souvenir you bring back from an exotic holiday may have a curse as the unexpected, unwanted, free gift. Many holiday souvenirs honour other gods. How many buddhas do we see in shops today? Many interior designers incorporate them into their plans. But they are meant to be worshipped, and we are commanded not to worship other gods. So why bring them into our homes? Totem poles, statues, etc, etc.

Sometimes the workers who make the souvenirs speak curses over them. Curses that will stay with the object and affect its' owner. If we buy something with writing on it, which we are unable to translate, how do we know it is not a curse?

Many of us annually spring clean our homes. We de-junk to get rid of all the unwanted or unnecessary clutter we've surrounded ourselves with. But how many of us do a spiritual spring cleaning of our homes? We need to monitor what we have in our homes. Are any of our books titles we know we shouldn't be reading? It's not only books, but also cds/tapes and dvds/videos. Certain types of music are displeasing to God and listening to them could bring down curses on us.

What do we do?

Our response to and curses on our lives? Curses can be lifted. We need to repent of any sin that may have brought the curse into being in your life. And sever ALL links with the activity/person involved. Ask God to lift the curse. "There is no curse without a cause" whatever that might be. Proverbs 26:2 Both blessings and curses operate according to eternal, unchanging, laws.

Turn curse to blessing. Answer curse with a blessing. NEVER try to 'bounce' curse back – that would be acting like them. Bless those who curse you. Sometimes we know someone is actively cursing us. We should NEVER try to return the curse on them. We must forgive them, then bless them. Exchange good for evil!

Blessings

We must remember that we were not created to suffer, to be cursed. When God created the world and human life, He created a perfect world, with no pain or suffering. But evil entered that world, tempting Eve and Adam, leading to the very first curse.

God loved (and still loves) us enough to give us free will. He could have created us without that, so that we were always obedient to Him. But He did not want us to be like robots. So we have free will. We can choose. We can choose how to live, who to follow.

The Bible declares this good news: "The Lord your God turned the curse into blessing for you, because the Lord your God **loved you**" (*Deuteronomy 23:5*). Here are some biblical references to explore, which are sources of blessings for us:

- Deut 28: 1-14 - blessings for obedience
- Luke 6: 20 – 22 - Beatitudes
- Luke 6: 27 – 36 - Love for enemies
- Luke 6: 28 - Bless those who curse you
- Deuteronomy 28: 3-13 blessings

A strategy for victory and blessing

Consider this woman – her name is **Rahab**, a Canaanite from a cursed people. "**Cursed be Canaan**; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren" (Genesis 9: 25). This people excelled in sinfulness. Their constant refusal to repent inevitably brought down upon them the destructive judgment of God.

Rahab belonged to this cursed nation. Furthermore, she was one of the most sinful women in the city. She was known as **Rahab the Harlot**. How could she, a Canaanite, escape the judgment of God over her people? How could she become blessed instead of cursed? Scripture records her story to encourage you. Whatever your sins and their ensuing curses, whatever curses you have inherited, they can all be converted into **blessings**. Follow Rahab's example:

a) She Listened to the News of God

God had commissioned Joshua to attack the people of Canaan and destroy them. Joshua obeyed the command and sent two spies ahead. Rahab met these two men and talked to them. She said: " For we have **heard** how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when you came out of Egypt .. for the Lord your God, He is God" (Joshua 2: 10, 11). Rahab started on the road to salvation when she **heard** about the wonderful deeds of God. She not only heard but pondered on what she had heard.

The first step is to listen; to open your ears to the wonderful news about God. Have you heard this news? Do you know that this news assures you of God's love for you and His desire to save you from curses and to fill your life with peace and joy.

You must begin by **hearing** this good news, especially the part that says **the Lord carried all the curses on your behalf when He hung on the Cross**. Paul says that faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). Rahab heard the news, so faith entered her heart. She believed that the God who had delivered His people from Pharaoh, would rescue her as well.

b) She Trusted that God Loved Her

When Rahab met the two spies, she did not see them as enemies, but as messengers from God, sent especially to rescue her. In spite of her sinful past, and her cursed nationality, she believed that God loved her and sent the men to deliver her. The Bible says: "Rahab .. received the messengers" (James 2: 25).

Beloved, do you want the curses over you to be changed into blessings? **Trust** that God loves you **personally**. Have faith that what you have heard about His abundant grace applies to you. God sent these words to you. He wants to give you rest, deliverance and healing. This is a tremendous revelation – Christ has redeemed you from curse so that it may not affect you.

c) She Shut the Door

The two men told Rahab that her city was going to be destroyed, and that if she was to be saved, she and her family would have to **shut the door** (*Joshua 2:19*). "**Shutting the door**" is a very important step. You have to shut the door on all the things that can incur curse.

Have you ever meddled in witchcraft or fortune-telling? **Shut the door** and cut off this connection right away. Do you have any amulets or charms in your home? Burn them and get rid of them immediately. It is very dangerous to keep them!

If the difficult circumstances you are in now are due to your past life, **shut the door now**. Shut it on the life that takes away your peace. Resolve not to turn back to the world. Stand against sin with all your determination and the grace of God will strengthen you. Say: "I will shut the door". If you realize that your current situation is because you have continued in the sin of your fathers and grandfathers, then take heart and **shut the door** to this sin.

Like the Psalmist, Asaph, pray to God: "Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us! Let your tender mercies come speedily to meet us" (*Psalms 79:8*). Trust that Christ has already **redeemed** you from the **curses** inherited from your fathers and forefathers. Praise God that He turns curses into blessings.

d) She Opened the Window

Her house was in the wall of the city, so she opened the window and tied a rope of scarlet thread to it, just as she had been directed by the two men. She shut the door on the past and opened the window to heaven, to speak to the true God. He would see the scarlet rope. Scarlet is the colour of blood, which it symbolises – the precious blood of Jesus.

You can open the window too, and look heavenwards. Look to the blood of the Lord Jesus, which speaks in heaven on your behalf (*Hebrews 12:24*). This blood declares that the Lord loved you and became a curse on the Cross to redeem you.

Close the door on your former life of sin and recklessness which brings curses into life. Open the window so the light of the Lord can shine in. The Holy Spirit is calling you: "Awake... awake... shake yourself from the dust.. Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive" (*Isaiah 52:1,2*) and "Arise.. shine.. for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you" (*Isaiah 60:1*).

Open the window to the Lord's light and love. Open your heart to Him. Invite Him to come and reign over your entire life. Open your ears to His encouraging words. Do not be afraid of following Him. He knows that you are still weak. He will be your shepherd. He will carry you on His shoulders.

He bought you with His precious blood. He will protect you and do wonders for you. Rahab was transformed from a cursed sinful woman, into one of the wonderful witnesses of faith. She became a mother among the people of God – an ancestor of Christ Himself.

In conclusion

Her curses were turned into blessings. Follow her example and you will go from blessing to blessing.

- Listen to the good news – Christ has redeemed you from the curse. He has turned curse into blessing for you, because He loved you.
- Trust in His love. Believe that He wants to set you free and give you a better life to enjoy.
- Shut the door on everything that incurs curse.
- Open the window to the Lord's light. Look to the blood of the Covenant which brings forgiveness.

Declare that you are "in Christ" and that you are "in Christ.. a new creation" (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). Resist the devil when he tries to bring about curses over your life.. Declare to him that you are not under the curse but the blessing. rebuke him in the Name of Jesus. Believe that life in Christ is full of blessings, brought by the Holy Spirit to your spirit, soul, and body. They are blessings which lead to blessings and take you from glory to glory.

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Living Out Salvationist Charism

by Eleanor Burne-Jones

Living out Salvationist Charism
by Eleanor Burne-Jones

Waking up to a changing missional context is both painful, and a process. Here in the UK, most of the churches are communities whose collective culture is firmly fixed in modernity. An increasingly yawning gap is opening up between them and the world around them, as postmodernity takes over as the dominant culture. At the moment, most of the believers in the churches around me are people often well over retirement age. They were brought up and lived their working lives in the modernity culture that is fading away. A few churches are vibrant, growing, and attracting people from all generations. I was in one last Sunday where when the leader invited the young people to leave for their groups, half the congregation left. It was a beautiful experience to be part of such an energetic and lively gathering of believers.

Many of the conversations around me wonder how and why so many young people are connecting with a Christianity that is presented in a clear and definite way, in a propositional way, and without the nuances of critique and deconstruction so many take for granted. The reality is though, that however full the rented school hall was on Sunday for this five year old Methodist plant, we would need at least six of them in this town before ten per cent of the population was in church on a typical Sunday. We are well into post-Christendom and post-Christian culture here, even to the point now of being a pre-Christian mission field in the generations under 50yrs old.

A first thought may be that 'We all need Jesus, and that's all we need to think about.' But the way we gather, and the way we form mission teams and see ourselves as missionaries (or missionaries to use the older term, but laden with associations), and how we see ourselves and communicate that to others are important if people in different cultures are to make sense of us and decide to engage.

It took me three years of reading and conversation with other students and leaders for the penny to drop that engaging with people in postmodernity doesn't just mean tweaking a program in creative ways, or removing it from the church building and relocating it in a trendy coffee shop. This adjustment will impact how we do everything and how we think, in TSA it will impact our structures (the easy bit) and our collective culture (the difficult bit) and it will wonderfully engage and stretch our imagination and creativity. Because the changes required are so deep, I wonder if we will develop different ways of being Salvation Army in different geographical locations and even in different age groups. If this happened, what would hold Salvationists together as one people, one 'Save the World' Army mission team'? I hold it will be the charism of the Salvation Army, not a mission statement, or a vision statement.

We will have to use the word 'charism' a little differently to others perhaps, because we don't typically think of ourselves as a religious order, in which this word is more often

used. It is rather like looking at what makes someone 'Franciscan' in their thinking, spirituality, and service, rather than asking what Order they are in and what their order focuses on doing from day to day. What makes someone 'Salvationist' is a question that is asking us to describe our charism. It's about our shared spiritual heartbeat, it's about what gives us our spiritual energy and drive. It is what truly unites us, and it is far deeper, more spiritual, more intently Jesus focused, and more subtle and powerful than a mission statement.

