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Editorial Introduction

by Major Stephen Court, Editor

Welcome to JAC98!

Greetings in the name of our great God and Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome to JAC98 – the 98th issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity. As is JAC's tradition, we're thrilled to be privileged to present an excellent line-up for you to read and apply in your lives and warfare. It includes contributions from Australia, America, Great Britain, and Canada, from soldier, cadet, captain, major, colonel, and commissioner. Thanks to each of the writers for sharing their work with JAC.

Major JoAnn Shade considers how we deal with A Problem Like Maria. It's clever, and it pulls no punches. And, it is the first of a two-part series for JAC. Read and share widely.

Colonel Richard Munn, in 'Revival', shows that, "The spiritual outpouring during Pentecost is the fulfilment of the original Jewish feast in which the hallmarks of a great harvest of souls and a new era for the Holy Spirit establish this as the original 'revival'" and that "this is still the birthday of the army today."

Major Robert Evans addresses some trending issues with Realigning Christianity, his biblical take on how we should identify and live as Christians in a time of tumultuous change.

Colonel Janet Munn's Biblical, Theological, and Historic Foundations represents some doctoral research for Theory And Practice of Gender Equality in The Salvation Army, and it places The Salvation Army and our praxis into spiritual context regarding power and women.

Aaron White, author of the widely used weekly Cell-Talks, shares his research on Female Characterisation in the Book of Judges. This is a difficult read (warning: deals with gruesome acts of violence and oppression) but one with revelation and potential application for all who engage.

You wonder what to say at your final meeting at a corps. Captain Michael Ramsay sorted this out last month and at his farewell meeting in Swift Current delivered this message from Exodus 13: A Time To Move.

Jonathan Evans, who was the first ever 'ministry director' in Canada and Bermuda Territory, pitches an 'alternative story' with a Christological focus in Integrated Mission: The Salvation Army's opportunity to participate in God's Renewal of Vancouver.

Cadet Sam Tomlin, training in London, reviews for us Marching Towards Justice, published by the Centre for Community And Theology and written by Lieutenants Naomi

and John Clifton and Majors Kerry and Nick Coke. The pamphlet is free, online, accessible, and practical.

Major Howard Webber, author of a recent Book Of The Year award, writes to us about a couple of campaigns William Booth fought in Caistor, half a century apart. Here's a peek into history that few know.

Major Robert Evans provides a Biblical Basis For Justice that provides scriptural support from various perspectives for current justice work that he both cites and advocates. This will strengthen resolve for all of us as we act justly.

Commissioner Wesley Harris offers a gentle rebuke, A Word In Season, balancing boldness with trampling emotions. May it be a correction for all who need such a thing in our life and warfare.

You'll note emphasis on evangelising, women, and justice in this issue on a firm biblical basis. Glory to God. May He help us establish such in our corps. Please, read deeply and share widely. If you finish this issue before the next one is due, feel free to search the archives (all free) including all 97 previous issues.

Much grace.

A Problem Like Maria

Part 1 of a 2 part series

by Major JoAnn Shade

In their 1959 musical, *The Sound of Music*, Rogers and Hammerstein story began in a convent with Maria, a young woman who didn't quite fit the mold of what a nun should be. As the sisters talk about her, they break into song, with the key line, "Oh, how do you solve a problem like Maria?"

As an officer of thirty-seven years (now retired), I've watched as the Salvation Army has wrestled with our version of the married woman "Maria problem." Is there a joint covenant or individual covenant? Is she a volunteer who is expected to assist her husband in his religious and charitable work (rendering little or no service or devoting full time [effort] to this work (as defined in a letter written in 1957)? Is the married woman officer (as is the case in the United States) a non-compensated worker but also an officer in her own right? And, once a couple has left the model of the shared leadership of corps officership, how can Salvation Army decision-makers appoint married women officers commensurate with their gifts and abilities?

While there are a number of problems/opportunities surrounding the married woman officer role, these comments (in this article and a subsequent one in the next edition of JAC) will address the question of our Maria problem. How can the Salvation Army appropriately appoint its married women officers when they are no longer in shared ministry with their husbands on the corps level? Can/should appointments for married women officers be given as much priority and prayer as those for married men officers? Of course, the gender-inclusive question would be, how can appointments for both husband and wife be given the same priority, for a cursory glance at the current practice in the Eastern territory of the US indicates that the male officer is predominantly in the more prominent position on the leadership chart.

Questions like these are not new. First exposed to the Salvation Army as a teen-ager. I liked what I saw in the ministry of the married women officers in the corps, yet when I worked at camp the summer after high school graduation, I was surprised and a bit offended to recognize that one of the headquarters officer women had the responsibility of supervising the laundry for the summer. Was folding hundreds of sheets the best use of her time and talents? She was an ordained minister, an officer of many years experience, and she was watching the dryer spin around. Oh, she gave good counsel to the teen-age laundresses, but was that it? If I chose officership, was that what I had to look forward to?

I have in my possession an article written for *The Officer* in 1931 entitled "Opportunities and Responsibilities of Wives of Headquarters Officers." In it, Mrs. General Higgins recognizes the same concern. Unfortunately, her first conclusion (more than eighty years ago) was that it was inevitable, given the structure in place at the time.

Now this condition, which can hardly be avoided, produces peculiar and delicate situations. In the years that have gone it may be we held a front-rank place, and led and controlled others; people looked to us, obeyed us and in most things we had the privilege and responsibility of the last word . . . Now everything is changed. To those of us who from the beginning, in obedience to a clear and definite call, took up our cross to follow the Master in becoming Officers, and appreciated the high calling as the greatest honour of life, the experience I have described carries with it a great trial.¹

Her conclusion at that time was that those married women officers needed to accept their assigned role, determining that “God shall still guide and control,” and suggesting that they look for opportunities to serve as the Home League treasurer or “just as ordinary Soldiers.” “But if in all the sweetness and gentleness of Christ we go to the Corps, showing the spirit of ‘I am among you as one that serveth,’ I am sure we shall find more open doors than we can enter, as well as an increased measure of love, sympathy, and blessing in our own spiritual life.”

I’m guessing that Catherine (Price) Higgins didn’t write this article in a vacuum – nor, at that time, was she serving as just an “ordinary soldier.” Even eighty years ago, it’s likely that married women officers in a variety of positions were finding those positions uncomfortable if not untenable. Apparently their concerns were known to the wife of the international leader (as she probably had experienced them herself), and her response is preserved for history through the written word.

Would it have been possible for her to work towards finding some kind of solution to the appointment dilemma rather than accepting it as a condition that could hardly be avoided? Was the only answer to the dilemma found by presenting a spiritual rationale to accept it as it stood? Perhaps even then some women questioned the reasoning of her guidance, but it came from the General’s wife so had to be accepted, didn’t it?

Is Higgins’ argument a theologically sound response in 2015? Are certain sacrifices expected of people because they are female and married? Or is that simply a rationalization that excuses the gender-specific selection of leadership once there is a wedding ring upon the finger of the woman? Elizabeth Janeway describes it this way: “When our mythology instructs any class of adults that it is their role to be gentler and more virtuous or humbler than the powerful, it operates as a form of social control . . .”²

What do we believe theologically about marriage and officership? Do we believe, as determined through the eyes of the Wesleyan quadrilateral – the primacy of the Scriptures, the tradition as found through the two millennia history of the Church (and, I’d suggest, in the one hundred fifty years of Salvation Army history), reason (rational thinking and sensible interpretation), and the experience of the Christian in their

¹ Catherine Price Higgins. *The Officer*. 1931.

² Elizabeth Janeway, *Powers of the Weak*. 1980, 158-159)

personal and communal journey ³in Christ – that women are to be subservient to their husbands in their work? If so, then the current appointment paradigm makes sense.

Perhaps we, as a denomination, do believe that the woman is the weaker vessel, incapable of serving in the same way that a man does. If that truly is our theological position, backed up by solid Biblical interpretation, then folding sheets may be an acceptable assignment for a married woman officer – or perhaps she should be freed to pursue other opportunities for service outside the Army.

But . . . the Salvation Army has a foundational commitment to gender equality based upon the strongly-held beliefs of its founders. Christine Parkins explains that while “Catherine Booth accepted that the Fall had put women into subjection as a consequence of sin and that submission to the male was God’s judgment upon her disobedience,” Booth argued that “to leave it there is to reject the good news of the gospel.”ⁱ William was in agreement: “I insist on the equality of women with men. Every officer and soldier should insist upon the truth that woman is as important, as valuable, as capable and as necessary to the progress and happiness of the world as a man.”⁴ While he may have had a theological acceptance of gender equality, Booth’s position was also a pragmatic one, as soldiers of both genders were needed for the salvation war. However, William also understood the cultural dynamics, and refused his daughter Evangeline permission to marry, as he recognized that marriage for her would limit her leadership role in the Salvation Army.

“But she really doesn’t want to be in leadership. She really wants to fold sheets all summer.” There may be a bit of truth in what some say behind closed doors. There are issues of small children and elderly parents, of marital dynamics and of low expectations, and, as I’ve so happily discovered, grandmother days. But there are many married women officers who are willing to give “every passion, every skill, every dream” to the work of the Kingdom as expressed through the Salvation Army but find that the job assigned is folding sheets, even if those sheets are figurative rather than literal.

So how to sort it out? We can’t really look to models elsewhere in the history of the church or even in our contemporary culture because the required dual clergy role has no cultural equivalent that I’m aware of. The US military offers no help unless we are willing to have separate deployments, with one spouse in Iraq and the other in Texas. So we are left to address this ‘issue’ ourselves through prayer, theological considerations, and the hard work of talking about it from the grassroots to the appointment consultations. It is time for the Aksah’s of our day to get down off our donkeys and tell those who hold the power what we want and need (see Judges 1:12-15).

³ Christine Parkin, “A Woman’s Place,” in *Catherine Booth, Her Continuing Relevance*, Clifford Kews, ed., (St. Albans, VT: The Campfield Press, 1990) 11-12.

⁴ William Booth. *Messages to Soldiers* (London; The Salvation Army, 1908) referenced on the Salvation Army international website, www.salvationarmy.org

The nuns solved their problem of Maria by setting her free to serve outside the convent so that she could “climb every mountain.” I don’t believe that’s what the majority of married Salvation Army women want. I’ll take a stab at what we do want and how to get there in the next edition of JAC.

Revival

by Colonel Richard Munn
Joel 2:28 – 32 and Acts 2:1 - 12

Proposition

The spiritual outpouring during Pentecost is the fulfillment of the original Jewish feast in which the hallmarks of a great harvest of souls and a new era for the Holy Spirit establish this as the original 'revival.'

This is still the birthright of the army today.

Introduction: In March of 1880 idle passers by in Castle Garden, New York City, thought the circus was coming to town. Descending down the gangplank of the steamer 'Australia' was an oddly uniformed man and 7 lassies waving flags never seen before in the USA. The man had been described as a 'lunatic' by his fellow passengers - for holding religious services all over the ship during the 4 week trip. The lassies had been described as 'half-a-dozen ignoramuses' by their own leader. As the curious gathered to investigate this strange mutation of Barnum and Bailey they were greeted with a hymn; "With a sorrow for sin, let repentance begin." Those who stayed longer heard the man - once again - get straight to the point: "You must be a lover of the Lord, or you won't go to heaven when you die!"

The Salvation Army was born in America - and it was magnificent Commissioner George Scott Railton and the 'splendid seven' lassies who marched down that gangplank and literally leapt into action.

- What appeared to be a travelling circus was the beginning of a much loved and respected movement that would soon encircle the globe.
- What appeared buffoonery was profoundly spiritually significant, a new beginning, a new movement - one that would reap an great harvest of souls, a movement of spiritual power and authority, a movement characterized by great liberty and freedom in the spirit.

Scripture: Apparent clowning that masks profound spirituality is present in the Acts chapter 2 story of Pentecost. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit with the miraculous and ecstatic speaking in other languages appeared to the curious onlooker as drunken comedy, so it took Peter to stand up and speak forcefully, pointing all the way back to the old prophecy of Joel, and under the anointing of God to say: 'This is that!'

It is a specific style of preaching - the '*peshet*' - the precise fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus did it frequently.

In other words the Joel passage has been fulfilled - it is not one of those prophecies that can even be thought of as 'maybe' happening one day in the future. 'This is that,' says Peter without equivocation.

This is worth noting, because the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is richly precise and significant. There is nothing haphazard here.

Pentecost: The feast of Pentecost is one of the three main feasts of the Jewish faith. A pilgrimage kind of a feast - that would explain the cosmopolitan gathering of Mediterranean types.

Pentecost literally means 'fiftieth.' Designated all the way back in Leviticus (23) is the ordinance to bring a grain offering seven weeks and one day after the Passover Sabbath. Also called the 'feast of weeks,' it marked the symbolic beginning of the harvest for a richly arable people.

And so the Joel passage: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved ..." is a true harvest of souls, one of the greatest, if not **the** greatest revival in the history of the church - "... about 3000 were added to their number that day." (Acts 2:41)

There is something else significant about the choice of Pentecost for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, however, because over the centuries it had come to be a celebration of the giving of the law, the 10 commandments, to Moses on Mount Sinai. Tradition had it that this was 50 days after escaping from the slavery of Egypt, the first night of Passover.

And so the Joel passage - once again - is richly significant: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people."

- If the 'law' was given on Mt. Sinai, it was an 'advocate' (lawyer) who was poured out at Pentecost.
- If it was the law - written on tablets of stone and impossible to keep - given at Sinai, it was the Holy Spirit searing God into the hearts of people empowering them to live lives of righteousness given at Pentecost.
- If it was cloud, fire and God's voice on Mount Sinai - it was rushing wind, tongues of fire and miraculous languages during Pentecost.

Holy Spirit Pentecost stands as both contrast and continuation of the Jewish Feast of Pentecost.

Pentecost remained as an important day for the early church - there are only 2 more references to Pentecost in the NT and both times Paul is making plans to move on or stay somewhere to celebrate Pentecost. "Paul...was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost." (Acts 20:16) This was 20 or so years later - what home coming week-ends those must have been!

- Holy Spirit Pentecost stands as an extension of the great saving ministry of Jesus Christ, his ascension preparing the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

- Holy Spirit Pentecost brings unparalleled power to the disciples who have just become apostles - it was for this that Jesus instructs them to wait in Jerusalem.
- Holy Spirit Pentecost marks a new era for the third member of the Trinity. It is the first birthday of the church. It marks an explosion of the presence of Christ around the world.
- Holy Spirit Pentecost is the first and greatest revival of the church - an unusual visitation of God pouring out sudden, unmerited, irresistible new life, invading human beings in a way that shatters old expectations.

Joel twice describes the coming of the Holy Spirit as a 'pouring out.' The image is that associated with a heavy tropical rainstorm - not a drizzle or a shower here. 'Pouring out' has a finality to it - what is poured out cannot be gathered again. And so it was at Pentecost - a Holy Spirit typhoon, and the recipients would never be the same again.

This pouring out is for 'all people.' Just in case we don't believe it Joel articulates it for us: regardless of gender, age or social status the Holy Spirit is for you. This is written in an age when tradition had it that the spirit of God would only rest on wise and rich men, or through exclusive schools of prophecy, the elders in particular.

While there is specific reference to 'prophesying' - and that certainly is accurate - this is not just for the preacher types. The universal outpouring of the spirit empowers us to communicate Christ in manifold creative ways – academic, artistic, aesthetic and more.

The outpouring and empowerment of the Holy Spirit is essential for mission and discipleship is. However, let's not relegate this to just the religious specialists - it is essential whatever your field – home, school, factory floor, office complex, add your world to the list.

"We believe it is the privilege of *all believers* to be wholly sanctified..." is the way we phrase it in our 10th doctrine.

And so, just as Christ was baptized by the Holy Spirit in the River Jordan at the commencement of his public ministry ...

- "... full of the Holy Spirit"
- "... led by the Holy Spirit"
- "... in the power of the Holy Spirit"
- "... anointed by the Holy Spirit"

... so too, the disciples receive a baptism before their public ministry can begin. If Christ relied on this Holy Spirit empowerment, how much more must we depend upon such a Holy Spirit commission today.

Leave it up to AW Tozer to caustically remark: "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from

the church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church 95% of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

Somewhat overstated - but enough truth to sting. As a body without breath is a corpse, so too a church without the Holy Spirit is dead.

Vision for a Salvationist Pentecost: Pentecost is perfect for The Salvation Army.

- Our founder wrote, "We want another Pentecost."
- 'Blood and Fire' is emblazoned as our motto
- We were birthed with Pentecostal power
- We identify with the holiness movement
- We have a revival heritage
- Male/female; young/old; clever/simple is part of who we are

General Eva Burrows one pronounced to a congress of Salvationists, with thunderous applause, 'The Salvation Army doesn't need any more programs, what we need is more of the Holy Spirit.'

