

JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

JAC Online

Issue 78, April - May 2012

Copyright © 2012 Journal of Aggressive Christianity

In This Issue

JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

Issue 78, April - May 2012

Editorial Introduction page 3

Major Stephen Court

Salvation – Our First Name page 4

Lieut.-Colonel Richard Munn page 4

Life and Death Page 11

Lieut. Xander Coleman

Do It Now page 20

Commissioner Wesley Harris

The Wild Gospel and Living in Deserts page 21

Major Danielle Strickland

Farewell to Carol page 24

Captain Claire Watson

Islands of Irrelevancy page 26

Commissioner Wesley Harris

The Seventh Sign: I Am Resurrection and Life page 27

CSM Aaron White

Essentials of Salvationism page 30

Commissioner Wesley Harris

In Defence of Indoctrination page 32

Editorial Introduction

by Major Stephen Court

Here we go again. You never know when one of these articles will take on a life of its own and be referenced in training colleges around the whole world. JAC78 lines up along with the previous 77 issues (available on archive) to provide orthodox, edifying, and provocative contributions to Aggressive Christianity.

Lieut-Colonel Richard Munn, the principal of the International College for Officers and a member of the International Doctrine Council, writes confidently and instructively on SALVATION: Our First Name – The Salvation Army's Theology of Justification.

Lieutenant Xander Coleman, new corps officer in UKI Territory and corps and outpost pioneer, writes about Life and Death: An exploration of Jesus' 'I AM' statements in the gospel of John.

Commissioner Wesley Harris, former territorial commander of New Zealand and Fiji Territory and our stalwart JAC contributor, exhorts us to DO IT NOW.

Major Danielle Strickland, corps officer in Canada and Bermuda Territory, writes a Lenten article about the Wild Gospel and Living in Deserts.

Captain Claire Watson, corps officer in Australia Southern Territory, gives a public FAREWELL TO CAROL, a poignant story of friendship, evangelizing, and addiction.

Commissioner Harris, former territorial commander of the Scotland Territory, writes about Islands of Irrelevancy.

CSM Aaron White, who leads 614 Vancouver corps, is the author of CellTalks, salvo curriculum used in many corps in at least three continents (to sign up for the free weekly small group discussion guide, see <http://corpscads.org.au/home/>). Here's a taste of it, prepared for you with the Five Ws – welcome, worship, the Word, witness, and wealth, called The Seventh Sign.

Essentials of Salvationism is a perennial topic of discussion for those in our movement and Commissioner Harris, former territorial commander of Canada and Bermuda, gives it the proper treatment of a wise old Salvationist.

Finally, we're arguing In Defence of Indoctrination, a short piece inspired by a 1978 children's book.

And that is JAC78. Please read it, share it widely, think about it, discuss it, and apply all the good parts. And, stay close to Jesus.

Salvation – Our First Name

by Lieut.-Colonel Richard Munn

Introduction

*“Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
(Ephesians 6:17)*

‘You have your mission and your dynamic written into your name!’ asserted an astute ecumenical colleague to John Larsson, retired General of The Salvation Army.¹ Yes indeed, Salvation is our first name.

Salvationist historians note that commensurate with the 1878 name inauguration, a veritable new lease of life was unleashed. “From that moment its destiny was fixed - the whole organisation was dominated by the name” records official biographer W.T. Stead. William Booth, The Founder, would agree, announcing, “We are a salvation people – this is our speciality.”²

In light of the above it does seem that an equally strong soteriology should complement this robust salvific identification. Numerically that is indeed the case, with five of the eleven Salvation Army cardinal points of doctrine fixed firmly on salvation – almost fifty percent of a terse, muscular core of beliefs.

What follows is a basic survey of the first three of these *soteriological* doctrines, outlining their essence, surrounding theological influences and consequent missional impact. Necessity constrains, however, that we must first look at Salvation Army *hamartiology*.

Sin

“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”” (Psalm 14:1)

We need to ask that most basic question – the one posed by blasé secular culture: ‘What do we need to be saved from?’

*We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.*³

¹ John Larsson, ‘Saying Yes To Life’ Salvation Books, The Salvation Army, International Headquarters, London, May 2007, 206

² *The Salvationist*, 1879

³ Salvation Story, Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine, The Salvation Army, International Headquarters, London, 1998, ix.

The Salvation Army – Doctrine Number 5

Universally inherent in our human condition is a drive for improvement. This pervades the totality of our existence – physical provisions, intellectual development and psychological wellbeing. It also includes our spiritual self-understanding. However, centuries of history prove that cycles of political and military ventures invariably prove wanting; and while socio-economic improvement alleviates much suffering, ultimately people remain unfulfilled. The result is what Dr. Stephen Harper calls ‘bootstrap theology,’⁴ a vain attempt at self-help. Even that most esteemed endeavour, improved education, fails on the moral plane. ‘All we get are better-educated criminals’ wryly notes General Shaw Clifton.⁵

How accurate, then, the trenchant observation of Nazarene theologian W.T Purkiser:

“The human predicament, then, is the reality of sin. This is foundational in Christian theology. Among the four great focal themes of the bible and of revealed religion – God, man, sin, and redemption – sin is seen as the ugly intruder.”⁶

Salvationists include in their hamartiology the doctrine of ‘Original Sin.’ The reference is centrally inherent in the 5th doctrine. Included in the temptation and sin narrative of Adam and Eve are significant theological truths. Sin is not originally part of our essential human nature, but rather intrusively violates us.

The immediate consequences of sin were alienation from God, enslavement to Satan and a loss of divine grace, through which all people become subject to physical and moral corruption. Salvationists see this ‘depravity’ in all its most heinous expressions – violence, abuse, addictions and profound despair. At the heart is a cry for help, a plea to return to Edenic harmony and intimacy with God, the Creator.

This depravity is inherited from our first parents. It is a complex matter. The law of heredity to our total being would seem to provide the most applicable insight.

“It is the law of organic life that everything produces its own kind. The law of like producing like does not refer exclusively to the biological features of man’s existence, but also embraces psychological qualities. [...] That we should resemble our parents and the whole human family psychologically and morally is no more mysterious than that we should resemble them physically.”⁷

General Frederick Coutts succinctly observes:

⁴ Stephen Harper, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, *Spiritual Formation of the Minister*, Spring 1983

⁵ ‘Monday Evening at The Citadel,’ Hartford, CT, Spring 1995

⁶ W.T. Purkiser, *Exploring Our Christian Faith*, Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, MO, 1978, 200

⁷ Purkiser, *op cit*, 215

“Men need a Saviour to save them from themselves. That is why the Father sent the Son into the world. And just as there is ample evidence of man’s need of a Saviour, so there is ample evidence that Jesus is the Saviour they need.”⁸

Yes, we need salvation; profoundly so. Jesus – ‘Jehovah saves’ – is the divine embodiment and sole remedy for our predicament.

Prevenient Grace

“We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

Salvationist soteriology is theologically Wesleyan-Arminian. As such it acknowledges the doctrine of *prevenient grace* – ‘the grace that goes before.’ This asserts that all salvation – emanating from even the faintest human inclination – initiates from the heart of God. This doctrine is important. It affirms the sovereignty of God, and yet allows for human will. In our brokenness and rebellious, stubborn sin we can still hear the gentle call of God to ‘come home.’ Even the slightest proclivity towards God results in multiplied grace.

“This prevenient grace is comprehensive, including all human desires after God, all drawings of the Father, all convictions of the Holy Spirit. If we yield to these impulses toward God they increase more and more.”⁹

A crucial principle is established here: Salvation is all of grace.