Being united by our charism frees us to think in more flexible ways, ways that allow us to express our salvationism in incarnational living as well as come-to-us attractional church; ways that disciple everyone to go out and take part in making disciples and planting churches rather than reserving this for the elite; ways that expect pioneering ministries from soldiers and that focus on covenant rather than church 'membership' and on the dynamic and developing ministry of every soldier rather than focussing on clergy-styled officers.

My conviction, having explored the charism of Francis in a Franciscan Order and then gone out to try to live it out, is that understanding and coming to focus on our charism is key to unlocking salvationists as pioneers, as people who make disciples who make disciples, as church planters who create church planting energy that goes global, as those for whom being with and serving the poor is as natural as breathing, our way of being disciples.

Vintage UK: 'Tears'

*by Commissioner George Scott Railton
(from the Christian Mission Magazine, August 1876)*

Parting sorrows, so often repeated, and yet felt so keenly perhaps contribute more largely to the sum total of human tears than any other cause. Tears, the overflow and the relief of sorrow in some, are often the seeds of greater sorrow still in those who see them. There is a magnetic influence in tears which communicates feeling rapidly in all directions; but in addition to this the sight of tears generally leaves behind a deep and lasting impression. This seems to indicate that there is a harmony and a sympathy in human nature still, which can be wrought upon very readily and very effectively. And to us, whose main business it is to move men upon a subject of the first importance, it becomes a most interesting question how to shed the most tears, and to make others shed the largest quantity.

Of course there is feeling at times too deep and strong for tears but as a rule, tears are not shed simply because people do not feel sufficiently to shed them. Let us feel more and we shall make other people feel more too. It is impossible for the truth of God to be released without producing a great deal of feeling, and, in a world where there is so much wrong, to realise the truth must be to feel a great deal of sorrow. No doubt this is one main reason why He who was the Truth, and fully understood the Father, was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

Why do we not weep at parting with sinners out of doors? Here is a crowd of poor sinners. Some of them have just stood and have scarcely heard anything yet. We grieve to turn away from them. But those men have stood for more than half an hour. That man and that woman, without bonnet or shawl, were about when we commenced, and have listened eagerly all the time. A city crowd of passing strangers to one another and to us. We must go to our indoor service, for it is time; but oh, what is to become of these people? We have never met them all before, and shall never meet them all again. The last word, the last look, before we meet the judgement seat! As far as we and our testimony for Jesus is concerned, these men and women are dying now. Parting forever! Parting without hope of ever meeting some of them in God's presence above! Oh, why do not tears burst from our eyes ere we turn away to our procession or to walk homewards?

Is it because we do not feel real brotherly love to these poor souls? We should not like to leave our own brother or sister there in the streets amongst that crowd to live and die like the rest. We should not like our own relatives to stay behind and perish. And yet these men and women are all our brethren, for whom Jesus died, for whom Jesus weeps and pleads still. Oh, to feel it more!

Is it because we are so much occupied with our own word, the service we have held, or are going to hold, that we really do not think just then about others? If so, is not our service, to a large extent, a mere form? We are there to expressly to care for others, and yet our minds are so taken up with our own joys, our own affairs, in fact, that we

forget, at any rate, at the solemn parting moment the very object of our coming. The leader, thanking God for so good and open-air meeting, wondering why so-and-so does not sing louder, questioning whether he has given our the best hymn, and what will be the best to follow it with, praying for a good time inside, and singing aloud in joyous confidence, and the poor lost sheep he wanted to lead home all behind still at the corner there! All busy, very busy, and with their Master's business too; but too much engaged with their own things after all to look with pitying, melting eyes to the things of others!

Oh for an overflowing flood of tender love of souls! Oh, for singing choked with sobs and processions broke up through the ungovernable emotion of holy men and women, broken-hearted on account of sins and sorrows of other people! Do we wonder while we feel so little about their straying away?

If we ourselves could but see our dying Saviour, as he draws night to many a soul, and turns away sickened and grieved by their continued refusal, if we looked into those eyes that weep still, and saw the heaving of that sad breast that is pierced as ever; so always, with the keenest of sorrows, the sorrow of a thoroughly disinterested sympathy, surely those who come to listen to us would not find it so easy to get away.

May God send us all a deep, all-consuming concern for the souls of our neighbours, that shall rend our hearts, and bow our souls, and make our lives one ceaseless flow of sweetness, tenderest compassion for the wretched blinded victims of sin, whose look of horror and anguish before the judgement seat of Christ will otherwise recall to us many a listless, unfeeling prayer, and many a hard, emotionless speech.

The Army Bride by Captain Tanya Dooley

To My Lovely Bride,

I am waiting for you. I have watched you grow since you were formed. I sent leaders to guide you, teach you My ways. I gave you My Holy Spirit to empower you. I gave you scriptures to study and learn from your forefathers. I even shared with you about my Son who gave up His life for you and in three days arose from the dead.

In your early years, you had great zeal! You had passion! You were on fire! You could care less about what the world thought of you. You loved Me as I commanded with all your heart, soul, and mind. You were even willing to die for me. You wanted others to hear about my love for them. Then just as your fathers, you twisted my words so they would make you comfortable. You wanted to please man, make them feel good. Yet in the process you left me, your First Love behind. You have become so busy with having the greatest house of worship, the greatest songs, the greatest programs, raising money to attract people to hear feel good sermons. Be aware, you have left Me for the world, and because of this, you cannot recognize the enemy. Some of you don't even know who the enemy is or because My Word has been twisted, you say there is no enemy. His name is satan and he has a legion of demons with him. He is the prince of the air. He has brought you down. Yet, I have already won the victory! I have defeated him. His time is short. I am here to rescue you if you will let me. Reject his lies, submit to me, draw close to me and I will draw close to you.

Where am I in your worship? I don't want feel good music, I want you. I want your life to be a daily sacrifice of worship. I want your praise and adoration. If you seek Me, the blessings will follow. If you seek Me and My heart, My Spirit will dwell in you and your house of worship. If you seek Me first and foremost, You will not need anything else. You are my temple. You are my dwelling place. I want to be welcomed but you have pushed me out with busyness and pride. I am a jealous God. I want your full devotion. I am not interested in your buildings, programs, and songs. I am interested in You. The rest will fall into perfect harmony out of your love for Me.

Come back to Me. I miss you. I want to clothe you with My righteousness. I want to lavish you with my love. I want to be in you and you in Me. Dine with Me. Abide with Me. I love you! You are precious to Me. I have wept over you. I have rejoiced with you. I want to hold you in My arms forever. Please don't reject Me again. Leave the world behind and follow Me. I am waiting for you. Come to Me.
Love, Your Loving Husband, GOD

Introduction: Who is the Church?

With so many denominations and religious sects, it can be quite confusing as to who the church is and should be. Catholics, Episcopalians, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Pentecostals are just a few denominations that we hear about on a daily basis. Then there are Buddhists, Muslims, New Agers, Wiccans, and many other "religions." Today the main focus is on self and being your own god. God is no longer the focus of our nation or world.

The church is not just the place that we go and worship. It is not a denomination or religion nor just a place for weddings, funerals, baptisms, masses, confessions, Easter, Mother's Day, or Christmas. When all is said and done, the building is just rubble and dust.

The church is "Christ's bride." "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:9b). When a sinner comes to the Lord, repents of his sin, is saved and baptized with the Holy Spirit, he becomes an heir to the kingdom. He becomes a part of the church, the body of believers, who love the Lord and is loyal to Him. "Theologically, we have been discovering anew that the Church is not an appendage to the Gospel: it is itself a part of the Gospel. The Gospel cannot be separated from that new people of God in which its nature is to be made manifest" (Stephen Neill).

From the beginning of time, God shows His love to His people time and time again. He gave Adam a mate. He gave Noah and his family a chance to live. He gave Moses the ability to set the people free from the Pharaoh's captivity. He gave Joshua the courage and strength to possess the Promised Land. He gave Solomon wisdom, David friendship, Daniel favor, Isaiah His presence. He made Israel His chosen people. When they went against Him and worshiped idols, He still loved them, and out of discipline, He allowed them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years and be taken into captivity. Through the prophets, God told Israel of His love. How, He was there from the time they were conceived to the time they died. He loved them so much that He gave His only Son. Yet they rejected Christ and the door was then opened for the whosoever, Jew and Gentile alike to have this gift of love, Jesus Christ, for free. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

After Christ ascended into heaven, He sent His promised Holy Spirit as recorded in the book of Acts. This was the beginning of what we call the church today. Yet once again, just as our forefathers have done, we have become so in love with the world, we have lost sight of what we should be. Programs, money, doctrines, and self gratification have become idols. "The chief danger of the Church today is that it is trying to get on the same side as the world, instead of turning the world upside down. Our Master expects us to accomplish results, even if they bring opposition and conflict. Anything is better than compromise, apathy, and paralysis. God give to us an intense cry for the old time power of the Gospel and the Holy Ghost!" (A B Simpson). We need to regain our focus and be a force to be reckoned with. We need to be prepared to meet our Groom as the

bride of Christ. Let us explore His Word and with His help see what He called the church to be: Christ's virtuous wife.

Chapter One: The Marriage Vows

The guests have arrived. Anticipation is in the air. Pews are lined with bows and beautiful colors. Candles are burning, the organ is playing. The men are lined at the front with the groom waiting nervously. The music slows. The first one to come in is a small girl throwing flowers onto the floor. Several other ladies follow close behind. Then with tears in eyes, everyone begins to rise. The long wait has come to a close. The march begins and the bride makes her way down the aisle. She is beautiful, radiant, dressed in white. There can be no flaws today, for this is the day she has always dreamed of.

She arrives to meet her groom face to face and the vows are then exchanged. Their love for each other is made known publicly. This would be the beginning of the rest of their lives. The preacher pronounces them man and wife. The kiss seals this claim. Then hand in hand they meet the crowd as Mr. and Mrs. She takes his name.

In the Old Testament, festivities before a wedding lasted a week. The bride and groom were dressed and treated like a king and queen. The father of the groom selected the bride, but she had the right to refuse him. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). The groom agreed to pay the father of the bride a price to compensate him for the loss of his daughter. Jacob gave up fourteen years of work in order to have Rachel as his wife (see Genesis 29:15-30). The father gave a dowry for his daughter; a gift of money, slaves or land. During the betrothal, the groom prepared a home for the bride and the bride kept herself busy. When it was time for the wedding day, the groom came to the bride's house to escort her to his home.

