

# WORD & DEED

VOL. XXVIII NO. 1



NOVEMBER 2025

A JOURNAL OF SALVATION ARMY  
THEOLOGY & MINISTRY

*Editorial: Living from the Center*

*Remembering General Paul A. Rader (Rtd)*

*Living by Faith: A Sermon from Habakkuk 2:2-20*

*Examining the Salvationist Theology of Covenant Through the Lens  
of Biblical Theology*

*Riots, Strikes, and Eschatology: The Origins of Salvationist Socialism*

*Suffering 101: A Scriptural Resource for Pastors to Address the Suffering  
in Our World*



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Alexandria, VA, USA

**Word & Deed Mission Statement:**

The purpose of the journal is to encourage and disseminate the thinking of Salvationists and other Christian colleagues on matters broadly related to the theology and ministry of The Salvation Army. The journal provides a means to understand topics central to the mission of The Salvation Army, integrating the Army’s theology and ministry in response to Christ’s command to love God and our neighbor.

**Salvation Army Mission Statement:**

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.

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**Editorial Policy:**

Contributions related to the mission of the journal are encouraged. At times there will be a general call for papers related to specific subjects. Manuscripts should be lengths as follows: academic papers (articles, literature reviews and essays)—5,000 words or fewer; sermons—3,000 words or fewer; book reviews—1,250 words or fewer. The title of the article should appear at the top of the first page of the text, and the manuscript should utilize endnotes, not footnotes. All Bible references should be from the New International Version. If another version is used throughout the manuscript, indicate the version in the first textual reference only. If multiple versions are used, please indicate the version each time it changes. Manuscripts must be submitted digitally in Microsoft Word format. The publication of all manuscripts is subject to editorial review. Authors may be required to make revisions. Once a manuscript has final approval for publication, a 100-word abstract of the paper may be used at the discretion of the editor. The deadlines for submitting final manuscripts are January 1 and June 1. A style sheet is available upon request. All manuscripts should be sent to the journal co-editors: [rjgreen105@gmail.com](mailto:rjgreen105@gmail.com) or [jonraymond1969@gmail.com](mailto:jonraymond1969@gmail.com).

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Vol. XXVIII No. 1 November 2025

**ISSN 1522-3426**

Cover Photograph, 614 Corps, Birmingham, Alabama, by Brian Wallace.  
Word & Deed is indexed in the Christian Periodical Index and with EBSCO.  
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## Editorial

# Living from the Center

*Word & Deed*, the Army's scholarly journal of theology and praxis, is now in its 28<sup>TH</sup> year. Going forward, we remember the Apostle Paul's prayer (Eph. 1:17-19) – "may the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. We pray the eyes of your heart be enlightened in order that you know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." In the Apostle John's Gospel, we read the work of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who "guides us into all truth. He does not speak on his own, but only what he hears, and will tell us what is yet to come" (John 16:13). Yet to come in this issue is a sermon and four articles, and eight book reviews.

Coming first is a sermon by Christopher L. Scott, "Living By Faith, a Sermon from Habakkuk, 2:2-22". In the Bible passage, God gives Habakkuk a clear message and tells him to share it with others, pass on the message, and encourage others to read it, run with it, and put it to action. By Habakkuk's prophecy the author interprets the passage to say "By faith we live, by faith we wait, by faith we suffer." Scott concludes that living by faith is the not only Habakkuk's message, but that of the entire Scripture.

Next, Michal Baken and Scott Noakes may disturb some Salvationists in writing "Examining The Salvationist Theology of Covenant Through the Lens of Biblical Theology". They begin acknowledging that covenant has been and continues to be a significant component of The Salvation Army's (TSA) ecclesiology, and that from time to time it is solemnly renewed. The authors observe that, over the past 130 years from its inception, Salvationists' understanding and engagement of covenant in worship has been decreasing in significance, perhaps underscored with new generations. Baken and Noakes' examination is comprehensive and includes a

review of biblical events of covenant, its origins in TSA theology, and its history, review of TSA literature, and the TSA history of covenant renewal. They found several areas of Salvationist drift. Their article presents recommendations in three areas for a renewal and sacrificial relationship with God. The writers encourage readers to learn from our ancestors and to press onto greater understanding of what it means to covenant with God.

Christopher Button's opening may shock many readers, He highlights that "In 1908, William Booth publicly identified himself as a socialist". In "Riots, Strikes, and Eschatology; Origins of Salvationist Socialism", Button suggests that Booth and the early Army were not participants in any form of social revolutions, nor were they pursuing the violent revolutions overthrowing ruling systems and powers of the twentieth century. Button brings attention to the socialist theory influence on the Army's development of its Social Reform Wing, particularly the Darkest England Scheme. Booth's theology of postmillennial eschatology occasioned his early interest in social reform. God's reign would destroy misery caused by sin. The roots of sin would be destroyed by sanctification. In a relatively short time, Salvation Army Socialism did not survive beyond 1920. Booth's theology and the Army's interest in Salvationist Socialism lost its drive. Booth's vision and hope was grounded in sanctification and emergence in Christ's return. There's more to Booths beliefs by Button, who also provides a strong, compelling discussion of the historical dynamics that move TSA broadly away from Booth's idea of sanctified social reform and instead to social work.

Rebekah Swyers, in "Scriptural Resources to Addressing Suffering", writes as a pastor to address suffering in our world. "As pastors we continue to avoid the difficult questions stemming from a hurting world. We leave hurting people floundering in grief and anger, and we leave them behind altogether with simple answers, platitudes and false statements that fill our own holes of theology." Swyers outlines several scriptural resources to speak into hurting lives. She shepherds, offering knowledge, wisdom, authority, and broad scriptural vistas of human suffering from Genesis to Revelation. Going beyond practical solutions for hunger, clothing, shelter or homelessness, she encourages compassion to go beyond physical fixes pursuing "wider and deeper space for honest discussion, lament, anger, doubt, and feelings for those around us who suffer." Swyers' writing is for clerical and lay leaders and particularly for The Salvation Army.

Lyell Rader is always sensitive to the Holy Spirit in his writings. Through his paper, "Living From The Center", he gives us a mitzvah. Rader begins by quoting

a Quaker, John R. Kelley: “... *Over the margins of life comes a whisper, a faint call, a premonition of richer living which we know we are passing by ...*”

From the Gospel of John and the whisper of the Spirit, Lyell Rader gives us windows into Jesus’ personhood and our own. Rader writes “We see ourselves, and in the grace extended, we find ourselves living from the Center.” His paper goes into scriptural depth and insight in three areas: Life (John 1:1-14; 3:1-10); Light John (9:1-34); and Love (John 7:53-8:11). Through Rader’s writing, the Apostle John speaks to our condition and holds before us the way toward wholeness in the presence of Jesus living from the Center.

Helpful book reviews complete the contents of this issue.

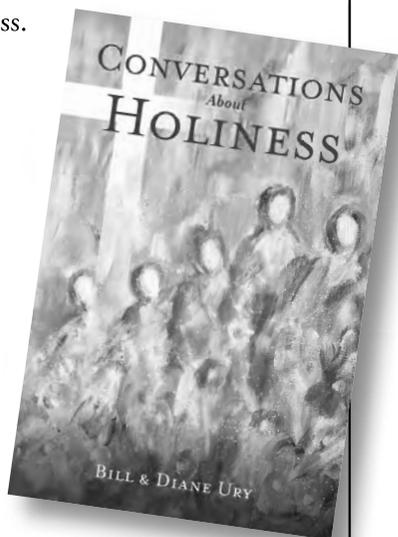
We are reminded that living from the center is not always easy, but for the sake of faithfulness both to the Scriptures and to the Christ who is fully revealed in Scripture such living is valued as the way for every believer. There is a depth in this theme that we pray will enrich the life and ministry of all who read this issue of *Word & Deed*.

JSR  
RJK

# *Conversations About Holiness*

Bill & Diane Ury

Every person is created for holiness. We are designed by our loving Creator for intimate belonging with Him. This is the hunger of every human heart. But what is holiness anyway? And what is sanctification? How does holiness hold a place of relevance in God's Church for this cultural moment? Should we even continue to use such an archaic word that seems out of touch with present Christians? Envoys Bill and Diane Ury spend their ministry responding to questions like these about holiness. Within this book, they share their hearts' passions for the Triune God of Holy Love, who longs to share His life with every person on earth.



## **Order This Book:**

**Online: [Christianbook.com](http://Christianbook.com) or [crestbooks.com](http://crestbooks.com)**

## Remembering General Paul A. Rader (Rtd)



General (Dr) Paul A. Rader (Rtd), who served as The Salvation Army's 15th international leader from 1994 to 1999, was promoted to Glory from Lexington, Kentucky, USA, on 18 January 2025 at 90 years of age.

Paul Alexander Rader was born to Lyell Mayes and Gladys Damon Rader on 14 March 1934, in the Bronx, New York, USA, and was raised in a wholly committed Salvation Army family. Paul spent his undergraduate years at Asbury University, then studied at Asbury Theological Seminary and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, graduating with BA, BD and MTh degrees.

At Asbury, he met and married Kay Fuller, who graduated with a BA degree in education. Together, they entered The Salvation Army School for Officer Training in New York (USA Eastern Territory) in September 1960 as cadets of the Soldiers of Christ Session. They were appointed as cadet-lieutenants to Newark, New Jersey in 1961, and were ordained and commissioned as officers in The Salvation Army on 14 June 1962.

## **Called to Korea**

Lieutenants Kay and Paul Rader felt called to be missionaries in South Korea, and upon their commissioning they were appointed to the faculty at The Salvation Army Officer Training College in the Korea Territory. In their early years there, they studied the Korean language and became fluent enough to preach and teach in Korean. They served in a variety of capacities, including education, evangelism and administration, and in July 1967 Captain Paul Rader was appointed Assistant Training Principal.

In March 1972, Captains Kay and Paul Rader moved back to the USA with their three children, where they were assigned to Southern California Divisional Headquarters World Services Department (USA Western Territory) and received the rank of major nine months later. While in California, Major Paul Rader studied at Fuller Theological Seminary, earning his doctorate in Missiology.