The US state of New Jersey is associated with a motto: 'New Jersey and you, perfect together.'

For our purposes we might say; 'The Salvation Army and The Holy Spirit, perfect together.'

Realigning Christianity

by Major Robert Evans

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ who has declared His Lordship over your life, accepted His Word as the source of truth, and received His Spirit as your guide, then this post is for you...and me!

We are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that we should show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). We have been "saved and called to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace" (2 Timothy 1:9). We have been commissioned "to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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).

Therefore, as God's chosen, called and commissioned people we are urged to *"offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God"* and are warned to *"not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:1-2). As such, our lives become His and His ways become ours. Our hearts beat after His and His mind is in us. Our desires are submitted to Him and His will becomes ours.

As fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ, we are to *"have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather he made himself nothing by taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!"* (Philippians 2:5-8)

However, against this biblical framework of Christian faith...

There is an emerging form of Christianity where words like sacrifice, submission and service are being exchanged for a self-centred humanistic theology that seems more strongly influenced by popular opinion than being inspired by divine revelation!

- Some Christians pursue their HAPPINESS instead of God's HOLINESS
- Some Christians defend their RIGHTS ahead of God's RIGHTEOUSNESS
- Some Christians place their PREFERENCES over God's PATTERN
- Some Christians value their OPINIONS more than God's TRUTH
- Some Christians consider EQUALITY with the world greater than SUBMISSION to God's kingdom order
- Some Christians seek TOLERANCE of all views at the expense of OBEDIENCE to God's commands

This emerging form of Christianity unwittingly or maybe willingly flirts dangerously close to Paul's warning to Timothy: *"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear"* (2 Timothy 4:3).

This emerging form of Christianity is out of alignment with the relationship Jesus demonstrated with His Father and the life He modelled to His followers. It has created a false dichotomy between God's love and justice, compromising truth for tolerance. Jesus, on the other hand, *"full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14), reframed God's law and love in such a way that His justice and mercy hold together in perfect harmony. Jesus, *"full of grace and truth"*, redefined religion as a relationship that fully reflects God's character. Jesus, *"full of grace and truth"*, restored God's image in broken humanity by setting us *"free from the law of sin and death"* (Romans 8:2). Jesus, *"full of grace and truth"*, *"condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"* (Romans 8:3-4).

Grace without truth is licence to do what is right in your own eyes. Truth without grace is legalism to enforce your version of truth. However, to be truly Christlike, grace and truth are the incarnational posture for humility and holiness that brings Christians into full submission to the One whose name we bear. This is the only posture where the Spirit of Christ dwells and His transforming power prevails. Anything less makes us a *"slave to the law of sin"*, not the law of God (Romans 7:25).

At this time, when there is so much confusion and compromise in the church, our opinions and desires as Christ followers must be fully submitted to Jesus Christ if we are ever to regain our voice as effective witnesses in the world and be the generation to fulfill the Great Commission!

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Foundations

by Colonel Janet Munn

“Justice is power performing the work of love.”

Paul Tillich

“Speak truth to power.”

The Quakers

Two women officers of The Salvation Army, one from Pakistan, one from India, spoke to us, two women officers of The Salvation Army, one from the United States, one from the United Kingdom: “Don’t forget us. Please, don’t forget us.” And we never will. Having shared life together daily for eight weeks, we understood each other—our stories, idiosyncrasies, joys, and pain. These women from South Asia had found a place of emotional safety in our short-term Christian community, allowing them freedom to express for the first time the oppression and injustices they and many other women are enduring, specifically because they are female.

My ministry context in recent years has involved sharing daily living in close community, for eight weeks at a time, with Christian leaders from a wide variety of nations. I have found that assumptions devaluing females are present in Western contexts as well as in developing cultures. Cultural norms and practices that are antithetical to the gospel remain widely accepted and unchallenged even among Christians, including Christian leaders. In fact, I have become aware of a recurring pattern, throughout the systemic structures of many Christian organizations and denominations, of gender inequality.

This project will attempt to discover the extent to which leaders in The Salvation Army value gender equality. To inform that exploration, a transformative hermeneutic must be applied to the Christian Scriptures, to kingdom theology, and to church history. Specifically, biblical application must be made regarding an

understanding of the image of God in humankind, as well as a fuller understanding of Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom of God and its implications for male/female relationships. Additionally, clearer theological insight regarding the gospel of the kingdom and holiness within that kingdom is essential and particularly needed for those who wield power within Christian organizations and denominations. Further, greater cognizance of the history of Christianity, and particularly of The Salvation Army and its antecedents, is vital in order to rightly respond to contemporary contexts and challenges.

This chapter will explore, in section one, a biblical hermeneutic of power, gender, and the kingdom of God. This will be followed in section two with an examination of theological perceptions of power with respect to gender and the kingdom of God. Finally, section three will study the antecedent influences upon the formation of The Salvation Army relative to the participation of women in leadership.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Underlying the biblical foundation section of this chapter is an assumption that proper engagement with Scripture can bring about transformation of individuals and communities. This addresses the need for a transformative hermeneutic, an approach to biblical interpretation that has the potential to change the community of believers into one more authentically redemptive.

Power, Gender, and the Kingdom of God

Three Scripture passages are considered that address the topics of power, gender and the kingdom of God. The first is Genesis 1:26-29, with particular emphasis on verse 27: “So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (NLT). The New Living Translation (NLT) is used here due to its more inclusive use of “human beings” compared to the “mankind” of the NIV. Gen. 1:27 is examined within the context of the creation narratives, with specific focus on the image of God as reflected in humanity and the potential in Christ for the fullness of that image realized in Christian community.

The second text to be considered is Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NIV). This brief passage, with its description of the new community established in Christ as an in-breaking of the kingdom of God, is studied in the light of its relationship to Gen. 1:27.

The third passage is the parable told by Jesus of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8. The themes developed from this passage reflect the larger context of Luke’s Gospel and once again illustrate the in-breaking of the kingdom of God: the struggle by the powerless for justice (18:2-3); the images of God implied in the parable (18:4-5); and the necessity of relentless perseverance, fueled by the imagination of what can be, until justice is meted out—a manifestation of the kingdom (18:1, 3, 7). This treatment of Luke 18 demonstrates a hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures as a means of individual and community transformation.

Humanity: A Theophany

A great deal of attention has been given to the study of Gen. 1:27. This brief verse offers a fascinating and important window into the identity of humankind:

*“So God created human beings in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”*

Gen. 1:27 (NLT)

The verse has a chiasmic structure, which places “the image of God” at the center, thereby stressing the importance of the concept, as does the repetition of “image”

(Hartley 2000, 48). The concepts expressed in Gen. 1:27 in terms of the imaging of God and the dignity of all of humanity as bearers of that image are unique in the context of the ancient Near East.

There is one way in which God is imaged in the world and only one: humanness! . . . God is known peculiarly through this creature who exists in the realm of free history, where power is received, decisions are made, and commitments are honored. God is not imaged in anything fixed but in the freedom of human persons to be faithful and gracious. (Brueggemann 1982, 32)

“Humankind is the locus of divine presence and, as such, it should be highly cherished” (Herring 2008, 494).

Further to the structure of Gen. 1:27, in the Hebrew language the placement of the phrase “male and female” before the verb adds emphasis to it, thereby establishing two things: first, that every male and every female is made in God’s image; and second, that “in the essence of being human there is no qualitative difference between male and female” (Hartley 2000, 48).

Spencer makes the valuable point that the image of God is a double image. Therefore, males and females together are needed to reflect God’s image. The contextual significance for the image of God is displayed in relationships. The interrelationship between male and female symbolizes the interrelationship within God. Male and female are needed to reflect God’s nature (Spencer 1985, 21). Hess’s study of Gen. 1-3 corroborates Spencer’s conclusions. He points out that the image of God defined in Gen. 1:27 as male and female reveals that “the most important distinction between human beings and all other life on earth is a distinction that is shared by both male and female” (Hess 2008, 8).

The Image of God and Power

The language of Gen. 1:27 not only gives insight into the dignity of humanity as bearers of God’s image and the necessity of both genders in that image bearing, but also shows the significance of humankind’s image bearing in community. In the Hebrew text, the human is first spoken of as singular (“he created him”) and then as plural (“he created them”). Human beings are individuals but are also a community before God, a community including both males and females. Human beings in community mirror God’s image to the world (Brueggemann 1982, 34). These image-bearing humans, male and female, are immediately given authority for the rest of creation, being assigned by God to “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over. . .” all creatures (Gen. 1:28). Interestingly, Keen sees in Genesis 1 an anticipation of the advent of Jesus as the revelation of the fullness of the image of God:

Adam and Eve were called into being as a hope that opens to the coming history of the fullness of God with us. That is precisely what the history of Jesus is.

Therefore, it is to this that they are essentially related; when God created Adam and Eve, it was to the coming Christ that he looked. (Keen 1998, 138)

Thus, Jesus as the image of God (Col. 1:15; Hebrews 1:3) significantly informs an understanding of the assignment given to humankind in Gen. 1 as divine image bearers with delegated divine authority. Jesus' image-bearing example teaches that divinely empowered image bearers are not to grasp at such privilege (Phil. 2:1-8) but, instead, exercise power as God does by creative self-giving, for the sake of others (Mark 10:43-44). "There is nothing here of coercive or tyrannical power, either for God or for the humankind" but rather a costly demonstration of the Divine caring for the world (Brueggemann 1982, 32, 34).

As Jesus models a new disclosure of God, so he embodies a call for a new human community. The idea of the "image of God" in Gen. 1:26-29 and in Jesus of Nazareth . . . is an explicit call to form a new kind of human community in which the members, after the manner of the gracious God, are attentive in calling each other to full being in fellowship. (Brueggemann 1982, 34-35)

Whatever Happened to Eden?

Most scholars agree at least on the 'spiritual equality' of males and females as stated in both the Old and New Testaments, most specifically in Gen. 1:27 and Gal. 3:28. Some, however, limit the notion of gender equality to the spiritual arena, and understand these texts as irrelevant to temporal equality.

For example, in interpreting the earliest chapters of Genesis and their instruction as to God's intention for gender at creation, Perriman references Gen. 3:9, stating, "We should take note of the fact that the man retains both precedence and prominence throughout the creation narrative. It is Adam to whom God calls in the garden" (Perriman 1998, 177). The conclusions reached by Perriman from his interpretation of Scripture include language of male dominance and power and, by implication, subservience and weakness for females.

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes such a religious view as patriarchy, not just in the sense of an "androcentric world construction in language but a social, economic and political system of graded subjugations and oppressions" (Russell 1985, 127). The practical implications of such a patriarchal hermeneutic can be seen in an essay by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, based on her work in shelters for battered women. The essay is entitled "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation."

Frequently women with strong religious backgrounds have the most difficulty in accepting that the violence against them is wrong. They believe what they have been taught, that resistance to this injustice is unbiblical and unchristian. Christian women are supposed to be meek, and claiming rights for oneself is committing the sin of pride . . . I have found that most social workers, therapists and shelter personnel view religious beliefs as uniformly reinforcing passivity and

tend to view religion, both traditional Christianity and Judaism, as an obstacle to a woman's successful handling of abuse. (Russell 1985, 99)

The hermeneutical conclusions from the early chapters of Genesis reached by Perriman in support of female subjugation in the temporal realm can readily fuel the kind of acceptance of oppression and abuse described by Thistlethwaite. Perriman's conclusions are difficult to reconcile with the sacrificial, self-giving example of the exercise of power understood in Gen.1:27 and in Jesus' witness, which the text anticipates. Further, they are incompatible with the double image of gender mutuality central to Gen. 1:27.

In contrast to Perriman's view, Bilezikian presents a hermeneutic of the creation texts that celebrates the full humanity of woman. In interpreting Gen. 2:23, Bilezikian notes that Adam acknowledges the woman's participation in the fullness of his own humanity.

She was God's ultimate achievement, taken out of man and made in God's image, the fusing of human beauty distilled to its graceful essence with mirrored divine perfection, the sudden present that caused the man to marvel in a whisper, 'At last!' (Bilezikian 1999, 33)

Bilezikian defends the male-female images of God of Gen. 1:27 by insisting that a proper hermeneutic of the creation texts demonstrates that ideas of a hierarchy between man and woman were completely absent in God's creation design (1999, 35). In that "[male domination] resulted from the fall, the rule of Adam over Eve is viewed as satanic in origin, no less than is death itself" (Bilezikian 1999, 58).

Kingdom of God, Come!

Gal. 3:28 brings into focus the kingdom of God as a new world order. The Apostle Paul asserts the theme of the kingdom of God breaking in with his pronouncement in the form of a threefold affirmation: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This is understood to have been an early Christian baptismal confession, the locus of which is "in Christ" (Jervis 1999, 106). Having been raised a devout Jew, prior to his conversion Paul himself was likely to have given daily thanks to God, along with other Jewish males, that he was not a Gentile, not a slave, and not a woman. It is interesting to note that this prayer was not an indication of contempt for Gentiles, slaves, or women per se. Rather, the prayer of gratitude was expressed because Gentiles, slaves, and women "were disqualified from . . . religious privileges which were open to free Jewish males" (Bruce 1982, 187).

But the Christian baptismal confession of Gal. 3:28 declared that a new world order had begun, that the kingdom of God had come. In that kingdom Christians gained a new identity that "transcended all typical social distinctions and the moral distinctions that resulted from such social differentiating" (Jervis 1999, 106). In Christ, one's primary identity is no longer defined in terms of ethnic, social, or gender distinctions.

There is a striking detail in the language of Gal. 3:28 that commands attention. In the Greek text, the first two phrases of the affirmation are symmetrical: “Jew *nor* Gentile” and “slave *nor* free.” However, the third phrase stands out because it reads literally “male and female.”

The phrase exactly echoes the Septuagint of Genesis 1:27: God created man “male and female.” Perhaps early Christians chose this phrase deliberately so as to signify that in baptism a new creation occurs (cf 2 Cor. 5:17), one that redefines even the most basic features of the original creation. (Jervis 1999, 106)

In both the creation account of Gen. 1:27 and the new creation declared in Gal. 3:28, the language of “male and female” does not emphasize their distinctiveness from each other, but their union in reflecting God’s image. Of course certain gender differences remain; these are not abolished in the new creation. But “in Christ” something new has happened, the kingdom has come, and the old divisions of the fallen world order have come to an end (Bruce 1982, 189; Longenecker 1999, 159).

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The Gospel of Luke has been called the “Gospel of the Outcast” (Witherington 1990, 52) and of the poor and marginalized. Luke clearly displays a special concern for women, “who were the most marginalized group in the first century, and for those who existed at the bottom rung of Jewish society” (Card 2011, 13). Luke’s Gospel contains many incidents in which the contributions as well as the needs of women are remembered. Among them are the stories of Mary and Elizabeth (1:39-56); Anna (2:36-38); Peter’s mother-in-law (4:38-39); the widow at Nain (7:11-17); a hemorrhaging woman and a dead girl (8:40-53). Luke also attributes to Jesus a number of parables that are replete with female perspectives and experiences, such as the woman using yeast in making bread (13:20-21), the woman searching for her lost coin (15:8-10), and the widow before the unjust judge pleading for justice (18:1-8). The inclusion of these women in the Gospel of Luke, studied with a hermeneutic of liberation, emphasizes the contribution of women as “exemplars of poorness and lowliness before God that finds expression in barrenness, widowhood, spiritual or actual neediness or service to the poor” (Kopas 1986, 192).

The parables just cited are set in the context of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God in Luke 11-19. The coming of the kingdom in the Gospel of Luke is expressed in the attention given to women, and these parables are seen as exemplary of the nature of the coming age (Wink 1992, 132). In fact, Jesus treated women as he did because “the restoration of women to their full humanity in partnership with men is integral to the coming of God’s egalitarian order” in the kingdom of God (Wink 1992, 134).

The Struggle of the Powerless for Justice

"In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'" Luke 18:2-3

Jesus tells a parable of a widow in need of justice facing an unjust judge. In Jesus' day legal cases were always a matter of a judge deciding to vindicate one party or the other (Wright 2001, 212). Such judges were usually appointed by Herod or the Romans and were notorious for their corrupt practices, particularly the expectation of bribes (Barclay 1953, 230). The widow in this case is without resources of any kind and has no hope of ever extracting justice from such a judge. She is a symbol of all who are poor and defenseless in the face of injustice (Barclay 1953, 231; Card 2011, 202).

Kopas asserts that the parable of the persistent widow succeeds perhaps better than any other in "uniting the themes of equality and oppression" (Kopas 1986, 200). The widow is virtually powerless in that she has no status compared to the judge or in relation to others who would plead with him. Yet, "despite her lowliness in society she recognizes a deeper claim to recognition" (Kopas 1986, 200). Reid describes this parable as one that "shatters stereotypes and highlights the power of the seeming powerless" (Reid 1996, 194). Widows such as Ruth, Tamar, and Anna join the woman in Luke 18 as women of action and persistence who are a vital part of the biblical story. These women challenge assumptions of widows as poor and helpless; they demonstrate assertiveness in their willingness to take critical action for justice and salvation (Reid 1996, 193).