There is much preparation today for weddings. The chapel, officiator, presider, music, dress, tuxedos, meal, wedding party, place for the honeymoon, etc. all have to be chosen with much thought. But before that preparation even begins to take place, there has to be a proposal. The groom to be chooses his bride, the one he wants to share the rest of his life with. She has a choice to join him or refuse his proposal.

God chose us before Creation. "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). It is our choice to choose a relationship with Him or refuse His invitation to everlasting life. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). God has given us the proposal. He is asking us if we will join in an intimate relationship with Him.

The church will find fulfillment when Christ comes back for her, just like a bride anticipates her husband. "And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the

water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). As a bride looks forward to her wedding day, are we really anticipating Christ's return? Is our heart's desire to be filled with Him, to be bathed in His love, to be overflowing with His living water, to be lavished by His kisses and embrace? "My lover is mine and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16).

Oh church, if we could just see how much He loves us. "The love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses but men" (A. W. Tozer). Once we realize His love for us on a personal level, it will be easy to say yes. Yes, Lord, I accept Your proposal. Yes, Lord, I love you. Yes, Lord, I am Yours and You are mine.

The first response that we need to give is accepting Him as Lord and Saviour. When we do, we then become heirs of the kingdom of God. He accepts us as one of His own. "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). The basic purpose of marriage is found in the bond it creates and the context for mutual growth it provides (Revell p. 694). Out of this growth in our love for God, we will begin to reject our former things and put on Christlikeness. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

When we begin to change, we will seek more of Christ and He will give more of Himself to us. We will be transformed. This transformation can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit who resides in us. When we get to the point that we realize that we are nothing without Christ, and allow Him to have everything, the real journey continues as a man and wife.

The Hebrew word for husband was Baal meaning lord or master, possessor, owner, and obtainer. How interesting that this was the name given to the Canaanite deity that many began to worship. The word also implied ownership rather than relationship. What is our Baal? What replaces our time that should be spent with God? God wanted to be called "ishi" meaning "my husband, being revered and adored by his wife." He wants an exclusive relationship with Him. Anything else is considered adultery.

The husband was required to have weekly sexual relations with his wife but could not force her. He was to supply her with food and money whenever he went on a journey. He could not move from one part of the country to another without his wife's permission. He could not forbid his wife to visit her parents even if they lived far apart. Christ tells us that the primary responsibility of the husband is to love and cherish his wife. As the head of the marriage, the husband is to imitate Christ and accept responsibility for his wife's nurture. "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

The wife's duties were to grind flour, bake, launder, cook, make the beds, spin wool, and nurse her children. She could also operate a home workshop, sell its products and keep the income. She was to prepare their children for school. She had the privilege to discipline the children. She also cared for guests. Christ wants wives to be submissive to their husbands. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22).

Christ gave us this example on how the marriage should work, to represent how the church should be as the bride. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:25-31).

Will we allow God to be our "ishi"? "Marriage is not a fence to hem you in; it's a guardrail to protect what's inside" (Zig Ziglar). God loves and cherishes us. He wants to protect us in His embrace. Our love and honor for Him will be evident in how we submit ourselves to Him. He is the head of the church. May we be presented as holy and virtuous to Him.

Chapter Two: Love for her husband

The Virtuous Wife

Who can find a virtuous wife?

For her worth is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband safely trusts her;

So he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good and not evil

All the days of her life. (Proverbs 31:10-12)

Being virtuous is being the husband's crown. The crown represents deity, honor, respect, worth and royalty. "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband..." (Proverbs 12:4). She brings honor and glory to him.

Ever wonder why a woman takes so long to get ready for a simple outing? There are many jokes about her, but she is making sure that she looks good for her man. When she comes out of the bathroom with her hair styled, her makeup on, her sweet perfume, she makes her husband quite happy. He will never admit it but inside he is bursting with pride. He looks forward to going out with his beautiful woman that he loves so much. He feels like a king, lord of the castle. She is his crown.

Most crowns have precious jewels encircled in them. The wife is valued more than any precious jewels, more than rubies. She is of noble character. "Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD" (Proverbs 19:14).

This woman of God is one that can be trusted. Her husband has no concern of her committing adultery, gossiping, lying, or stealing. He is secure in their relationship. They are faithful to each other. With her beside him, he lacks nothing. He does not need to gain another love for she makes him complete.

Trust comes out of submission. God's Word says that women are to be submissive to their husbands as the husband is submissive to God. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18).

Submission is realizing that the woman is the weaker sex and God has placed the man as the head of the household. The man is there to protect and provide for the woman. The woman in turn shows respect to her husband by submitting to his leadership.

The virtuous wife does her husband no harm. She only wants to do good for him. She makes sure that her relationship to him is priority. Her love for him cannot be denied. She does everything she can to please him until the day she dies.

Christ is our husband. "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth" (Isaiah 54:5). Our total allegiance should be given to Him. We are to be His crown. He adores us. He loves us. Our lives should bring honor and glory to Him.

When we go to "church" meetings, are we there looking what we can get from God or are we looking at how we can please Him? Everything we participate in as a corporate body should bring honor and glory to God. Much preparation is brought to programming, and usually it is to make people feel comfortable and have the sense of feeling His presence. Yes, we should seek His presence, but most importantly, we should seek His heart. What makes God pleased with our worship? He wants us to worship in Spirit and in truth. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Worship does not just happen on Sunday morning or whenever the doors are opened at our place of fellowship. It is a daily relationship with God our Maker, Lover, and Friend. Everything we do and say should be out of worship for Him. We cannot worship God and curse our enemies the next day. "But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so" (James 3:8-10). Our words have power and we need to be very careful what comes out of our mouths.

Can God really trust us? If we are gossiping, lying, cursing others, and not being real in our relationship with Him, then the answer is no. No, He cannot trust us. A virtuous wife is trustworthy. She does nothing to make her husband question her love and loyalty to him. What consumes our time? Family, friends, television, computers,

internet, cell phones, work? If Christ is our priority, He should be the first person we think of when we wake up and the last when we lie down. He should be a part of our conversations. He should be the very air that we breathe.

In order for us to be effective as a church, we need to come to the realization that we are nothing without Christ. He is our cornerstone. He is our Rock. He is our Everything. When He sees that He has our total devotion, He will give more of Himself to us.

The marriage is consummated through sexual intercourse. The two flesh become one. Once this happens, there is no room for adultery. The more the woman gives to her man, the more he is satisfied. He knows that she loves him, and thinks that he is everything to her.

Jesus wants us to have intimacy with Him, not sexual intimacy, but an intimacy that ordinary men cannot fathom. He speaks of this in John 6, in a beautiful depiction of partaking of His flesh and blood. "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven — not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever'" (John 6:53-58). Jesus wants us to be in daily communion with Him. The more time we spend with Him getting to know Him better and more intimately, the easier it will be to worship in spirit and in truth. He will then be able to trust us.

Christ does not want just a part of us. He wants all of us. So often we come to Him and give Him an area of our lives and leave the rest till "later". Why wait until He comes back to take us home to really experience Him? He wants to give us more than we can ever imagine, but so many are too scared, afraid of the unknown. We have heard the old adage that God cannot be put into a box, that is true, but God cannot move further in our lives unless we allow Him. He is a gentleman. He will not force us to love Him and accept Him. It is our responsibility to seek Him. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

After living with each other, married couples can finish each other's sentences, share common goals, and have a similar mindset. As we give of ourselves to God, we will be changed. We will be transformed. Naturally, we will become more like Him. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). If we want to please God the rest of our days, we need to be serious about our relationship with Him. The more time we spend in His Word and in prayer, the more we will know Him. It is not enough to have knowledge about God. We need to get know Him intimately. "True religion is a union of God with the soul, a real participation of the

divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or in the apostle's phrase, it is Christ formed in us" (Henry Scougal).

Church, Christ is to be our priority. He is to be the first one that we devote ourselves to. We cannot minister to our family, our neighbors or our enemies unless we are devoted totally to Him. Nothing else matters unless we are completely, helplessly, and hopelessly in love with Christ. When we get to that level of love, the things of the world will not matter. We will want to do everything to please our lover. Christ is our Beloved, and we are His. We are His crown.

Chapter Three: Love for Her Household

*She seeks wool and flax,
And willingly works with her hands.
She is like the merchant ships,
She brings her food from afar.
She also rises while it is yet night,
And provides food for her household,
And a portion for her maidservants.
She considers a field and buys it;
From her profits she plants a vineyard.
She girds herself with strength,
And strengthens her arms.
She perceives that her merchandise is good,
And her lamp does not go out by night.
She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
And her hand holds the spindle. (Proverbs 31:13-18)*

The sun is blazing. Her oldest daughter is sweeping the floors. Her son is carving a chair in the backyard. She looks up and wipes the sweat off her brow. The baby is crying, he's hungry again. It just seemed like minutes ago he nursed. She pulls him close to her bosom and nurses him again. With one hand under the baby, she bends to scoop more dirt and plants wheat. The hearth is hot and the smell of fresh bread is beckoning. The baby stops nursing. She lifts herself up, goes into the house to prepare supper.

The family then eats and goes to bed. She is on the side of her bed praying, thanking God for the many blessings He has given her this day. She goes into the living room near the spindle, and begins to sew a new shirt for her husband. He had snagged the good one on the boat earlier while catching a large net full of fish. There is a pot of stew cooking for tomorrow on the fire. Once the shirt is done, she goes to bed only to wake up at the crack of dawn to start breakfast and pick the grapes off the vine to sell for wine.

How many of us today would keep this type of schedule, especially in the extreme heat of summer? In Biblical times, women were expected to take care of the household, the chores, making clothes, cooking, etc. She nursed the children, taught them before sending them to school, and disciplined them. Husbands that had a wife that was hardworking were considered blessed.

Here we see in Proverbs, that the virtuous wife did not mind getting her hands dirty. She made sure that everyone in the house was taken care of. She did not look out for herself, others came first. She even worked to have money for her family. The time of day did not matter, just as long as the family was fed, dressed, and had a place to lay their head to rest at night.