Atonement

“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17)

At the heart of Salvationist soteriology is a clear, strong, classic statement of atonement. It is the fulcrum of the eleven doctrines. It contains the energizing dynamo for mission:

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

The Salvation Army – Doctrine Number 6

Commissioner Andrew Miller echoes the passion of many Salvationists in vowing with conviction: “I would rather die than give up this article of my faith.”¹⁰

⁸ Frederick Coutts, *Essentials of Christian Experience*, London, Salvationist, 1969, 5

⁹ H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Cuthbertson, *Introduction To Christian Theology*, Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, MO, 1946, 263

Note the explicit use of the past tense that Jesus *has made* an atonement for sin – emphasising his complete victory and finished work at Calvary. This ‘finished work’ of Christ is a work done *for us* in order that the saving work might be done *in us*. It is a *relational* truth and graces those who come to know Christ himself. Just for added emphasis Salvation Army literature brusquely notes, “Just to believe the doctrine is not enough.”¹¹

Christus Victor

“Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Colossians 2:15)

There is one particular and additional note to be added. As befitting an army, the forceful theory of atonement espoused by Gustav Aulen is especially pertinent for us. Here Golgotha is understood with a dimension of cosmic conflict between the forces of righteousness and the powers of evil. The concerns of Calvary are of such supreme consequence that they must be attained victoriously, at whatever the cost to the Almighty himself.

Christ – *Christus Victor* – battles against the evil powers of the world, the “rulers of the power of the air” under which people are in bondage and suffering. In his triumph God reconciles the world to Himself. The heart of the theory is that God himself is the One who suffers most in the conflict, yet emerges victorious.¹²

The ministries of incarnational self-denial and identification with suffering are ones embodied by many Salvationists around the world. The terrain is often harsh, the casualties are real and the victories are costly.

The ‘Army’ is not a metaphor.

Tri-fold Action

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30)

What follows next is a remarkably clear and pragmatic Trinitarian triad:

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.

The Salvation Army – Doctrine Number 7

¹⁰ Andrew Miller, USA National Advisory Board, 1989

¹¹ *The Doctrine We Adorn*, The Salvation Army, International Headquarters, London, 1982, 61

¹² Purkiser, *op cit*, 234

Simply put, when we return to God in repentance and express faith in Christ we discover the liberating transformation of forgiveness. Sometimes the order or emphasis may differ: We place trust in Christ; in so doing we return to God; in that process we are 'reborn' by the Holy Spirit.

There is a paradox in our relationship with God that the twin graces of justification and regeneration address:

"Justification speaks of a decisive change in our relationship with God through faith in Christ, from alienation to acceptance. Regeneration speaks of the life of the Spirit imparted to us, the ongoing work of grace in our lives in which we must co-operate."¹³

This 'new birth' brings unparalleled joy and peace. We now have restored communication with God. We enjoy an assuring confidence in God's presence and realize ourselves to be part of a new humanity.

Missionally-speaking this is often expressed in the 'personal testimonies' of the congregation during Salvation Army worship around the world. These are often profoundly moving times in which doctrine comes alive in the day-to-day stories of people. Anyone is invited to share, and in so doing 'The Word becomes flesh.'

Justification

"It is with your heart that you believe and are justified ..." (Romans 10:10)

It bears repeating. The essence of Salvationist soteriology is intensely personal – cherishing individual relationship with Jesus Christ within a community of mission. Theologically speaking this means including the *relational* benefit of reconciliation in addition to the *legal* transaction of justification.

We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

The Salvation Army – Doctrine Number 8

There is also a certain confidence inferred here – an assurance of salvation. New life in Christ need not be diffident. As an overall scheme of thought this is sometimes referenced as 'Wesleyan optimism' – a positive, buoyant salvation. The doctrine references the 'witness of the Spirit,' the calm certainty referenced by Paul that 'the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.' (Romans 8:16)

At the very heart of God's salvific action in Christ is a changed relationship between ourselves and God. Despite our alienating sin, God declares us righteous. The action

¹³ *Salvation Story, Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine*, The Salvation Army, International Headquarters, London, 1998, 81

touches that universally primeval need – we are accepted and loved. We do not deserve such grace, and we certainly cannot earn it, or repay it. Like the returning prodigal we have unbounded access to the Father's welcome and warmth. We are fully reunited into the family of God.

The relational portrait of the home is one of several picturesque atoning images of salvation referenced by John Stott:¹⁴

The Shrine where Christ's sacrifice appeases the wrath of God – 'Propitiation';
The Marketplace where Christ buys us back and sets us free from the captivity of sin – 'Redemption';
The Law Court where Christ becomes our substitute and accepts the sentence of our guilt – 'Justification';
The Home where Christ restores broken relationships for those who are alienated from God the Father – 'Reconciliation.'

Personal salvation transfigures missionally into 'the priesthood of all believers.' This is essential Salvationism. Ecclesiologically it means a preference for the designation 'soldier' rather than 'member.' Philip Needham writes:

Soldiership means that *there is no room for passive membership*. [...] Members can be passive or active; they may do no more than belong on the rolls. Soldiers cannot only belong; they are either fighting or maintaining readiness for battle – otherwise, they are not really soldiers.¹⁵

Conclusion

"May your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation" (2 Chronicles 6:41)

Salvationist soteriology is classically orthodox, and yet distinctly influenced by two significant forces – the 16th Century Reformation and 18th Century Wesleyan Revivalism. The former is theological bedrock; the latter reflects the revivalist milieu in which the Army was born.

This can delineated as follows:

Reformation Foundation

- Salvation is provided by grace alone
- Salvation is received by faith alone

¹⁴ John R. W. Stott and David L. Edwards, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1988, 160

¹⁴ Phil Needham, *Community In Mission, A Salvationist Ecclesiology*, International Headquarters, The Salvation Army, London, 1987, 52

- Salvation is experienced in Christ alone
- Salvation is taught in Scripture alone

Wesleyan Revivalism

- All people need to be saved
- All people can be saved
- All people saved can know they are saved
- All people who are saved can go on to Christian holiness¹⁶

The net effect of this vibrant Salvationist soteriology is a profound commitment to evangelism. For instance, the basic congregational entity, the corps, is defined as ‘a Salvation Army unit established for the propagation of the gospel.’¹⁷ Additionally, the primary assignment of a Corps Officer is ‘the conversion of the unsaved people of the district.’¹⁸ The same Orders and Regulations state unambiguously:

“A corps officer should understand that he is sent by God and the Army to all the unconverted, non-church-going people in his district, especially to the most needy and depraved among them. These [are] his constituency.

It is, therefore, no mere coincidence that the two ‘SS’ on all uniform lapels stand for ‘Saved To Save;’ or, that General William Booth famously ordered Salvationists to ‘Go for sinners, and go for the worst;’ or, that a Salvation Army officer solemnly covenants ‘to live to win souls and make their salvation the first purpose of my life.’

Yes, Salvation is our first name. Salvation is our first purpose. Salvation is our first love.

God grant us the grace to live up to it.

¹⁶ Major Alan Harley, Holiness Lectures, International College for Officers, London, October 2009

¹⁷ Orders and Regulations for Corps Officers Chapter 1. Section 4.1a

¹⁸ *ibid*, Chapter 1. Section 4.3a

Life and Death

by Lieut. Xander Coleman

An exploration of Jesus' 'I AM' statements in the gospel of John.

The 'I am' statements in John's gospel are a prominent literary feature used to reveal who Christ is and give a compelling insight into John's Christology. Each 'I am' claim 'brings home an important aspect of the person and the ministry of Jesus' (Morris, 1995: 324), not least because of the overtones of divinity caught up in the phrase 'I am' (Wiersbe, 1986: 78). Another prominent feature of Johannine writing is the contrast of polarised concepts, like light and darkness, belief and unbelief, sight and blindness. Life and death are particularly important ideas throughout the gospel, and seem to be an especially prominent feature of the discourses surrounding Jesus' 'I am' claims.