In August 1973, they returned to the Korea Territory, with Major Paul Rader first serving as the Training Principal, then later as Territorial Education Secretary. In October 1977, he was appointed Chief Secretary and promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

## **A return to the US**

After 22 years of service in Korea, in February 1984 the Raders went back to the United States for Lieut-Colonel Paul Rader to serve as Principal of the School for Officer Training in Suffern, New York. It was at that time that he was awarded a Doctor of Laws (LLD) degree from Asbury University.

In January 1989, Lieut-Colonel Rader was appointed Chief Secretary of the USA Eastern Territory with a promotion to the rank of colonel, and in October that same year was further promoted to the rank of commissioner and became leader of the USA Western Territory. In 1994, Commissioner Paul Rader was elected the first American-born General of The Salvation Army with an unprecedented unanimous vote, and he held this London-based role of international leader until 1999. During those years, Commissioner (Dr) Kay Rader was the World President of The Salvation Army Women's Organisations. Together, they travelled to more than 75 countries, bringing encouragement, inspiration and growth to the work of The Salvation Army around the world.

## **A godly man**

Upon retirement, General Paul Rader served as the 15th President of Asbury University from 2000 until 2006. As President, he was known to regularly attend

events on campus, offering encouragement and support to undergraduate and graduate students alike. After retiring from this position, he lived his remaining years in Lexington, Kentucky with his beloved wife.

General Paul Rader was a godly man who lived in service to others and, most of all, to Christ. He was a lifelong learner with a deep commitment to education, the power of prayer and holiness. He was a devoted husband to Kay, his wife of 68 years, and was her strongest supporter as they shared in ministry together. He was also a loving father, grandfather and great-grandfather, leaving a legacy of love, integrity, humility and conviction. Through all his years, he maintained a sense of humour and a belief that we all hold the capacity to overcome.

### **An unwavering commitment and calling**

General Lyndon Buckingham, the current international leader of The Salvation Army, has paid tribute to General Rader, saying: ‘General Paul Rader was a devoted servant and leader. I salute his unwavering commitment to his calling, his unrelenting vision for the growth of The Salvation Army and the sharing of the gospel to the furthest reaches of the globe.’

Chief of the Staff Commissioner Edward Hill added: ‘General Paul Rader was a dynamic and engaging leader who inspired me and countless other officers of my generation. I thank God for the power of the General’s preaching and teaching. We are grateful to God for calling General Rader into service and ministry within The Salvation Army, and we acknowledge with grateful thanks his commitment, servant leadership and example in the United States and Korea, and throughout the international Army. We know that many will have been blessed and impacted by his ministry, and we thank God for his legacy.’

General Paul Rader is survived by his wife, Commissioner Kay Rader, and three children – Edie (Jack) Moon, JP (Helen) Rader and Jennie (Ray) Purvis – as well as seven grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and countless extended family members, friends and colleagues. To them we offer our condolences and the assurance of our prayers, that they will experience a sense of God’s peace and comfort.

### **Korean Translation**

국제 구세군 제15대 총재(1994~1999) 를 역임하신 폴 A. 레이더 전 대장이 2025년 1월 18일, 미국 켄터키주 렉싱턴에서 향년 90세로 하나님의 부르심을 받으셨습니다.

폴 알렉산더 레이더 (Paul Alexander Rader) 는 1934년 3월 14일, 미국 뉴욕 브롱크스

에서 글래디스 데이먼 레이더 (Gladys Damon Rader) 와 라이얼 메이스 (Lyell Mayes) 사이에서 태어나 구세군 사역에 헌신한 가정에서 자랐습니다. 그는 애스버리 대학교 (Asbury University) 에서 학부 과정을 마치고, 애스버리 신학교 (Asbury Theological Seminary) 와 서던 침례신학교에서 신학 (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) 을 공부하여 학사 (BA), 신학사 (BD), 신학석사 (MTh) 학위를 취득했습니다.

애스버리에서 그는 교육학을 전공한 케이 풀러 (Kay Fuller) 를 만나 결혼했고, 두 사람은 함께 1960년 9월 미국 동부 관할구역 뉴욕에 있는 구세군 장교 훈련학교에 ‘그리스도의 장교 훈련생 과정’으로 입교했습니다. 그들은 1961년 뉴저지주 뉴어크 (Newark) 에 견습 중위로 임명된 후, 1962년 6월 14일 구세군 장교로 서임 및 위임받았습니다.

### 한국에서의 소명

풀과 케이 레이더 중위는 한국 선교의 부르심을 받아 한국으로 향했고, 부임과 동시에 구세군 한국 지방장교 훈련학교의 교수진으로 임명되었습니다. 임명 초기에는 한국어를 배웠으나 곧 설교와 강의를 한국어로 할 수 있을 만큼 유창해졌고, 부부가 함께 교육, 전도, 행정 등 다양한 분야에서 사역했습니다. 1967년 7월, 풀 레이더 대위는 훈련학교 부교장으로 임명되었습니다.

1972년 3월, 세 자녀와 함께 미국으로 돌아온 케이와 풀 레이더 대위는 미국 서부 관할구역 소속 남부 캘리포니아 지부 본부의 세계봉사부에서 근무했고, 9개월 후 소령으로 진급했습니다. 캘리포니아에 머무는 동안, 풀 레이더 소령은 풀러 신학교에서 선교학 박사 학위를 받았습니다.

1973년 8월, 다시 한국으로 돌아온 레이더 소령은 훈련학교 교장으로 시작하여 교육 부장으로 이어지는 다양한 직책을 맡았고, 1977년 10월에는 서기장으로 임명되어 중령으로 진급했습니다.

### 미국으로의 복귀

22년간의 한국 사역을 마친 후, 1984년 2월 풀 레이더 중령은 뉴욕 서퍼런 (Suffern) 에 있는 구세군 장교 훈련학교 교장으로 임명되며 미국으로 돌아왔습니다. 이 시기에 애스버리 대학교에서 법학박사 (LLD) 학위를 받기도 했습니다.

1989년 1월, 레이더 중령은 미국 동부 관할구역의 서기장으로 임명되며 대령으로 승진했고, 그해 10월에는 총장 (Commissioner) 으로 승진하여 미국 서부 관할구역의 책임 사령관이 되었습니다. 1994년, 커미셔너 풀 레이더는 전 세계 대표자들의 만장일치로 최초의 미국 태생 구세군 총재 (General) 로 선출되었으며, 1999년까지 런던 본부에서 전 세계를 이끄는 국제 총재직을 수행했습니다. 이 시기 동안 케이 레이더 박사 역시 총장의 직책을 맡아 구세군 세계 여성 조직의 회장으로 사역하였으며, 부부는 전 세계 75개국 이상을 방문하여 구세군 사역을 격려하고 영감을 불어 넣으며, 구세군의 성장을 함께 이끌었습니다.

## 신실한 삶

퇴임 후, 폴 레이더 장군은 2000년부터 2006년까지 애스버리 대학교의 제15대 총장으로 재직했습니다. 총장으로 재직 당시 장군은 정기적으로 캠퍼스 행사에 참석하여 학부생과 대학원생 모두에게 따뜻한 격려와 지지를 아끼지 않았던 것으로 유명합니다. 퇴임 후, 장군은 켄터키주 렉싱턴에서 사랑하는 아내와 함께 여생을 보냈습니다.

폴 레이더 장군은 그리스도를 중심에 둔 신앙으로 타인을 섬기며 살아간 신실한 인물이었습니다. 그는 평생 배우는 자세를 잃지 않았고, 교육, 기도의 힘, 거룩한 삶에 깊이 헌신한 사람이었습니다. 68년간 함께한 아내 케이에게는 늘 든든한 동반자였고, 사역을 함께하며 서로를 지지했습니다. 그는 세 자녀의 아버지이자, 손주와 증손주에게 따뜻한 사랑을 베푸는 조부였으며, 사랑과 진실성, 겸손과 확고한 믿음으로 가득 찬 삶을 유산으로 남겼습니다. 또한 그는 끝까지 유머 감각을 잃지 않고 극복에 대한 믿음을 지켰던 사람으로 모든 사람의 기억에 남아 있습니다.

## 흔들림 없는 헌신과 소명

현 국제 구세군 총재인 린든 버킹엄 (Lyndon Buckingham) 장군은 그를 기리며 ‘폴 레이더 장군님은 헌신적인 일꾼이자 지도자이셨습니다. 소명에 대한 장군님의 흔들림 없는 헌신, 구세군의 성장과 땅끝까지 복음을 전하고자 했던 장군님의 끊임없는 비전에 경의를 표합니다.’라고 추모했습니다.

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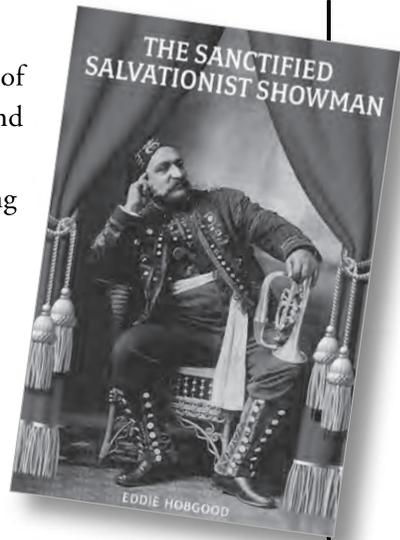
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Eddie Hobgood is a first-generation Salvationist who came to The Salvation Army through its open-air ministry. Together, he and his wife Kathy were commissioned as Salvation Army officers in 1983 and have served in various appointments across several cities in North Carolina, as well as in Atlanta, Georgia and London, England. Hobgood now serves as a senior consultant with Arthur Alley Associated and enjoys the privilege of helping nonprofit organizations develop mission and strategic plans.