This paradox of strength and weakness is intrinsic to the kingdom of God and manifest in the essential nature of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven, like a woman with yeast (Luke 13:20-21), comes not in power and glory but in "hiddenness and insistent, gentle influence on people whether they know it or not" (Kopas 1983, 199).

The Image of God—As Judge or Vulnerable Widow?

"Finally [the judge] said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

Luke 18:4-5

The theme of the vindication of the powerless is a constant one in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth continued this identification of the chosen of God with the poor (Russell 1985, 100). How closely Jesus' teaching allows for his own identification with the poor is another question.

There is a wide variety of opinion among scholars as to the most appropriate way to interpret the position of the widow of this parable. Augustine allegorized the persistent widow as the church. Some contemporary scholars identify her in relation to the individual believer. Others view her as embodying all who are oppressed and need to continually fight against systems and structures of subjugation (Snodgrass 2008, 454).

Each of these can offer a helpful perspective and have legitimacy in the context of particular life circumstances.

There is also more than one way to interpret the role of the judge in the parable. The traditional interpretation is that the judge represents God, not in the sense of one who corrupts justice, but in the sense of one who holds supreme power and authority (Wright 2001, 212; Barclay 1953, 231). Others would see this portrayal of God as itself oppressive. Some view the judge as embodying oppressive structures of injustice that cannot withstand the relentlessness of the coming kingdom (Scott 1989, 187).

Reid sets her interpretation of this parable in literary context, noting that in each of the previous two Lucan parables—the kingdom of God likened to a woman with yeast in Luke 13:20-21 and to a woman searching for a lost coin in Luke 15:8-10—the woman represents God. In the context of Jesus' kingdom teaching in the Gospel of Luke an entirely different understanding emerges, namely, that the image of God is represented by the widow.

Here is an unexpected twist in the parable. That God would be relentlessly pursuing justice is not a new image of the divine. But that God is more akin to a victimized widow than a powerful judge is startling. She embodies godly power in the midst of apparent powerlessness. Followers of Jesus are invited to take up the same stance: to draw on the power of weakness to overcome death-dealing powers. (Reid 1996, 192)

Kopas adds further hermeneutical insight from the Gospel of Luke: “[the female] image is of the God of compassion who brings good news to the poor, does not break the bruised reed or extinguish the smoking wick, and gives hope to those who wait in darkness” (Kopas 1986, 202). She also sees in the women portrayed in these parables from Luke the image of God communicated in simplicity (Kopas 1986, 199). Such an approach to hermeneutics offers a redemptive message to the poor and powerless people of the world as well as a tempering message to the powerful ones.

Relentless Perseverance Fueled by Imagination

“There was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ . . . And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?” Luke 18:3, 7

The powerlessness of the widow in this parable is beyond doubt. It seems unlikely that she would have been able to offer a bribe to the judge, or that she had other human support or advocacy. Her case looked hopeless. After all,

Judges have two principal motives to show justice . . . a healthy fear of God . . . a deep respect and concern for humanity. This judge had neither of these qualities—had no reason to “do justice.” But the persistent widow is about to help him find a new reason. (Card 2011, 202)

The woman's only asset was her persistence (Witherington 1990, 53). And in the kingdom of God as illustrated by Jesus in this parable, her persistence was enough. In teaching this parable Jesus not only demonstrates a concern for a widow, but even the implication that this woman's conduct—persistent, relentless, importunate, annoying perhaps—was a model to the disciples of divinely affirmed behavior, including for women (Witherington 1990, 63). It is difficult to imagine a stronger endorsement of the widow's persistence than that given by Jesus.

From this text and interpretation Reid challenges contemporary believers, both women and men, "to courageously face death-dealing powers and persistently demand justice" (Reid 1996, 194). Similarly, Wright offers a helpful hermeneutical approach that calls for persistence in challenging the status quo, practices that need to be challenged with the new thing that has happened and continues to happen through the entrance in the flesh of Jesus Christ into the human story. Such must be challenged and at times confronted with the redemptive word of Scripture (Wright 2005, 121-123). The widow's relentless persistence is essential in this regard.

The promise of the coming kingdom included vindication of the powerless: Israel's god would vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night. His vindicated elect (18:8) however, would be a group one might not have expected: not the official or self-appointed guardians of Israel's national life, but those who cry to their god for vindication. They would be the forgiven ones. Humble in the present, they would be exalted in the future on the day when Israel's god acted. (Wright 1996, 366)

In the Lucan parables, Jesus features women as exemplary of the nature of this coming age. The widow of Luke 18 is iconic in her persistent challenge of injustice—injustice meaning anything out of line with the perfect will of God. "Injustice is sin, systems, powers and authorities that damage the world. Injustice is greed, desire and harmful practices and beliefs that diminish people and society" (Roberts and Strickland 2008, 14).

An Imaginative Hermeneutic

Bilezikian addresses persistent intentionality in recreating a redemptive biblical hermeneutic, stating that

It will require nothing less than a systematic effort of deprogramming, designed to purge the Christian mind of abusive interpretations of portions of Scripture that should have been left alone when not understood, and the vulgar popular stereotypes that such misinterpretations have reinforced. (Bilezikian 1999, 210)

The Lucan pericope considered here expresses the potential of a refusal to give up on a vision, an imagination of justice restored. How is it possible to remain persistent in fighting against injustice, to continue to believe for something better? Engaging the

Scriptures in such a way that creative use of the imagination is involved makes it possible to see beyond what is to what could be. In the context of the Gospel of Luke specifically, Card asserts that “a parable demands the use of the imagination . . . we too must learn what it means to read, to perceive, to understand the Bible with our imaginations” (Card 2011, 11).

Several scholars have used the term ‘imagination’ in addressing issues of hermeneutics and justice in the post-modern context. For example, Brueggemann describes within each person a “zone of imagination that stands between the input of the text and the outcome of attitude, belief and behavior” (Brueggemann 1993, 61). This, he argues, is an essential factor in the human capacity to change through engagement with biblical texts. It is this sort of hermeneutical imagination that is needed to face and challenge oppressive and exploitative practices (Brueggemann 1993, 62).

Brueggemann offers an imaginative conception of the ultimate effectiveness of a biblical understanding of various kingdom paradoxes. “It is that candid reality of weakness and gentleness that will in the end permit the undoing of an abusive, fearful world of the self-sufficient and the formation of a new counter-world of genuine humanness” (Brueggemann 1993, 32). Card describes life in this kingdom as becoming “a slave to the impossible” (Card 2011, 40). Faith leads to perseverance in the struggle and the imagination necessary to prevail, the same spirit portrayed by the persistent widow:

What is unbelief but the despair, dictated by the dominant powers, that nothing can really change, a despair that renders revolutionary vision and practice omnipotent . . . Faith entails political imagination, the ability to envision a world that is not dominated by the powers. (Myers 1988, 305)

Jesus’ purpose in Luke 18 is to teach his disciples to persist in prayer, an endeavor of imaginative faith. Wink links such persistence with challenging oppressive forces through prayer:

Intercessory prayer is spiritual defiance of what is in the way of what God has promised. Intercession visualizes an alternative future to the one apparently fated by the momentum of current forces. Prayer infuses the air of a time yet to be into the suffocating atmosphere of the present. History belongs to the intercessors who believe the future into being. (Wink 1998, 173)

Summary

This biblical foundation section has endeavored to address oppression stemming from an inadequate or inaccurate biblical hermeneutic. A hermeneutic of the kingdom of God is needed that is essentially Christian feminist and deeply imaginative.

The three scripture passages studied included Gen. 1:26-29 with an examination of the image of God as reflected in humanity and the potential in Christ for the fullness of that image in male and female together. The second text considered was Gal. 3:28 and the

new community established in Christ as an in-breaking of the kingdom of God explored in relation to Gen. 1:27 and Luke 18:1-18, the third passage examined. Specifically, Gal. 3:28 was examined as a threefold early Christian baptismal confession understood as representing the new creation in the kingdom of God in which previously held social categories of separation and domination become irrelevant. Particular focus was given to the categories of male and female in the new creation.

Luke's Gospel was studied as an expression of the gospel of the kingdom. This in-breaking of the kingdom as witnessed in the Gospel of Luke includes the struggle by the powerless for justice (18: 2-3), the images of God implied in this parable (18: 4-5), and the necessity of relentless perseverance, fueled by the imagination of what can be (18: 1, 3, 7).

These three passages provide key hermeneutical themes with relevance to matters of the image of God, power, gender, and the kingdom of God. The kingdom themes of strength in weakness, power exercised in sacrificial self-giving, and God's identity with the vulnerable were developed throughout. The mutuality and synergy intended for the genders as understood in the creation texts were explored, as were some feminist interpretations of the parable from Luke 18.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The theological foundations section of this chapter approaches the themes of power, gender, and the kingdom of God, from the varying perspectives of Christian thought and tradition. The use of power by those who self-identify as Christians has left a varied and contradictory legacy. To this day, some Christian denominations and organizations offer theological justification for male domination within religious hierarchies, resulting in diminution of the full image of God as displayed in both genders. This examination will commence with a theological discussion of power and the image of God as reflected in the dual male/female image, and the image of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Power, Gender, and the Kingdom of God

Clearly, any Christian theology of power must be profoundly formed by Christ's own example as He inaugurated the kingdom of God. A truly Christ-formed theology of power must manifest itself in personal holiness and societal transformation with regard to gender relationships as a demonstration of the kingdom of God breaking in. This principle applies most particularly to the use of power within the church. These issues are taken up by means of a focus on power and a theology of the kingdom of God.

Interwoven throughout is consideration of Wesleyan holiness theology as it relates to the kingdom of God and power as this is the theological tradition of The Salvation Army—the context for the project reported on in this paper.

Theology of Power and Divine Image

A classical theological conception of the omnipotence of God includes the power of creation, governance, and teleological completion (Case-Winters 1990, 39, 172, 201). This is in alignment with most orthodox Christian creedal statements, including Salvation Army doctrine number two, which states: "We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship (The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine 2010, xv).

Biblically, all power comes from God and belongs to God (Matt. 26:64; John 19:11); God's power upholds the world itself (Heb.1:3; Col. 1:17; Marshall 1995, 679). Calvin asserts that divine omnipotence includes not only the overall direction of human history but also the determining of all personal and particular details (Case-Winters 1990, 202). According to Barth, divine power is "independent, unconditioned and causative . . . never even partly dependent upon, or responsive to" any of its objects (Case-Winters 1990, 103; Davaney 1981, 48).

This theological understanding of divine omnipotence invites critique. Divine omnipotence, as asserted by Calvin and Barth, is understood as "power in the mode of domination and control" (Case-Winters 1990, 39). Wink perceives the danger of such power as representing "the Domination System" which he describes as "might makes right . . . the prize goes to the strong. Peace through war, security through strength: these are the core convictions that arise from this ancient historical religion" known as "the Domination System" (Wink 1992, 16-17). The "Domination System" is best understood as what the Bible describes as "world," "aeon," and "flesh" (Wink 1992, 49). While at times attributed to God, these ways of exercising power are in contradiction to the example of Christ himself and God's intended "domination-free order," which Jesus came to establish in the kingdom of God (Wink 1992, 46).

The theological view of divine omnipotence propounded by Calvin and Barth is perceived as having a male bias that has historically resulted in destructive social consequences of "oppression, exploitation and violence" enflamed by divine attribution (Case-Winters 1990, 172-173). Another criticism of the Calvinist position, then, is that it excludes the female image of God drawn from the creation narrative of Gen. 1. Primary or exclusive emphasis on masculine divine imaging of power communicates, at best, a secondary position for females (Case-Winters 1990, 218).

The image of God portrayed in Gen 1:27 reveals the necessity of both male and female to reflect the divine image in the world. The intention is neither masculine nor feminine as normative, but rather a necessary co-existing of both in an egalitarian order (Wink 1992, 47).

What we need are images that encompass the positive aspects of both [male and female]. . . . The issue of sexist language in our God-talk goes far deeper, then, than matters of simple justice and fairness to women. What is at stake is a

veritable revolution in our God-images. Nothing could be more crucial, because our images of God create us. (Wink 1992, 48)

The egalitarian order referenced here was inaugurated through Jesus Christ as the unique expression of the divine image and the holy example of a right use of power.

Divine Power in the Image of Christ

Divine power, particularly as revealed in Jesus, “liberates rather than subjugates,” and thus is an expression of divine love (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 311). A theology of power must allow for God to restrict his freedom to act, for love’s sake. “God shows power, not by asserting himself against us, but by the act of turning precisely to the creature that rebels against God” as demonstrated in Jesus’ self-sacrifice (Mott and Tilleman 2012, 312). This is a distinctly different theological perspective on divine omnipotence compared to that of domination and control, as conceived by Calvin (Case-Winters 1990, 39). It also relates to the biblical concept of justice, which seeks not only to alleviate suffering but also to deliver from the power that causes it (Mott and Tilleman 2012, 27).

Lipp and colleagues offer insight regarding power and freedom demonstrated in Jesus. “In the incarnation of the Son and his path to impotent suffering on the cross, we are thus to see an act of divine freedom and divine power” (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 311). It is evident that in Christ’s exercise of power, relations of superiority and subjection have lost their primacy:

God’s power is always rooted in love, not pride; it is rooted in redemption, not conquest; and it is rooted in concern for the other, not the self. It is humble, not proud, and inviting, not rejecting. Its symbol is the cross, not the sword. This is why [God’s power] is seen as weakness by the world. (Hiebert 1994, 238)

Jesus Christ reveals the Father, and thereby radically alters any theological understanding of divine omnipotence by demonstrating “power operating in divine relationship and through divine intention” (Van Rheen 2000, 777). Jesus brings into being a new order, an exercise of power transformed by faith working by love, that is “free even in the face of death and hence it can dare all for which it can be responsible to God. It can defy superior force, because it still accepts even ruin as victory” (Rahner 1973, 408-409). This new order is called the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God offers a radically new picture of divine power (Lk 4:14; 5:17; 11:20-22).

The Kingdom and Power

The kingdom of God is viewed by some scholars as the first and most essential dogma of the Christian faith, in that it is both the gospel Jesus preached and the new state of things he introduced (Snyder 2001, 61; Green 2012). The New Testament concept of the kingdom of God is as the reign of God, the redemptive rule of God (Grudem 1994,

863-864; Green 2012). Such language: “kingdom,” “reign,” “rule;” is the language of power.

With the coming of this kingdom something new has happened, particularly in relation to power. This kingdom comes in the person, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rahner 1981, 402; Marshall 1995, 680; Hiebert 1994, 235). In Wright’s language, “Jesus came to launch God’s new creation, and with it a new way of being human . . . God’s kingdom was bursting into the present world” (Wright 2010, 116). It is a kingdom, a reign, bringing freedom—the rule of God that brings liberty (Moltmann 1989, 78), which Wink describes as “God’s domination-free order” (Wink 1992, 299). This clarifies why Jesus’ words and actions, which introduced the kingdom of God, were particularly good news to the poor, those who were powerless and thus vulnerable to mistreatment by the powerful (Mott and Tilleman 2012, 12; Rahner 1981, 401). This kingdom, ushered in by Jesus, cannot be established by force, “but only by its proper means: by suffering, self-giving love” (Wright 2010, 98). Hence, the use of power, in its usual sense, has been turned upside down by the coming of this kingdom.

The Kingdom—Personal and Social

This upside-down kingdom has significant implications that are both personal and social in nature. Grudem contends that Christians can experience in this life something of what God’s final kingdom reign will be like: “They will know some measure of victory over sin, over demonic opposition, and over disease. They will live in the power of the Holy Spirit who is the dynamic power of the coming kingdom” (Grudem 1994, 864). Wright goes a step farther, “Precisely because God is the God of creative, generous, outflowing love, his way of running things is to share power, to work through his image-bearers, to invite their glad and free collaboration in his project” (Wright 2010, 67).

Snyder is concerned that a theology of the kingdom have application in contemporary society. For example, he argues that Barth’s theology of the kingdom results in an overemphasis on individual rather than communal response and societal impact (Snyder 2001, 72). Similarly, Bultmann’s theology of the kingdom of God is criticized for “retreat[ing] into the hearers’ interiority,” (Heltzel 2008, 455), with significant questions raised as to societal relevance:

Has Bultmann lost the very thing that made the kingdom of God relevant in the first place: namely, how to achieve God’s kingdom in the sociopolitical reality of history? If the social and communal dimension of the kingdom is localized in an individual’s interior struggles, and if human responsibility is reduced to an attitude toward the unknown future, has not the kingdom of God become merely a solipsistic disposition? (Heltzel 2008, 455)

The implied disconnection of the kingdom of God from society in the here and now is untenable for Snyder and Heltzel.