The word 'life' appears 36 times, more than twice any other book in the NT, accounting for a quarter of NT references to life (Morris, 1995: 73). Rendered from the Greek *zoe* (Strong's 2222), meaning 'vitality' (Strong, 1990b: 79 (at 5590)), the idea 'includes all the positive aspects of social well-being and fellowship with God' (Lindars, 1981: 85). In the prologue, 'John is preparing the way for the thought that he will develop throughout his Gospel, that Jesus is *the* life-bringer' (Morris, 1995: 74, emphasis his): 'In him was life, and that life was the light of all people' (John 1:4, TNIV). The idea of 'eternal life' is meant when John refers to life (Morris, 1995: 73):

The word rendered "eternal" (always in this Gospel used of life) basically means "pertaining to an age."...the adjective was used of life in the coming age, not that of the present age. "Eternal life" thus means "the life proper to the age to come." It is an eschatological concept... Eternal life is life in Christ... which removes a person from the merely earthly... it originates in a divine action... wherein one is born anew. (Morris, 1995: 201)

Through Christ, the vitality of heavenly life can be experienced in the present (J. Painter, cited in Morris, 1995: 330n121). The concept of 'eternal life' and use of *zoe* occur throughout the 'I am' statements, with the exception of 'I am the true vine' (John 15:1, TNIV), where they are implied.

The theme of death contrasts that of life throughout John. Throughout the seven 'I am' statements, three different types of death are used to contrast with the *zoe* offered, usually using more than one in each instance. Firstly, Jesus refers to physical death: 'Lazarus is dead' (John 11:14, TNIV). Jesus differentiates between mere physical death and spiritual death (Tasker, 1983: 138), which is the second understanding of death; the kind of death implicated in the vine-branch that is 'thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned' (John 15:6, TNIV). This kind of death visits a person who may be still biologically alive, but whose spirit is severed from God because they fail to recognise and appropriate the life Christ offers. The third concept of death is that which Christ does for us: the good shepherd who 'lays down his life for the sheep' (John 10:11, TNIV). Jesus 'is ready and willing to lay down His life in perfect obedience as a voluntary sacrifice' (Tasker, 1983: 129).

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is a bread that comes down from heaven, which people may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:47-51, TNIV)

The dominance of *zoe* in the 'I am' statements is clearly demonstrated here. Jesus is the bread of *life*, taken to mean 'bread that gives life' (Morris, 1995: 324n99). Using imagery from Exodus, where God provided manna for Israel's hunger, Jesus likens himself to that manna, declaring himself to be the 'bread that comes down from heaven' (John 6:50, TNIV). Furthermore, he exposes the failure of manna to bring everlasting life, claiming that only he can give 'eternal life' (John 6:54, TNIV). Jesus does not just *sustain* life, like manna, he *gives* life (Wiersbe, 1986: 77). This is a 'movement away from the old life with its beggarly famine and its total inability to satisfy, and into all that association with Christ means' (Morris, 1995: 324): *zoe*, vitality, fullness. The way to appropriate this life is clear: 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them' (John 6:56, TNIV)

In this first of the 'I am' claims, Jesus conjures up all three ideas of death: physical, spiritual and sacrificial. 'Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died' (6:49, TNIV). Morris asserts that "died" here refers to physical death (1995: 330-331), but concedes that the same verb is used in the following verse to indicate spiritual death. Landers suggests that manna represents the Law, impotent to change hearts and bring true life (1981: 265). If physical death is what Jesus means in verse 49, the idea of spiritual death is what he is moving towards. 'Here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which people may eat and not die' (6:51, TNIV). The life Jesus offers is not life without physical death: his reference to the resurrection 'at the last day' (6:54, TNIV) evidences this. If a spiritual life in verse 51, then a spiritual death also. Jesus describes this condition as having 'no life in you' (6:53, TNIV) and is clearly aimed at 'the Jews who began to argue sharply' (6:52, TNIV): unless they ate Jesus' flesh – a repulsive idea – they would remain spiritually dead. The offer of Jesus' flesh points to physicality of his gift of life (Morris, 1995: 331). 'Jesus is flesh offered in sacrifice' (Burge, 2000: 201), revealing his willing embrace of death in order to give us life.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' (John 8:12, TNIV)
He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come. Once more Jesus said to them, 'I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.' (John 8:20-21).

'Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of *life*' (8:12, TNIV). Here, as in the prologue, 'light and life are again connected' (Morris, 1995: 389). 'Rabbis sometimes used "light" as a name for the Messiah' (Morris, 1995: 389n8), and this picture is of life radiating from the Messiah like light. 'The light of life' according to Tasker, means 'the light which comes from Him who is life' (Tasker, 1983: 115), describing Jesus as the epitome of life. Like sunlight is necessary for all earthly life, Jesus' light makes 'eternal life' possible. It is 'the life which frees a person from the

sphere of death' ('Schnackenburg, cited in Morris, 1995: 390n10). Again, Jesus reveals how to appropriate this life-light: 'Whoever *follows me* will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life' (John 8:12, TNIV). John contrasts light and darkness – the polarity between truly following Christ and rejecting him like the Pharisees. There is no middle ground – 'Jesus is speaking of wholehearted discipleship, not of casual adherence' (Morris, 1995: 389). The light of life is promised as the 'alternative of continuing to walk in darkness' (Lindars, 1981: 316), which can be seen as a description of spiritual death.

'Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come"' (8:21, TNIV). Without the light of life, the Pharisees experience darkness, spiritually blind to Christ's light. 'Jesus said, "For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind"' (John 9:39, TNIV). Jesus looks toward Calvary and makes another contrast – this time between his death, and the spiritual death of the Pharisees. 'His death is set in contrast to theirs. They will die in their sins, and this will prevent them from going where he goes.' (Morris, 1995: 395). Jesus sacrificial death is bound up further with the Pharisees' spiritual death. John presents Jesus as in control of his destiny, avoiding arrest here 'because his hour had not yet come (8:20, TNIV). Nevertheless he knew that the religious leaders would kill him, prophesying to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me' (8:28, TNIV). It is ironic that the Pharisees' spiritual death precipitates Jesus' self-sacrificial death, in turn unleashing spiritual life in an unprecedented way.

Therefore Jesus said again, 'Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the Sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:7-11, TNIV)

Jesus uses a pastoral picture for two 'I am' claims: 'I am the gate for the sheep' (10:7, TNIV) and 'I am the good shepherd' (10:11, TNIV). Positioned between these two claims, the promise of zoe life: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (10:10, TNIV), or, 'and have it abundantly' (NASB); the Message paraphrases, 'I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of'. The shepherding metaphor shows us 'fat, contented, flourishing sheep' (Carson, 1991: 385). Jesus the gate protects the sheep and allows them to access pasture. 'The gate is the sole means by which the sheep may enter the safety of the fold (v. 9a) or the luxurious forage of the pasture (v. 9b)' (Carson, 1991: 385). This is no prosperity gospel – Jesus is not offering physical longevity or abundance of material possessions, 'but the possibility... of a *life lived at a higher level* in obedience to God's will and reflecting His glory' (Tasker, 1983: 130, emphasis mine).

The Greek for this abundant life is *zoe* (Strong, 1990a: 624), but when Jesus says, 'I lay down my *life* for the sheep' (10:15, TNIV), he uses *psuche* (Strong's 5590) meaning

breathing, physical life (Strong, 1990a: 624). The physicality of Jesus' death is again emphasised, not to be understood metaphorically but literally. As Jesus moves toward the cross, John shows him laying down his life as a 'voluntary sacrifice for the sheep' (Tasker, 1983: 129). 'He did not die as a martyr, killed by men; He died as a substitute, willingly laying down His life for us.' (Wiersbe, 1986: 123). This self-sacrifice for the sheep is 'the most important feature of Jesus' role as shepherd' (Burge, 2000: 291), for 'it is because the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep that abundant life is made available for them' (Tasker, 1983: 132). Jesus' death brings life to the sheep, making the concepts of death and life ambiguous and intermingled.

John's gospel abounds with contrasts between Jesus and the religious leaders; between true and false, good and bad, light and darkness. Here the contrast is between Jesus the gate, protective and providing, and the damage the thieves are inflicting: stealing, killing, destroying (10:10). These thieves may represent the religious leaders (Wiersbe, 1986: 121) – they refuse true life from Christ, and damage those who would accept it. Spiritual death begets spiritual death. However Carson suggests they represent anything which sets itself up as an alternative saviour:

The world still seeks its humanistic, political saviours – its Hitlers, its Stalins, its Maos, its Pol Pots – and only too late does it learn that they blatantly confiscate personal property (they come 'only to steal'), ruthlessly trample human life under foot (they come 'only... to kill'), and contemptuously savage all that is valuable (they come 'only... to destroy'). (Carson, 1991: 385)

In either case, death and destruction contrasts with the abundant life enjoyed by Jesus' flock.

Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'
'Yes, Lord,' she told him. 'I believe you that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.' (John 11:23-27)

In the context of Lazarus' death, Jesus reveals himself as the epitome of 'eternal life' the personification of resurrection. 'I am the resurrection and the life' (11:25, TNIV). The reader is reminded that 'in him was life' (John 1:4, TNIV), and only in him. 'Through the miracle of [Lazarus'] restoration Jesus desires to manifest Himself as *the resurrection and the life*' (Tasker, 1983: 138). Jesus raised Lazarus from physical death to physical life, but the truth taught through that miracle is even greater, more profound, more powerful: 'the life he brings is the life of the age to come. It is the "eternal life" of which he speaks elsewhere...Those who believe on Jesus...will live even though they die' (Morris, 1995: 488). Believer may experience resurrection life now. Jesus moved 'the doctrine of the resurrection out of the future and into the present... wherever He is, God's resurrection power is available *now*' (Wiersbe, 1986: 137). The key here is belief, Jesus challenging Martha, 'Do you believe this?' (11:26, TNIV). Her response is an emphatic confession of faith: 'Yes, Lord...I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world' (11:27, TNIV)

Jesus declares Himself to be 'the resurrection and the life' (11:25, TNIV), and speaks of believers who 'will never die' (11:26, TNIV). Obviously he does not mean that they will escape physical death ('even though they die' in the preceding verse evidences that). But such will be the life lived in them that mere physical death becomes inconsequential. 'The paradox brings out the great truth that physical death is not the important thing...they will not die in the fuller sense.' (Morris, 1995: 488). Wiersbe observes, 'When we know Him by faith, we need not fear the shadow of death... When you belong to Him, you have all that you ever will need in life, death, time, or eternity!' (1986: 137). Physical death is of little import, and spiritual death may be avoided by grace through faith in Christ. Spiritually dead humanity needs to be resurrected in Christ the Resurrection and sustained by Christ the Life: both are gifts given by grace (Jean Calvin cited in Morris, 1995: 488n55).

My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. (John 13:33, TNIV)
Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'
Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.' (John 14:5-7)

Jesus again foretells his death, yet declaring himself to be 'the life'. If 'I am' insufficiently shows Christ's divinity, further evidence is found in his claim of likeness to the Father: 'If you really know me, you will know my Father as well' (14:7, TNIV). The characteristics seen in Christ reflect the Father's; the life Christ gives is an extension of God's life. 'Jesus Himself is therefore *the way*, because He is the embodiment of *the truth* about God and His relationship with men; and by reason of this, *the life*, that is inherent in His own words and actions, the very life of God Himself, is available for all mankind' (Tasker, 1983: 165, emphasis his). Like the Gate, Jesus the Way is the only way to salvation. Unsurprisingly, 'some expositors find the emphasis on "life": "I am the true way to life."' (Morris, 1995: 570n18). Jesus embodies 'eternal life', resurrection life – that life of the age to come – being both life itself and the source of life for believers (Morris, 1995: 569).

This revelation of self and Father happens under the shadow of a conversation about Jesus' immanent death. Though not explicitly mentioned, and the word 'death' not used, there are clear undertones of foreboding anticipating Christ's self-sacrifice:

We should not overlook the faith involved both in the utterance and in the acceptance of these words, spoken as they were on the eve of the crucifixion. "I am the Way," said one who would shortly hang impotent on a cross. "I am the Truth," when the lies of evil people were about to enjoy a spectacular triumph. "I am the Life," when within a matter of hours his corpse would be placed in a tomb. (Morris, 1995: 570).

Jesus is amongst his disciples, so there seems no need to speak of spiritual death (although that comes up in the True Vine discourse (15:1ff)); Jesus' upcoming sacrificial death overshadows his teaching, despite the disciples' failure to understand. He would shortly give up his life to bring 'eternal life' – 'the life of the age to come that is offered by

Jesus in the present' – to a humanity dead in sin (J. Painter, quoted in Morris, 1995: 330n121).

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful...

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. (John 15:1-2, 5-6)

While neither life nor death is explicitly mentioned in this discourse, the imagery is bursting with those themes. Fruitfulness is 'every demonstration of vitality of faith, to which... reciprocal love above all belongs' (Bultmann, cited by Morris, 1995: 595) – the outworking of 'eternal life'. 'The branch cannot produce its own life; it must draw that life from the vine' (Wiersbe, 1987: 41). Through intimate relationship with Jesus – remaining in him – we both receive the necessary life and exhibit fruit. 'To abide in Christ' – who is the 'Way, the Truth and the Life' (14:6, TNIV), 'the Resurrection and the Life' (11:25, TNIV), 'the Good Shepherd' (10:11, TNIV), 'the Gate for the Sheep' (10:7, TNIV), 'the Light of the World' (8:12, TNIV) and 'the Bread of Life' (6:48, TNIV) – 'is the necessary prerequisite of fruitfulness' (Morris, 1995: 595). Tasker links the True Vine to the Bread of Life through the idea of intimacy of abiding or remaining (Tasker, 1983: 174): 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them,' (John 6:56, TNIV) finds obvious parallels with, 'If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit (John 15:5, TNIV). In both instances the living union with Christ is the source of true life. Wiersbe connects this with another of the 'I am' statements, the Good Shepherd. The idea is the similarity between the relationship of vine to branch and shepherd to sheep in terms of 'union and communion' (Wiersbe, 1987: 41). 'When believers abide in Christ and Christ's words abide in them, they live as close to Christ as well may be' (Morris, 1995: 596). Is is in proximity that Christ's life may be lived out in them.

Jesus' statement that 'apart from me you can do nothing' (15:5, TNIV) is a 'emphatic declaration of human helplessness apart from Christ' (Morris, 1995: 596). This is the same kind of spiritual death that the Pharisees suffered. It refuses to acknowledge spiritual weakness and need for Christ. Jesus likens such people to a useless 'branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned' (John 15:6, TNIV). This is a severe warning for those who reject the life that comes from intimacy with Christ: they will experience spiritual death.

Jesus' thoughts again turn to his crucifixion, now immanent. 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (15:13, TNIV). Clearly an allusion to what is to come, Jesus again foretells his death once more in terms of voluntary sacrifice (Morris, 1995: 598-599). His motivation is love for his friends, and his friendship extends to all who 'do what I command' (John 15:14). 'Jesus is willing to die because of his profound commitment to the ones he loves' (Burge, 2000: 291). He is aware that his physical death brings spiritual life to the world, and he willingly goes to

the cross to prove his commitment to providing life for us. As the prophet said, 'by his wounds we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5, TNIV).

That this idea of eternal, full, abundant, resurrection *zoe* life appears throughout Jesus' self-revelatory statements in John's gospel, shows a Christ wholeheartedly committed to providing *zoe* for a humanity that is dead in sin. The consistency with which the idea appears around the 'I am' claims is striking, and points to how John wants to portray Christ. His claim in the prologue, 'in him was life, and that life was the light of all people' (1:4, TNIV) becomes an important interpretative key to understanding John's Christology. Christ did not just create biotic life in the physical world, but embodies everything it means to be truly alive. His mission was to make this *zoe* available to people in the present, that they may participate in his resurrection life – the life of the age to come – now. And 'the moment we put our trust in Jesus we begin to experience that life of the age to come which cannot be touched by death' (Morris, 1995: 488-489).

In true Johannine style, this *zoe* is contrasted with various ideas of death. Mere physical death is of little consequence to those that already enjoy a deeper life. Spiritual death is more of a concern, standing in direct opposition to the spiritual life which Christ offers. The red thread running through these 'I am' statements, though, is Christ's self-giving death. He is the willing sacrifice, embracing physical death so that we may know spiritual life. 'The story of the 'passion' in John is not an account of what men did to Jesus, but rather the story of what he did for them' (Marsh, quoted by Morris, 1995: 453). Because of his death, we may truly 'have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10, TNIV).