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# Living by Faith<sup>1</sup>

## A SERMON FROM HABAKKUK 2:2-20<sup>2</sup>

*Christopher L. Scott*

All of us have experienced our perspective changing over time because of the position or role in which we find ourselves. Perhaps we started a job as a regular employee who had many great ideas about how to better run the organization, fix problems, and improve it. But later when we became a manager or supervisor we realized based on our new position that many of those great ideas we had as an employee wouldn't work as a manager. Maybe as a kid we didn't like our parents and disagreed with what they did. But when we became a mother or father, we then saw the wisdom in what our parents did. Politicians usually campaign on a set of changes they want to make when elected into office. But when elected they often realize what they wanted to accomplish is impossible or not practical after learning how government works.

Let me propose—if I may—that it can be like that with God too. The things we think God should do are not seen that same way from God's perspective. The way we believe God should intervene in a situation from our perspective on earth is very different from the perspective God has from heaven.

Habakkuk was experiencing this in 607 BC. Thus far in the book of Habakkuk we've learned about Habakkuk's problems in chapter one. In chapter one we read Habakkuk's first question about God's inactivity. Habakkuk essentially asks in Habakkuk 1:2-4 "How long will evil continue and when will you stop it?"<sup>3</sup> Next we read God's first answer to Habakkuk in Habakkuk 1:5-11. God essentially responds, "I'm going to stop it, I know what's going on, and you'll be surprised how." Therefore Habakkuk asks a second question in 1:12-2:1. He questions God's inconsistency and basically asks, "Why use greater sinners against less sinners?"<sup>4</sup>

In Habakkuk 2:2-20 we read God's second answer to Habakkuk. If we were to summarize these nineteen verses into one big idea it would be this: God responds to Habakkuk with a message about the future, a message for the faithful, and a message for Babylon.

## **GOD'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE (vv. 2-3)**

### ***Something to Write Down for Future Generations (v. 2)***

Habakkuk tells us, "Then the Lord answered me and said, 'Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run'" (Habakkuk 2:2). This revelation from God is going to be a tangible reminder—like a wedding ring or a necklace given by a loved one—to remind Habakkuk about a commitment that is made.

God tells Habakkuk to *preserve that message*, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets." This suggests its importance. It had to be preserved so they probably recorded it on tablets of baked clay.

God tells Habakkuk to *publicize that message*. "That the one who reads it may run." That phrase tells us this was a clear message because the one running can read it. In other words, the one who has read it can easily share the message with others. This is most likely the meaning here. God's telling Habakkuk or whoever else, "Read this, then run and put it into action."

### ***Something to Work Out at a Future Time (v. 3)***

God reveals to Habakkuk, "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay" (Hab 2:3). It was important for Habakkuk to record this because it has future implications. We learn, "the vision is yet for the appointed time." That appointed time is going to be described in detail in Habakkuk 2:6-20. We also learn about the certainty of this declaration from God, "It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail." This plan will occur. God is 100 percent accurate 100 percent of the time. It's our responsibility to wait.

## ***FROM HABAKKUK'S PROPHECY WE LEARN THAT BY FAITH WE WAIT***

Habakkuk hears from God in 607 BC, yet the Babylonians aren't conquered until 539 BC when king Cyrus of Persia comes and invades Babylon.

Most of us understand the necessity of waiting for things to occur. When we plant seeds we know we need to wait for them to grow into plants. When we want to teach kids to read we know it requires instruction, practice, and repetition. If

we want to improve our health we know it involves eating healthy and exercise over months and years.

But sometimes when it comes to God—because we know God is powerful and can do anything—we don’t like to wait for His intervention. We want Him to zap things instantly. God can sovereignly intervene and cause miracles to occur, but He often uses instruments of His plan to accomplish His will. God uses the world we live in to accomplish His will.

That’s why it’s important we learn that it’s *by faith that we wait*. Sometimes we have to wait for a new job, a spouse to come to know the Lord, or to have a baby.

It’s especially hard to wait on things that we know are good. My friend Justin had spent four years getting his bachelor’s degree and six years getting a master’s degree. After waiting months to find a church that would hire him he became discouraged, sad, and even angry. Many times I talked to him and he expressed his frustrations and disappointments saying, “I thought God wants me to be a pastor, but I don’t know why it’s so difficult to find a job.” When we want God to do things that we know are good it’s hard to wait for Him to intervene.

We might say, “God I need a new job that pays better so that I can save for retirement or give more to church.” Or maybe we plead, “God I want my spouse to become a Christian so that I see my spouse when I get to heaven.” Maybe we ask, “God I want a child so I can raise him or her up to love you and honor you.” Those are all good things, but it’s hard to wait for God to work on those things.

Sometimes we don’t know how those things will be accomplished. Sometimes we don’t know how God might work, but it’s *by faith we wait*. Pastor and writer Mark Hitchcock said this when preaching from Habakkuk, “In the Bible faith is never in contrast to reason, faith is in contrast to sight.”<sup>5</sup> We trust God to do good works, but we might not see how He’s going to do them. We *wait* on the Lord, rather than *moving* on our own strength or according to our own timeline. Because we know God, we love God, and trust God, it means we wait on God.

But what is this important message Habakkuk 2:3 predicts? Imagine a dramatic pause as God speaks it to Habakkuk.

## **GOD’S PLANS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS (vv. 4-5)**

### ***The Wicked (vv. 4a, 5)***

As we read about the wicked people in Habakkuk 2:4-5 we need to remember that the word “Chaldeans” is the term Habakkuk uses to describe the Babylonians<sup>6</sup> (Hab 1:6, 15).

Habakkuk tells us that the Babylonians are *dominant*, “Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him” (Habakkuk 2:4a). The Babylonians lived by their sight and their might. But their pride was what condemned them. They ran over people instead of submitting under the authority of God.

Habakkuk also tells us that the Babylonians are *drunk*, “Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, so that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples” (Habakkuk 2:5). This verse describes the wickedness of the Babylonians in two ways. First, there’s a personification of Babylon as a drunk man, “wine betrays a haughty man, so that he does not stay at home.” Second, there’s personification of Babylon as a hungry man, “He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations, and collects to himself all peoples.” This personifies death as having an appetite that is never satisfied. The Babylonians were proud, greedy, and always wanted more.

Habakkuk also tells us that the Babylonians are *deadly*, “wine betrays the haughty man.” Excessive alcohol is not the chief sin or worst sin here, but it appears as the sin that fuels other sins. When my family lived in Exeter, California we had a traditional open wood fire place with a small pipe that provided natural gas you could use to get the wood fire going. It was fantastic! That little bit of natural gas takes the small amount of fire and magnified it greatly. Alcohol has that same effect on our sin. Alcohol takes the little bit of sin we have and enlarges it. We see that happen in Daniel 5 with King Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar’s son) where alcohol led to many foolish deeds and the eventual end of the Babylonian kingdom (Dan 5:30-31).

In Habakkuk 2:4-5 there’s a sharp contrast between the wicked people—Babylonians—that were prideful and drunk with the righteous people whom Habakkuk describes next.

### ***The Righteous (v. 4b)***<sup>7</sup>

While God has declared His plans for the wicked (Hab 2:4:a, 5), God declares his plans for the righteous saying, “But the righteous will live by his faith” (Hab 2:4b).<sup>8</sup> If you ask most people on the street today how they would get to heaven, most would say by being a good person and doing good deeds. This verse contradicts that.

This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament so let’s make sure we read

it in its *context*. Habakkuk has posed his questions to God and expressed his concern about the righteous (Habakkuk 1:4, 13). Here in Habakkuk 2:4 God probably has the oppressed individuals of Habakkuk 1:4 in view. God is saying that this is what is true for those who trust in God and not in themselves.

In addition to the context it is important to examine a few *cross references* of Habakkuk 2:4.<sup>9</sup> Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three times in our New Testament. In each of these quotes I want to bring out the meaning of a specific word.

When quoted in Romans 1:17 the word “*righteous*” describes salvation. “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:17). In this context *faith* opposed to *work* leads to salvation. In other words, what you do doesn’t make you righteous.

When quoted in Galatians 3:11 the word “*live*” also describes our salvation but a different aspect of it. “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith’” (Galatians 3:11). In this context *faith* opposed to *legalism* and *Law* leads to salvation. In other words, you don’t become righteous by keeping the Law or celebrating certain festivals and feasts.

The use of Habakkuk 2:4 in Galatians 3:11 and Romans 1:17 became the battle cry and banner of the Protestant reformation. In the sixteenth century the Roman Catholic Church was requiring payments from common people to pay for their sins and to lessen the time that their family spent in purgatory. Along with that came a list of “dos” and “don’ts” that the Roman Catholic Church had for the people as a way for them to maintain their standing as Christians in the Roman Catholic Church.

From that context with Habakkuk 2:4, Galatians 3:11, and Romans 1:17 several streams of Protestant reformation traditions began. One stream known as the “Reformed Faith” flowed from two men. From Ulrich Zwingli who was located in the city of Zurich in northern Switzerland and from John Calvin who was also from Switzerland but was located in the city of Geneva, which was in the south. Another stream came to be known as the “Lutheran Reformation” led by Martin Luther in Germany and Conrad Grebel who was based in Zurich. A third stream developed and is known as “Anabaptism” from Menno Simmons who was from Holland.

All three groups saw Habakkuk 2:4 as quoted in Galatians 3:11 and Romans 1:17 as the correct teaching that a person is declared righteous by God because of faith, not because of works.

There is a third quote of Habakkuk 2:4 in the New Testament that is lesser known, yet still important. While Romans 1:17 used “righteous” to describe salvation as

*faith* opposed to *work*, and Galatians 3:11 used “live” to describe *faith* opposed to *legalism* and *Law*, Hebrews 10:38 quotes Habakkuk 2:4 focusing on “*faith*” and its role in our sanctification. The context in Hebrews is *faith* persevering under *pressure*. In other words, you don’t leave your faith when times get hard, instead it is your faith that allows you to endure and grow. This quotation in Hebrews 10:38 is most like Habakkuk’s use.

Now that we understand the context and have examined cross references of Habakkuk 2:4, let’s look at its *constant message*. Tough times are coming for Judah, but they will only endure by faith. God is assuring Habakkuk that it is by the faith and godly lifestyle of the innocent that they will be preserved through coming oppression.