This woman is special. She is not afraid to work. She provides for her household. She girds herself with strength. She is a light that does not burn out. What a lot this says to us as the church.

We are very good at looking beyond the church trying to win people into our congregations. However, if the spiritual level is dead or suffering, outsiders will not want to be a part of the problem. We need to focus on the issues inside the church before going out. How do we do this?

First we need to not be afraid to work. This is not just the pastor's job. Everyone in the church needs to work together. There needs to be a sense of unity. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1:14). If there is no unity, the work is spent on solving problems rather than winning souls to the kingdom. We are to seek the things of God, not the things of man. Sometimes it means getting our hands dirty. Issues may need to be dealt with that are hindering the work of the Spirit. At times, it may seem like everything is wrong, but if our priority is Christ and the Presence of God in the church, we need to work at it. As said in the previous chapter, we should be seeking to please God and what better way than to be working for Him.

The early church was very good at caring for each other. When one was sick, another would bring food to the family, and then laid hands upon them and prayed. When one had sinned, they were prayed over and forgiven. "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:13-16). If only we could get back to this practice today! Instead of putting each other down or holding onto bitterness, we need to love and look out for each other.

We need to gird ourselves with strength. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"(Philippians 4:13). Our true strength comes from God. His strength is

made perfect in our weakness. We need to take the time alone and corporately to worship and seek Him. We are in a war. Satan will do anything he can to destroy the body of Christ. He is afraid of a church that is strong. But with God's strength, we have the victory. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:3-6). We need to understand that the main cause of most church conflict is our ignorance of the enemy and not having the strength to fight him. We need to be an army that will stand up and fight.

If we know that someone is in need of prayer, pray. Don't share it as gossip. Don't belittle them. Pray for them and then encourage them. If one falls, pick him up and dust him off. If others see us united and strong, they will more than likely join us.

We need to be a shining light. No matter what time of day or night, we need to be reflecting Christ. He is our light and salvation. With Him, there is nothing to fear. "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalms 27:1). Our conduct will show whose we are. What do people think when they see us individually? What do they think when they see us as a church? What image are we portraying?

Are we taking care of each other? God wants us to have Him first and foremost, but then He also wants us to look out for each other. Where do we stand?

Chapter Four: Love for Others

*She extends her hand to the poor,
Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.
(Proverbs 31:20)*

They are your next door neighbors, friends, and those you pass by daily. They live pay check to pay check. Food is scarce and the clothing is tattered. Most mock them saying that they need to work harder and stop being so lazy. But that's it, they do work, they struggle trying to make ends meet especially with the rising costs of living.

There is a great need. People are hungry. People are lonely. They are children without parents. They are homeless. What are we doing about them? Are we eager to laugh and point the finger? Or are we willing to stretch a hand?

Everyone knows The Salvation Army as a helping hand to the poor. There is no question that they excel in this area. However, what about the church in general? Are the members of the body of Christ willing to help those who are lonely and less fortunate? It goes beyond the food lines and social service offices. Are we willing to give up our own food so someone else can eat? Are we willing to give our clothes and

shoes to someone who has none? Are we willing to give of our tithes in order for the work to go on?

As the Bride of Christ, we are to be willing to help the poor and the destitute. The Founder of The Salvation Army, William Booth, wanted to make sure that they were taken care of, he stated..."While women weep as they do now, I'll fight; while little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight; while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight- I'll fight to the very end!"

God calls us to reach out. Once we are spiritually alive, we can reach out to the lost and down trodden. They will see Christ in us and they will want to be a part of our church. We may never know who we are reaching out to. A familiar contemporary Christian song asks the question, 'Who will be Jesus to them?'

Jesus talks about this in the book of Matthew. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:34-40).

The more you love someone, the more you become like them. Christ wants us to be more like Him. We will give to those in need as He gave. This goes with the two commandments that Jesus gave... "Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

God must be first and foremost in our lives, then our family, then the church.

Chapter Five: Clothed In Righteousness

*She is not afraid of snow for her household,
For all her household is clothed with scarlet.
She makes tapestry for herself;
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells them,*

*And supplies sashes for the merchants.
Strength and honor are her clothing;
She shall rejoice in time to come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom,
And on her tongue is the law of kindness.
She watches over the ways of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.
-Proverbs 31:21-27*

When asked who the greatest influence in their life was, most would say it is their mother. A mother takes care of the household, raising the children, and working, whether it is in the home or outside the home. "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life" (Abraham Lincoln).

The woman portrayed in this portion of scripture is a mother and a wife who is not afraid of work. She takes care of her household, and herself. She works to raise money. Strength and honor clothe her. When she speaks others listen because she is a woman of wisdom. She pleases her husband and is his glory. He is known throughout the city gates. The elders of the land respect him.

The wife is to be the glory of her husband. She reflects her husband's leadership in the family. They are one in body and in spirit. She should carry herself in such a way that would make him proud. She is his right hand. The wife's duty is to take care of her husband and to love and nurture the family. She is to be kind and teach her children the ways of the Lord. She is to only speak good things from her lips, not gossip or slander. When others see the way she lives, they see a reflection of her husband as the head of the household.

Christ is the head of the household known as the church. The way we live is a reflection of our relationship with Him. "We are called to passionately embrace our God at every turn, through every minute, and in every way possible" (Author Unknown). The more that we are in relationship with God, the more we will reflect him in everything we do. We will be busy working for the Lord. It will come naturally as we grow closer to Him. We will not worry what comes against us; we know that our hope is in Christ. He is our shield, our protection.

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.' Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday" (Psalm 91:1-6).

Strength and honor are attributes of the Holy Trinity. "Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and gladness are in His place" (1 Chronicles 16:27). If we are in right relationship with Him, strength and honor will clothe us. We will want to do everything

and anything to please Him. This is how we should live... "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. **and those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another" (Galatians 5:16-26).

We are to die to self and be alive in Christ. Everything we do and say should mirror Christ. Our words should uplift, not tear down. The book of James teaches us a lot about the tongue. We need to be careful about everything we say because we can never take our words back.... "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so" (James 3:5-10).

What we say reflects what is in our hearts. Words are powerful. We have a choice of how we speak. Are we going to speak positively or negatively. Others can tell a lot about us by our words. We can ask God for wisdom to take control of our tongues. God wants us to bless others not curse them. He wants us to speak truth not gossip. A question to think about, would we share the same gossip or negative words with Jesus? "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Colossians 3:12-13). God wants us to be positive and encourage each other. We cannot show others tender mercies or kindness if we are slandering them.

What are we reflecting, ourselves or Christ? "I think that most Christians would be better pleased if the Lord did not inquire into their personal affairs too closely. They want Him to save them, to keep them happy, and to take them off to heaven at last, but not to be too inquisitive about their conduct or services" (A.W. Tozer). Oh, church, why are we so afraid? If we want others to see Christ, we must start reflecting Christ in everything we do and make Him known throughout the nations. Let us let go of ourselves and be totally changed and radical for Him!

Chapter Six: Rewards for The Faithful

*Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praises her:
"Many daughters have done well,
But you excel them all."
Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,
But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
And let her own works praise her in the gates.
(Proverbs 31:28-31)*

The winner for the Miss Universe pageant is... Ladies from around the world have spent hours, months, even years preparing for this moment. The dresses, speeches, and talents had to be picked, practiced, and perfected. How many really do remember the name of the one who won the pageant? They are often forgotten as time passes by.

Mother Teresa, Princess Diana, these are names that have become a part of us. Why do we remember them but not the ones who have put forth all the effort being the most beautiful and talented woman in the world? They possess a beauty that goes farther than outward appearances. "For attractive lips, speak words of kindness. For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people. For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry. For beautiful hair, let a child run her fingers through it once a day. For poise, walk with the knowledge you'll never walk alone." These women did just that. Their legacy will live for generation after generation.

In the Bible several women made a difference in how they lived and they each received a reward for their faithfulness. We can learn from them. Rahab, Ruth, and of course Mary are just a few. Rahab was a prostitute who kept the spies safe in her house when they were sent into Jericho. She hid them when the authorities tried to find them. Because of her obedience, she and her family were spared when the walls of Jericho came down. Everyone else in the city was killed. She also became part of the lineage of Jesus.

"Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, 'Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.' So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, 'Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.' Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, 'Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.' (But she had brought them up

to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof) (Joshua 2:1-6). "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace" (Hebrews 11:31).

Ruth had lost her husband in a terrible famine and moved with her mother in law, Naomi despite her pleas to go back to her home town (Ruth 1:1-15). "But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16). Because of her loyalty, she was remarried to Boaz and became a part of the lineage of David and Jesus. "So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.' Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, 'There is a son born to Naomi.' And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David (Ruth 4:13-17).

As we all know, Mary was the mother of Jesus. History tells us that she was just a young teenager but she was faithful to God and found favor with Him. She was visited by an angel who told her that she was going to conceive a child. Imagine what she must have thought. She even questioned the angel to how this could be possible when she had not had any sexual relations especially since she was only betrothed and not yet married. "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!' But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.' Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.' Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1:26-38).

These women did not have fortune or fame. They may not have even been the most beautiful, talented women in history. Yet they possessed the one thing that God wants from His children, a heart that is devoted to Him. He doesn't care what we look like or what talents we have, though they could be useful for the building up of the church. He

is interested in our hearts. He will pour out His blessings upon us and we will be known as His children if we follow after His heart. "A Christian is a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, a hand through which Christ helps" (Anon). If you honor Christ in your heart, He will be honored by your life.

If we are willing to surrender our everything, the blessings will be found in our everyday life and the greatest reward will be the time spent in eternity worshipping at His feet, the enemy has been made His footstool and we will dine with Him at the Wedding Feast. "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.' And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' And he said to me, 'These are the true sayings of God.' And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'" (Revelation 19:6-10).

We need to remember who we are in Christ. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people called out of darkness into His marvelous light. We have royal blood in us. We are princes and princesses. When we were saved, we became an heir to the Kingdom of God

What an honor! Rahab was honored by having her family spared in the fall of Jericho. Ruth was honored by being able to remarry. Mary was honored by being the mother of Jesus Christ, God's only Son. We are honored by being called God's children! We have been adopted into His family. We will also have the honor of being at the Wedding Feast when He returns.