This exploration has grown out of a series of I preached on the 'I am' statements. Week by week as I prepared my material, this concept of true life kept emerging as key part of my sermons. The concept of life in all its fullness (John 10:10) had captured me some years before, but as I preached through the gospel I found it to be a major theme of Jesus' teaching in John.

Knowing John's penchant for contrasts, I looked for where ideas of death might come into the stories. I discovered that physical death happens, and for those left behind, that hurts. Even Martha mourned when the Resurrection was standing in front of her face. Yet the overwhelming hope in physical death is this: the life we experience in Christ far supersedes mere physical death. Pastorally, this is great hope for the bereaved, and can be celebrated, as it was with Lazarus, in the midst of mourning. We speak so seldom of resurrection, we must not pass up the opportunity to preach it at a funeral. More important, though, is helping people experience the reality that 'everlasting life' begins on earth. Our eschatology is already inaugurated, and we are waiting, with all creation, 'in eager expectation' for it to be fully established (Romans 8:19).

Far worse than physical death, though, is spiritual death, which involves rejection of Christ, withering of spirit, death in sin. This death is no less real (perhaps considerable more real) than physical death. Perhaps we play this down in our pluralist postmodern society; we are uncomfortable about declaring society spiritually dead, and certainly not

individuals. Meanwhile, millions attempt a spirituality without Christ, or live a ritualistic form of Christianity devoid of a living relationship with the Saviour. But life without Christ, however 'spiritual', is spiritually dead. There is only one Gate, and only one Way to the Father. Jesus is the only way to fullness of life, and we must take our role seriously in seeking to introduce people to him. The stakes are high – it is a matter of life and death!

There is only one cure for spiritual death – another kind of death, by someone else: Jesus sacrificing himself, substituting out spiritual death for his physical death. As his followers, it is our privilege to follow him to the cross. Captain David Kinsey says that true Christian ministry looks like this: 'whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it' (Matthew 16:25, TNIV). Like Christ, we bring life to other people by laying down our lives for them.

And, because Jesus is the personification of resurrection, through his death we are resurrected to *zoe* life. Where Jesus the Resurrection is, there is resurrection-life also. That the Resurrection lives in my heart is ample proof that 'eternal life' can be lived here and now. Helping people to experience this life is, for me, a mission imperative. The idea is holistic, ministering to the whole person, and is Christocentric, focussed on, reliant on and emanating from Jesus.

The idea of losing your life to find it, and of death bringing life, points to a delightful ambiguity between death and life. A friend of mine has a pair of matching tattoos, one on each arm. Viewed from one angle, the tattoo says 'life.' Viewed from the other, it says 'death'. My friend got them to remind herself of Jesus, who epitomised life, yet voluntarily died to bring that life to others. Having received his love, she wants to lay down her life to bring his life to others. This is where the disciple walks, living resurrection life here on earth but laying down that life for others. What a joyful thing to be counted amongst 'the living dead'.

Bibliography

- 2007 *New Revised Standard Version Bible Anglicized Edition*. London, HarperCollins
- 2007 *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible New International Version*. Indianapolis: B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co.
- 2005 *The Holy Bible, Today's New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan
- 1995 *New American Standard Bible – Updated Edition*. Iowa Falls: Word Bible Publishers
- Beasley-Murray, George R.
1991 *Word Biblical Commentary John*. Milton Keynes: Word
- Burge, Gary M.
2000 *The NIV Application Commentary: John*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan
- Carson, D. A.
1991 *The Gospel According to John*. Leicester: IVP
- Ellis, E. E.
1982 'Life'. In *New Bible Dictionary*. Second Edition. Ed J. D. Douglas. Leicester: IVP, 1982: 697-701
- Lindars, Barnabus
1981 *The Gospel of John*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott
- Morris, Leon
1995 *The Gospel According to John*. Revised. Cambridge: Eerdmans
- Peterson, Eugene H.
2003 *The Message Remix*. Colorado Springs: NavPress
- Strong, James
1990a *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. London: Thomas Nelson
1990b 'A Concise Dictionary of the Word in The Greek Testament; With Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version'. In *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. London: Thomas Nelson
- Tasker, R. V. G.
1983 *The Gospel According to St. John An Introduction and Commentary*. Leicester: IVP
- Wiersbe, Warren W.
1987 *Be Transformed John 13-21*. Amersham-on-the-Hill, Bucks: Scripture Press
1986 *Be Alive John 1-2*. Amersham-on-the-Hill, Bucks: Scripture Press

Do It Now

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

IT is said that confession is good for the soul and so that is the place for me to begin. I admit that when I began life as an officer I was a deep-dyed procrastinator. Some of my fellow lieutenants had what they called 'LBW files and they were not referring to the cricket term, 'Leg before wicket' but rather, and to their shame, 'Let the beggars wait'. I shared their guilt by arguing that I should not do today what could wait until tomorrow.

For the sake of emphasis I will continue to exaggerate and say that I could have papered a room with reminder notices from divisional headquarters and I must remorsefully wonder whether saintly divisional secretaries might have been in danger of losing their salvation while waiting for my long awaited returns!

Be that as it may. I am glad to testify that I had a Damascus Road experience. I told myself that I was quite capable of coping with my correspondence if, instead of stuffing letters I received into a drawer, I would deal with them as they arrived. Presto, it was simple as that! I took the simple motto, 'Do it now!' and it made a world of difference.

Mind, I will admit that there are exceptions to prove the rule. Some decisions are better for waiting, Some matters call for conference and further consideration. But that should not be used by procrastinators as what my Australian comrades would call a 'cop out'. We should not put off until tomorrow what could and should be done today – so do it now!

The Wild Gospel and Living in Deserts

by Major Danielle Strickland

We have an insatiable appetite for the positive. Those of us who follow Jesus often add 'Jesus' as a name for our new 'positive' attitude. I've seen more than one offer given to be 'saved' presented as a means to be happy and wealthy. It's funny when the Bible doesn't seem to follow suit. See almost every major figure in Scripture has a tragic story – and almost always a tragic ending (every single one of the 12 disciples were killed for their faith). Their lives, as a direct result of choosing to follow God led them to difficult circumstances. Granted – they did live adventurous and full lives – but they weren't exactly poster people for happiness.

It's Lent. That's the 40 days spent preparing our lives and hearts for the events of Easter... (the Christian tradition)... but of course we borrowed it from the Jews – who used it to get ready for the PASSOVER by getting rid of everything in their house that had yeast in it. Yeast represented sin and the idea was to live completely free of it for the days leading up to Passover (the big event that saved the Egyptians from their oppression in Egypt).

To kick off Lent we often use the scripture where Jesus is tempted in the desert (wilderness) – most likely because he spent 40 days and nights there. But maybe also for a few other reasons; it mirrors the time the Israelites spent in the desert (40 years... Jesus did a fast forward version of the event in 40 days), and it was a time of testing (which is of course what the Israelites were supposed to be doing crossing the desert in 40 days – which turned into 40 long and mostly stupid years). See, Jesus embraced the experience as a means of living a truly surrendered life but the Israelites resisted it – they hated the desert, they hated to be 'emptied' of themselves. Someone once said it took about a year to get Israel out of Egypt but forty years to get Egypt out of Israel. We don't have the time in this article to explore in great detail, but Israel resisted the desert experience so much that they spent most of their lives walking around in circles, complaining and setting up towns that they named things like, 'bitter', 'fat', 'grumble' and well, you get the idea. They wasted a whole generation resisting the process of 'emptying' (in Hebrew this is a reference to the 'nothing' of creation – what God hovers over to create)... it's what Philippians 2 explains about what Jesus did – he 'emptied' himself of well, himself. And embraced the calling to save the world. See, the process of emptying, of getting to the place where the spirit can actually create something new is a difficult one to understand and to embrace. But it's all through the scripture as a part of our faith journey. Embracing the desert places is a sure way to move deeper into the things of God's kingdom come.