### ***FROM HABAKKUK’S PROPHECY WE LEARN THAT IT’S BY FAITH WE LIVE***

By faith we live spiritually and by faith we live physically. By faith we enter the heavenly kingdom of God and by faith we endure the earthly kingdom.

As Habakkuk utters these words the Babylonians probably think they’re getting away with what they’re doing. But God has something to say.

### **GOD’S PLANS FOR THE WICKED**

As we examine Habakkuk 2:6-20 you’ll see the word “woe” used five times (vv. 6, 9, 12, 15, 19). The word “woe” is translated from the Hebrew word *howy* which begins each of the five “woe oracles” in Habakkuk 2:6-20. A woe oracle announced the failure and future doom of a nation.<sup>10</sup> A woe oracle was a way to announce that the funeral for a nation was just around the corner.<sup>11</sup> These woe oracles are oracles of judgement that are classified as “taunt.” A taunt “is an utterance that mocks or jeers the opponent.”<sup>12</sup> It’s a put down. It’s trash talk. In addition to saying bad things are going to happen, a taunt is also a personal attack on the nation and its leaders. God “rubs it in” to make it hurt, to make it sting, and to make it personal.<sup>13</sup>

Let’s briefly examine each of these five woe oracles that God establishes against Babylon.

#### ***Plunder (vv. 6-8)***

God begins His list of wrongdoings of the Babylonians with how they took money that wasn’t theirs. God declares their extortion wrong, “Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity! You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off

many peoples; so you are sinning against yourself. Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework” (Habakkuk 2:6-8). When God says the Babylonians are like a man that “makes himself rich with loans” (v. 6) it means Babylon had a reputation for heavily taxing conquered nations as well as issuing loans with high interest rates (2 Kings 4:1-7; Neh 5:1-13; Deut 24:10-13).

### ***Pride (vv. 9-11)***

The next issue we learn God has with Babylon is that they have been taking homes that weren't theirs. The Babylonians have been exploiting others, “Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity! You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples; so you are sinning against yourself. Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework” (Habakkuk 2:9-11). Babylon wants to be inaccessible and high above others. They want to be unreachable. Babylon has taken property from other people and built their own homes with it. They built themselves up by tearing others down.

### ***Projects (vv. 12-14)***

A kind and gracious and loving God objects to how Babylon was taking cities by violence. This was an example of Babylon's unnecessary extravagance. “Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence! Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:12-14). The Babylonians are ruthless people that shed blood in the process of taking cities.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Poured Wine (vv. 15-17)***

God's issue with wine is that drinking excess wine inhibits good behavior.<sup>15</sup> The Babylonians are enjoying too much alcohol.

*God condemns their excess use of liquor*, “Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk so as to look on their nakedness! You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace will come upon your glory” (Habakkuk 2:15-16). Stephen Braemer teaches in the Bible Exposition department at Dallas Theological

Seminary and calls these two verses “spring break” verses. When you mix drugs and alcohol you normally get bad things. Not only does alcohol cause bad things to happen, but it also invites others into it as well. In Daniel 5 the Babylonian king drinks excessive alcohol and he gets 1,000 other people at the banquet to get drunk too! That’s the night that Babylon is overtaken by Persia.

*God condemns the excess use of liquor and then condemns Lebanon*, “For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.” (Habakkuk 2:17). Lebanon was a beautiful nation north of Israel. It had lush forests and lots of animals. But the Babylonian war machine used their trees and animals for their military campaigns (Isa 14:7, 8; 37:24).

### ***Powerless Gods (vv. 18-20)***

As if plunder, pride, projects, and poured wine weren’t bad enough, next God describes powerless gods. The Babylonians had a habit of taking idols for worship and giving esteem to dead idols.

*As we read about the powerless gods we see a silence before idols*, “What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’ To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’ And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it” (Habakkuk 2:18–19). This last one has the “woe” show up in the middle of the three verses (vv. 18-20). It focuses on “idol” (v. 18a) which is literally a “graven image” carved from wood or hewn from stone. It also focuses on “image” (v. 18b) which is literally a “molten image” made by melting metal and casting it into the shape of a false god.

As we read about God’s plans for the wicked in Habakkuk 2:6-20 we see that idolatry is the sin above all others that the Babylonians commit against God. Idolatry is worship and service to a creature or creation instead of the Creator. It started with Satan (Isa 14:14) and continues now (Rom 1:25).

Thus we need to ask, “How do we know we are worshipping or serving a creature or creation instead of the Creator?” My answer would be that if you *cannot* give it away or if you are *unwilling* to give it away, then it’s an idol. Pastor Mark Hitchcock defines an idol this way, “An idol is anything that is more important to you than God. Anything that absorbs your heart and your imagination more than

God is an idol.”<sup>16</sup> The idols we have today are sex, hobbies, social positions, jobs, possessions, and even our children or grandchildren can become an idol in our lives. Those are all good things, but they become problems when we elevate them above God. When they hold our heart captive, they become idols.

*As we read about the powerless gods we see a silence before idols as well as silence before God, “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him” (Habakkuk 2:20). When we read about “His holy temple” it likely refers to the heavenly temple (Pss 11:4; Micah 1:2) where God rules and answers the prayers of those who seek Him (1 Kings 8:28-30; Pss 73:17). In contrast to the silence of idols, God calls on all the earth to be silent before Him. All the earth is to worship Him in humble submission (Pss 46:10; Isa 52:15).*

***FROM HABAKKUK’S PROPHECY WE LEARN THAT IT IS BY FAITH WE SUFFER***

While this passage is a woe oracle (specifically a “taunt song”) against Babylon, the reality is that the faithful and the righteous are going to suffer through it.

Many of us know good kids who suffer in their childhood because of bad parents, or harsh siblings who do terrible things to them. Our heart often breaks for those kids because we know that there’s nothing they did to bring on that suffering or those circumstances. That’s the same scenario for Habakkuk.

Habakkuk is going to suffer unjustly because of the wrong doings of others. He will join men like Daniel (605-535 BC in Babylon), Ezekiel (592-570 BC in Babylon), and Jeremiah (627-585 BC in Judah). Each of those men endured the wrath of Babylon against Judah.

What God is telling Habakkuk here is this: “By faith you *wait*, by faith you *live*, because it will be by faith you will *suffer*.”

The candid words of Joni Eareckson Tada in a recent online video are relevant. “Suffering is not much good in it [sic]. But it will teach you who you are. It’s a textbook that will show you the stuff of which you are made. And sometimes it’s not very pretty. Suffering will squeeze that out of you. We say we know Christ, well okay, the next time you suffer and suffer hard, find out what comes out of your mouth and that will show how much you know Jesus. And so in that sense, it’s good, in a strange way.”<sup>17</sup>

Suffering is a fact of the Christian life. But this is important: We don’t worship a God that *we carry* around (like a lifeless idol), we worship a God that *carries us*. And He will carry us through our troubles. That’s why sometimes living by faith through suffering means we just take it a week at a time, a day at a time, or

an hour at a time. It's by faith we suffer. And it's by faith that we rely on God to carry us through it.

## **CONCLUSION**

By faith we wait, by faith we live, and by faith we suffer. Faith is the key topic of Habakkuk 2:2-20. We've seen that "the righteous will live by his faith" (v. 4). The late theologian John Walvoord says this is "not only the central theme of Habakkuk but of the entire Scripture."<sup>18</sup>

Faith is like a boat anchor. An anchor is a heavy curved piece of metal, tied to a chain, that is released to the bottom of the ocean, and is connected to a boat. The anchor keeps the boat solid and steady among the shifting tides, wind, and storm. But for that anchor to work it has to be tied to something. The anchor has to be connected to the boat in order to help the boat.

Paul and the author of Hebrews showed us our faith is an anchor that is tied to a person: Jesus Christ. He was fully God and fully man. He died on the Cross for our sins. And it's through our faith in Him that we live spiritually and that we will endure life physically here on earth. Our faith in Him is what keeps us solid and steady among the shifting tides, winds, and storms of life.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Prepared and delivered at Lakeview Missionary Church on May 7, 2023, fourth in a series “Reverent Wrestlings” from Habakkuk.

<sup>2</sup> **Big Idea:** *God responds to Habakkuk with a message about the future, a message for the faithful, and a message for Babylon.*

**Proposition:** *Righteous standing starts and continues by faith in God.*

<sup>3</sup> See my article, “Wondering and Waiting (Habakkuk 1:1-4)” *Word & Deed*, May 2024, pp. 93-101.

<sup>4</sup> I provide a full outline for Habakkuk as well as many other books of the Bible on my website, [christopherlynnscott.com/free-resources](http://christopherlynnscott.com/free-resources)

<sup>5</sup> Mark Hitchcock, “Just Live by Faith” (Habakkuk 2:1-4) from July 24, 2016. <https://faithbibleok.subspla.sh/t7sqgc> Accessed May 4, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew word, *kasdim*, is translated as “Chaldeans” (Hab 1:6) in the NASB but this group of people is better known by another name: Babylonians (see NIV and NLT). The Babylonians were a tribe within the Assyrian Empire that rose up and overtook the Assyrian Empire. Nabopolassar rose up into power in 625 BC and Nebuchadnezzar inherited the powerful kingdom in 605 BC. See B. T. Arnold, “Babylon” (pp. 53-60) edited by Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 59.

<sup>7</sup> J. Ron Blue says this verse “sparkles like a diamond in a pile of soot. In the midst of God’s unrelenting condemnations of Babylon stands a bright revelation of God’s favor” (J. Ronald Blue, “Habakkuk,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985], 1513).

<sup>8</sup> Some translations read “faithfulness” (NIV, NEB, focusing on the aspect of the word that can mean moral steadfastness.

<sup>9</sup> This verse appears to be a deliberate echo of Gen 15:6. See O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 178.

<sup>10</sup> Amos 6:1-7 is good example of a woe oracle toward Israel.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Smith, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 37-38.

<sup>12</sup> Lyland Ryken, *Symbols and Reality* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2016), 50.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-52.