Willard and Simpson place strong emphasis on the personal, individual effect of the breaking in of the kingdom. They call this a revolution of character, pointing out that the power of the kingdom manifests itself first inside the human heart—but that it then results in transformation of social structures. “Such transformed people bring the presence of the Kingdom and the King into every corner of human life by fully living in the Kingdom with him” (Willard and Simpson 2006, 13-14). This fullness of the kingdom Moltmann understands to be the “restoration of all things” (Muller-Fahrenholz 2000, 186).

Wink points out that Jesus’ own life demonstrated the possibility of “a total reorientation within . . . and a total reorientation without” (Wink 1992, 162). He emphasizes the necessity of change in personal conduct in the kingdom, anticipating that by itself it will upset the conventions of social power. This is exemplified in Jesus’ words regarding tax collectors and prostitutes entering the kingdom of God ahead of some religious leaders (Matt. 21:31). “Apparently Jesus’ God is interested in one thing only: whether we behave in a way consistent with the divine order that is coming” (Wink 1992, 168).

Kingdom Power in Society

John Wesley’s kingdom paradigm is not one of passively waiting for a future hope but, rather, recognizing that while “the final eradication of evil and establishment of righteousness will only take place at [Christ’s] return,” the church “must prepare for [his] appearing with Kingdom deeds,” thus the need for activism in social justice and mercy (Cubie 1983, 103).

The kingdom of God is present and future, personal and corporate, is inaugurated by and present in Jesus Christ. This kingdom represents a reversal of the power dynamic, whereby God shares power with the citizens of the kingdom. This is especially good news to the oppressed, and therefore has significant relevance for females, who suffer the most among those who are oppressed.

In Wesleyan kingdom theology there is no disconnect between conversion, sanctification, and the process of social transformation (Hynson 1988, 47). The kingdom of God involves individuals freed from sin by the sanctifying power of the Spirit and also from the relationships and conditions in which they live (Moltmann 1989, 293). Wesley recognized that “the Gospel must simultaneously be individual and social” (Bundy 1988, 12).

Salvation Army founder William Booth developed a similar holistic understanding of holiness:

For William Booth, especially in his later theology, the one true sign of the Church was participation in the work of redemption, both personal redemption and social redemption leading ultimately to the establishment of the kingdom of God. This work was fundamentally connected to Booth’s doctrine of holiness

because he believed that only a holy people could accomplish a holy work and achieve a holy goal. (Green 1989, 56)

E. Stanley Jones' theological development offers an interesting example of evolution from an individualistic American view of the kingdom (Bundy 1988, 5) to one recognizing social responsibility and seeking societal redemption:

Jesus believed in life and its redemption. Not only was the soul to be saved—the whole of life was to be redeemed. The kingdom of God coming on earth is the expression of that collective redemption. The entrance to the kingdom of God is by personal conversion, but the nature of that kingdom is social. The kingdom of God is the most astonishingly radical proposal ever presented to the human race (Jones quoted in Bundy 1988, 10).

The outworking of the kingdom of God in society will include “justice to others on the personal, social and societal levels” (Cubie 1983, 100). This of course includes a radically different community of females and males.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Not only does Wesley understand that power is available to the individual believer to respond to the Gospel and to resist sin, but also that power is at work in the church corporately, power to radically impact society. Because Christ is king now,

“The church may resist evil powers in the sure promise that its work in the world will be crowned with grace and, finally, glory . . . Wesley's theology makes conversion the rite of initiation into the kingdom, and sanctification the pilgrimage through the kingdom on earth until the glory of heaven is reached” (Hynson 1988, 52, 54).

Believers are thus freed from the will-to-power of the unregenerate and empowered, rather, to live for God and for the good of others (Hynson 1988, 54; Cubie 1983, 102). This is the domination-free order preached by Jesus in which we see “a single unifying theme: a vision of the liberation of all humanity” (Wink 1992, 45).

The gospel of the kingdom of God is more than a future hope, valuable as that is. It is a gospel of Jesus' liberating message that offers a “context-specific remedy for the evils of the Domination System” (Wink 1992, 49). “Context-specific” indicates that the coming of the kingdom on earth as in heaven is for now. It is meant to demonstrate the presence of God in his people, male and female. And that these people, as male and female, would relate to one another in mutual honor and submission, even as is demonstrated in the godhead. This is to be a sign of the kingdom of God breaking in.

Wesley's theology of the kingdom of God is one of power, power given by God's grace, power to respond to the Gospel, power not to sin. Further, this is divine power in human communities given in order to oppose injustice and oppression in society and cultural

norms and forms that are in opposition to the reign of God. This is to include power in the grace of God to resist sexism and discrimination against females, and power to transform structures that stand against God's kingdom breaking in.

The gospel of the kingdom was never intended to be kept personal and private; in fact, it cannot. The reality of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God indeed brings about personal transformation, and that is intrinsically linked to transformed conduct in community, thereby proclaiming the coming of the kingdom in the wider society. This new order is demonstrated in relationships between males and females in defiance of the prevailing Domination System of the world.

Kingdom Power in the Church

Cubie points out that emphasis on societal transformation has often been either neglected or attempted through the use of force by the church, thereby negating kingdom principles and understanding of Christlike use of power (Cubie 1983, 101). He applies the term "anti-Christ" to anything that opposes the kingdom of Christ (Cubie 1983, 101). This includes efforts by those with power in the church to create unity through force, use of violence or deceit, and oppression of others (Cubie 1983, 106). All of these demonstrate a failure in love, which is the ethic of the kingdom of God.

Jesus sets the example of
the power of the powerless, the judgment of the one who did not come to judge
and the wrath of the Lamb who did not come to condemn but to save. His power
was that of sacrificial, self-giving love, and must be manifest in those who are his.
(Cubie 1983, 107)

The power and authority of believers individually and as a community flow from the kingdom of Christ. In other words, all rule in the church is legitimized only by Christ's own kingdom rule and should be modeled after his example.

True unity in the church is not about organizational or hierarchical unity, as these invite temptation "to fulfill one's personal vision of the Kingdom by coercing others into it" (Cubie 1983, 108). Kingdom unity transcends loyalties of politics, economics, and culture, recognizing the manifold ways in which the kingdom comes. What each is called into is the liberty and unity of love (Cubie 1983, 109). The ideal of kingdom unity challenges the so-called hierarchical unity that William Booth demanded of his troops, outshines it in reflecting the unity of the godhead, and is potentially demonstrated by women and men portraying the divine image.

Temptations abound within the church to use coercion and to establish one's own "kingdom" or vision. There must be recognition, even suspicion of "all autonomy of power" (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 312). The power of God in the kingdom is "irreconcilably opposed to any form of divisive self-assertion or request for power on the part of any individual or group" (Rahner 1981, 401-402). These are to be recognized as "anti-Christ" (Cubie 1983, 106), submitted to accountability or controls, and rejected as

legitimate means of accomplishment. Wesley's optimism and confidence in the power of God over sin did not lead to the absence of accountability, but to greater accountability, in the form of class meetings and other similar means (Henderson 1987, 13).

A theology is needed to assist in distinguishing between a secular model of the use of power and the right use of power available through the Spirit within the people. And such a relevant "theology of power must refuse, then, to demonize power or to glorify impotence. Instead, it must develop criteria for responsible handling of ecclesiastical, political and social power" (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 314).

Summary

Theological views of divine omnipotence must be profoundly formed by the revelation of Jesus Christ and His example of the use of power as self-sacrificing for the sake of others and rooted in love. Further, a theology of the Divine image that includes both the masculine and feminine serves to inform an egalitarian understanding of human community in general and the new community in Christ in particular.

This new community in Christ is to demonstrate the coming of the kingdom of God by means of its unconventional relational power dynamics, in which those whom society would exclude are welcomed, the weak are empowered, and the powerful humble themselves, resulting in a domination-free order. This theological understanding of power in Christian community assumes the transformation of all social relationships, most particularly relationships between males and females.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The history of Christianity reveals a stunning polarity in the use of power with regard to personal holiness, social responsibility, and gender equality. On the one hand, it was Christians who launched the Crusades and the Inquisition, slaughtering large numbers of Muslims and Jews. This legacy also includes the New England witch hunts of the 17th century, 90 percent of whose victims were female (Isherwood and McEwan 2001, 37). On the other hand, throughout the centuries, it was in no small part Christians who established hospitals and universities, promoted literacy and education for the masses, and fought to abolish the African slave trade. Christians have long defended the rights of women, children, and the poor (Campbell and Court 2004, 44, 48-49).

From this wide scope and contradictory witness of Christian history this section of the paper narrows its focus to the antecedents influential in the formation of The Salvation Army and its early history relative to the participation of women in leadership. This examination is intended to provide a basis for comparison of current Salvation Army practice with historical practice and offer a context for review and analysis of contemporary Army leaders' views with regard to gender equality.

Power, Gender, and the Kingdom of God

Specifically, early practice of The Salvation Army is considered in light of its spiritual ancestry in the Wesleyan revival of the 18th century and of the pervasive influence of the holiness movement that grew out of that revival. Particular attention is given to Catherine Booth's significant role in promoting women in leadership. An exploration of the effect of the Salvation Army's military structure on its use of power and the authoritarian stance of co-founder William Booth round out the section.

Early Influences

From the days of the early church fathers as shown in the patristic writings, Green argues, there has been an emphasis on the correlation between personal holiness and social responsibility, bringing significant societal benefits. "One such example of this is found in the success of Christianity with equalizing women in society" (Green 1977, 28). These three emphases, personal holiness, social responsibility, and equality of women, were foundational in the practice of The Salvation Army.

An influence on The Salvation Army in its earliest years in terms of inclusion of women in ministry leadership was that of the Quakers.

Booth found himself at the head of a rapidly growing movement badly in need of local leadership and funds. Women flocked to The Army, and Booth . . . used women in the entire range of Army work . . . almost from the very beginning. Catherine Booth, an extraordinarily intelligent and capable person, spearheaded this reform. The Quaker example proved, again, helpful and encouraging in this regard . . . It is clear that the early Salvationists repeatedly made eager use of the Quaker example in employing women in the Christian ministry. (McKinley 1977, 49-50)

McKinley makes explicit the Quaker precedent and influence upon both Catherine and William Booth with regard to females in ministry. The unity of conviction on this point between Catherine and William was sufficient to overflow into their own practice within their marriage and into their leadership of the newly established Salvation Army.

"The greatest breakthrough in opportunities for women to proclaim the gospel came with the Wesleyan revival in England in the eighteenth century." So asserts Malcolm in *Women at the Crossroads* (Malcolm 1982, 111). Green states that, resulting from the influence and example of John Wesley's mother, Susanna Wesley, women descended from early Methodism have enjoyed greater opportunities for leadership in the church than women in other denominations (Green 2012). These would include all subsequent expression of Methodism, such as the Wesleyan Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and The Salvation Army.

In terms of John Wesley's influence upon The Salvation Army, it would be difficult to imagine a stronger statement than that of co-founder William Booth:

I worshipped everything that bore the name Methodist. To me there was one God, and John Wesley was his prophet. I had devoured the story of his life. No human compositions seemed to me to be comparable to his writings . . . and all that was wanted, in my estimation, for the salvation of the world was the faithful carrying into practice of the letter and the spirit of his instructions. (Booth-Tucker 1892, 74)

Booth left the Methodist church while still a young man and established The Salvation Army, infusing his Wesleyan theological roots with a renewed evangelistic zeal and a fiery passion for social justice.

Rader argues that the holiness movement itself championed women's rights and female equality. Specifically, "Phoebe Palmer exercised extensive influence in the struggle for women's rights . . . it was the evangelicals, and principally those of holiness persuasion, who championed the cause of female equality in church and society" (Rader 1977, 86). Palmer had a singular influence on Salvation Army co-founder Catherine Booth (Green 2012).

Confronting the Culture

Given that the personal holiness espoused by the various Salvation Army antecedents was consistently expressed in terms of social responsibility, it was perfectly congruous for The Salvation Army to involve itself in politics, even controversially so, on behalf of vulnerable young girls. The Army played a major, very public role in the successful campaign to raise the age of consent in Great Britain in 1885 from 13 to 16 years old (Hollis 2013, 200). By such action, The Salvation Army established itself early on not only as a movement where women could preach and lead in spiritual ministry, but also as a powerful advocate for the rights of women and girls in the wider political arena, willing to confront the hypocrisy of the surrounding Victorian culture.

The values of The Salvation Army stood in marked contrast to those of that culture. Within the holiness movement itself and The Salvation Army in particular, there were strict standards of a puritanical holiness lifestyle (Murdoch 1985, 99). Further, in Victorian England, women were generally not empowered to lead; rather, they were marginalized and restricted to the separate sphere of domestic life.

Yet Read cites the popular culture of the day as one formative influence on The Salvation Army: "Freed from constraints of outdated and irrelevant ecclesiological and religious practices the founders looked to the world for models and methods that would assist them in their God-given mission" (2006, 559-560). Read's assertion is a surprising one; however, it is evident that the Booths saw no contradiction in taking from the popular culture whatever could be utilized to advance the mission of The Salvation Army (Maddox 2008, 5). With regard to women's rights this sometimes landed the Army in closer alignment to secular feminist activists than to conventional church practices and sensibilities.

Nevertheless, Victorian English culture and the early Salvation Army were at odds with each other in countless ways. With regard to gender roles, the differences were extreme. In Walker's view, The Salvation Army "disrupted and refashioned gender relations in many facets of its work . . . as Salvationist women challenged and resisted the conventions of femininity and enhanced women's spiritual authority" (Walker 2001, 2). In claiming the right to preach, women "disrupted a powerful source of masculine privilege and authority" (Walker 2001, 2). Walker concludes, "Virtually no other secular or religious organization in this period offered working-class women such extensive authority" (Walker 2001, 2). Consequently, The Salvation Army has an unusual and significant history of advancing women's rights in relation to the surrounding culture, be it popular or religious, in many parts of the world.

Catherine Booth

Murdoch gives much credit to Catherine Booth, co-founder of The Salvation Army, for the significant inclusion of women in leadership from the start.

Catherine Booth recognized women's powers of intellect and innate equality and elevated them to clerical parity with men. Although Catherine Booth did not break new hermeneutical ground in her discussion of scriptural support for the ministry of women, she did, through her public advocacy, force the introduction of thousands of working-class women into the ranks of ordained clergy. (Murdoch 1984, 348)

Murdoch used U.S. census statistics for the decades 1880 to 1900 to discover the percentage of U.S. clergy who were female. In 1880, the year The Salvation Army arrived in the United States, the percentage of female clergy was .225. By 1900 the percentage had grown to 9.2 (Murdoch 1984, 349). The Salvation Army was a major contributor to this increase. Catherine Booth was the primary formative influence on The Salvation Army in this regard (Murdoch 1984, 349).

The influence of Catherine Booth on William Booth can hardly be overestimated, and without the synergy between them on the matter of women in leadership, The Salvation Army would not have its place in history as a significant vehicle of ministry and leadership for tens of thousands of women (Murdoch 1984, 348). Interestingly, the female/male mutuality in leadership demonstrated by Catherine and William Booth is a historic illustration of the dual image of God explored in the biblical foundations section of this chapter. Further, their shared vision and example of gender equality in marriage and mission gave powerful witness to the kingdom of God and to the holy imagination necessary to envision this new community, as explored in the theological foundations section of this chapter.

As The Salvation Army developed and formalized its own identity, it issued important foundational historical statements relative to gender equality. First, from The Constitution of the Christian Mission, which changed its name to The Salvation Army the following year: "Godly women possessing the necessary gifts and qualifications

shall be employed as preachers . . . and shall have appointments given to them . . . and they shall be eligible for any office” (Christian Mission Magazine, 1877).

Further, from Orders and Regulations for Salvation Army Staff Officers:

One of the leading principles upon which the Army is based is the right of women to have the right to an equal share with men in the work of publishing salvation to the world ... She may hold any position of authority or power in the Army from that of a Local Officer to that of the General. Let it therefore be understood that women are eligible for the highest commands—indeed, no woman is to be kept back from any position of power or influence merely on account of her sex ... Women must be treated as equal with men in all the intellectual and social relationships in life. (The Salvation Army 1895)

The “Lydia Phase”

In her studies of various religious groups, McKinnish Bridges has identified what she calls the “Lydia phase” (McKinnish Bridges 1998, 333), which Shade helpfully describes as a period in the early years of a developing movement in which women begin in positions of leadership, as was true of Lydia the key person in the establishment of the church in Philippi (Acts 16). With time, the very women who were founding leaders in the church are “relegated to secondary roles in order for the movement to gain cultural legitimacy and to diminish the feminizing effect of women’s leadership” (Shade 2012, 4). The irony of widespread, significant female leadership in The Salvation Army being a “Lydia phase” that came to an end for the sake of cultural legitimacy is obvious in view of the previous insights of Read (Read 2006, 559-560) and Walker (Walker 2001, 2) regarding the perceived unseemliness of the early Army’s actions relative to its cultural contexts. Those actions ranged from the use of unconventional (in the view of the established church) secular methods for the acceleration of Army mission to defiance of conventions of the wider culture in the interests of that same mission. Further, the initial “feminizing effect of women’s leadership” was such that in many towns nearly all the pubs went out of business because “the whole population had gone to the ‘Hallelujah Lasses!’” (Hollis 2013, 264). Yet, Eason’s research reveals that a shift from the “Lydia phase” did indeed take place in The Salvation Army within the first few decades of its existence. By the 1930s, it was evident that the percentage of females in leadership was relatively minimal (Eason 2003, 151).