It's incredibly important for us to realize that the Spirit led Him there immediately after Jesus was baptized – which is to be honest, a bit weird. Jesus had just embraced His divine calling to be the Messiah – He had immersed himself (literally by his baptism in the Jordan river) in the human condition in order to fight a way through the muck and the mire of our paralyzing sin – in order to make a new way to live and model a life lived fully. Plus, it was a bit of a rock-star moment... the heaven's parted, a dove settled on

him and a voice from heaven affirmed his acceptance by the father. That's gotta be a good day! Maybe the best day – can you think of a day like that? When everything goes right? Seriously, a top of the mountain moment... when you know deep inside yourself that you've heard the Father's blessing... even God is proud of you. Then the scriptures do something strange... see, after an event like that, if you were interested in changing the world, you'd most likely stage a press conference – or head straight to Jerusalem to announce to the world powers that be there is a new King in town or something dramatic and public – maybe you'd at least head home and tell your mom that you told her so! You've made it now! The thing is that the exact opposite of that happens. The scripture says that IMMEDIATELY after Jesus was baptized THE SPIRIT led him into the wilderness.

The Spirit led him. Wow. I'm not sure about you – but I have a tendency to believe that everything that happens to me that is hard and horrible is from hell. The trouble is that I've most likely designated 'hard' and 'horrible' as anything that is difficult and tempting. You see, if we are honest, all the things that we would do to 'tell the good news' and to shout it aloud are all connected to what the devil brings to Jesus to do.

Turn stones into bread. AKA: use your gifts for yourself.

Throw yourself from the highest point in the temple. AKA: spectacular – always aim for a big production. Public display. Power.

Become King of the World now. AKA: skip the pain. Compromise the process. Any means necessary for the same outcome.

What is striking about the temptations themselves is how little they veer from actually changing Jesus' destination. The devil never once questions whether Jesus is truly the Messiah – whether He is coming to establish His kingdom – whether He is going to change the world. He only tempts Jesus in the WAY to do those things.

Jesus resists because He knows that the WAY He brings the Kingdom is as important as the Kingdom outcome itself. As Melissa Etheridge sang, and I just found out is actually a quote by an old, saintly dead guy, 'all the way to heaven, is heaven'. What is remarkable about Jesus is how much He embraced 'smallness' in His life. Small towns, small people, small followers – always resisting the big and glorious things of the world – resisting power and money and fame. He embraced the WAY of the Kingdom of God and showed us the Kingdom in living colour - and daily. Not under the applause of humanity but under the loving voice of our Father, proud as punch of who we are.

The thing the devil wants to get us to do is to follow Jesus - but in a worldly way. Be a Christian – but live like everyone else. Be a follower of Jesus - but you don't need to actually give your money away – keep it. Be a follower of Jesus but... well, you get the idea. What the devil tries to do is to get us to keep ourselves full of ourselves. And this is problematic. We can spend a whole lifetime wandering around, in a wilderness, pathetically unhappy in our faith, questioning God and making up little places to settle in

called 'fat', and 'bitter' and well, 'worldy' and miss the incredibly deeper experience of the 'emptying'. Allowing the Holy Spirit to hover over our lives and start creating a new thing – in a new way. Imagine what He has in mind. I don't know about you – but I'd like to embrace the desert in order that we might move on to the promise land. I've a feeling there is a lot there to do! Here's praying for a forty day LENT and a lifetime of God's kingdom come.

Farewell to Carol

by Captain Claire Watson

"I'll see you again". That was the how I farewelled my friend Carol* as I left her house on Monday 13th February. I never saw her again. On the eve of Valentine's Day, 2012, Carol hung herself in her garden.

When I found out the news later that week, I searched through my memories of our last visit. Was there some clue that I had failed to notice of suicidal intention? Did I neglect to respond to some veiled cry for help? I came up with nothing. I remembered giving Carol a calendar. She accepted it with thanks, saying she didn't have one. Why would she accept such a gift if she did not plan to awake to another day? I also recalled how Carol had spoken of a second operation that needed to be performed on her injured ankle. She would soon travel to Perth to have more x-rays so the extent of the healing could be assessed. Was her decision an impulsive one, like a child who suddenly tears up a drawing they do not like? In the days following Carol's death, the sky was hazy with smoke in the mornings. There was a bushfire burning hundreds of kilometres away and the smoke had travelled as far as our town. My mind too felt hazy with confusion.

Carol had struggled through life. She told me that her mother had neglected her as a child, leaving she and her siblings to fend for themselves. Carol's own four children were taken into state care due to her battle with drugs and alcohol. She had spent time in prison. When I met Carol, she was recovering from a car accident in which her ankle was fractured. She was alone in the house on crutches without food as her partner had left. Depression, pain and anger clouded her days.

After providing for her immediate need for food, I suggested that we commence the Positive Lifestyle Programme. The ten week course addressed many issues, past and present, in Carol's life such as anger, depression and loneliness. When she wasn't drowsy from the powerful pain medication she took, Carol was a fast reader and formulated answers quickly. Her bookshelf was filled with an eclectic mix of books, including a Bible. One day I took her to the town library to encourage her love of reading. Carol's partner returned home at some stage during the course.

The topics opened up old wounds and we shared some good discussions. We celebrated Carol's courage and perseverance in completing the course by sharing lunch at a café. Carol received her certificate at one of our Sunday meetings and it took up permanent residence on her kitchen bench. She successfully regained her drivers licence and told me that she had stopped drinking. During one visit, Carol proudly showed me a computer that she had bought.

By this time, I had become aware of Carol's interest in spirituality. In the past she had been involved with a local church, but now declared she had lost faith in God. She agreed to work through the 'Simply Christianity' course with me and together we watched the JESUS video. Though our progress was slowed by various interruptions, we finally finished the course just before Christmas, 2011. Carol prayed, asking God for

forgiveness because Jesus had died on the cross for our sin. I went away on holidays, hopeful that this recommitment to Christ would be the turning point in her life.

I only saw Carol on three occasions the following year. We talked about God's grace, the Holy Spirit and prayer. During one of those visits, it was fairly evident she had been drinking heavily. She yelled and swore at her partner and sobbed that no-one cared about her. I abandoned the lesson, put my hand on her shoulder and prayed that God would reassure her of His love. The next time- and last time- I visited Carol she was calm and drowsy. We talked briefly about reading the Bible and she told me she would start reading the book of Luke.

That evening, Carol and her partner went to the beach where they argued. Carol returned home and completed the final solution to her pain. The following morning, I went for my usual walk around the neighbourhood. Two elderly women, who regularly walked their dogs, were chatting as they passed me. I caught a fragment of their conversation; "...the drug addict, you know the one who lives at the end of the street". I felt uneasy as I drove our children to school and saw a policeman's car parked near Carol's house. Perhaps she had been arrested?

At the funeral, the minister spoke of Carol's past involvement in their church. It was encouraging to hear some extracts from letters she had written years ago from prison. In them her faith in God was clear. I believe that I will see Carol once again in heaven. As a DVD of images from Carol's life was shown, the photo of a little girl with a wide smile stayed with me. She seemed to be looking towards the future with eyes of hope. When did that hope grow dim? Although I knew something of the pain in Carol's life, her sudden death shocked me. I knew that Jesus would not want me, or anyone else, to carry a burden of guilt about what I might have said or done to prevent it. Carol alone made the decision to end her life. Yet that does not diminish the responsibility we have, as followers of Jesus, to love our neighbours as we do ourselves. The questions that haunt me still are; How many people are living in quiet despair like Carol in my neighbourhood? And how many of them, unlike Carol, have not experienced the grace and truth of Jesus?

*Not her real name

Island of Irrelevancy by Commissioner Wesley Harris

We may be sentenced by a sentence or arrested by a phrase! Certainly, I was challenged by a writer who spoke of 'islands of irrelevancy in a sea of need'. I wondered whether some of our corps might fairly be described as irrelevant in their local community. If the corps is turned in on itself, only pre-occupied with domestic issues and oblivious to the concerns of its neighbours then the charge of culpable irrelevance might fairly be laid.