<sup>14</sup> Yet, verse fourteen is a little bit of relief in the midst of judgement. This verse is light in the darkness. In contrast to the Babylonians whose work will eventually be fruitless, God promised that the entire earth would recognize His glory when He establishes His Millennial Kingdom on the earth (Num 14:21; Pss 72:19; Isa 6:3; 11:9). Human depravity must be dealt with and this is how.

<sup>15</sup> The Bible warns about the evils of strong drink (Prov 20:1; 21:7; 23:20-21, 29-35; Rom 13:13;

Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 5:7). According to Scripture drunkenness and sensual behavior go hand-in-hand (Gen 9:20-27; 19:30-38; Rom 13:11-14).

<sup>16</sup> Mark Hitchcock, “God of the Nations” (Habakkuk 2:6-20), August 21, 2016 at Faith Bible Church. <https://faithbibleok.subspla.sh/hpc8wdm> Accessed May 4, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> “Joni Eareckson Tada’s “Songs of Suffering: 25 Hymns and Devotions for Weary Souls” <https://youtu.be/OH9ztsfGfRM> Accessed May 4, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> John Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 1990), 308.

# Examining the Salvationist Theology of Covenant Through the Lens of Biblical Theology

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## **Introduction**

Covenant has been, and continues to be, a significant component of The Salvation Army's (TSA) ecclesiology. As early as 1888, covenant exemplars were offered to Salvationists as an opportunity to "renew in the most solemn manner their engagements, to love, honour, obey and serve God all their days".<sup>1</sup>

Over one hundred and thirty years later, covenant continues to play a significant role in TSA expression. Recruits are invited to sign a Soldier's Covenant in order to become Soldiers; Cadets sign an Officer's Covenant before they are commissioned; and, in the New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa Territory, Soldiers' Covenant Renewal Sundays are an annual affair.

However, despite the significance covenant holds in TSA, we have observed a lack of understanding among Salvationists in the way that covenant is spoken of. Perhaps, it is hardly surprising then that there seems to be some areas of TSA worship where covenant is decreasing in significance, especially in regard to the new generations.<sup>2</sup> This reflection has led us to ask how an understanding of a biblical theology of covenant and Salvationist Covenants inform how covenant is communicated to a new generation?

## **Methodology**

In order to answer this question, we utilised three methods. First a biblical exegesis of the three most commonly accepted biblical accounts of covenant:

Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic/Sinaitic Covenant, and New Covenant was conducted to gain an understanding of the biblical narrative of covenant.

Second, a literature review of TSA published material relating to the Salvationist theology of covenant. We found this unexpectedly difficult due to a lack of Salvationist writings on covenant. This limitation of direct correspondence required us to rely on word of mouth and our own interpretations of Salvationist publications, some more than a century old.

Third, a short-circuiting reading method was employed.<sup>3</sup> This allowed us to lay our exegesis of Biblical covenant and the results of our literature review of the Salvationist theology of covenant side by side to see if there is a tension, a connection, or a spark between the thoughts. These three events we have described as Collide, Collude, and Complement.

### ***A Biblical Theology of Covenant***

The theme of covenant is permeated throughout Scripture. Not only are some relationships between individuals and nations framed as covenants,<sup>4</sup> but God's relationship with humanity is often expressed using the word תִּירַב (berit) – translated 'covenant'. In fact, the divine-human relationship is so frequently expressed in terms of covenant that Gentry and Wellum argue that it is impossible to "correctly discern the message of the Bible" without covenant.<sup>5</sup> In light of this, and considering the rise in popularity the historical-critical method has experienced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is hardly surprising that biblical scholars have dedicated much time and study to understanding how covenant was understood in the ancient Near East (ANE).

As a result, attention has been given to ANE covenants whose literary forms share many similarities to the covenants God makes in Scripture, especially the Hittite Suzerain Treaties. In response to continuing debate over the exact form of ANE covenants, Usue argues "there was no absolute or rigid uniformity in the covenant patterns among" the ANE.<sup>6</sup> However, our survey of several sources concluded that there were some components that are expected in ANE covenants: a historical prologue, stipulations (i.e. rights, laws, and responsibilities), a sign, the presence of witnesses, and blessings and curses.

While there is a lot of contention over how much connection can be drawn between biblical and ANE covenants, we believe that too much focus on these arguments is disproportionate to the comprehension they can offer.<sup>7</sup> While an understanding of ANE covenants can be useful for understanding how God's covenants

with humanity were understood by the original audience, God is not restricted to human understandings and it can be presumed that he added and subtracted from traditional forms as it suited his needs.

### ***Noahic Covenant***

The first scriptural use of תירב (berit) is found in the description of Noah's first encounter with God in Genesis 6:18: "But I will establish my covenant with you..." The details of this covenant are not expounded on until Genesis 9:8-17 when God uses תירב eight times as he promises never again to destroy the world by flood. This covenant is not offered only to Noah, but to "every living creature...for all generations to come."<sup>8</sup>

The form of the Noahic Covenant appears to be the most basic of all Divine-human covenants found within Scripture. There is an everlasting promise, that God will never again flood the earth; and a sign to serve as a reminder - the rainbow. Because God's promise regulates his own future actions but makes no attempt to curb the actions of humanity,<sup>9</sup> the Noahic covenant is considered to be an unconditional covenant.<sup>10</sup> There is nothing that any living creature can do to break this covenant; the conditions rest purely on God whose faithfulness will ensure that it is everlasting.

### ***Abrahamic Covenant***

It is generally agreed that God's covenant with Abraham begins with the promises found in Genesis 12:1-3. These promises are the first of several episodes in Abraham's narrative where this covenant is developed. First, God gives Abraham the promises of the covenant (Genesis 12); second, God ratifies the covenant (Genesis 15); third, God confirms the covenant (Genesis 17); fourth, God once again confirms his covenant in response to Abraham's obedient willingness to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22). While some scholars argue for the separation of these episodes into several different covenants between God and Abraham,<sup>11</sup> we agree with Gentry and Wellum's assertion that they are best understood as a continual development and confirmation of the one covenant that God is ratifying with Abraham.<sup>12</sup>

The Abrahamic covenant promised in Genesis 12:1-3, is not ratified until Genesis 15 when Abraham asks, "how can I know that I will gain possession of [these promises]"<sup>13</sup>. God responds by instructing Abraham to cut several animals "in two and arrange the halves opposite each other" then, when Abraham has fallen into a deep sleep, God passes between the animal halves in the form of a smoking pot<sup>14</sup> and

flaming torch.<sup>15</sup> A similar ritual is spoken of in Jeremiah 34:18, when God declares that those who “have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces.” In his commentary on Genesis, Wenham suggests that this act should be “interpreted as an enacted curse;”<sup>16</sup> that walking between the animals is a commitment to sharing their fate should the covenant be broken. Therefore, it is significant that God is the only party to have walked between the animals. “God in effect puts the divine life on the line”.<sup>17</sup>

While some scholars argue that the Abrahamic Covenant is unilateral in nature;<sup>18</sup> Baker points out that, while it is divinely initiated, “human response is specifically invited and documented”.<sup>19</sup> The bilateral nature of this covenant is especially seen in Genesis 17 when God gives Abraham, and his descendants, the responsibility of keeping the covenant by being circumcised. Just as God offered a rainbow as a sign of the Noahic Covenant, so God now requires circumcision as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and declares that “any uncircumcised male...has broken my covenant.”<sup>20</sup> “The Abrahamic Covenant with its circumcision sign depends on active faith obedience of the human partner to initiate the sign that activates its blessings.”<sup>21</sup>

### ***Sinaitic Covenant***

As the scriptural narrative continues, God repeatedly renews the Abrahamic Covenant with Isaac,<sup>22</sup> Jacob,<sup>23</sup> and then the Hebrew people at Sinai,<sup>24</sup> Moab,<sup>25</sup> and Shechem.<sup>26</sup> The most significant of these covenantal renewals took place at Mount Sinai and is detailed in Exodus 19-24. Both Kitchen and Roehrs argue that the Sinaitic covenant ought to be distinguished from the Abrahamic Covenant and considered to be a separate covenant in its own right.<sup>27</sup> However, we find Grant and Wilson’s case more convincing when they propose that the Sinaitic covenant is simply a “confirmation and elaboration of that made with Abraham, not something new or different.”<sup>28</sup> While the process of renewing the covenant at Sinai does contain many of the expected components, and the stipulations, blessings, and curses are expanded on, the Sinaitic Covenant offers nothing new. “God’s plan and purpose...[had] not changed.”<sup>29</sup>

### ***The New Covenant***

There are differing views on whether the covenant as enacted by Jesus’ death and resurrection is a continuation of the previous evolving Abrahamic Covenant or the ending of this existing covenant and creation of a new covenant altogether.

Through our study we have considered both options of the new Jesus-enacted covenant versus sustained Abrahamic Covenant debate and decided that while both sides have compelling arguments, for this paper we will consider the New Covenant as an entirely new covenant.<sup>30</sup> In saying this, we believe the old covenant still has large influence over the new, and forms the foundation of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant retains the bilateral nature of the previous Abrahamic (both parties have their role to play in enacting the covenant bond) but differs significantly by changing the sign of the covenant from male circumcision to baptism<sup>31</sup> and communion.<sup>32</sup> The New Covenant is the first of the biblical covenants since the Noahic to have a universal aspect. No longer is covenant with God linked to genealogy or the paternal line, it is now a choice open to all humanity.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Human engaged covenant***

The Noahic, Abrahamic/Sinaitic and New Covenants are all Divine-Human covenants. They were all initiated by the Divine out of an already existing relationship with humanity or individual humans.<sup>34</sup> This one-sided covenantal creation, raises the question about the possibility of humanity being the instigator of covenant with God.