The Military Structure

The Salvation Army was birthed in the mid-19th century, when many popular British heroes were generals and soldiers (Read 2006, 357). Without a doubt, this is one reason why The Salvation Army adopted military forms and terminology (Read 2006, 357). Nonetheless, females found themselves welcome and readily deployed in service, in mission, and in leadership in this army.

In view of the military structure of The Salvation Army, it is not surprising to learn that it was “founded upon the principle of implicit obedience . . . the principle of voluntary

subjection to an absolute authority” (Jewett 1999, 51). William Booth stated emphatically in his remarkable work, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, “The first condition of that service is implicit unquestioning obedience. The Salvationist is taught to obey as is the soldier on the field of battle” (Booth 1890, 250). McKinley goes further in asserting that William Booth “regarded dissension . . . as ‘the very poison of hell’” (1977, 51). It is noteworthy that some of the more rigid and autocratic sentiments expressed by William Booth came years after the death of Catherine Booth, who predeceased him by 22 years. One can only imagine the degree to which the ongoing involvement of Catherine in leading and forming The Salvation Army might have contributed to a more balanced use of power.

In contemplating the influence of the military metaphor and the expectation of unquestioning obedience, questions naturally arise as to potential dangers to the less powerful: namely, women. There is increasing recognition that the church has historically expected women to be self-sacrificing: some would argue, more so than has been expected of men (Isherwood and McEwan 2001, 37).

In *The Salvation Army in the United States*, married women officers do not receive a paycheck in their own name. Thus they have no employment record with the U.S. government, leaving them quite vulnerable should they leave Salvation Army officership and/or should their marriage fail. These married women are expected to sacrifice a basic dignity that is offered without exception to male officers and also to single women officers. This Salvation Army practice illustrates the point made by Isherwood and McEwan as to the church’s expectations of women, as well as the unintended but real abuse of power in the military structure against the very women who energize its mission. Further, it contradicts the historical principle of the organization: personal holiness and social responsibility resulting in particular concern for the just treatment of women.

Summary

The Salvation Army historically experienced explosive growth in no small part as a result of the active involvement of tens of thousands of (mostly young) women in its mission. The release of these women into ministry was born out of the influence of other Christian traditions, both ancient and relatively recent, and was motivated by both theological and practical impulses, largely spearheaded by Catherine Booth. The guiding principle was personal holiness leading to social responsibility and resulting specifically in advocacy and action for the equality of females. Further, the historical interaction between this burgeoning movement and 19th century British culture, while largely antagonistic, was also synergistic, with each contributing to the development of the other.

The challenge of consistently acting in accordance with the proclaimed principle of gender equality was apparent early on in Salvation Army development and remains today. The Army’s military structure has historically proven efficient in numerous contexts, with an army of human resources willing to be deployed anywhere in the world

to advance its mission. However, with the military assumptions regarding power come the potential for a misuse of power, particularly with regard to gender equality.

Female Characterisations In The Book Of Judges

by Aaron White

Female characters are prominent throughout the book of Judges. Israel was a patriarchal society whose stories primarily focused on the interactions between Yahweh and men, yet the book of Judges includes eleven fully fleshed-out female characters, and mentions other women as well. These characters are often proactive, significantly advance the story, and act in ways typically reserved for men in Israelite culture. Women are contrasted with each other and with male characters throughout Judges, sometimes displaying ideal degrees of boldness and faithfulness, at other times treated as objects, gifts, or victims of violence in a progressively disintegrating Israelite society. The female characterisation in the book of Judges both demonstrates what faithfulness could look like in Israel, and reveals the dire consequences of disobedience. Judges should prompt contemporary society to revise its understanding of the qualifications of godly leaders and deliverers, and should warn any culture that abuse of the vulnerable will inevitably bring about judgment from God.

BOLD FAITHFULNESS

The first two chapters of Judges is mostly a catalogue of Israel's hesitancy and failure to obey Yahweh's voice. Deuteronomy 31:6 and Joshua 1:9 assert that faithful obedience to Yahweh would result in the bold taking of the land. Judges instead relays a narrative trajectory towards unfaithfulness and calamity, a reality repeatedly hammered home with the phrases, "the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord," and "in those days Israel had no king."⁵

Within this male-centric context of war, conquest, hesitancy and unfaithfulness, the characters of Achsah and Deborah inhabit the ideal combination of boldness and faithfulness. Achsah is displayed as "a role model of propriety for later portrayals of women" in Judges, "an ideal woman for all Israelite women to emulate."⁶ Once married the perspective shifts to a focus on Achsah's desires and plans, showing that she is not merely a passive object of male action, but rather exhibits initiative and "exercises power over men."⁷ Suggestive wordplay intimates that her request to her husband follows sex, ensuring a more favourable outcome.⁸ There is no reprimand for this in the text, as she uses the tools at her disposal for the best interests of both her husband and herself. This is shown again when Achsah adopts a daughter's respectful posture when speaking with her father. "Symbolically, Achsah represents all Israel as a bride to God,

⁵ Robert Chisholm, "The Role of Women in the Book of Judges," accessed July 3, 2015, <https://bible.org/article/role-women-book-judges>; Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women's Stories in the Old Testament*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 37.

⁶ Lillian R. Klein: "Achsa: What Price this Prize?" in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, Second Series, ed. Athalya Brenner, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 18, 26.

⁷ Klein, "What Price?" 22; Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 119.

⁸ Klein, "What Price?" 24.

and her obeisance to her father represents man's [sic] obedience to God."⁹ When she boldly asks for a "blessing" from Caleb, drawing upon the example of the Patriarchs as well as daughters inheriting territory from Numbers 27:7, Achsah thereby embodies the traditional Israelite approach of negotiating with Yahweh. She shows that she is "a vital woman who knows how to live within the constraints of her society, who recognizes what is important to her in that social milieu, and who acts decisively, adjusting method to the situation at hand."¹⁰ This bold and faithful Kenite woman is set in sharp contrast to the unfaithful tribes of Israel, and is rewarded with life-giving territory in the Promised Land.

Deborah the judge is likewise juxtaposed with the tribes of Israel, and in particular with Barak, as she initiates decisive action based on Yahweh's commands. She is a true prophet according to Deuteronomy 18:18-20, in that she faithfully speaks on Yahweh's behalf and her prophecies are fulfilled.¹¹ She is also "a woman to whose voice the entire nation pays heed as children listen to the instruction of their mother."¹² Deborah commands and even publicly rebukes Barak, Israel's top general, using "gendered" words that convey the prophetic sound of women's anger towards faithless, hesitant men.¹³ Her certainty and willingness to obediently act are contrasted with Barak's reluctance, and with Reuben, Gilead, Dan, Asher and Meroz, all of whom are excoriated in Deborah's song for failing to join the battle.¹⁴ Deborah's song centralises "the lives and relationships of women through their own words, inner lives, and actions."¹⁵ Her words carry the same power as a military engagement as she mocks the enemy and sounds a triumphant note of victory and fulfilment, the kind of success that could be the norm if Israel were obedient.¹⁶ Deborah and Achsah together present a picture of women who symbolise Israel's greatest potential. They are portrayed as trustworthy guides, ably leading men in the ways of the Lord.¹⁷ They also speak prophetically to today's culture, challenging it to hear the directions of Yahweh through previously hidden or marginalised voices, and to expect that Yahweh will act and command through those who have long been considered outsiders or of secondary importance.

Other female characters are depicted as faithful and bold compared to their male counterparts, but do not reach the ideal heights of Achsah and Deborah. Though not an Israelite, Jael remains stalwartly faithful to Yahweh, contrasting favourably with her husband Heber, Sisera, and Barak. Luring a foreign military commander into her tent

⁹ Lillian R. Klein, *From Deborah to Esther: Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 22.

¹⁰ Klein, "What Price?" 26.

¹¹ A Brenner and F. van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts: Female & Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 65.

¹² Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts*, 49, citing S.D. Goitein, "Women as Creators of Biblical Genres," 1998, 10.

¹³ Klein, *From Deborah to Esther*, 35; Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts*, 65.

¹⁴ Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts*, 43-44.

¹⁵ John Petersen, *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 72.

¹⁶ Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts*, 63.

¹⁷ Klein, *From Deborah to Esther*, 42.

and manoeuvring him into a position of complete submission requires brash initiative.¹⁸ Some view her actions as sexual seduction, similar to the bold manipulations of Achsah, the Timnite woman, and Delilah.¹⁹ Others see her acting deceptively as a mother-figure to Sisera, parodying both Deborah and Sisera's actual mother.²⁰ Either way Jael stands in for Israel, which had been previously vulnerable to Canaanite aggression, while Sisera represents Canaan, now lying between her feet.²¹ Jael's actions are daring, faithful, and effective, and she receives the honour that could have been Barak's. Yet her conduct, unlike Achsah's and Deborah's, is presented as morally ambiguous. Barak's reluctance and the growing disobedience of the tribes results in Yahweh using the forbidden actions of a foreign woman to accomplish the deliverance of his people.²² Like Barak, Israel itself will not receive any honour from these actions.

The siege at Thebez also shows a woman taking initiative in the midst of Israel's dishonour. Women could, in extreme situations, engage in defensive fighting in Israel.²³ Like Jael, this woman smashes an unconventional weapon through a man's head, only this time the enemy is an Israelite tyrant. Judges has moved from Deborah inspiring Israel to victory; to Jael overcoming a foreign oppressor by herself; to an anonymous woman delivering Israel from another Israelite.²⁴ Like Jael, this woman's actions are effective and inspired by Yahweh. She is not named or praised in the text, however, and the overall mood of the story is tragic, describing civil war instead of victory over foreign oppressors.

Similarly tragic is the narrative of Jephthah's daughter. Dancing out to celebrate her father, she is "unaware that her joyful initiative seals her death."²⁵ She is faithful to her father and his vow, but she also bargains for time to mourn her unfulfilled life, thus initiating an annual female remembrance of this horror.²⁶ That she receives death instead of blessing and life from her father is no fault of her own, yet Klein suggests that she was neither bold nor wise enough to save herself from her father's folly.²⁷ Whether this assessment is fair or not, it is certain that this woman's faithful innocence was sacrificed on the altar of her father's ignorance and pride, and of Israel's disobedience.

The story of Manoah's wife begins more hopefully, yet also descends into disappointment and disaster. Manoah's wife is a dynamic actor in the narrative, hearing revelation, trusting Yahweh, delivering messages, and leading her static husband into wisdom.²⁸ She is differentiated from both her husband and son, Samson, by these traits.

¹⁸ Keith Bodner, "Into the Hand of a Woman," (unpublished class notes), 8.

¹⁹ Klein, *From Deborah to Esther*, 14.

²⁰ Peterson, *Reading*, 118.

²¹ Bodner, "Into the Hand of a Woman," 8.

²² Klein, *From Deborah to Esther*, 39-40.

²³ Luise Schottroff, Sylvia Schroer, Marie-Theres Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 113.

²⁴ Chisholm, "The Role of Women," <https://bible.org/article/role-women-book-judges>.

²⁵ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 100.

²⁶ Trible, *Terror*, 104.

²⁷ Klein, "What Price?" 26.

²⁸ Webb, *Judges*, 174; Keith Bodner, "Flame of Hope," (unpublished class notes), 6.

Her calm judgment and faith “becomes a perfect prelude to the story of a brawny male hero whose lapses of judgment in regard to women entangle him in repeated difficulties and ultimately destroy him.”²⁹ Manoah’s wife is faithful and wise, but her effectiveness is limited by the foolishness of her son and the timidity of the Israelite tribes. The stories of Jael, the Thebez woman, Jephthah’s daughter, and Manoah’s wife are an affirmation that Yahweh’s plans will move forward even in the unlikeliest of circumstances. They also warn that corporate disobedience can limit the potential of even the most faithful individuals, and can forfeit the enjoyment of Yahweh’s intended blessings and honour.

A third category of female characterisation in Judges portrays women whose boldness lacks the contours of faith. Delilah displays self-reliance in negotiating with the Philistines and in playing on Samson’s love to accomplish her ends. Like Achsah she employs a manipulative sexuality, but she is not seeking her lover’s best interests.³⁰ In contrast to Jael’s seduction and defeat of Israel’s enemy, Delilah seduces and betrays an Israelite warrior. Her boldness is therefore depicted as faithless and harmful. The same is true for Micah’s mother, who may be compared unfavourably to Deborah. In creating an ephod for worship she evokes Gideon’s idolatry, and like Gideon her misplaced boldness sows disaster for her progeny. Though an Israelite, she is not informed by faith in Yahweh, and “uses YHWH’s name much as Micah will seek to use YHWH, for convenience.”³¹ This evidences a wider, communal lack of faith, as no husband is present to help her or her thieving son, and she has not been instructed in the laws of Israel as Deuteronomy 31:11-13 dictates.³² Finally, the Levite’s unnamed concubine leaves her husband and returns home, risking great social cost to herself.³³ She is described as being “unfaithful” to him, and though she does not cause the violence to come, her actions help set the stage upon which it occurs. Thus, even the bold female characters in Judges gradually move away from the ideal faithful obedience demonstrated by Achsah and Deborah at the beginning of the story. Delilah, Michah’s mother, and the Levite’s concubine all take initiative, but being surrounded by faithlessness choose to do “what is right in their own eyes,” unable to perceive any alternatives.

These stories in Judges all speak to the vital importance of radically faithful communities that learn to attend to the voices of women, and that model and empower alternative actions for vulnerable people living in an unfaithful world. The Church, echoing the broader culture, has long dismissed stories, songs and wisdom from the edges, particularly from women and indigenous peoples. It would do well to listen to those such as Dr. Cheryl Bear, a Nadleh Whut’en songwriter who boldly sings the stories of Canada’s residential schools and reservations to the Church, and who faithfully announces the possibility of reconciliation and healing through truth-telling, humility, and sacrificial love.³⁴

²⁹ Bodner, “Flame of Hope” 8, citing Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings: A Translation with Commentary*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 178.

³⁰ Klein, *From Deborah to Esther*, 13.

³¹ Klein, *From Deborah to Esther*, 29.

³² Klein, *From Deborah to Esther*, 31.

³³ Lapsley, *Whispering*, 38.

³⁴ “The Regent World,” last accessed July 3, 2015, <http://world.regent-college.edu/field-notes/cheryl-bear>.

VIOLENCE

The other side of the characterisation of women in Judges involves the violence done to them. Throughout Judges, women bear the brunt of Israel's evil and faithlessness, and the deeper the spiral of disobedience becomes the greater the horrors that are visited upon them. Men give women away, use them as objects, rape, kill and even dismember them. Judges does not simply parrot patriarchal culture with these stories, but rather comments critically upon this abuse of women.³⁵ The increasingly shameful treatment of women in Judges is presented as a reflection of the degradation of the nation as a whole, just as it continues to reflect such evil in the contemporary world.

Mieke Bal argues that "the Book of Judges is about death."³⁶ Men kill men in war and women bring down men who are leaders or warriors, but "men, mighty men, kill innocent young daughters."³⁷ Judges provides a witness to this as it details the experiences of women during wartime. Sisera's mother approvingly suspects that her son is delayed because his army is busy plundering and raping the women of Israel, with "two wombs for every man". This is why Deborah's song rejoices over Sisera's death, portraying him as symbolically raped by Jael, receiving the exact punishment he had inflicted upon countless Israelite women.³⁸ The Thebez woman's unmaning of Abimelech implies a similar reversal, this time to an Israelite. Millstones carry sexual connotations in Israelite literature, the upper millstone representing men, the bottom representing women.³⁹ Thus, "when a woman throws an upper millstone from the town's walls and kills Abimelech...he quickly perceives the significance of her action. The woman has become the upper millstone, she is now male; by force of symmetry, Abimelech is now in danger of becoming female."⁴⁰ The later capture, blinding, shaving, and public (likely sexual) humiliation of Samson – indignities normally faced by captured women - serves to display this gender reversal one final time. Once "a paragon of male bravado," Samson becomes "a feminized captive and exile, a paradigm of Israel in exile, seemingly abandoned by God."⁴¹ That this "feminisation" is portrayed as the ultimate punishment of Sisera, Abimelech and Samson reveals the gender and power disparity in this culture, and the price that women routinely had to pay – and still have to pay today – for the sins of men.