Of course, in a secular society the widely held view might be that religion is at best an optional extra with nothing of value to contribute to individuals or families in the twenty first century. That mistaken perception may make the practice of religion *appear* to some as irrelevant for modern life when in reality it could well prove to be the answer to some fundamental. needs.

One of my favorite holiday locations is an island off the coast of Australia. It is separate from the mainland but not cut off. A feat of engineering means that it can be reached by road so that supervision and supplies are available.

So too, while in some ways our corps should be separate from the world they should not be remote or removed from it. There is the need for 'holy worldliness'. William Booth often spoke of the sea of need which surrounds us. People need service and, above all else, they need salvation and so it is important that we do not merely do our internal 'Army thing' but remember that we are called to be 'people people' reaching out to those who may be so near and yet so far from us. Our former name was, 'The Christian Mission' and in a real sense that is still essentially what we are meant to be.

The Seventh Sign: I Am Resurrection and Life

by CSM Aaron White, author of CellTalks

(John 11:1-53) Kit List: Bibles

Welcome:

Read John 11:1-16. Has anyone ever tried to stop you from doing something incredibly risky? Were they successful? What, or who, would you be willing to die for? Bring in a news item about your neighbourhood, city, country or world that you can discuss with the cell. Where do you see God in this story? Ask other members of cell to bring in stories to discuss in subsequent weeks.

Worship:

Where have you seen the glory of God this week? Where have you experienced community this week? Do you have any prayer requests to share with the cell? Spend some time praying for the needs of your neighbourhood. Read John 11:17-27. Do you believe that Jesus is life? What does that mean to you? Martha believed that the Father would give the Son anything he asked for. What do you think the Son is asking the Father to do for you? What do you want him to ask for? (If you are in Vancouver, remember that Knee Drill is now at 6pm at the Anchor of Hope, followed by Recreate / Celebrate Recovery Open Group)

Word:

Read out John 11:28-44 What is the setting for this sign? Where and when does it happen, and who is there? Does suffering and untimely death cause you to doubt God's goodness or power? Can good ever come out of suffering and death? Can God be glorified through it? How is God glorified through Lazarus' death? Why does Jesus delay going to him? Martha believed that Jesus could have healed her brother, and even that he can give him life at Judgment Day. But what did Jesus want Martha to believe about him? Do you believe that Jesus can bring life out of death here and now? Why is Jesus "moved" and "greatly troubled" when Mary cries? Why does Jesus weep? What is this sign (Lazarus' resurrection) pointing to? How does this sign lead to Jesus' death? Why doesn't Jesus just heal everyone, or bring everyone back from the dead? Why does Martha hesitate before opening the tomb? Can we see the glory of God if we don't believe?

Witness:

Read John 11:45-53, 12:9-11. People believed in Jesus because Lazarus was dead, and now he lived. What sign has God done in your life that could cause others to believe in Jesus? Do you pray for signs and wonders? Are you prepared for the persecution that can come along with witnessing for Jesus?

Read John 12:1-8. This is an act of extravagant worship. How are we "wasting" ourselves and our resources on Jesus? Find some way to give and use cell resources to extravagantly worship Jesus this week. (It should be noted that it is also right to spend our money bringing relief to the poor – see Deut 15:1-11 and Acts 4:34-35 for background on this.)

Wealth:

Ask each person in your cell to adopt a block that they will pray for every time they walk down it each day. It should be a block you walk on most days. Right down the blocks that will be covered in prayer, and see if you can recruit friends to cover even more blocks so that your whole neighbourhood is covered on a daily basis. Pray that your block would know an experience of God this week, and that people would come to know God's life on that block.

The main point: Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and he proves it by bringing his friend Lazarus back from the dead. This final sign pointed directly towards Jesus' own death and resurrection, and was itself the cause of the authorities planning to have him killed.

Notes...

This sign takes place before the Passover, in the town of Bethany which is on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was a risky move for Jesus to return to Bethany, and his disciples tried to prevent him from doing so, because he had encountered serious hostility in Judea before. But Jesus knew that the "hour" of his death was approaching and that he needed to go to Jerusalem. He also knew that he was safe until the appointed time came for him to be taken and crucified. Jesus' death was happening based on God's timetable, nobody else's.

Jesus was apparently quite close to the family involved here, that of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They send for him to come, and many other relatives and friends of the family would have come to grieve alongside of the sisters. What Jesus had come to do could not be kept secret.

As we saw in the sign of the blind man receiving sight, Jesus declares that Lazarus has died so that God's glory could be revealed. This may sound strange to us, as death is a painful and sad event. Even stranger, Jesus seems to delay his coming, to ensure that Lazarus was dead and that everyone would know he had not simply fallen ill or asleep. It is likely that Jesus could not have arrived in time anyways to prevent Lazarus' death, but the fact remains that he waited. Two or three days would not make it more difficult for Jesus to raise Lazarus, but it would increase the faith of all who witnessed the miracle, for there could be no doubt about Jesus' power over life and death. But what of the pain caused to the family? Jesus is not unaware of that pain, and he joins in it, but it must be remembered that everyone does die. Lazarus himself would die a second time after his resurrection. It is because of God's mercy, and for the display of his glory, that Lazarus is resurrected this time.

Suffering and death are part of life in this world. We are promised a different reality in glory, but here and now there will be sorrow and grief. But how we live, suffer and even die, as the people of God, can give glory to God. We can pray for miracles, and sometimes they will happen, to the glory of God. But we can also love one another well in the midst of sickness and death, and continue to have faith and hope in the God who

holds all things in his hands, and this too will give glory to God. And we can declare with our living and dying breaths that we believe fervently in a new life to come, in the hope of resurrection. Our lives here and now are to be lived in the light of that reality.

Martha believed in Jesus' power to heal, and that he was the one who would raise all people to life at the end of time. This is a remarkable faith and understanding. But Jesus called for even more from her. He wanted her to believe that he had power over life and death in the present day, and that not even the grave held any obstacle to him.

But Jesus is not cold or unfeeling in the display of his power here. He comes at great risk to himself to see the family, and he is moved and greatly troubled by Mary's words and tears. Death and pain do grieve Jesus; he is not dispassionate; he weeps. But the indication is that Jesus was more than just sorrowful; it seems that Jesus was greatly agitated, even angry. Why? Jesus is about to stare down the last and greatest enemy, death (1 Cor 15:26), and he is passionate about this fight. This sign is a precursor to Jesus' own victory over sin and death and the devil, and he meets the enslavers of humanity with fire in his veins. And this in the face of continued unbelief from the crowd around him, who applaud his weeping but question his ability to do anything about the situation.

Martha does not wish to have the stone removed from the tomb, because Lazarus' body would have begun to decompose, and the stench would have been immense. She is still clearly hesitant about Jesus' ability to bring life from death. Yes, he could heal, but could he deal with a rotting body? Jesus tells her that she will not see the glory of God unless she believes. She has some belief, but he wants the kind of belief that knows that even death cannot hold him back. She does what he says, and she beholds the glory of God as her brother is revived. So it is with us; if we are obedient, if we have faith to believe that Jesus is who he says he is, we will behold the glory of God.

Jesus calls out Lazarus by name, just as a good shepherd does for his sheep (John 10). And his word of command for Lazarus to come forth is that same word of command that called all of creation into being. Here is God, the great "I Am", at work. And this revealed glory is too much for the religious and political elite. In the book of John it is this miracle, this sign, that sets the wheels in motion for Jesus' death. The authorities know that they cannot put a lid on this event, and that people will hear of it and believe in Jesus. It is one thing to produce bread in the wilderness, but another to bring a man back to life. And so they plot in earnest to kill him, with Caiaphas, the high priest, even prophesying (unintentionally) that it is better for one man to die for the people. He means that it is better that one agitator die than the whole of Israel be laid waste by Rome. But readers of John's gospel will know that one innocent man did die on behalf of all the people. And this death did not prevent people from believing in him; quite the opposite, it displayed the glory of God in an even greater way, and set the stage for Jesus' own resurrection.