There are many cases within Scripture of humanity (mostly the Kingdom of Judah) returning to the covenant fold. This renewing of covenant is evident in the biblical accounts of Nehemiah and in many instances throughout 2 Chronicles.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly there is no mention within Scripture of humanity initiating an altogether new covenant with God. Roehrs goes as far as to say, “[i]t could be said that the Old Testament is very careful to emphasise that God made the covenant with man and never that man made the covenant with God.”<sup>36</sup> Consequently, we can feel assured in stating that God, not humanity, is the instigator of the Divine-Human covenants found within Scripture.<sup>37</sup> It could be interpreted as an act of arrogance for humanity to attempt to initiate a covenant with God.

## **A Salvationist Theology of Covenant**

### ***Methodist Covenant***

We believe that it is important to consider Methodist perspectives due to the considerable influence Wesleyan thought had on early TSA belief and practice. Not only did the Booths have a personal history with the Methodist New Connexion, but William Booth famously wrote the words, “I worshipped everything that bore the name of Methodist.”<sup>38</sup>

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1755, John Wesley recorded the way he had introduced the idea of covenant to his congregation explaining that it was “another means of increasing serious religion, which had been frequently practiced by our forefathers... namely the joining in a covenant to serve God with all our heart and all our soul.”<sup>39</sup> In addition to presumably alluding to our biblical forefathers in this quote, Wesley’s own writings indicate that he was also referring to Puritan Richard Alleine whose words he later admitted to having quoted at his first covenant renewal service on the 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1755.<sup>40</sup>

Alleine’s beliefs regarding covenant were included in his book *Vindiciae Pietatis*, published in 1663, in which he urged Christians to “make a formal covenant with God.”<sup>41</sup> Alleine’s son-in-law, Joseph, had previously suggested that covenants be used to signify a new believer’s conversion, however, Alleine was the one to suggest that covenant could also be used as a renewal of a previous conversion.<sup>42</sup> Both of these understandings of covenant were later adopted by Wesley who taught that relationship with God could be considered a “covenant of grace”; a “mutual agreement by God and human” which was purchased by the blood of Christ. According to Wesley, individuals entered into this covenant through baptism<sup>43</sup> and were then given the opportunity to renew their covenant at annual covenant renewal services.<sup>44</sup>

### ***The Salvation Army Covenant Renewal***

The first form of covenant used in TSA was renewal of previously made commitments to God. In the *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers* released in 1888, covenant services are presented in much the same way as Methodist covenant renewal services:

It has been the usage of some of the most eminent saints on their particular occasions to renew in the most solemn manner their engagements, to love, honour, obey and serve God all their days, at the same time reminding themselves and reminding God of His engagements to bless and keep them according to their needs.<sup>45</sup>

In these *Orders and Regulations*, covenants are defined to mean “a promise or contract between two parties” and the precedent for covenant renewal is dated back to the “great Jewish Salvation Army”<sup>46</sup> reflecting William Booth’s penchant for reading The Salvation Army back into the Old and New Testaments. Scriptural examples are offered from 2 Chronicles 15:8-15 and 2 Chronicles 34:29-33 where Kings Asa and Josiah, respectively, recommit themselves and their people to the Abrahamic/Sinaitic Covenant.<sup>47</sup> Officers and Soldiers in TSA are encouraged to

follow these examples, whether in public or private, and two proposed exemplars are provided: General Covenant and War Covenant.<sup>48</sup> When these covenant renewals were made in a public meeting, the Officers were instructed to have the people repeat the words of the covenant after them.

The wording used to explain covenants had changed by 1925, however, the meaning was much the same. Covenants were still defined as “a promise or contract,”<sup>49</sup> however, several things had changed; three of which stand out to us as particularly significant. First, while covenant had been the first ceremony mentioned in the 1888 *Orders and Regulations*, in 1925 it was preceded by the Swearing-in of Soldiers and the Presentation of Colours.<sup>50</sup> Second, it is suggested that, in some cases the proposed covenant should be printed so that it can be signed and kept for future reference.<sup>51</sup> Third, there were now three covenant exemplars offered: Holiness Covenant, War Covenant, and Personal Covenant.<sup>52</sup>

When the 1994 ‘Salvation Army Ceremonies’ was published, covenant had been relegated to less than two pages at the back of the book – after the Presentation of Equipment and of Flags – and contained significant changes in wording. Covenant services were now considered a “part of Salvationist heritage” and were described as a time where God’s people were “invited to renew their vows...to love, honour, obey and serve their Lord.”<sup>53</sup> There was no attempt to define covenant and only one short, non-specific covenant exemplar was offered. The 2018 revision contains no mention of covenant aside from the Soldiers Covenant.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Officer’s Covenant of The Salvation Army***

In 2016 the International TSA Heritage Centre researched the origins of the Officer’s Covenant but were unable to locate any specific information around the origin of the notion.<sup>55</sup> The earliest found example of a signed Officer’s Covenant dates back to 1902 but this specific covenant does not seem to be an official Salvation Army covenant, rather an irregular example, possibly used at a one off event.<sup>56</sup>

The earliest accepted example of an institutionally used Officer’s Covenant found in TSA’s International Heritage research is dated 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1904. This particular covenant does not mention the intended purpose of the covenant (i.e. Soldier’s or Officer’s) but states the event (Chief of Staff’s Spiritual Day) and the people involved in the signing ceremony (Leaders and Comrade-Cadets).

Apart from updating the language, much of the wording of the Officer’s Covenant has not changed over the last century. With the notable exception of the addition

of “To care for the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, love the unlovable and befriend those with no friends” in the mid 1990’s.<sup>57</sup>

During our own training at Booth College of Mission, in the New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa Territory, we were told many times that the Officer’s Covenant is an extension of the Soldier’s Covenant that all cadets have previously signed.<sup>58</sup> This raises a question similar to that of the New Covenant; is this a continuation of an established covenant or a creation of a new covenant? The wording from the 1911 Officer’s Covenant “*here and now* bind myself to HIM in this solemn covenant” does seem to suggest strongly that this is a new covenant, as does the current covenant wording of “I bind myself to Him in this solemn covenant”.

### ***Soldier’s Covenant***

Despite covenant renewal services, and therefore the idea of covenant, being a “part of Salvationist heritage,” the Soldier’s Covenant is a relatively new concept.<sup>59</sup> Until 1994, Soldiers were required to sign the ‘Articles of War’. These ‘Articles of War’, presumably named after “the disciplinary and legal procedures by which the naval and military forces of Great Britain were bound”,<sup>60</sup> originally contained just ten clauses that an individual was required to commit to in order to be considered a soldier. By 1972, these ten clauses remained much the same and the eleven doctrines of TSA had been added.<sup>61</sup>

While the form of the document had changed very little in the first hundred plus years of TSA history, many changes accompanied the transition from ‘Articles of War’ to ‘Soldier’s Covenant’.<sup>62</sup> While much of the structure and essence remained, the Soldier’s Covenant now contains a prefix, eleven doctrines, ten ‘I will’ statements, and finally a suffix. The prefix and suffix are very similar to the first and last clauses of the Articles of War, and the ten ‘I will’ statements contain much of the same meaning as the remaining eight original clauses; however, we found there to be some significant differences. First, while five of the original clauses are statements of what a soldier will *not* do, the Soldier’s Covenant restructures four of these statements in a positive light. Second, rather than swearing to “always obey...officers”, the individual now covenants to be “loyal” to TSA leaders. And third, there is no mention of the Soldier’s Covenant being an eternal document as opposed to the Articles of War which contained the words “to be a true soldier of The Salvation Army till I die.”<sup>63</sup>

Given the considerable amount of modification that was made in the transition

between the Articles of War and Soldier’s Covenant, we were surprised to find very little TSA documentation explaining the thought and intention behind the change. The only mention we found was in ‘Chosen to Be a Soldier’ which acknowledged that the Articles of War had undergone some “major changes...to language and content”, but emphasised that “the spirit and primary aims...have been retained.”<sup>64</sup> Despite the major changes that were made to the document, it is unclear how these changes were intended to transform it from an ‘Articles of War’ to a covenant.

### Discussion of Biblical and Salvationist Covenants

After considering our biblical exegesis of covenant and compiling a literature review of the Salvationist theology of covenant, as summarised in Table 1: Comparison of ANE, New, and Salvationist Covenants, we then worked to consider these two ideas together to see where they collide, complement, or collude with each other.

*Table 1: Comparison of ANE, New, and Salvationist Covenants*

ANE Covenant	‘New’ Covenant	Wesley’s Covenant (1781)	Holiness Covenant (1977)	Officer’s Covenant (2019)	Soldier’s Covenant (2019)
<b>Historical prologue</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Stipulations</b>	Submission to Jesus (Romans 10:9)	...”subscribing to all thy laws... I solemnly take them, as the Rule of my words, thoughts and actions...”	“I promise to follow Thee with all my heart, obey Thee with all my strength...” <sup>65</sup>	“to love and serve him...”	Ten “I will” statements

<b>Sign</b>	Baptism (Galatians 3:27) Communion (Matthew 26:27-28) Circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29)	X	In 1925 an option was given for copies for covenants to be given to those who signed them.	Signed covenant	Signed covenant
<b>Witnesses</b>	X	When spoken in a public meeting	When spoken/ signed in a public meeting. “In the presence of my comrades...” <sup>66</sup>	“done...in the presence of the [TC], training college officers and fellow cadets”	“I now call upon all present to witness that I enter into this covenant...”
<b>Blessings and Curses</b>	Adoption to God’s family	X	X	X	X
<b>X</b>	Ratification of covenant (Mark 15:33-41)	“And the Covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.”	“May the promises I make on earth be ratified in Heaven.” <sup>67</sup>	X	X

## ***Points of Collision***

### ***RENEWAL OR REMEMBRANCE?***

While the concept of a covenant renewal service has seemingly been in decline the idea still has an interesting place within TSA theology.<sup>68</sup> The recorded biblical examples of covenant renewal all stem from the realisation that the Hebrew people have not fulfilled their covenantal stipulations and therefore must repent.<sup>69</sup> However, TSA's current concept of covenant renewal is an annual assembly, on a set specific date for the whole territory. This assembly is not a realisation that people have broken covenant, but rather a ceremony remembering the covenants Soldiers and Officers have previously signed.