The feminisation of male characters, however, is the exception; the escalating consequences of Israel's evil still primarily results in the brutalisation of the female body. The beginning of Judges introduces the motif of a father-figure giving his daughter

³⁵ Lapsley, *Whispering*, 36.

³⁶ Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 1.

³⁷ Bal, *Death*, 1.

³⁸ Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts*, 47; Bodner, "Into the Hand of a Woman," 9.

³⁹ Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *Gendering Texts*, 143.

⁴⁰ Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, *Gendering Texts*, 143.

⁴¹ Keith Bodner, "Crash and Burned" (unpublished class notes), 11-12, citing Dennis T. Olson, "The Book of Judges." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. 2, ed. Leander E. Keck, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 858-59.

away, and again Achsah is presented as the ideal in this scenario. Achsah's name implies "anklet" or "bangle", suggesting at first that she is a sexual adornment given to a conquering warrior.⁴² She proves to be much more than this, however, and her marriage to Othniel is a model for faithful unions against a backdrop of deep concern over intermarriage.⁴³ Caleb therefore appears to be taking care of his daughter with this action, and the nation is blessed as a result.⁴⁴ The next instance of a father giving away his daughter is entirely different, and displays Israel's precipitous fall into evil. When Jephthah attempts to manipulate Yahweh into helping him win a battle, it is his innocent daughter who gets murdered. Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter to Yahweh reads as a grotesque corruption of Achsah's story. There is no indication in the text that this vow is required by Yahweh, and the death of Jephthah's daughter is presented as horrifically wrong: it is premeditated, premature, violent, and leaves the family with no heirs.⁴⁵ Superficially similar to the aborted sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22, this sacrifice actually tells a very different story: Yahweh does not initiate this, and there is no divine intervention to save Jephthah's daughter.⁴⁶ With this unfaithful act Jephthah mirrors the sins and the circumstances of Israel, who in their attempts to control the divine will be left empty, without heir or hope, all their victories turned into mourning (2 Samuel 19:2).⁴⁷

The use of women as sexual objects in Judges is related to Yahweh's various rebukes to Israel's over its idolatry and prostitution with others gods (Judges 2:17; 8:27). Gideon embodies these sins when he fathers Abimelech upon his concubine, as does Jephthah's father, who uses a harlot for uncomplicated sex that results in major complications for the life of Jephthah and Israel. Isolated from their fathers and extended families, who should have taught them the wisdom of tradition, both Abimelech and Jephthah do what is right in their own eyes, causing extensive damage to their families and tribes and nation.⁴⁸ Samson has parents to guide him, but disregards their wisdom. All of Samson's sexual partners are used as objects, either to slake Samson's lust, or to ascertain information for the Philistines. His Timnite wife, seemingly discarded after the riddle incident, is given away to another man by her father. The combination of Samson's taboo claiming of her, and her father's "gift" of her to the Philistines, leads directly to her being burned to death in an act of vengeance. Even more distressingly, in Judges 19 a Levite uses his concubine to save himself from a savage group of men bent on sexual violence. In another corrupt parody of Caleb's actions the Levite gives his young concubine away, not to bless her but to preserve his own dignity and life. The story of Lot in Sodom (Genesis 19) includes this exact scenario story, except that the proffered young women in that story are saved by divine intervention. As with Jephthah's daughter, the concubine is not rescued, revealing the

⁴² Klein, "What Price?" 21, 24.

⁴³ Schottroff, Schroer, Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation*, 113, 158.

⁴⁴ Chisholm, "The Role of Women," <https://bible.org/article/role-women-book-judges>.

⁴⁵ Tribble, *Terror*, 104.

⁴⁶ Tribble, *Terror*, 105.

⁴⁷ Tribble, *Terror*, 105.

⁴⁸ Tribble, *Terror*, 100.

depths to which Israel has sunk in its relationship with Yahweh.⁴⁹ Her life is considered less valuable than the Levite's, and the primary offense of her rape and murder appears to be the destruction of the Levite's property.⁵⁰ The Levite's use of her dismembered body to call the rest of the tribes to war against the Benjaminites shows that even in death she cannot escape being used or given away by him.⁵¹ Examining the progression from the Caleb-Achsah relationship to the Jephthah-daughter narrative, the father-Timnite story, and finally the Levite-concubine disaster, Davidson suggests that "the placing of the concubine story at the end of the book completes an artistic progression from domestic tranquility...to utter degradation. The progression symbolises the story of premonarchic Israel. Indeed, the concubine is Israel ravished and ripped apart."⁵² The concubine's abused and dismembered body represents Israel at the end of Judges, and signals the full reversal of the triumphant mutilation of Adoni-Bezek in Judges 1:6.⁵³

The concubine's story however, is not the last instance of women being given away or experiencing sexual violence in Judges. Israel's plan in Judges 21 to preserve the tribe of Benjamin includes the slaughter of men and married women, and the capture of virgin women from Jabesh Gilead and Shiloh for forced marriages. These women are given away not by their fathers, but by the rest of Israel, to be used for the purposes of national unity and expected to bear their captor's children. Sisera's mother describes the rape of Israelite women by Canaanite soldiers, but now it is Israel – all of Israel – who are complicit in the capture and sexual exploitation of Israelite women. The "progression of violence from the representation of one violated female figure (*pilegesh*) to the representation of a violated tribe of females (daughters of Shiloh)...rais[es] the spectre of the tribes of Israel as guilty of a brutal male assault, an act of genocide."⁵⁴ The stolen women are depicted as silent, having none of the boldness or self-preservation of Achsah, Deborah, Jael, or the woman at Thebez.⁵⁵ Tribble argues that the later Scriptural treatment of Naomi and Ruth stands in condemnation of the abuse of the concubine and the women of Shiloh, and that Hosea 9:9 and 10:9 also condemn the "days of Gibeah".⁵⁶ Censure can already be found at the end of this story, however, where Israel's evil is clearly summarised: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25).

The level of exploitation, sexual violation, and violence directed towards women has not abated in the generations since Judges was written. Seventy nine percent of the estimated 600,000-800,000 people trafficked for labour and sex across borders each

⁴⁹ Alice Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic: Women and Violence in Judges 21", in *Judges, a Feminist Companion to the Bible*, Second Series, ed. Athalya Brenner, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 155.

⁵⁰ Schottroff, Schroer, Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation*, p.112

⁵¹ Bach, "Rereading" pp.144-145

⁵² Tribble, *Terror*, 90, citing E.T.A. Davidson "Intricacy, Cunning and Design in the Book of Judges," (unpublished manuscript) 90n52.

⁵³ Bach, "Rereading", 157.

⁵⁴ Bach, "Rereading," 146.

⁵⁵ Bach, "Rereading," 150-151.

⁵⁶ Tribble, *Terror*, 85-86.

year are girls and women, predominately poor women and girls of colour.⁵⁷ Though rape is internationally prohibited as a weapon of war, it is still widely used as “the most powerful, cost-effective weapon available for destroying the lives of ‘enemy’ women, families, and entire communities; demoralizing enemy force; and, in some cases, accomplishing genocide.”⁵⁸ A Canadian RCMP report from May 2014 states that “1,017 women and girls identified as Indigenous were murdered between 1980 and 2012—a homicide rate roughly 4.5 times higher than that of all other women in Canada.”⁵⁹ The male assumption of entitled sexual access to women’s bodies still drives the contemporary sex industry, from violent pornography to the manipulations and degradations of survival prostitution. It is still very much the case that the powerful and privileged in the world, primarily men, are ignoring the commands of Yahweh and doing what is right in their own eyes, leading to the brutalisation and death of countless vulnerable women and children.

CONCLUSION

The characterisation of women in the book of Judges is a barometer for the moral and spiritual state of the nation. The occasional bright spots of faithfulness and success are most often found in the form of bold, faithful female characters, showing Yahweh’s use of those considered vulnerable and unlikely to bring about deliverance. As Israel progressively moves away from obedience to Yahweh, however, the vulnerable women in their midst experience the immediate consequences of the nation’s sin. The nightmarish violence meted out upon women in the book of Judges reflects Israel’s national character, and serves notice for what will happen to it as a nation. This has direct relevance for today’s world. Yahweh is not restricted in his choice of deliverers to those who occupy worldly positions of power and privilege. Leaders who exhibit faithful obedience to Yahweh should be expected and sought amongst those social groupings most dismissed and ignored in the corridors of influence. Conversely, societies and cultures should gauge the state of their relationship with Yahweh by examining the treatment of the most vulnerable in their midst. When the bodies and souls of the innocent are exploited for profit, sex and violence, this announces the evil residing and growing at the heart of a people, and is a harbinger of the judgment that will come upon the society or culture as a whole.

⁵⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: Executive Summary,” February 2009, accessed July 3, 2015, http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Executive_summary_english.pdf, 8; “Stop the Traffik,” accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.stophetraffik.org/the-scale-of-human-trafficking>.

⁵⁸ Global Justice Centre: Human Rights Through the Rule of Law, “Rape as a Weapon of War,” accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.globaljusticecenter.net/index.php/our-work/geneva-initiative/rape-as-a-weapon-of-war>.

⁵⁹ Amnesty International, “Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls: Understanding the Numbers,” accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.amnesty.ca/blog/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls-understanding-the-numbers>.

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A Time To Move by Captain Michael Ramsay

Exodus 13:21-24:

Presented to Swift Current Corps, 21 June 2015

This week I have been reminded of the Exodus. When the people left the only homes they had even known in Egypt to go to what God had promised them, how did God lead them? What went before them? (A fiery pillar/column of cloud that they could follow night or day.) This pillar would lead them from location to location for a whole generation. Some places they would stay for a long time. Some places they would stay for a short time and some places they would avoid altogether as God led them on a circuitous route eastward. Every time the pillar of fire/cloud would stir, it was time for them to pack up, move and follow God to a new location.

This is not unlike our vocation and experience as Salvation Army Officers. Every time God stirs headquarters hearts like He did the pillar of fire/cloud, it is time for us Officers to move. At some locations we stay for a long time; others we stay for a short time and there are others, of course, that Susan and I have missed altogether as God has been leading our family eastward. Susan, the two older girls and I followed God from Victoria to Vancouver's DTES where we stayed for a couple of years. We then followed His leading to Winnipeg where we stayed another couple of years and then Nipawin and Tisdale in Saskatchewan before he led us to Swift Current where God has allowed us to serve Him hand-in-hand with each of you, our dear friends for these past six years – and He has even blessed us with another member of the Ramsay clan while we were here.

We have certainly been blessed here but now the pillar of fiery cloud is stirring again. It is time to have packed up our belongings and follow God to His next place for us. We have no idea how long we will be there or even really what we will be doing there; we just know that like the Hebrews whom God called out of Egypt, the Ramsays as we were called out of Victoria, will need to keep following the Lord and -unlike the Israelites- we need to do it without grumbling so that we may experience the joy that can only be found in obedience to the Lord.

And so today we are on the move again. This is our last Sunday. Our car is packed and we are ready to go and though we do not know our penultimate temporal destination, we do know our next stop on the road and we do know that as we are faithful then our ultimate destination of our lifelong journey will be in the Eternal Kingdom, the Age to Come, Everlasting Life.

So as we go from you after the service today, following God in a manner akin to the fiery pillar of cloud, know that you are in our hearts and in our minds and that we will always cherish your friendship and all that the Lord has taught us through each and

everyone of you on our stop here in Swift Current. May God continue to bless you as greatly as He has blessed us through you, for now and forever more.

In Jesus Name, amen.

Captain Michael Ramsay
www.sheepspeak.com

Integrated Mission

by Jonathan Evans

The Salvation Army's Opportunity To Participate In God's Renewal Of Vancouver

The Salvation Army is widely known as a social service provider despite its roots in Christian mission and evangelism. The founder, William Booth, foresaw the tension between these supposedly different spheres vividly stating, "If you want my social work, you have got to have my religion; they are joined together like Siamese twins, to divide them is to slay them."⁶⁰ Indeed, Christian witness and evangelism is compromised without a Spirit-led and biblically centred concern for people and vice versa as, "there is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world."⁶¹ Leslie Newbigin makes the case for the integration between the spiritual and social spheres; "Christian programs for justice and compassion are severed from their proper roots... and so lose their character as signs of the presence of Christ and risk becoming mere crusades fuelled by a moralism that can become self-righteous. And the life of the worshipping congregation, severed from its proper expression in compassionate service to the secular community around it, risks becoming a self-centered existence serving only the needs and desires of its members."⁶² This paper will argue that an integrated mission of the spiritual and social dimensions is necessary for survival of The Salvation Army in our secular, post-Christian world by recapturing its theology, history and Christological mission to "win the world for Jesus."

Theology As Foundation For Mission

At the apex of Christendom and at the onset of the university, theology was held in high regard as, "queen of the sciences," acting as the foundation of the Trivium and Quadrivium that students were expected to study. The foundation for sciences and social work were birthed from a Christian worldview. Alister McGrath reminds us that the Christian teachings of creation and holism against platonic dualism birthed modern science known as the Foster thesis.⁶³ It is from modern science that the social sciences emerged and continue to have a theological root in civil rights. Yet, in today's secular worldview, Christian theology must not assume that it is in a place of authority. Hirsch, however, gives hope to the current position of the church; "vital movements arise always in the context of rejection by the predominant institutions (e.g., Wesley and Booth)."⁶⁴ David Bosch highlights that a marginalized view of Christianity is the predominant landscape for the church and missions:

⁶⁰ Roger Green, *War on Two Fronts: The Redemptive Theology of The Salvation Army* (London: Salvation Army Supplies & Publishing, 1989), 128.

⁶¹ Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council (1952), Quoted in, Lesley Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 1.

⁶² Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 11.

⁶³ Alister McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 138-40.

⁶⁴ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 56.

Strictly speaking one ought to say that the Church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it... This ought to be the case because of the abiding tension between the church's essential nature and its empirical condition... That there were so many centuries of crisis-free existence for the Church was therefore an abnormality... And if the atmosphere of crisislessness still lingers on in the many parts of the West, this is simply the result of a dangerous delusion. Let us also know that to encounter crisis is to encounter the possibility of truly being the Church.⁶⁵

Christian theology has historically interpreted the world as its mission field. Seemingly there is a problem in the world where people needlessly suffer through oppression, famines, wars and neglect. Noting Augustine, John Calvin, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan tradition and Karl Barth, Niebuhr discovers they try to convert the values and goals of secular culture into the service of the kingdom of God.⁶⁶ Yet, in a world that has moved on from the influences of Christianity and is increasingly sceptical if not antagonistic, integrating Christ and culture is hardly an easy project. Defining culture, however, can help progress the human project as a spiritual and social enterprise. Brunner defines culture as "that which man does beyond biological necessity."⁶⁷ Theologian Donald Bloesch asserts that "[Culture] can also be defined theologically. In this sense *culture* is the task appointed to humans to realize their destiny in the world in service to the glory of God."⁶⁸ Consequently, Christians should view social work as the cultural mandate from God to continue the creation and redemption project in which God unwaveringly utilizes both reverent and secular humans. Some evangelicals incorrectly interpret eschatology as an escape or final act of God to set things right that rids them of responsibility for social action or creation stewardship. In reviewing the four major eschatological perspectives, however, Finger concludes:

All evangelical eschatologies anticipate significant degrees of continuity between our present earth and future world. To be sure, this contrasts greatly with what seems to be believed in some evangelical churches: that our ultimate destiny is an immaterial, spaceless heaven, and that our present earth will be wholly destroyed. Wherever these views may come from, they have no sound foundation in either evangelical theology or Scripture.⁶⁹

Therefore, with the earth as God's eternal enterprise for his care and concern for humanity, a robust eschatological vision allows for Christians to realize their participation in the renewal of the whole earth.

⁶⁵ David Bosch, Quoted in *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).

⁶⁷ Emil Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization* (London: Nisbet, 1948), 142.

⁶⁸ Donald G. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics in Contemporary Times* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 54.

⁶⁹ Tom Finger, "Evangelicals, Eschatology and the Environment," *Scholars Circle Monograph 2, Evangelical Environmental Network* (1998): 27.