If we remember who we are, then wearing the clothes of righteousness will be our desire. We will be humbled and Christ will be exalted. We will become nothing and Christ our everything.

Conclusion

As the bride of Christ, we need to have Him as the first and foremost in our lives. He is our husband and we are His bride. He is the head of the household and we are to submit to Him. This comes through faith, (Forsaking All I Trust Him). We need to let go of all idols, anything that can come between Him and us. "It is easy to die for Christ. It is hard to live for Him. Dying takes only an hour or two, but to live for Christ means to die daily. Only during the few years of this life are we given the privilege of serving each other and Christ... We shall have heaven forever, but only a short time for service here, and therefore; we must not waste the opportunity"(Sadhu Sundar Singh).

We need to take care of our family, the body of believers within our congregations. When we are faithful to them, we are able to reach outwards to our community bringing them into the fold. The body of Christ needs to grow. If we want the church to grow, we need to reflect Christ in everything that we do. "The true man of God is heartsick, grieved at the worldliness of the Church... grieved at the toleration of sin in the Church, grieved at the praylessness in the Church. He is disturbed that the corporate prayer of the Church no longer pulls down the strongholds of the devil" (Leonard Ravenhill). Prayer is the key in the church to go where Jesus wills us to go. Prayer is communication between us and God. It is vital to the health of the church. There cannot be a relationship without communication. Studying God's Word, gathering together in worship and testifying to His grace are also important to the growth of the church.

The church begins with each of us individually having Christ as our cornerstone. If we are not growing in our personal daily relationship, we can harbor a divisive spirit that can hinder the work of the Spirit within the corporate body. If we want God to bring restoration and revival to the church, we need to be in daily communion with Jesus and in tune with the Holy Spirit.

The devil would love to destroy us. We need to have our spiritual armour on ready to take our stand against the enemy's schemes. In knowing who we are in Christ we have the authority to bind up the enemy. Jesus is Lord and will have the last say, sending the devil to spend eternity in hell. Jesus has won the victory. Let's walk in it and live it! There is a reward for us in heaven if we are but faithful to Him. Keep marching forward in the fight and let us be found as Christ's Virtuous Wife.

Poem: Fed Up

by Captain Tanya Dooley

I wonder if I am the only one that feels this way:
Frustrated and angry about the injustices of this world.
Why do so many suffer violence and rape,
Being sold into sexual slavery
Whilst sex and crime is rampant on our tvs?
Why do children starve to death
Whilst we have more than enough food to eat?
Why do workers in the field have to be paid pittance
Whilst we aren't willing to do that kind of labour
But get paid much more for sitting in an office?
Why should thousands be dying and going to hell
Whilst we are complaining about what music
We should sing or what time the service will end?
Why is that Jesus said 'If you do it to the least of these',
The least of these isn't good enough
Because they are not like us?
How is it that we can say we love our neighbour but
Sit comfortably in our pews gossiping about them?
Why is it that if one preaches fundamental truths from God's Word,
We reject them because they offend?
Then again, why is it so many preach
Sugar coated sermons , tickling ears
Whilst the people are spiritually dead?
How can we say we love God but
Don't care about preserving His creation?
Why can't we believe that the power of Jesus
Can do miracles, heal, and set prisoners free,
But we can believe the rubbish in our newspapers and magazines?
Where has our faith gone?
When will God's people stand up and fight?
When will we let God be in control
Instead of us controlling Him?
When will the world see Jesus living in you and me?
I am fed up!
I am going public!
I am determined!
This means war!
Souls need salvation.
The saved need power.
The powered need discipling.
The disciplined need armour.
The armoured need to battle.
God's people need to stop hiding,

Stop being like the world, and
GROW UP!
Feed on His Word,
Drink of His presence
And live daily in prayer.
Then and only then
Can the injustices of this world be tackled
By believers who love God
And live out loud daily!
Are you fed up?
Are you with me?
Then let's do something about it!

The General's Keynote Address at International Leaders Conference: one Officer's Response

by Major Stephen Poxon
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I am not a surgeon, but were I, I would be delighted to see before me, for diagnosis, our beloved Salvation Army, carefully, reverently and gently laid bare, so to speak, by General Shaw Clifton.

Delighted because his expertly forensic analysis of The Salvation Army is timely (perhaps, even, overdue), deeply methodical, and, obviously, soaked in prayer. These points in themselves are all immensely reassuring. There resonates throughout the address a robust yet sensitive awareness of the Lordship of Christ (which, in itself, generates tremendous spiritual confidence and humility), coupled with sensible optimism and a willingness to accept and implement important action if and when the prognosis demands it.

This is a thoroughly modern address rooted in Army history against an ancient Scriptural backcloth. Our modernity is crucial, but so too our need to remain aware whence we have come, and how (and why) the Lord of history has graciously and faithfully enabled our progress. The General achieves great success in bringing these three key elements of Army life - the modern, the historical, and the Scriptural - to the fore, and reminding us of the importance of such balance.

This is, too, of necessity, a document with a distinctly international flavour, reflective of the important relevance of General Shaw Clifton's service on five continents. This all amounts to good evidence of Providential care and concern (and, hence, authentic grounds for optimism). So too the range of subject matter, which is generous and inclusive - almost to the point of it representing a ridiculously ambitious and impossible mandate were it not for encompassing, abounding grace that constantly undertakes on our behalf, after the manner of Song No. 579 in our (current!) Song Book.

The Salvation Army, worldwide, continues to swim (march), quite deliberately, against various tides, and is repeatedly made only ever stronger by such swimming and marching. The tides of secularisation and the (apparent) abandonment of holiness teaching by some denominations (the latter being, incidentally, one of the fruits of the former - the two are bedfellows) are swelling, and want to intimidate, but we do not forget Commissioner Dalziel's words: 'Dominions rise and perish, the mighty have their day, but still thy word abideth, it shall not pass away'. Our denominational semi-isolation on the point of holiness does not matter.

The Conference themes listed should keep us healthily busy for years, and it is highly commendable that the address is able to accommodate huge issues of global Salvationist concern as well as matters that might reasonably and courteously be categorised as important minutiae, to the detriment of neither. This happy marriage should not be overlooked or undervalued, for if attention to detail plays any part in the

wellbeing of our Movement, then it warrants appropriate mention in such a paper, but not to the extent we ever forsake our largest visions. Without the formation of large visions, we perish (cf. Proverbs 29:18), but we may, by the same token, need the reminder that the avoidance of perishing is usually worked out in the trivial round and the common task. Experience shows us this, at any level of Army life and practice. Within that reminder, there lies a nugget of warm encouragement. It behoves us, therefore, to polish up and perfect the trivial and the common, hence their legitimate and welcome inclusion here.

Were I to take any slight issue with the address (and I am mindful that I have only seen the abridged version), it would be with regard to two points:

Firstly, I feel the General has been overly cautious (perhaps overly polite) in seeming to understate the role of The Salvation Army as ecclesial entity.

This, I realise, may well be an ecumenical courtesy, but even if it is, I would still very gently suggest the pressing need for a mindset amongst Salvationists - the renewal of our corporate Salvationist mind, as it were - that might eventually release us from the semi-chronic, creeping, lurking, crippling inhibition of an inferiority complex, and for that reversal in our thinking to be heralded from the top (i.e. the Office of the General).

This complex has so often served, or threatened, to shackle us, and to make us lose heart when radical evangelism has been our gift, only to swap that gift for what we might generally refer to as good works, or at least, if not that, then tepid outreach.

In part, we may have exchanged (probably unwittingly, and almost certainly reluctantly) our presentation of Calvary's epic for the consolation prize of ecumenical involvement by virtue of our presentation of charity.

Worse still (despite the hugely valid place of good works), we have even begun, in some quarters, to accept that they and they alone represent our only mature contribution to any ecumenical witness. This passive acceptance of our invented default status has almost certainly infected officer personnel as well as non-officer membership, and could actually amount to a spiritual crisis (at least, a crisis of identity).

I personally searched for, and would have valued, a specific word from the General to redress this cruel, phoney and mocking imbalance, and to bolster our self-belief as ecumenically-worthy evangelicals. Pro rata, on the ecumenical scene, The Salvation Army is, in many ways, quite literally, a world leader, yet we continue to endure (and even secretly nurture) an unnecessary paucity of confidence in what we are as an entity; hence our retreat, often, into secondary matters.

The irony is that, fundamentally, our sister churches very often admire, or even quietly envy, our stances and our unique attributes, and are thirsting for the calibre of vanguard leadership and pioneering theological initiatives of which we are still capable.

Secondly (and I am almost certainly skating on the thinnest of thin ice here), I searched, equally fruitlessly, for any explicit mention of those of us who serve outwith senior leadership, and are probably always likely to do so.

I do of course fully realise that this address was given to senior leaders from around the world, hence its numerous references to those who hold positions of divisional or territorial leadership. Hence, too, its exclusive content and bias. I accept that, but not, to be honest, without the mild concern that those of us who constitute the rank and file of officership (e.g. corps officers) quite possibly represent the majority. Without the likes of us (I have served as a corps officer for fifteen consecutive years), there would be no need for divisional or territorial commanders.

Whilst the General's pastoral letters are acknowledged as a brilliant and caring pastoral idea, and whilst they are read with interest and appreciation, it remains that it would be easy to digest this particular address without feeling included. That is definitely not so, I realise, but I think I will stand by my personal observation on that point - which is, I concede, subjective.

Nothing in that observation is intended to show or even imply disrespect towards the General or any senior leader, nor to engender same. I simply make it in the spirit of discussion and as a small, quiet contribution from 'the coal face'.

In conclusion, I think of Song No. 648 in our Song Book, set to music by Brigadier Richard Nuttall. General Orsborn's marvellous words could well serve as part of a daily Office of Prayer for Salvation Army officers, and especially, in the context of General Clifton's Keynote Address and this response, the lines of verse one:

*Where lowly spirits meet
Instant in Prayer,
All at one mercy seat,
One plea to share,
With thee we intercede,
Leader of those who lead,
Heart of our Army's need,
Make us thy care.*

We owe our General, and all our leaders, our support in prayer. Most of us know little or nothing of the burdens and demands of senior leadership (nor its joys and rewards). If we, wherever we serve, and in whichever capacity, fail to arrive at the Mercy Seat on behalf of our leaders, the Army is poorer for that. So too, are we.