Essentials of Salvationism

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

There are some things which are essential if the Army is to be effective and if we as individuals are to be 'worth our salt' as Salvationists. The first essential is **conviction**. In preparing a book for publication I have been studying the life of our Founder, William Booth, and have again been impressed by the strength of his conviction.

As a young officer I was privileged to have retired Commissioner George Jolliffe as a mentor. At one stage he had been on the personal staff of the Founder and even lived in his house for a while. I asked the commissioner the secret of William Booth's drive which made him such a force in evangelism and was told that it was his belief in hell. It was his intense conviction that people without Christ were teetering on the edge of eternal disaster and that gave William Booth a sense of urgency and led him to seek to win the souls of almost all he met – including the taxi driver, the wealthy host or the down-and-out on the street

William Booth's convictions were powerful and helped to fire the impetus which brought the Army into being. By comparison, have we become too casual in our convictions?

T.R.Glover said of Marcus Aurelius, 'He didn't believe enough to be great'. That judgement may or may not be correct but more to the point, could it be true of The Salvation Army and ourselves as individual Salvationists in the twenty first century? I only ask!

True conviction should lead to **commitment**. Many of us live in what may be termed an uncommitted generation. Sometimes there is a reluctance to be committed to anything be it marriage or a life-time of service. But commitment is essential for effectiveness and a satisfying life. It is certainly a prime necessity in a movement such as ours.

In The Salvation Army's small but noble contingent of martyrs the name of Kim Lock should be in lights. He was a Chinese silk merchant who got saved at the Wellington Citadel Corps in New Zealand. He felt that he should return to his home province in China in order to proclaim the gospel there.

At that time the province had already come under communist control but Kim and 12 of his friends felt they should hold an open air meeting in the town square. Townsfolk were impressed but the authorities were implacable. The young enthusiasts were arrested but when released they witnessed again. This happened several times until they were warned that the next time they would be executed. And so, it happened. Kim and his friends witnessed and then were taken to the square and beheaded in front of a huge crowd. Their commitment was so great that no cost was too much.

If as an Army we are to live up to our name and our reputation there is a third essential to be maintained. It is **compassion**. Years ago in the United Kingdom the Army had a

fund raising appeal with the slogan, 'For God's sake, care'. If some charities had selected such a slogan it might have seemed sacrilegious but there was general acceptance that for the Army it was appropriate. For us it is the way it should be.

If we ceased to care we would cease to count. We should not do what we do to court publicity or even to secure funds for the Army which we love. It is for God's sake that we reach out to the last, the least and the lost. We care because within us we have the caring Holy Spirit. That is the essential secret which must never be forgotten.

In Defence of Indoctrination

We used to do indoctrination much better than we have done in the last generation. Sociologist Erving Goffman developed the concept of the 'total institution' that describes an all-encompassing type of life shared by a group of people. The military provides a good example of it. And The Salvation Army used to be an excellent representation.

Every aspect of a person's life could be wrapped up in The Salvation Army, even a generation ago. Covenant, worship, friendship circles, socialising, schedule - time, money, vocational aspirations, language, dress, songs... an ascendant sense of identity was provided by The Salvation Army.

I stumbled on to one classic example of the indoctrination - using the term in the original sense, 'into doctrine' - this week with a Canada and Bermuda Territory publication from 1978 by Cyril L. Kingston called An Army A B Cs.

Here's the text:

A stands for ARMY so mighty and grand
B is for BIBLE, for BONNET, and BAND
C is for CITADEL, home of our CORPS
D is for DRUM and the wide-open DOOR
E an ENROLMENT when soldiers are made
F for the FLAG so proudly displayed
G is for FLORY! glad spirit expressing
H - the HOME LEAGUE offers friendship and blessing
I is for INSTRUMENT, good news declaring
J for a JUNIOR, a song of JOY sharing
K for the KINDNESS all children should show
L for the LESSONS we learn as we grow
M is for MARCHING, also for MEETING
N for NEWCOMERS, let's give them a greeting
O for our OFFICERS, souls are their care
P is for PENITENT, also for PRAYER
Q is for QUESTIONS, the Bible's our guide
R our RECRUITS, new strength they provide
S for the SONGSTERS who bless with their singing
T for the TIMBRELS which set the hall ringing
U is for UNIFORM, tidy and clean
V is for VETERAN, three cheers for him!
W for WORKERS, WILLING and WISE
X marks a text we should each memorise
Y for YOUNG SOLDIER all children should read it
Z is for ZEAL, all soldiers need it.

The good news is that The Salvation Army is making some strides toward returning to an unashamed posture. Canada and Bermuda's brand new 'Ready to Serve' Junior

Soldier DVD series and sendthefire.ca are unapologetically salvo. USA Western's wildly popular WarDrobe and SAVN.tv, Australia Southern's 'Follow The Black Cat' and Department of Youth, New Zealand's firezone.co.nz, training schools like SAVED2SAVE, Railton School, Revolution Hawaii, various campuses of The War College, USA Southern's Captain Gabriel, training courses like SA101/201/301, and several other initiatives are strategically aiming at different aspects of people's lives - moving us once again toward a total institution.

What are the next steps:

- books - thanks to JustSalvos for their great kids line of books, but we need more aimed at kids; we need books aimed at teens, at young adults, at mature and old people; we need books aimed at more issues than we're covering these days... (We know one author who has titles on holiness, leadership, mission, discipleship, identity, and prayer... so we're covering a lot of subjects);

- radio - thanks to Wonderful Words of Life (USS) for their consistency, but we could spin more radio (online?) with various specific markets; - tv - we have done tv pretty well in the past - from a generation and a half ago in England with BBC to the earliest days with Arnold Brown and The Living Word - but we might more strategically exploit tv time (coverage, documentary, and maybe production);

- online - we've not owned internet like we have owned each of the various media in modern history - movies, tv, radio - but there are currently initiatives - the boldest being SAVN.tv - aimed at catching up to some other Christian evangelistic initiatives (though we should strategically decide if we're going to piggyback on excellent existing projects or if we're going to try to create SA versions of them);

- programmes - cradle roll, junior soldiers, band of love, YP company, corps cadets, recruits, soldiership, league of mercy, home league, and so on worked when deployed faithfully. Let's introduce them to a new generation;

- meetings - open air, knee drill, holiness, salvation, soldiers, etc. all worked when deployed faithfully. Let's introduce them to a new generation;

- uniform - our uniform worked in the past, but we can do even better these days with the wide range of casual uniforms now available (from USS A-OK division's informal high collars through WarDrobe's epaulet-hoodie) as well as some great quality t-shirts and jackets and hats and more;

- language - well, we've slipped so far it may seem unreasonable to even hope that we can return, but (and see articles in recent JACs - Semantic Antics, in http://www.armybarmy.com/pdf/JAC_Issue_075.pdf and Blood and Fire Under Fire, in http://www.armybarmy.com/pdf/JAC_Issue_074.pdf) if we return to calling officers, corps, soldiers, meetings, by their accurate names would help significantly.

- identity - it may be false nostalgia to suggest that in the 'good old days' salvationists identified themselves primarily as salvationists, but can you imagine an Army in which we do that? In one city, we don't have to - one prayer letter from 2012 had this story: "The other day one of our Juniiior Soldiers Seth, was one of two boys suspected of graffiting the toilets at school. The principal Natalie told me that she confronted him and she was taken aback with the response she was given. "No Mrs. Jenkins, I am a Junior Soldier, and I would never do anything like this because I wouldn't want to ashamed (sic) Peter and Diane". She is blown away with the attitude of these young soldiers and the difference God is making in their lives." And how about the day when officers stop mis-identifying themselves as 'pastors', 'ministers', 'church leaders', and 'clergy'?

- mission - well, as you may know, our mission is to win the world for Jesus and we are Saved to Save. If we return to these goals instead of the committee-speak description of our activities aimed at avoiding lawsuits, we'll be well on our way toward accomplishing the true mission.

Indoctrination is, purely, to bring someone 'into doctrine'. That's a good thing. Let's start doing it. Let's return to the total institution of primitive salvationism that was on its way to winning the world for Jesus.