True theology is expressed in praxis. Rodney Stark in *The Rise of Christianity* describes the noted difference between rich, the middle class and particularly the doctors who would flee when their town was struck by plague. Christians, however, usually among the poorest, would stay and care for the sick, including those who were neither Christians, nor their own family members, nor in any other way obviously connected to them.⁷⁰ Christians explained it was “natural” for them to care compassionately because the God they discovered through Jesus is self-giving love. The trajectory of Christian history to this day is filled with examples of service stemming from a theological understanding of the world and humanity. Notably, “The origins of The Salvation Army lie in such concerns for the poor, whose situation its founders believed could be alleviated by combining evangelism and social action. William Booth’s remarkable book *In Darkest England [and The Way Out]* drew attention to the social deprivation experienced by millions [at home] in England in the 1890s... The movement pursued its twin tacks of revivalist evangelism and social action.”⁷¹ In Vancouver, The Salvation Army was the first holiness movement established in claiming, “holiness as its distinguishing doctrine and social work as its public manifestation.”⁷² It was not just social work that attracted people to The Salvation Army:

The Salvation Army’s blend of enthusiasms of revivalistic Methodism along with Booth’s military innovations attracted many Methodists who were disillusioned with the modern changes in their church... The rapid growth of urban centres, in which the Salvation Army had most appeal, also played a key role in its expansion in Canada... The relative strength of the Salvation Army in British Columbia was due to several factors. Its fervency and unorthodox style were well suited to the rough new urban environment in which most of the inhabitants lived. In Vancouver, hundreds of converts, mostly single men, were gained in the first few years, as large crowds of curious onlookers followed the singing, drum-beating officers to the primitive opera house to join services that were characterized by boisterous enthusiasm and spontaneity... Moreover, the army always retained strong traits of its English origins, and while not holding much appeal for the large numbers of non-British immigrants in the rest of western Canada, it was attractive to many of the British immigrants of British Columbia.⁷³

It was this ability of The Salvation Army to capitalize on British Victorian culture and urban venues along with its appeal to the lower classes that it endeavoured to “purify the moral atmosphere.”⁷⁴ The *War Cry*, the Army’s weekly newspaper claimed to sanctify commonplaces:

⁷⁰ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 161.

⁷¹ Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), 325.

⁷² Robert K. Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia, 1917 – 1981* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 33.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁷⁴ Diane Winston, “All the World’s Stage: The Performed Religion of The Salvation Army, 1880 – 1920” In *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media*, eds. Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 115.

The genius of the Army has been from the first that it has secularized religion, or rather that it has religionized secular things... On the one hand it has brought religion out of the clouds into everyday life, and has taught the world that we may and ought to be as religious about our eatings and drinkings and dressing as we are about our prayings. On [the] other hand it has taught that there is no religion in a place or in an attitude. A house or a store or factory can be just as holy a place as a church; hence we have commonly preferred to engage a secular place for our meetings... our greatest triumphs have been witnessed in theatres, music halls, rinks, breweries, saloons, stores and similar places.⁷⁵

Winston concludes, “The Army’s spectacles, pageants, films, and slide shows were vehicles for explaining its brand of religion and social service both to donors and spiritual seekers. The effort succeeded – especially with the former, members of the middle and upper classes, who saw the Army providing a vital public service.”⁷⁶ Today, however, Vancouver is far removed from its British Victorian roots and is confronted with secularization.⁷⁷ Newbigin instructs that we “Recognize the most urgent contemporary mission field is to be found in their own traditional heartlands, and that the most aggressive paganism with which they have to engage is the ideology that now controls the “developed” world.”⁷⁸ However, a recovered two pronged approach of social work and secularized spirituality may prove as effective as it did one hundred years ago.

Christology As Foundation For Integrated Mission

The theology of integrated mission is derived from the integrated person Jesus Christ. The centre of the story of God’s redemption is in the person, message and mission (including the crucifixion and resurrection) of Jesus. Ross Hastings begins his section *Discovering Shalom in Missional God, Missional Church* with an anecdote: “Ivan Illich was asked what he thought was the most radical way to change society; was it through violent revolution or gradual reform? He gave a careful answer. Neither. Rather, he suggested that if one wanted to change society, then one must tell an alternative story.”⁷⁹ Most modern stories end with death being the final end of humans. God as author of the story, however, has stepped into history to introduce a new form of existence; “now his [Jesus’s] humanity is of a different order, no longer orientated toward mere earthly existence. His new humanity is oriented toward a new creation in which heaven and earth are in perfect union. Jesus now is in a body that is prototypical of the resurrection bodies Paul speaks of in 1 Cor 15:42-44.”⁸⁰ The true story of Jesus confronts us with the reality of death but also the hope of resurrection. That is, Jesus is the significant key towards the notable crisis humanity is in: death. Rather than

⁷⁵ *American War Cry*, September 23, 1896, 8.

⁷⁶ Winston, “All the Word’s Stage”, 132.

⁷⁷ Lloyd Mackey, “Shifting Stats Tour Shook the Church, But Also Provided Grounds for hope” *The Church for Vancouver*, May 14, 2014, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://churchforvancouver.ca/shifting-stats-tour-shook-the-church-but-also-provided-grounds-for-hope/>.

⁷⁸ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 10.

⁷⁹ Rowland Croucher, Quoted in Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 121.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

choosing social work or spiritual renewal as the project for saving humans, Jesus integrates both approaches in his person, message of the Kingdom of God and his mission. In Christ we see the perfect union of the spiritual and physical because in that integration humanity is re-integrated into whole beings. Wendell Berry corrects the often mistaken evangelical dualism between body and soul:

The formula given in Genesis 2:7 is not man = body + soul; the formula there is soul = dust + breath. According to this verse, God did not make a body and put a soul into it, like a letter into an envelope. He formed man of dust; then, by breathing his breath into it, He made the dust live. The dust, formed as man and made to live, did not embody a soul: it became a soul. "Soul" here refers to the whole creature. Humanity is thus presented to us, in Adam not as a creature of two discrete parts temporarily glued together but as a single mystery."⁸¹

Considering the proper understanding of mankind as a single entity, integrated as a physical, relational and spiritual being, missional work must address the whole person. Relying on the Athanasian argument against Arius is helpful here. Athanasius rightly argued that Jesus must have had a physical body if the atonement were to have any effect on the resurrection of the Christian. Jesus, by being fully human and divine, offers a full salvation to the entire person so that every faculty of the person may experience regeneration and eternal life. Consequently, Christianity that does not address the whole person misses out on the intention of God's restoration.

Jesus's first declaration after his baptism and temptation in the gospel of Mark begins, "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the *good news* of God, and saying 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news'" (Mark 1:14-15, NRSV, emphasis added). Utilizing the militaristic language of the time, Jesus is announcing himself as a new ruler. "The term [good news] is generally used to declare the news of something that has happened to rescue and deliver people from peril."⁸² NT Wright observes, "This can only mean that Israel's God himself is arriving at last, to renew and restore his people... Israel's God is now becoming king – Israel's dream come true. But Jesus is talking about God becoming king in order to explain the things he himself is doing. He isn't pointing away from himself to God. He is pointing to God in order to explain his own actions."⁸³ In Christ and therefore in Christianity you cannot separate the person from his message and his mission. Jesus begins his ministry with another proclamation centred on himself and his activity:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

⁸¹ Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 106.

⁸² Tim Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 29.

⁸³ N. T. Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2012), 92.

He has sent me to proclaim
 release to the captives
 and recovery of sight to the blind,
 to let the oppressed go free,
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."
 (Luke 4:18 – 19, NRSV)

The Kingdom that is announced in Mark is expounded upon in Luke's gospel. Again, the good news is explicitly expressed in a great reversal for the poor, captives, blind and oppressed. Jesus's ministry follows his proclamation where he will do such things. Just like in the Exodus God reveals his power over seeming powers through his mighty deeds: healings, signs and miracles. The final power to be defeated that holds humanity captive is death itself. Jesus spoke openly about his crucifixion and resurrection and its function in Luke 9:22, "saying, 'The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.'" Mysteriously through Jesus's atonement he has become the "mediator of creation" instituting a new world order where resurrection, not death, is the final act. Moltmann explains, "If Christ is the foundation for the salvation of the whole creation, then he is also the foundation of creation's very existence. If being the foundation of salvation, he is all creation's goal, then he has been its foundation from eternity."⁸⁴ It is to this reality that Jesus calls humanity to "repent" and "believe." Though highly specific and centred on one person, Jesus, the salvation and kingdom he institutes is universal. Moltmann expands on Jesus' creative mediation as a holistic and integrated salvation for the whole world, "the salvation experienced and revealed through him is related, not merely to believers, and not merely to men and women, but to the whole of reality. Christ came 'to his own home' (John 1.11), not into a strange land. That is why even though Christians are 'strangers and sojourners' in this perverted world, they too are at home in God's real creation as its true citizens. The experience of salvation makes the extension of the experience of salvation to the whole of existence and to 'all things' necessary. Salvation is liberating because it includes everything, accepting all things into an all-embracing hope."⁸⁵ It is into this all embracing hope that believers are citizens of the Kingdom of God. This kingdom is surprisingly a reversal of the world's power dynamics found in Jesus's teachings. This task of discipleship is "to embody the message of Jesus, the Founder. In other words, this is the *strategic* element and therefore a good place to start. C. S. Lewis rightly understood that the purpose of the church was to draw people to Christ and make them like Christ."⁸⁶ Hirsch continues to stress the essential task of making disciples because this task is where Jesus "invested most of his time and energy, namely in the selection and development of that motley band of followers on whose trembling shoulders he lays the entire redemptive movement that would emerge from his death and resurrection."⁸⁷ Without that investment the disciples would likely have been a lost cause. Robert Coleman ensures that to realize the goal of Jesus we must think in long-term discipleship:

⁸⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 102.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸⁶ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 102.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Here is where we must begin just like Jesus. It will be slow, tedious, painful and probably unnoticed by men at first, but the end result will be glorious, even if we don't live to see it. Seen this way, though, it becomes a big decision in the ministry. One must decide where he wants his ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of his life in a few chosen men who will carry on his work after he has gone. Really it is a question of which generation we are living for.⁸⁸ Disciples then have a specific calling to adhere to Jesus Christ while also realizing their participation in God's universal renewal. Christopher Wright addresses the fact that it is God's mission, not the church's:

Mission is not ours; mission is God's. Certainly, the mission of God is the prior reality out of which flows any mission that we get involved in. Or, as has been nicely put, it is not so much the case that God has a mission for His church in the world but that God has a church for His mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God's mission.⁸⁹

The church is hardly alone in this endeavour. Moltmann assures us that people are integrated into the history of the Trinity, "Through the Spirit of Christ they not only become participators in the eschatological history of the new creation. Through the Spirit of the Son they also become at the same time participants in the Trinitarian history of God himself."⁹⁰ Hastings likewise demonstrates that the church is in mission through the Holy Spirit: "The grand motif of Acts is that the church is able to have a missionary witness because it is baptized in the Spirit, endowed with the Spirit's power, and led and sometimes nudged forcefully by the restless, missional Spirit. The church's pneumatic saturation and orientation is undeniably evident: it exists and continues because of the Holy Spirit's work. It is the Spirit who gathers new converts and incorporates them into new church communities."⁹¹ Thus it is the work of God's Spirit in the church to embody the message and mission of Jesus. The Salvation Army's ecclesiological document is rightly titled *Community in Mission*. Needham focuses on the unity of the church in mission quoting the Salvation Army's founder Catherine Booth, "God cares very little about our sectarian differences and divisions. The great main thing is the love of God and the service of humanity."⁹² Citing William Booth's love of innovation and adaptability Needham commends that specialized mission teams commit together for a particular community ministry. These teams are to strengthen commitment to the universal gospel, attract persons with specific needs in order to effectively implement the ministry of evangelism, and organize for spiritual battle:

Because modern Christian warfare must take place in a shifting, pluralistic terrain, it requires a 'guerilla style' which relies on the strategies of smaller commando units which

⁸⁸ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revel, 1993), 35.

⁸⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 62.

⁹⁰ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 90.

⁹¹ Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 295.

⁹² Catherine Booth, Quoted in Phillip Needham, *Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology*. (London: The Salvation Army, 1987), 59.

are adaptable to the exigencies of the war. It also requires disciplined units which understand their military objectives and maintain combat readiness. The mission team is ideally suited for this disciplined pursuit of objectives and the adaptation of structure and method to the needs of the battlefield.⁹³

The Salvation Army is well poised with its urban, missional DNA and urban history to cultivate such teams. By integrating intentional disciples who armed with the gospel, filled with the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus with The Salvation Army's social ministries, many conquests await. Today in Vancouver the restructuring of a thrift store, family services, women's recovery, social housing centred in a new church community, *Boundless Vancouver*, presents the opportunity to provide holistic discipleship and present an open sign of the radical transformation of personal and social relationships in the light of the Kingdom's future.

William Booth's famous mantra of "Soap, Soup and Salvation" was about the loving care shown to the whole person to ready them for spiritual renewal. Today, in Vancouver, few would express their interest in the church but many do express concern for the marginalized, for social issues and are supportive of the pragmatic outworking of the gospel that Salvationists undertake. A crisis is at hand, however: like the YMCA in Canada many years ago the social ministries of the Army are poised to eclipse or rid its evangelical foundations by mere budgets and public relations. However, by reframing itself in its theological, historical and Christological callings it is poised to keep Salvation in The Salvation Army.

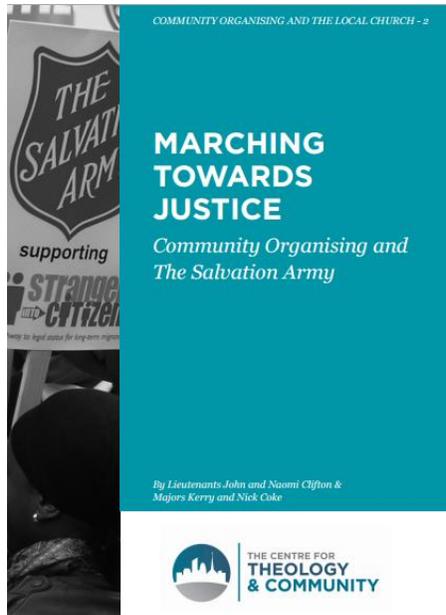
⁹³ Ibid., 60-1.

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Marching Toward Justice

by Cadet Sam Tomlin



In her famous freedom song 'Talkin' about a revolution', Tracy Chapman refers to the poor and oppressed 'crying at the doorsteps of those armies of salvation, wasting time in the unemployment lines, sitting around, waiting for a promotion.' The picture might depict the image of a poverty stricken American city where Chapman grew up, but it is also familiar to anyone with knowledge of the origins of the history of the Salvation Army itself. Founded 150 years ago this week at the heart of the poverty stricken East End, it certainly would have provided hope for thousands crying at its doorsteps.

The song has been used in justice-seeking Christian circles since it was released, its words powerfully evoking the biblical theme of the upside down Kingdom of God where the last will be first, and the

first last and the 'whisper-like' nature of God's revolutionary plan for the world. The reference to the 'armies of salvation' was also given fresh relevance this week with the launch of a new pamphlet '**Marching Towards Justice: Community Organising & the Salvation Army**' published by the **Centre for Community and Theology**.

Authored by four Salvation Army church leaders based in East London, the pamphlet was launched at the famous site of the Bryant & May match factory. Famous in salvationist circles because in the 1880s and 1890s it was the scene of an early battle for justice. The powerful and profitable factory relied on a workforce it treated appallingly - workers (mainly women) were exposed to dangerous substances while making the matches which caused cancer of the jaw and were paid barely anything. Voicing any opposition could result in losing your job.

Working with others, the Salvation Army opened its own factory with better conditions and pay. A huge campaign by salvationists buying the 'Darkest England' matches eventually undercut the profits of Bryant & May, and the moral pressure that came through the publicity forced them to improve conditions and pay.

Around 80 people came to the launch and standing in a small bar area, the meeting at times had the feel of what I imagine an early revivalist meeting might have had, or that of 'base communities' of South American liberation theology - passionate speakers, contribution from the floor and a feeling that everyone has something to offer - an exciting buzz in the room. Not that this is anything new to the concept of **community organising** the pamphlet discusses - all strategic or public meetings are designed to be creative and participatory.

After the first section which describes how the Army was 'born for justice seeking', exhibiting numerous examples from the past, comes the challenge to recapture this spirit today in the form of community organising: 'These stories remind us that we stand on the shoulders of giants. If they remain only as aspirational legends, however, they can rob us of what we can learn about the reality of justice seeking today.'

The main principles and methodology of community organising are described as founded in building relationships, often with people very unlike yourself, to build power. This often makes people nervous but the distinction is made between dominant power 'over people' and relational power 'with people'. Four main elements are cited and discussed in this way of thinking and acting: visitation, power analysis, training and public action. Building power with people enables the upside down situation where seemingly powerless people are put in the position to have their voice heard; for example when a Soldier at a corps and cleaner at a housing association in Canary Wharf joined with an alliance of local institutions to meet with the CEO,

'The most poignant moment came when the...Soldier looked the CEO in the eye and shared the story of how difficult it was to live on the minimum wage and how family life could be transformed if he could earn the Living Wage. The CEO listened respectfully to his employee's testimony. It was a moment of grace – the 'upside down kingdom' in action, where the one considered to be powerless became powerful and a genuine public relationship was built. A week later a letter arrived from the CEO. All 30 of the cleaners were to be given new contracts. Wages would be set at the Living Wage level, and sick pay and holiday pay were included. Amazingly, he went the extra mile and backdated the workers' pay for a whole year to a Living Wage level! It was an outstanding result. Justice had been served. Hallelujah!'