Time for Action

by David Lumm

Before I say what I have to say, first let me share my inspiration for this article. The inspiration comes from Jesus' commands to the disciples (and us) in Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:1-5 and also from the example of the early Church in Acts 2:1-4, 42-47. Jesus commands: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20; all quotes NIV) and then, before He is taken up to Heaven tells them, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." We see the early Church do this and "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Sounds good, doesn't it?

I believe our identity as Salvationists is made up of three key aspects, which can be viewed a little like embedded Venn diagrams. As Christians we are part of the outer group, this is the largest group that contains all the others - this is representative of the Body of Christ. Within the first group is a smaller group made up of the Holiness movement; The Salvation Army is one of several groups born out of the Methodist Holiness movement. Finally, as Salvationists we are in an inner circle, a subset of the total Holiness movement. Looking from the outside in, our "Christian Identity" is made up of these three features: Salvation, Holiness and The Salvation Army! This is important as our identity requires certain things from us - to be honest what I'm talking about isn't just for Salvationists, but our calling requires this of us even more so! It's not that some Christians can ignore Jesus' commands, rather that we have been called to live and breathe His command aggressively for the rest of our days.

I had to go and mention calling, didn't I? The fact is that God calls all of us. Calling isn't something for officers or missionaries, it doesn't just apply to monks and nuns. People might say "calling is for the priesthood", as if only some people are specially set apart. Holiness is for all of us, therefore all of us can be (and should be) set apart! In The Salvation Army we believe in something called "the priesthood of all believers" - that means that we're all priests, all ministering to a flock and we all have the same access to God. In the old days it might be a priest that spoke for God, now it can be any one of us. So you see, if we're all priests, we're all called. Tough.

Jesus gave that last command before He went up to Heaven: Go and make disciples! He says a few other things in His last moments on Earth, but this is the very last command He gives just before He is taken up. He wasn't just talking to the men and women gathered round Him on that hilltop. We don't know how many people were gathered around Jesus that day, but I think it's easy to say with some confidence that it would have been nigh on impossible for that group to disciple the whole world in their lifetime. The only way it could work efficiently is if each of them discipled a couple of people, who in turn disciple a couple more and on and on like that. In more recent

history the Church has started to think that one should disciple the many and we've become more like recipients rather than participants.

No, that's not how it's supposed to be. Go. Jesus says go and make disciples. The instruction is to each and every one of us! If you are saved you have *something* to teach somebody else. We never stop growing, we never stop learning. Being a disciple means we learn from someone else. That teaching and learning starts with the truths of the gospel: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; God is mighty to save and unwilling that any should be lost; God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son so that none should perish, but all could have eternal life. If that's all you feel equipped to teach, then teach it. Go and make disciples!

Here we are talking about mission, let's just take a look at the mission statement of The Salvation Army. There are actually a few things bouncing around and I forget which is the official one these days, but my favourite was where John Gowans summed up our mission perfectly with one simple short sentence: "To save souls, grow saints and serve suffering humanity". The first two (saving souls, growing saints) just reaffirms the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, the latter adds to it, defining The Salvation Army's specific calling in the world.

To be honest, I think within the Salvation Army we've lost our fighting spirit a little bit. If we're at the scene of a battle (think men in armour more than modern warfare) The Salvation Army has retreated back to camp to celebrate its victories and forgotten to come back out and fight. We've been having our festivals, and enjoying fellowship, but we've neglected the battle raging around us, all the while letting other Churches that don't have our calling to fight in our place. You know what? It's time for action! It's time to fight! Is this an Army? This is The Salvation Army, pushing out Salvation in front and leaving Holiness in our wake. Is this an Army? Then where are its soldiers? Will you go? Your commander-in-chief needs you!

God is a giver of gifts. He loves to give to us and He's infinitely generous, but He doesn't spoil us and He never gives more than we need. He only gives us just enough of what we need for a particular purpose before giving us the next gift. He likes to know that we're dependent on Him! This all starts when we are in Sin - God provides the gift of salvation. Once saved He provides the gift of the Holy Spirit. Once we're fully kitted out with Salvation and Holiness he calls us, then He equips us to live out that calling! Each gift highlights a new need and in turn God responds with another gift. It becomes a constant cycle of gift-calling-gift.

In Isaiah 55 God says to Israel (a promise now open to us too): "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food. Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David. See how I used him to display my power among the peoples. I made

him a leader among the nations. You also will command nations you do not know, and peoples unknown to you will come running to obey, because I, the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious."

God is saying "Come and receive what you need. Now go with my power behind you!" Looking back at our reading we heard Jesus' final instruction was a mission statement, 'go and make disciples'. The followers had another instruction to follow before that, though. Jesus had met with them and said 'wait'. The long term mission is 'go' but the immediate instruction is 'first wait'. The followers had to be equipped before they could follow. Before they could fulfill their ultimate mission to go and make disciples they had to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. You know what? Once they received the gift, God lived up to his promise and made them glorious! That last passage ends "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Oh boy, He made them glorious! They follow their calling and the rewards are great. When they were in step with God's calling, doing the right combination of going and waiting, the church was born, and boy was it born quick!

In Matthew (17:20) Jesus says to His disciples "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." A little bit of faith and nothing will be impossible. He has made you glorious! We have the early church to prove it. We have the early Salvation Army to prove it.

Katie Booth-Clibborn, daughter of William and Catherine was taken to Paris by her mother at the age of 22 and left there with a small group of young women to introduce "L'Armee du Salut" to France.

Within a week she was "sworn at, jeered at, and pelted with stones and mud ..." But her incredible tenacity and sincerity of purpose gradually won through. They nicknamed her "La Capitaine" at first ... and then "La Maréchale" (the Marshall). The first meetings in Paris were in a dingy building in a rough quarter, where, as the police sergeant remarked, "they have got in that crowd half the cut-throats of Paris". Yet these hardened men were dazzled by the innocent and dedicated zeal of the young ladies pressing upon them a gospel which their religion-hating culture had denied them. After no result from exhausting effort a Christian lady advised Katie to return to her mother in England. The reply came, "If I cannot save France, I can die for it!" Young Catherine won her first convert by going to an old washer-woman at the back of the meeting, hugging her and telling her how much she loved her. With the assistance of a dozen other young women under her remarkable leadership – ever in the forefront of the battle for souls – the Maréchale planted the Salvation Army also in Switzerland, Belgium and Holland.

This isn't just faith, this is faith with teeth! This is powerful stuff. They had faith, they followed a calling and they were blessed. God made them glorious! These days we seem to think that it's OK to just "believe", we don't necessarily have to act on it. More than that, some people think they can be Christians and never be with other Christians.

It's not solitary and it's not idle. James wrote about faith and action in his letter, in James 2:14-18 (from the Message paraphrase)

"Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense? I can already hear one of you agreeing by saying, "Sounds good. You take care of the faith department, I'll handle the works department." Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove."

Faith requires action, and action born out of true faith is confident and passionate. To paraphrase Catherine Booth, "show people anything less than whole-hearted spirit-filled world-changing Christianity and they will spit on it and turn their backs". Real faith, real action is the sort of stuff that will make us glorious! God says go, so don't just meander off in that general direction, get going! Go!

William Booth said, "While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight; while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight, I'll fight to the very end!" That's fighting talk, that is! That's passion. That's faith in action! He lived up to his promise and boy did God make him glorious! Well done, my good and faithful servant!

God isn't just a God of gifts. He is a God of impossible gifts. Just look at how He treated the Israelites escaping Egypt. When they found a river that was impossible to cross blocking their way, God made it possible. When they were hungry in the desert and thought their survival was impossible, God made it possible. When they were thirsty in the desert God made water come out of a stone. Impossible?

What about all those excuses you're thinking of, all those obstacles stopping you from living out your calling? Are they bigger than an uncrossable river, more drastic than a distinct absence of food, more impossible than finding water in a desert? Is the almighty God not big enough to handle your problems? If God is calling you, why shouldn't you follow? Has He not proven Himself able? Is He not sufficient? Are not all the promises of God sure? God has surely proven Himself trustworthy! Take a look back over your life, when has God been anything less than all-mighty? If God calls, He equips! Go!

You want excuses? God called Abraham to leave everything he knew in pursuit of an unknown land filled with promise. Abraham left his comfortable life in order to receive an incredible blessing from God. Where would we be now if Abraham had not followed. Abraham was 75 when he started that journey! He was 100 when he finally got the

promised son. Abraham had plenty of excuses and (frankly) not a lot of faith, but God made him glorious!

Sometimes what God asks of us doesn't make sense. It looks like He's asking something silly, or something impossible. We think there are too many reasons not to do it. We should do it! If God asks us to do something we should trust him and do it. Just go! There is a story of a man who felt called to buy some milk, he was unsure but only that Sunday had the pastor preached about listening to God, so he bought the milk - he thought, if the worst comes to the worst, he could use it himself. God asked him to drive through a rough part of town late at night, despite it being out of his way, he was in no rush so he decided to go. He then felt God ask him stop the car and knock on a particular door - now this was getting tough, it was time for real faith. He could hear shouting and a baby crying... "This place, Lord?" he asked... But the feeling in the pit of his stomach only grew stronger. Yeah, it was this place. He knocked gingerly, hoping that the people inside would just think he was weird and close the door on him.

A woman came to the door, holding a baby and just looked at him in silence. He slowly held up the milk and said nervously, "I have a gift for you"... the woman ran back into the apartment screaming and shouting in some foreign language and then a rather large man came back with her, they were both speaking in the strange language really fast. The man weighed up his options, did he have time to run for it? He didn't and anyway, he was frozen to the spot. The large man reached the door and began to cry. In broken english he asked, "Are you an angel?" "No," replies our man, now somewhat confused. "I thought maybe you were an angel," the larger man says, "because you have answered our prayers." It soon emerged that the baby had been crying for some time because it was so hungry; the family could not afford any food and didn't know anyone in the city. They had prayed for two days solid to a God they didn't really know and suddenly an unknown man had brought them food. The first man left there crying himself, utterly confused and utterly blessed, the family were left with food *and* faith. God had spoken, the man had listened. A little faith had gone a long long way!