There is, however, biblical precedent for ongoing ceremonies remembering covenant.<sup>70</sup> Genesis teaches that circumcision was required for each generation of Hebrew males as an ongoing, inter-generational reminder and sign of the covenant.<sup>71</sup> But this must be considered separate to the biblical examples of national/corporate covenantal renewal. In light of this, covenantal remembrance, rather than covenantal renewal, would better describe TSA's annual covenant-based ceremonies.

### ***BLESSINGS AND CURSES?***

As with the Noahic and New Covenants, neither TSA's Soldier's or Officer's Covenants contain recorded blessings or curses.<sup>72</sup> However, the Abrahamic/Sinaitic Covenant, which is exclusively used as the biblical example for covenants, describes in detail the blessings and curses associated with the fulfilment or abandonment of the stipulations are well recorded.

This absence of the associated blessings and curses in TSA covenants would not be an issue if it wasn't for TSA's primary use of the Abrahamic/Sinaitic Covenant as a reference for its theology of covenant.<sup>73</sup> This referencing of the older covenant is startling considering how the New Covenant is the basis of the Christian church and seems to better complement TSA's covenantal narrative.

## ***Points of Complement***

### ***STIPULATIONS***

When comparing the form of biblical covenants to TSA covenants, we also found several areas of similarity. Like the Abrahamic/Sinaitic and New Covenants, both the Soldier's and Officer's Covenants involve stipulations. While there are many areas in which TSA stipulations differ significantly to those laid out in the Abrahamic/Sinaitic Covenant, and the precise details differ between the Officer's and Soldier's

Covenants, they both echo the stipulations laid out in the New Covenant.<sup>74</sup> At their most basic, these stipulations could be compared to submission to Jesus, however, taking the comparison even deeper they both relate to loving “the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and loving “your neighbour as yourself”.<sup>75</sup>

### **SIGNS**

While there are no indications that the Methodist Covenants and the TSA renewal covenants were accompanied by an ongoing sign, the Soldier’s and Officer’s Covenants both leave the signee with a signed document to act as a remembrance for “future reference”.<sup>76</sup> Interestingly, this could be considered to correspond to Salvationist thought that the swearing in of soldiers was introduced as an alternative for adult baptism – one of the signs of the New Covenant.<sup>77</sup> Another possible sign relating to the Officer’s and Soldier’s Covenants is the wearing of the uniform.

### **COVENANT VS. CONTRACT**

TSA’s historical definition of covenant as being “a promise or contract between two parties”<sup>78</sup> corresponds with McCarthy’s belief that in the Old Testament covenant “was a kind of contract between God and the people.”<sup>79</sup> Gentry and Wellum disagree, arguing that at “the heart of the covenant... is a *relationship* between parties” while a “contract is characteristically *thing-oriented*”.<sup>80</sup> This distinction seems weak to us considering that, not only were ANE covenants often forced upon a conquered nation by the victorious party, but also curses were an expected component.<sup>81</sup> However, Gentry and Wellum’s definition of covenant, which is seconded by sociologists Bromley and Busching,<sup>82</sup> is better understood when compared to the New Covenant where, despite the presence of stipulations, the focus shifts from achieving the blessings through obeying the law to “a *relationship*... characterised by faithfulness and... love.”<sup>83</sup> This complements TSA’s modern understanding of covenant as being “more focussed on relationships” than a contract.<sup>84</sup>

### ***Points of Collusion: Recommendations for Communicating Covenant to a New Generation***

When considering our biblical theology of covenant alongside TSA’s understanding of covenant, we found areas in which we believe that a biblical theology of covenant can inform TSA thinking so as to create a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of what it means for Salvationists to covenant with God.

We present three of these points of collusion as our recommendations for The Salvation Army.

***RECOMMENDATION ONE: RENEWAL NOT RATIFICATION***

We recommend that The Salvation Army move away from its historical emphasis of equating Salvationist covenants with the Abrahamic/Sinaitic Covenant, to focusing on the comparisons between Salvationist and New Covenant.

As TSA endeavours to develop a new generation of disciples, the movement's teaching and understanding of covenant should grow. It has been clear through this inquiry that TSA has prioritised recording or communicating its developing theology around the use of covenant. This may have led to a diminishing of the term to describe things it was never intended for, and subsequently, in our experience, confusion and apathy around the concept of covenant.

Apathy and confusion are not conducive to attracting new generations to covenanted relationship. We believe that in order to encourage new generations of Salvationists to enter a covenantal relationship with God, they must first be taught a sound biblical basis for Salvationist covenant. The current biblical basis for the Salvationist understanding of covenant does not easily integrate with the Abrahamic/Sinaitic Covenant to which it professes a connection, but rather shares the spirit and freedom of the New Covenant. Therefore, the New Covenant should be the biblical basis on which to build Salvationist theology of covenant.

The Salvation Army should be aware of the absence of biblical examples of humanity initiating new covenant with the divine and emphasise the role of God's calling humanity back to covenant. That is, calling all of humanity back to the universally available New Covenant. This could be acknowledged by describing the signing of the Salvationist covenants not as the ratification of a new covenant, but as an act of renewing a covenant that already exists.

***RECOMMENDATION TWO: COVENANT NOT CONTRACT***

We recommend TSA deviates from its historical definition of covenant as being "a promise or contract between two parties"<sup>85</sup> and instead considers covenant to be "a *relationship* between parties characterised by faithfulness and loyalty in love."<sup>86</sup>

As TSA leaders endeavour to speak of covenant in the twenty first century, we should be aware that relationship is especially important to the new generations. This is particularly seen in millennials who are believed to "crave relationship, to have someone walking beside them through the muck."<sup>87</sup> Therefore, we believe

that they will find an understanding of covenant as being about relationship to be more meaningful than if they were to see covenant as contractual and restricting.

In the light of this, we recommend that TSA present Salvationist covenants as being first and foremost about the faithful, loving, and loyal relationship with God that they have already committed to, and so focus less on the stipulations involved. This is not to say that the stipulations should not be clearly laid out before the covenant is signed, nor that these stipulations need not be adhered to. However, we recommend TSA leaders intentionally emphasise the relational nature of covenant over the more contractual stipulations.

### ***RECOMMENDATION THREE: SACRIFICE NOT MEMBERSHIP***

We recommend that TSA returns to its historical emphasis of covenant as carrying the “greatest responsibility” and involving much sacrifice.<sup>88</sup>

The theme of sacrifice was one that we found throughout our biblical tracing of covenant, and this seems to have been something that early Salvationists understood well. Salvationists who committed to the 1888 Holiness Covenant pledged to “separate...from the world, from its amusements, from its friendships, from its fashions, and from its sins”.<sup>89</sup> While the Articles of War was not a covenant, the 1888 edition made similar commitments, as well as the additional declaration that the individual would show themselves “a Soldier of Jesus Christ in all places and companies: no matter what [they] may have to suffer, do, or lose”.<sup>90</sup>

This sacrificial approach to relationship with God seems to have been somewhat lost throughout TSA history. While the most recent Soldier’s Covenant does speak of showing “the spirit of Salvationism whether in times of popularity or persecution”, it does not speak of loss, suffering, or sacrifice in the same explicit way that early TSA documentation did. Moreover, in our own country, New Zealand, it has become common for Soldiers to be referred to as being TSA “members”;<sup>91</sup> a change in terminology which has very different connotations both to early TSA understandings of soldiership and to the biblical theology understanding of covenant that we have traced. We have not been able to find any documentation to explain why this shift in understanding has occurred, however, we believe that TSA’s understanding of covenant is lacking without a comprehension of the sacrificial lifestyle that God calls his people to.

Therefore, we recommend that, when TSA leaders speak of covenant to a new generation, we not shy away from speaking of covenant as a commitment to a life of sacrifice.

## **Conclusion**

TSA has a rich heritage of covenantal practice, from the inheritance the movement received from Richard Alliene and John Wesley, to covenant renewal services, Officer's Covenant, and the more recent addition of Soldier's Covenant. A heritage that is only added to by the biblical example of the "great Jewish Salvation Army"<sup>92</sup> who, like us, were also a covenanted people. Let us continue to learn from our ancestors, of faith, movement, and blood, as we press onto greater understandings of what it means to covenant with God.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> William Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers* (London: The Salvation Army, 1888), 585.
- <sup>2</sup> Such as covenant renewal services that, despite being a part of The Salvation Army heritage, are not mentioned in the newest edition of *The Salvation Army Ceremonies*. The Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Ceremonies* (London, England: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 2018).
- <sup>3</sup> This was roughly based of Zizek's short-circuiting methodology. Mike Grimshaw and Cindy Zeiher, "Baudrillard and Zizek: Short-Circuiting the Parallax?" *International Journal of Zizek Studies* 10, no. 1 (n.d.): 1–12.
- <sup>4</sup> Some examples of covenantal relationships in Scripture include Joshua and the Gibeonites (Josh. 9), David and Jonathon (1 Sam. 18:3; 23:18), and Ahab of Israel and Ben-Hadad of Syria (1 Kgs. 20:31-34).
- <sup>5</sup> Peter John Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 22.
- <sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Ordue Usue, "Theological Perspectives on the Concept of 'Yahweh's People' In Ezra and Nehemiah During the Post-Exilic Period (539-350 BC)", (University of Pretoria, 2005), 88, <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/29334/03chapter3.pdf?sequence=4>.
- <sup>7</sup> Especially as we cannot be sure that each biblical description of a covenant being ratified or being confirmed contains every word and detail of the event.
- <sup>8</sup> Gen. 9:12
- <sup>9</sup> Nor any of the other living creatures that are included within the covenantal relationship.
- <sup>10</sup> Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed With an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 23 (Downers Grove, Ill: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 2007), 61.
- <sup>11</sup> Waltke argues for the covenant episodes to be divided into a promise (Genesis 12:1-3), two covenants – a land covenant (Genesis 15:1-21) and an everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:1-27) –, and an oath (Genesis 22:1-19). Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2007), 14–21.
- <sup>12</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 230.
- <sup>13</sup> Gen. 15:8
- <sup>14</sup> A large earthenware jar used for baking. Gordon J. Wenham et al., *Genesis 1 - 15*, *Word Biblical Commentary* [General ed.: David A. Hubbard; Glenn W. Barker. Old Testament ed.: John D. W. Watts. New Testament ed.: Ralph P. Martin]; Vol. 1 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Published, 1987), 332.
- <sup>15</sup> While this imagery can appear bizarre, this is not the only time when smoke and fire are

representative of the presence of God in Scripture. When the Israelites are travelling through the desert, God guides them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Exod. 13:21

<sup>16</sup> Wenham et al., *Genesis 1 - 15*, 332. These authors also point out that “a curse like this is...attested in one of the eight-century treaties”, though they do not specify which treaty they are referring to.