A question was asked at the launch about the often cited dichotomy between evangelism and social justice. The response was insightful and echoed the words of the pamphlet itself: 'At the heart of Salvation Army missional engagement is the dual focus of evangelism and social action. As with any healthy, holistic view of mission, both aspects are properly integrated and cannot be separated.'

A great achievement of the pamphlet, apart from exhibiting a biblical foundation and depth of personal experience is establishing the fact that far from being a set of new principles and orthopraxis (correct practice), justice seeking through community organising is part of the DNA of the Salvation Army. Indeed without such principles, being content simply with charity without justice, it is actually a betrayal of the founding principles of the Army and will result in detracting from its mission. As it is asserted: 'Everything about the language, terminology and methodology of the Salvation Army points to a revolutionary movement seeking to turn the world upside down'.

It finishes with a section on case studies from the authors' churches (or corps) and the Salvation Army training college, and the many victories that have been won with other

local institutions for the common good through building relationships of power: e.g. the living wage, housing, street safety.

What I personally love about the pamphlet and approach it describes is that it captures what theologian Jacques Ellul calls the 'troublemaking' heart of Christianity:

'Christians were never meant to be normal. We've always been holy troublemakers, we've always been creators of uncertainty, agents of dimension that's incompatible with the status quo; we do not accept the world as it is, but we insist on the world becoming the way that God wants it to be. And the Kingdom of God is different from the patterns of this world.'

Social justice seekers can often be said to be 'serious' people dealing with 'serious issues' and there is not much room for fun. The approach the pamphlet endorses contradicts this entirely - if it is partnering with God in establishing His Kingdom, we should be dancing as we go: 'action should be fun, so that people enjoy what they are doing. It's important to laugh! Actions should be creative in order to get the attention of bystanders, the media and the 'target!'

I have been blessed to get to know the four 'troublemakers' who authored the report this year and join in some of their holy troublemaking, and it has been a joy to realise that this fits firmly within the salvationist tradition. As Army Mother Catherine Booth said: 'If we are to better the future, we must disturb the present'. I wholeheartedly commend this pamphlet and suggest it is essential reading for all salvationists.

More information and a continued discussion of the pamphlet and its themes can be found at matchfactory.org

[>>download the brochure](#)

Cadet Sam Tomlin wrote a review on his blog here:

<http://thoughtsonhope.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/review-of-marching-towards->

William Booth and Caistor

by Major Howard Webber

Flags and bunting and a festive air greeted General William Booth as he entered Caistor, north Lincolnshire, on Saturday 2nd September 1905. Huge crowds greeted him. Traps, (two wheeled carriages), had come from all over the neighbourhood to this little town of less than 2,300 souls, and a civic reception was prepared for him. Nothing unusual about this. In his later years Booth was greeted in similar fashion wherever he went.

What made his visit to Caistor different to any other was what he said there. He spoke of coming to Caistor over 50 years ago, a young man with few friends, and the lasting impressions that it made, 'It was at Caistor that he first commenced the work that was to become so dear to him,' he said.

One Friday in mid-December 1853, towards the end of his time as a Wesleyan Reform minister in Spalding, William Booth(24yrs) received a letter, from a Parkin Wigelsworth, a solicitor in Donington, requesting he spend the following week in Caistor, almost 60 miles away, 20 miles north of Lincoln. Wigelsworth assured Booth that he would look after any appointments he had for that week.

Booth didn't need asking twice. Despite needing a rest and recently being 'very ill,' he set off the following morning, having first written to his fiancée Catherine in London, to tell her what he was about to do. Earlier, he had told her how difficult it would be to leave his circuit for more than two days even if her poor health had made it necessary. Consequently, Catherine was none too pleased to hear his news, as is clear from her reply,

'I was surprised to hear of your going to Caistor, after intimating to me the impossibility of your leaving your circuit for more than 2 days without consequences being so serious, even if I had been so bad(ill) as to make it necessary. I am truly sorry to hear of your state of health, but give up in utter despair the idea of making you judicious and prudent. After labouring in public so incessantly for a month or 6 weeks I cannot think it was wise to undertake to preach 3 times on Sunday and every night of the week. Neither do I think it was necessary or right.'

Arriving at 4pm he discovered he was 'altogether unexpected'. However, rather than return, he sought out the bellman (town crier) and some friends to advertise the fact that he was there. At the meeting the following morning 'I offered many reasons why the members should join me in seeking revival in Caistor. We knelt and gave ourselves afresh to God.' In both the afternoon and evening meetings many came under conviction and committed their lives to Christ.

In his journal, Booth highlights one particular case, that of a Mr. Joseph Wigelsworth, the 24 year old brother of the man who had requested Booth visit Caistor. Deeply

troubled during the morning meeting he returned in the afternoon and wept. In the evening Booth spoke to him and discovered that he had been brought up in a Christian home and been a Methodist for years, 'yet he was unsaved.' As Booth spoke with him, 'he broke down, came boldly to the penitent form, and with many tears and prayers he sought and obtained forgiveness. 'It was a splendid case and did us all good.'

The place was filled every night that followed and 'thirty six found salvation.' An entry dated 17th December 1853 in the account book of Caistor's Wesleyan Reformers, reads 'To cash for Mr Booth's expenses £1.' Mr Batty the bellman was paid 1 shilling for his services.

Having promised to spend another week there, Booth returned in the January and was pleased to find that only two of the thirty-six had fallen away and returned to their previous life. With increasing congregations the Reformers managed to acquire a redundant Congregational chapel in time for Booth's return. The result was, 'a glorious harvest. Seventy six were saved during the week,' Booth recorded.

But there were critics. The Reformers, to which Booth belonged, had only commenced their services in Caistor a few weeks before Booth's first visit, but had grown significantly. There were already thirty five members when he first arrived, eighty by Christmas and over two hundred by the time by the end of his third visit in February. One newspaper correspondent spoke of them as having 'hewn, partly out of the rough and partly from other sects, Ranters, Independents and Nothingarians, a sect of their own.' He stated that, in the "revival meetings" as they are technically called...the wildest fanaticism is encouraged; ravings and bawling, and all manner of extravagant doings are permitted.'

At the end of his final visit in the February of 1854, shortly before he moved down to London, Booth recorded, 'Every night many souls saved...The parting with this dear people was very painful. I had never experienced anything approaching to the success with which God crowned my labours here.' He loved Caistor and returned in June and again the following year with his new bride.

On his visit in 1905 the chairman of the council spoke of the 'abiding results' of his 'unwearied self-denying labours as an Evangelist in this town 50 years ago,' so many were the lives that were transformed. His 15 months stay in Spalding was used powerfully by God, but it was at Caistor that his eyes were opened to how God through him could reach the lost, 'the rough and Nothingarians,' beyond the chapel confines. With all that he achieved in the founding The Salvation Army, 'soul-saving' would ever remain what he in his old age termed his 'life's business.'

Biblical Basis For Justice

by Major Robert Evans

Christian faith at its core is an integration of belief and behaviour that emulates the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ, in whom Christ followers put their trust. Jesus, who, “being in very nature God” (Philippians 2:6) and who “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14), personified God’s divine attributes of holiness and justice (Isaiah 5:16). Therefore, as Christ followers, engaging in acts of justice is to embody the character of God and fulfil His biblical mandate “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your aGod” (Micah 6:8), just as Christ did. From this posture, Christian faith is both an expression of God’s righteousness and an execution of God’s justice that manifests His character in the world where we live out our faith (Cannon 2009, 20).

Mae Cannon joins with a chorus of other contemporary voices to express a renewed call for justice by establishing a strong biblical basis for this outworking of Christian faith: “Biblical justice is the scriptural mandate to manifest the kingdom of God on earth by making God’s blessings available to all” (Cannon 2009, 22). It is this biblical basis that reframes the heart of Christianity to realign with the heart of God. In his book ‘Pursuing Justice’ Ken Wytsma echoes Mae’s voice by calling all Christians to embrace a biblical framework of justice that defines a God-ordained purpose to “live and die” for:

“Justice is rooted in the character of God, established in the creation of God, mandated by the commands of God, present in the kingdom of God, motivated by the love of God, affirmed in the teaching of Jesus, reflected in the example of Jesus, and carried on today by all who are moved and led by the Spirit” (Wytsma 2013, xxii)

Within this framework, Wytsma helps us to analyse and evaluate a biblical basis for Christians “to embrace a God of justice and His call to be agents of justice” (Wytsma 2013, xxii), which can be illustrated by the life and theology of historical and contemporary figures who embraced this calling.

Justice rooted in the Character of God

Throughout the Old Testament God is consistently described as being ‘just’ with justice recognised as intrinsic to God’s character.

Pentateuch: “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Psalms: “The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.” (Psalm 111:7)

Prophets: “Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of Justice.” (Isaiah 30:18)

This biblical insight into God’s character connects us with His heart, as explained by Wytmsa: “When we understand that justice is rooted in the character of God and flows from the heart of God, we can begin to see that it permeates all of life” (Wytmsa 2013, 9). Martin Luther came to this understanding of the character of God when he acknowledged God’s justice as the source of his salvation. Luther’s study of Psalm 71:2, “In your justice Oh Lord, deliver me!” radically transformed his view of God’s justice from something that condemns, according to what he deserved, to something that saves, according to God’s grace (Pierson 2009, 138).

Justice established in the Creation of God

God established a pattern and design in His creation that defines the way the created order is intended to interact with the Creator and with all that has been created.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”” (Genesis 1:27-28)

With God’s pattern for creation being repeatedly violated since ‘The Fall’, injustice has ensued through a distorted and decaying reality and “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8:22).

People like William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King Junior, and Oscar Romero are among many who have sought to restore justice in the creation of God by restoring His image through the liberation of human beings. Movements with an emerging green theology seek to restore justice in the creation of God by affirming that “creation matters to God,” asserting that “climate change resulting from human sin and idolatry is an offense to God,” and challenging Christians that “If we believe God is a just and loving God who calls us to do justice and love the world, then we must speak out and act to mitigate against the effects of climate change” (Dawson and Pope 2014, 67).

Justice mandated by the Commands of God

Prophetic voices in Scripture have consistently challenged injustice and commanded God’s people to act justly. There is a deeply entrenched divine imperative throughout the message of the prophets that has God rejecting religious practices that are devoid of justice. God’s righteous requirements in the matter of justice are clearly stated by the prophet Amos:

“I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept

them. Through you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:21-24)

Today, there are a number of contemporary prophetic voices still speaking into this same space, challenging the Church to take a more proactive role in social justice. One such voice is Bono, lead singer of U2 and international advocate for AIDS programs, who said in an interview with *Christianity Today*, "A third of the Earth's population is incarcerated by poverty...It is, as they say, the drive of the Scriptures. Why isn't it the drive of the churches?" (*Christianity Today* 2002)

Justice present in the Kingdom of God

In the gospel of Luke Jesus fulfilled the prophetic mandate for justice as He inaugurated His mission to usher in the Kingdom of God: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19).

The mission of the Kingdom has a cultural and redemptive mandate to "penetrate the old society bringing cultural transformation that will bring wholeness to the people" through the integration of evangelism and social action as a 'wholistic mission' to all nations (Burnett 1996, 68). David Burnett, in presenting 'The biblical basis of the Mission of God', says "The era of the Kingdom was signified by healing, deliverance and restoration" (Burnett 1996, 62).

Justice motivated by the Love of God

John 3:16 is arguably the most well-known passage of Scripture, as it summarises the entire gospel message in a single verse that reflects God's motivation for justice through His salvation plan – "For God so loved the world..." God's love of people is proportional to His love of justice – "For I, the Lord, love justice..." (Isaiah 61:8). God's love is not a formless attribute but an action in the form of justice. In the same way, "Scripture does not command us to 'love' in some abstract, disembodied way, but rather to work out our love in the world" (Wytsma 2013, 77).

Mother Teresa personified the love of God in the streets of Calcutta by administering His justice to the poor in response to being "loved so greatly by God." Her life theme of 'love', which motivated her selfless ministry, has been captured by a collection of her quotes in a book aptly titled 'Where There is Love, There is God.' The editor of the book records how she often affirmed, "We have been created for greater things, to love and to be loved" (Kolodiejchuk 2010, 15).

Justice affirmed in the Teaching and Example of Jesus

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught a counter-cultural message of justice by turning the power structures upside-down. Instead of an “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth,” we are to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39). Instead of hating our enemy, Jesus said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Instead of our “acts of righteousness” being self-serving, we are to give to the needy with an attitude of humility (Matthew 6:1-4).

Such an attitude was demonstrated by St. Francis of Assisi who abandoned his father’s wealth and a luxurious lifestyle for a pathway “travelling by foot, living in poverty and seeking literally to follow in the footsteps of Christ,” while establishing a movement of Franciscan monks who “saw a return to many of the Galilean principles in Catholic mission” (Spencer 2007, 109).

Justice carried on today by all who are moved and led by the Spirit

A continued biblical basis for justice is evident through the lives of many who have been led by the Spirit of God to take up the mantle of justice to restore a broken humanity to a right image of God. In addition to those already mentioned, this can be further illustrated by the lives and faith of these modern day advocates for justice:

Gary Haugen – author of “Just Courage” and President and CEO of International Justice Mission (IJM). Pastor John Ortberg describes Haugen as, “A prophet in our day calling us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.”

David Batstone – author of “Not For Sale” and Co-Founder and President of global anti-slavery organisation Not For Sale. David says, “There are times to read history, and there are times to make history. We live right now at one of those epic moments in the fight for human freedom.”

Dr Wess Stafford – author of “Too Small to Ignore” and international advocate for children and President of Compassion International. Wess is described as having a “scripturally based perspective and Spirit-authored passion” as a “champion for the children” by “reiterating their value...and revealing their integral part in God’s plan.”

Having established a clear biblical basis for justice, the juxtaposition between the heart of the Creator and the brokenness of His creation demands a reasoned response from those who profess a faith in Jesus Christ. If the incarnation placed Christ in the centre of culture as the redeemer of creation, then it stands to reason that faith in Christ brings with it “a vision of human flourishing and common good” and that “to follow Christ means to care for others (as well as for oneself) and work toward their flourishing” within our respective cultures today (Volf 2011, xvi). Christian faith, therefore, cannot be lived in isolation from our common humanity but “should be active in all spheres of life,” bringing a prophetic message of hope through a public mission that bears witness to Jesus Christ (Volf 2011, xv).

Having a biblical basis for justice is one thing, but we also need a sound apologetic that effectively connects our belief in God with an experience of God that can reasonably demonstrate to a non-believing world how “the Christian idea of salvation involves a transformative relationship with the creator of the universe” (Beilby 2011, 106). Just as Jesus put flesh on the divine nature of God, giving a concrete expression to God’s love and justice, so too Christian faith should put flesh on an experience of God’s love and justice. Beilby affirms this thought: “The Christian faith is not an abstract set of concepts to be believed but a life to be embraced, a life that includes all of a person – head, heart and hands, reason, emotion, and will” (Beilby 2011, 106).

I am blessed to have been raised with such an expression of Christian faith through The Salvation Army which has shaped my understanding and experience of God’s justice to be a holistic mission to the whole person. I cannot separate my love for Jesus from my love for people and vice versa. The two are inseparable sides of the same coin, expressing the full justice of God through His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Our founder, General William Booth, expressed this strongly when challenged about his religion, “If you want my social work, you have got to have my religion; they are joined together like the Siamese twins, to divide them is to slay them” (Needham 1987, 63). This holistic mission is demonstrated in the Australia Southern Territory of The Salvation Army through our mission intentions – Transforming Lives, Caring for People, Making Disciples and Reforming Society. They interact with our theology of mission and arise from “our conviction that people are profoundly valuable, creatures in the image of God” (The Salvation Army 2014).

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A Word In Season

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

RETIRED Commissioner George Jolliffe was a kind of mentor of mine when I was a young officer. In his younger years he was a secretary to the Founder of The Salvation Army and carried something of the influence of that close contact even into retirement. He told me that William Booth never missed an opportunity of making a spiritual contact with people he met, such as a cab driver, or the captain of a ship, or the host at a billet.

Apparently a lot of early day Salvationists followed the General in this respect so that people expected an enquiry about their spiritual condition when they met a Salvationist in uniform which testified to faith and availability.

I recently read a long article by a journalist commissioned to write about the Army and who, after a week of interviews, seemed surprised that only one person had broached the matter of his own spiritual experience. Does that indicate a lack of what used to be called a passion for souls or is it rather that we are so frightened of saying the wrong thing we do not say the right thing?

For many of us the latter may be the reason.

We know that indiscriminate contacting could do more harm than good and trample on sensitive emotions. Soul winning calls for a prayerful approach and a careful understanding of human nature. Also, courage is required to take every opportunity of speaking a word for the Master. The one who wins souls is wise. Lord help us!