You know what, sometimes God will ask us to do things that are strange, or maybe aren't what we're used to. He may ask us to do things that we don't feel capable of doing or don't think is our place. The man in our story was not a milkman, but God used him to deliver milk. Does that make sense?

God asked Noah to build a giant ship and load it with animals. Despite everything Noah thought he knew, despite every gut feeling, despite what the neighbours might say he did it. He had no choice, really. He loved God, he trusted God and he felt honoured and blessed to have been spoken to by God - could he then turn around and say "Nah, I ain't the man for this, sorry most high God". So can we refuse our mission?

There's always the question of how we understand our mission and/or how we hear God's voice. Some people will be lucky enough to hear an actual voice, but most will have feelings, they'll hear things from other people, perhaps God will give you an audible message via someone else. It may not happen so suddenly and it may not be

so drastic as the way God called Abraham or Noah; God can build something deep into your heart. He can insert a passion deep into your soul. That passion is there to equip you to do His work. What are your passions? For the early church, they waited as they were instructed and The Holy Spirit led them. William Booth was already preaching but felt moved to work with a particular group of unchurched people. His spirit was moved to respond to a specific need.

For me and my wife, it was a combination of passion in our hearts, messages from other people and even timely sermons. Lucy has a built-in passion for Cornwall, I have a passion for spiritual warfare and we both have a passion to work for God. Someone gave us a word from God, others confirmed our passion to tackle darkness head on and we heard sermons encouraging us to get on and do what God was asking of us. Over a period of about a month our thoughts and feelings, and all these messages started to come together - leading us towards a single vision: Go to Cornwall, go where there isn't an Army, somewhere by the sea and spread the gospel and tackle spiritual darkness. Over time we were able to collect the basic elements of our mission into a modified form of the mission statement above: To push back the darkness and claim the land for God; To Save Souls, Grow Saints, Train Warriors and serve suffering humanity.

So to recap, you get saved, you get called, and then what next? Test it. Read the Bible, pray, speak to other believers you trust and ask them to pray. Ultimately, you need to follow the model that I have highlighted, which is get a calling that is in-line with your commission (if it isn't, reject it because it's not of God), wait to be equipped and then "Go"! One thing we found important was that it's OK to test God. Gideon tested God and God wasn't angry. If you're not sure, ask for a sign, but be specific! God is able! He's also endlessly patient! When it comes to actually going, the cost may be high, but the rewards are so much more valuable. Remember that God will make you glorious!

I believe that there is a question hanging in the air for each and every one of us and it requires an answer! God is asking, whom shall I send? Will you go? Will you go in the strength of the Lord? What is God asking of you? What mission does he have for you? Perhaps today He is saying "Go!" or perhaps He is telling you to wait to be equipped. Maybe today God's message for you is as simple as "I AM SUFFICIENT!" Whatever the message, don't ignore it! If He is asking you to go and do something, I encourage you to try saying yes to God - it'll be exciting!

Unleashing the Apostolic Genius in The Salvation Army

by Captain Andrew Clark

It seems pretty safe to say that there is probably more conversation going on now about the nature, shape and 'feel' of Salvationism than possibly ever before. The fragmentation away from 'first love principles' have left us with a Salvation Army which isn't always encouraging, certainly in the context in which I am placed.

I have personally been convinced that The Salvation Army is something akin to a sleeping bear. When roused and fully awake, its potential is tremendous. I've also been one who has been deeply inspired and motivated by the Salvationism of our founders. I've long been convinced that there was something in our earliest days as a movement which are key to our regeneration as a missional movement, a permanent mission to the lost.

It was in reading 'The Forgotten Ways' by Alan Hirsch that I began to get a really clear sense of what it was about primitive Salvation Army that was so potent. It's actually something that is common to many movements, especially Jesus movements within the Christian Church over the whole course of its history. Alan Hirsch calls it Apostolic Genius...that is, certain elements that are deeply ingrained in the spiritual DNA of Jesus movements. He draws his conclusions specifically from studying the early church and the present day phenomenon of the under-ground church in China. As I read, I started to explore how his principles applied directly to the missional DNA of The Salvation Army.

My history lecturer at Bible College once said that 'we cannot know who we are and where we are going, unless we understand where we have been.' The thing is, when we look at issues regarding who we are as Salvationists, we often fail to go further back than Booth, recognising that what was in him and all that The Salvation Army came to be came from somewhere else. It's all in Jesus.

Let me share each of Hirsch's elements of what he calls, Apostolic Genius, the stuff that fuels and shapes authentic missional movements.

1 Jesus is Lord

The thing that set Judaism apart from the rest of the religions of its day was the nature of God himself. This is the God who declared in the Shema, in Deuteronomy 6:4, that 'The Lord is God, the Lord is One.' The implication of this was that God was the God of every aspect of life. This explains the somewhat confusing nature of Leviticus! If God was God of everything, then he was God of everything! For Yahweh, there is no sacred/secular divide. The whole of our being is under his Lordship.

As we move into the New Testament, we have a full revelation of God in the form of his Son, Jesus. The concept of the Lordship of Yahweh over everything becomes focussed. We are invited to understand God through the Lordship of Jesus. The central war cry of the early church was 'Jesus is Lord!' This wasn't just a statement of

theology, it was the heart of the Hebraic mindset that understood that spirituality and religion were not compartmentalised to certain sections of life. It is the ultimate distillation of our faith. The whole of life was to be ordered under the Lordship of Jesus. Everything was spiritual. It is the essence of faith, after which everything else is marginal.

The early Salvation Army no doubt had the Lordship of Jesus at its heart. Catherine Booth wrote: *"And what is our work? To go and subjugate the world to Jesus; everybody we can reach; everybody we can influence, and bring them to the feet of Jesus."* (Catherine Booth, AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY)

More spectacularly, she said at another point, *"The decree has gone forth that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and that He shall reign whose right it is, from the rivers to the ends of the earth. I believe that this Movement is to inaugurate the great final conquest of the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Catherine Booth, in John Rhemick. A NEW PEOPLE OF GOD.)

Not only did Catherine believe in the centrality of Lordship of Jesus in faith, but she affirmed his was an organising principle, something which gave reason to our coming together in the first place.

We see this Lordship expressed in various ways with the primitive Salvation Army. Consider uniform wearing at work, the desire to take faith into the workplace. Look at our theology of sanctifying the ordinary and our theology of the sacramental life as opposed to the sacramental rituals. Revisit the construct of The Salvation Army flag with its reminiscent 'Yahweh our Banner' (Exodus 17:15) and the desire of William Booth to see it flying from every public building. One need look no further than our response to societal problems! This was a robust desire to see the Kingdom come in every sphere, and in every area of life, temporal and spiritual. Today we call it wholistic; a term we were doing before we knew the term.

Is Jesus the Lord of The Salvation Army today? Do we divide our work, service and ministry into sacred and secular? Are we passionate about bringing the world to the feet of Jesus to the extent that everything we do is organised around this principle? And what of our social work? Does Jesus claim of Lordship find itself at home at the heart of all we do in that sector? As a whole, does our ministry look like an expression of the whole ministry of Jesus as we find in the pages of the gospels?

2 Disciple making.

Inherent in the concept of disciple making is the concept of the Holy Spirit imparting to us the grace we need to become, in essence, little Jesuses to our world. The early disciples ate, breathed and slept 'Jesus'. Their task as talmidim, followers of their Rabbi Jesus, was to become like him in every way, to somehow begin embodying all there was about him in terms of practical expression of his spirituality as well as simply the teaching he gave. The Hebrew disciple wanted to be so close to his masters footsteps

that the dust from his feet would be continually in his face. The implication being that as the Rabbi moved, so did the student.

We notice that Jesus' method of discipleship and teaching was very pragmatic. Yes, there were times when he sat them down and taught them, but much of the teaching was 'on the go.' He recognised that the best way to get these guys to think like him, was to first teach them to act like him by practically 'doing the stuff.' The thinking came out of the action. Look at the example of Jesus sending his 72 disciples out to heal the sick and proclaim the Kingdom in Luke 10. It was at this point that he was saying to a group much wider than his initial 12 'Look...you've seen me do it, you know the score, its your turn.' They obey, they respond and faithfully go only to return with a extreme excitement of all they had accomplished. Right off the buzz of their missional accomplishment, Jesus enforces their experience with the theological back-up to explain what had just happened.

When we delve into the history of our own Jesus movement, our own discipleship training mission, we see early Salvationists in the cut and thrust of active discipleship. Catherine Booth explains the discipleship emphasis like this: *"There is no record since the Apostles of a body that has so encompassed the Divine idea, all its members being taught to make all other objects and aims of life subservient to the one grand purpose of preaching the Gospel to every creature and striving to win every soul with whom they come in contact to its salvation"* (Catherine Booth. THE SALVATION ARMY IN RELATION TO THE CHURCHES. p31,32).

Hinting herself at the discipleship making element of Apostolic Genius, she reflects on the contrast between discipleship in the Army and in other churches of her day. The fact that the soldier saved at the drum was pinned with an Army badge, called upon to testify straight away to their new faith in Jesus and in uniform serving Jesus at the front line the next week is proof enough of this dynamic. In Scotland, we have a phrase that goes something like 'its better felt that telt' – in other words, learning comes from experience, not from simple accumulation of knowledge.

As we have developed as a Salvation Army, we've taken up the very discipleship practices that Catherine Booth was protesting against. We She said that *"these people stand in these paths of traditionalism and routinism just where their forefathers left them occupying all their time admiring the wisdom and benevolence and devotion of their forefathers instead of IMITATING THEIR AGGRESSIVE FAITH, and MARCHING ON TO THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD."* (Catherine Booth. PAPERS ON GODLINESS, emphasis hers.)

If ever there was a danger for The Salvation Army, it is this very same thing. It is imitation that is the key, seeking to live out the aggressive and apostolic faith. Not necessarily of Booth, or Railton or any other such name that played a part of throwing the mission of The Salvation Army round the globe, but in the ways of Jesus that threw the Christian faith worldwide; the same passionate commitment to living the life of Jesus that has permeated modern-day China with Christians.

Authentic discipleship can never be about either membership or about simply what we do at the Army. We must ask ourselves, 'what exactly is the everyday, practical requirement of the follower of Jesus?' How transformed would our world be by a group of people who covenanted to flesh out in real terms the life of Jesus in every area of life? What would our officer training look like? How would this approach change our teaching and training methods for soldiers and local officers?

It strikes me that if there is to be a future for The Salvation Army, our 'members' must cease to be members and begin passionately run after Jesus to see what he is doing in our day in the lives of our communities and learn from him, by his Spirit and grace within us, what it means to be a little Jesus in that immediate context. I wonder if we will have the courage to take our discipleship learning outside the classroom and hit the road with our crazy itinerant Rabbi.

3 Missional-Incarnational Impulse.

We saw that a crucial element of discipleship and discipling was a thrusting of ourselves into the world. For Jesus followers, it was the same. The concept of 'sending' is central to the mission of the New Testament. Jesus was sent by the Father, the Spirit was sent by Jesus into the context of our lives so that we could then be empowered for witness 'to the ends of the earth.' But like Jesus, that 'sent-ness' involved becoming one with that which he was sent to. It involved a deep and intimate engagement with the world.

Hirsch describes the missional-incarnational impulse of Jesus like and good preacher and offers us some 'Ps':

- *Presence* – Jesus became flesh and blood, 'moved into the neighbourhood' and developed a close relationship to us. He didn't ship out to Heaven every night.
- *Proximity* – He dealt with every strata of society, from Chief Priests, Pharisees, Roman Legionnaires all the way down to tax collectors, prostitutes and 'sinners.' He had table fellowship with people in ways that got him a reputation.
- *Powerlessness* – Jesus was the ultimate servant of God. He led from a position of rejecting all the conventional methods of leadership of his day. He didn't come as a king, priest or prophet, but he was, in the absolute truest sense, King, Priest and Prophet! Jesus influence and authority was spiritual rather than institutional.
- *Proclamation* – Jesus announced the Kingdom as well as demonstrating it. He was at odds with the St Francis of Assisi who thought words were optional. You can't take away proclamation of the gospel away and remain true to the gospel.

It is clear to see that the early Salvation Army understood missional-incarnational impulse. The Army invaded and became an integral part of every slum and palace it could get into. In terms of presence, whilst Booth's Darkest England scheme was happy to 'get people out', here was a commitment first of all for the Salvationist to 'go in.' The stories of Booth-Tucker in India are legends. With regards to proximity, William Booth's funeral was attended by queens and prostitutes.

Even with our autocratic rank system and slightly tyrannous William Booth, we find words like this from the likes of Railton: *"We are an army of soldiers of Christ, organised as perfectly as we have been able to accomplish, seeking no church status, avoiding as we would the plague every denominational rut, in order perpetually to reach more and more of those who live outside every church boundary.* (George Scott Railton, HEATHEN ENGLAND) We resisted the temptation to approach mission from the lofty position of the churches, but instead was happy to be the object of ridicule from the churches who though we 'dumbed-down' the glorious body.

In the field of Proclamation, we took need say very little. We were born in the streets and the gospel was broadcast in every genre possible, as we all know.

For today, the questions are clear. Are we sufficiently engaged with the lost? Are we fully participating in the life of our world? What company do we keep? Is our leadership and 'position' as Christians expressed in service? Do we assume our position in society? Are we willing to stand up to the requirement of the gospel to proclaim the Kingdom in season and out of season? Are we still creative in getting the message out? Are we a movement accessible by 'the people' we are sent to serve and win?

4 Apostolic Environment

William Booth was, without a doubt, a man with an apostolic ministry. His visionary leadership, along with that of his closest encouragers, launched a spectacular expansion of the Christian faith around the world. Its a legacy that continues today as our current General, Shaw Clifton, launches us into more and more nations.

Essentially, an apostolic environment (where all 5 Ephesians 4 ministry roles are in place) is one that calls out and develops God's people, and releases them and sends them into their part of the mission. Apostolic ministry creates the background, the bedrock, for other ministries. Apostolic ministry establishes true faith communities. It gives birth to the prophetic ministry which ensures that the people remain faithful. This then gives birth to evangelistic ministry, calling people to the one true God. With souls being won, shepherds are called into play. Once saved, the teaching ministry leads to fuller disciples who then continue the ongoing work. The balance must remain if the movement is to be kept vibrant, 'sent' and advancing.

The Salvation Army has inbuilt a ministry model that most churches today can only hope for. In its primitive form, the local corps setting successfully leashed all five ministry roles. In the corps officer, you could have a mix of any of the five, but her main role was as apostolic overseer, steering the mission of the soldiers. We see Generals, Territorial Commanders, Divisional Commanders 'talking up' our mission to win the world for God. We have our prophets calling out the word of God, speaking prophetically to the world and the church on issues such as social justice, poverty, sexual slavery, the call to holiness, and on the spiritual nature of the sacrament.

Back at the corps, the evangelists were leashed in a variety of forms, directed by Corps Sergeant-Majors galore. The Recruiting Sergeant team, including the Band and

Songster Sergeants, as well as Visiting or Ward Sergeants were mobilised in pastoral care as well as in the teaching ministry along side Corps Cadet Guardians, Sunday School Guards and the Corps Officer.

We all know the story. I contend that The Salvation Army worked because the whole corps (read 'body') was mobilised to their particular ministry. It was honouring to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and it created an effective fighting force.

Today, to a large extent, our officers have become one-man-bands. The simple call is for each officer and soldier to discover, develop and function within his or her own gifting. As officers, we fall into the trap of trying to embody all five ministry roles. Either that, or we believe that our sole function is as pastors. We need total mobilisation.

As officers, are we teaching our soldiers to be warriors? As soldiers, are we engaging in the mission dei where God has placed us? Is the Salvationism you experience a creative culture where you are encouraged and released in ministry? If its not, what can you do to encourage change? Are the five-fold ministries alive in your setting?

5 Organic Systems

This is about appropriate structures for metabolic growth. Phenomenal Jesus movements grow precisely because they do not have centralized institutions to block growth through control. Here we will find that remarkable Jesus movements have (1) the feel of a movement, (2) structure as a network, and (3) spread like viruses.

Now, this is an issue for us in The Army. At its best, our military approach was to harness efficiency. By this, we cut out layers of beurocracy such as committees and boards. It was swift and efficient. However, like any man-made system, or even any interpretation of any sort of church leadership structure, it can become an end in itself, instead of a means to an end.

Today, however, is a different picture. Our structures don't allow for flexibility, spontenaity and all the other 'ity's' you care to mention. We sometimes structure ourselves out of any felxible mobility.

Hirsch notes, not without significance, that Jesus movements are viral networks rather than command structures. This doesn't mean to say that there is no structure of leadership, rather it is flexible. We need a structure that can support potential growth, not stifle it.

You see, when I reflect on the leadership of the early Salvation Army, aside from the sometimes control-freakery of the likes of Wm Booth, we see something interesting. The 'Army' thing gave direction and purpose, but when we consider some of Booth's strategies, we see they are something akin to organic structures.

Listen to what he said:

Beginning as I did with a clean sheet of paper, wedded to no plan. willing to take a leaf out of anybody's book. above all, to obey the direction of the Holy Spirit. We tried various methods and those that did not answer we unhesitatingly threw overboard and adopted something else.

And while the conclusion was the military model, Primitive Salvationists were quick to borrow from other systems:

We believe that all rational measures, all the measures which men use with respect to the world, if they are lawful and good, may be transferred by the sanctification of the motive, by the transposition of aim, to the Kingdom of God. Yea, we are bound to it. (Catherine Booth. THE SALVATION ARMY IN RELATION TO THE CHURCHES)

Change, adaptation, fluidity...they were there. It also strikes me when seeing this in reality. Take the stories where Booth would get stories from some distant lands saying that people had started the Salvation Army, could he send an officer. Now that's exponential and virus like growth.

I've heard more modern and recent comments similar. I think it was General John Gowans who noted that he still often had people write to tell him that they had started the Army somewhere and that some of his Salvation Army Commissioners in some African territories could never quite pinpoint how many corps they had at any given point because soldiers would simply go off and start something where they were.

Now, that's apostolic genius at work, all enabled by an organic organising principal.

We all need to work at thinking about how we help, or hinder, the growth of our movement by what we think is our right to sanction or not sanction. Can we get to the place again where we structure for growth and spontaneity?

6 *Communitas*, not community

Communitas is something very different to community. I guess you could even say that *communitas* is community in action, and community at its best. The example of what happened after the terrible Tsunami in Asia at the end of 2004 is an example of world-wide *communitas*. Everyone banded together and did something to make a difference in the midst of the devastation.

Biblically, think of Abram setting out with his family into a new adventure, David and his band of men, the apostles and the early church all banded together not just as a community, which they were already, but community with a purpose! The life of Jesus and that of Paul were out there on the edge lives, dangerous existence and living for the sake of the cause.

Commissioner Phil Needham, in his great little book, *Community in Mission*, writes that "mission is the dominant and controlling passion of the church and that every aspect of the church's life ought therefore to be seen as contributory to mission in one way or

another.” In Hirsch’s words, mission is the ‘organising principle’ of the church. Captain Stephen Court expresses this as ‘the fellowship is in the fight’ highlighting that whilst it can be good to ‘hang out’ with Salvationist friends, the deepest form of togetherness and purpose comes with fighting the fight together, as a Band of Brothers...and Sisters!

William Booth said it like this: “A Salvation Army Corps is a band of people united together to attack and Christianise an entire town or village.” Fellowship in the fight, indeed.

This appears to me to be a significant issue in our Army today.. More and more we take on the forms of churchliness, with our services, members and committees. Officership has become a priesthood, and so many ‘members’ have ceased to be militant soldiers. In our primitive Army, people were saved and straight away attached to a brigade and engaged in the fight.

How do we begin to develop *communitas* from our communities? How can we take steps of faith out into the world in which we are called to work which will create the necessary dynamics for effective mission? How can we re-position ourselves in the new battlefields of the 21st century?

It appears to me that we have in our missional DNA and heritage everything needed for explosion into all that God has for us. One of these days, God’s Army will claim its birthright and become a force to be reckoned with once again.

I’ll let Booth have the last word.

“When The Salvation Army ceases to be a militant body of redhot men and women whose supreme business is the saving of souls, I hope it will vanish utterly’.