<sup>17</sup> Leander Keck, ed., *General & Old Testament Articles, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus*, vol. 1, The New Interpreter’s Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections For Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 446.

<sup>18</sup> Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 317.

<sup>19</sup> Jamie A. Grant and Alistair I. Wilson, eds., *The God of Covenant: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* (England: Apollos, 2005), 24–25.

<sup>20</sup> Gen. 17:14. The seriousness of the sign of circumcision is seen in Exod. 4:24-26 when the Lord comes to kill Moses for the sin of not having circumcised his sons.

<sup>21</sup> Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 320.

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 26:21

<sup>23</sup> Gen. 28:13-22

<sup>24</sup> Exod. 19-24

<sup>25</sup> Deut. 29

<sup>26</sup> Jos. 24

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, “The Fall and Rise of Covenant, Law and Treaty,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (1989), 118-139; Walter R. Roehrs, “Covenant Theme of the Old Testament,” *Concordia Journal* (January 1977): 26.

<sup>28</sup> Grant and Wilson, *The God of Covenant*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 306.

<sup>30</sup> Luke 22:20

<sup>31</sup> Ole E. Borgen, “Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership in the Methodist Church Before the Union of 1968 (Part II),” *Methodist History* 28, no. 3 (n.d.): 98.

<sup>32</sup> Matt. 26: 27-28

<sup>33</sup> Acts 10: 34-35

<sup>34</sup> Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 43.

<sup>35</sup> For example, the story of Asa in 2 Chronicles 15.

<sup>36</sup> Roehrs, “Covenant Theme of the Old Testament,” 27.

<sup>37</sup> There are however many other examples of covenant within The Old Testament, including between human individuals (1 Sam. 18:3) and between nations (Jos. 9:13)

<sup>38</sup> Fredrick Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth*, vol. 1 (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1892), 52.”

- <sup>39</sup> Barrie W. Tabraham, *The Making of Methodism* (London: Epworth, 2010), 106.
- <sup>40</sup> Wesley wrote that he had “recited the words of that ‘blessed man Richard Alleine.’” Marion A Jackson, “An Analysis of the Source of John Wesley’s ‘Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God,’” *Methodist History* 30, no. 3 (April 1992): 177.
- <sup>41</sup> Tabraham, *The Making of Methodism*, 106.
- <sup>42</sup> Jackson, “An Analysis of the Source of John Wesley’s ‘Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God,’” 178–179.
- <sup>43</sup> Borgen, “Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership in the Methodist Church Before the Union of 1968 (Part II),” 98.
- <sup>44</sup> Tabraham, *The Making of Methodism*, 106.
- <sup>45</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 585.
- <sup>46</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 585. By “Jewish Salvation Army” they are referring to the Hebrews in Scripture.
- <sup>47</sup> In 2 Chronicles 34:31, Josiah specifically promised to “follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant”.
- <sup>48</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 588–591.
- <sup>49</sup> The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Officers of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army, 1925), 330.
- <sup>50</sup> The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Officers*, 323.
- <sup>51</sup> The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Officers*, 329.
- <sup>52</sup> The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Officers*, 331–334.
- <sup>53</sup> The Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Ceremonies* (London: The Salvation Army, 1977), 35.
- <sup>54</sup> The Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Ceremonies*.
- <sup>55</sup> Heritage Centre & Archives, “Officer’s Covenant” (The Salvation Army, October 2016).
- <sup>56</sup> Heritage Centre & Archives, “Officer’s Covenant”, 2.
- <sup>57</sup> This was possibly at the same time as the soldier’s ‘Articles of War’ were rewritten and reformed into a covenant.
- <sup>58</sup> This concept is troubling as the Officer’s Covenant has been in use since 1911, but the Soldier’s Covenant came into being in 1994. David Noakes, “Salvationist Covenant Theology” (class lecture, Booth College of Mission, November 7, 2019); Michelle Collins, “The Officer’s Covenant” (class lecture, Booth College of Mission, November 15, 2019).
- <sup>59</sup> When speaking of soldiers, the 1993 Orders and Regulations for Officers speaks only of ‘Articles of War’, but in the 1994 Orders and Regulations for Soldiers of The Salvation Army (*Chosen to Be a Soldier*) the phrase ‘Articles of War’ is always followed by the words ‘Soldiers Covenant’. Admittedly, *Chosen to Be a Soldier* does reference the change as having taken place in 1989, however, we could not find any TSA documentation to reflect that. The Salvation Army, *Orders*

and *Regulations for Officers of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army, 1993), vol. 2, p. 11; The Salvation Army, *Chosen to Be a Soldier: Order and Regulations for the Soldiers of The Salvation Army* (England: The Salvation Army, 1994), 3.

<sup>60</sup> “Definition of Articles of War | Dictionary.Com,” *www.Dictionary.Com*, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/articles-of-war>.

<sup>61</sup> The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Soldiers of the Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army, 1972), 83–86..

<sup>62</sup> To speak of a transition from Articles of War to Soldiers Covenant is somewhat misleading as the Soldiers Covenant still contains the Articles of War. “...I enter into this covenant *and* sign these articles of war...” (emphasis added). “Our Beliefs,” last modified June 26, 2008, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/about-us/articles-of-faith>.

<sup>63</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 189. Ironically, despite the Articles of War containing the words “until I die”, the 1888 Orders and Regulations for Field Officers speaks of a “Soldier’s Pass” which shows that a person is “regularly enrolled Soldier in good standing in The Army.” These passes were only valid for three months after which a new pass would be issued so long as the soldier continued to live as a true soldier of TSA. Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 191–192.

<sup>64</sup> The Salvation Army, *Chosen to Be a Soldier*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> From the Holiness Covenant. The Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Ceremonies*, 10. Both the Salvation War Covenant and the Personal Covenant also make mention of responsibilities on the part of the signee.

<sup>66</sup> From the Holiness Covenant. The Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Ceremonies*, 10-11. The Salvation War Covenant includes the phrase, “before my comrades”, however, the Personal Covenant makes no mention of witnesses.

<sup>67</sup> From the Holiness Covenant. The Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Ceremonies*, 10. No mention of ratification is mentioned in the Salvation War Covenant nor the Personal Covenant.

<sup>68</sup> As evident in its absence in the most recent TSA Ceremonies book. The Salvation Army, *Salvation Army Ceremonies*.

<sup>69</sup> Such as: Asa in 2 Chron. 15 and Jeremiah in 2 Chron. 34.

<sup>70</sup> Deut. 6:6-9 is one example.

<sup>71</sup> Gen. 17:12.

<sup>72</sup> Although it could be argued that these blessings and curses do in fact exist outside of the signed covenant document in the relevant Orders and Regulations. For Officers: The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Officers of The Salvation Army*, pt. 7: An Officer in Relation to The Army.

For Soldiers: The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Soldiers of the Salvation Army*.

<sup>73</sup> As seen in: *Covenant, Marriage, Dedication and Funeral Services of The Salvation Army* (Queen Victoria Street, London.: The Salvation Army Publishing Offices, 1889).

<sup>74</sup> While this is true, it is important to remember that the two stipulations Jesus offers in Matthew 22:38-40, sum up the old covenant.

<sup>75</sup> Matt. 22:37-39

<sup>76</sup> The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Officers of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army, 1925), 329.

<sup>77</sup> Shaw Clifton, *Who Are These Salvationists? An Analysis for the 21st Century* (Alexandria, VA: Crest Books, 1999), 59.

<sup>78</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 585.

<sup>79</sup> McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament: The Present State of Inquiry," 217.

<sup>80</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 141.

<sup>81</sup> Berman, "Ancient Covenants," 4."

<sup>82</sup> David G. Bromley and Bruce C. Busching, "Understanding the Structure of Contractual and Covenantal Social Relations: Implications for the Sociology of Religion," *Sociological Analysis* 49 (December 1988): 18.

<sup>83</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 141.

<sup>84</sup> Noakes, "Salvationist Covenant Theology." Since we were not able to find any mention of a TSA definition of covenant in literature published after 1977, we were unable to confirm that TSA understanding of covenant has shifted from seeing it as a form of contract.

<sup>85</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 585.

<sup>86</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 141.

<sup>87</sup> Mikel Del Rosario, "The Table Briefing: Ministering to Millennials," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 174, no. 695 (July 2017): 352.

<sup>88</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 586.

<sup>89</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 589.

<sup>90</sup> Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 181–190.

<sup>91</sup> "Samoa Celebrates Its First Year with Enrolment of New Members," *The War Cry*, November 16, 2019; "Midland Division Corps Members Recognised with Community Awards," *The War Cry*, November 30, 2019.

<sup>92</sup> William Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, 585.

# Riots, Strikes, and Eschatology: The Origins of Salvationist Socialism

*Christopher Button*

## **Introduction**

In 1908, William Booth described himself as a socialist. Specifically, a Salvation Socialist.<sup>1</sup> William Booth and the early Army were not socialists as we might understand socialism today. The modern reader cannot engage with the word socialism without also recognizing the cultural baggage that the word has accrued. However, to understand what William Booth meant when he described himself and the Army as socialist, we need to try to return to the way in which the word was used before the revolutions of the twentieth century. Just as today there is no one thing called socialism, but instead multiple forms of socialism, the same is true for the latter half of the nineteenth century. Socialism was developed from the emerging European social and political philosophy, particularly in the context of the instability within French politics, the revolutions across Europe in 1848, and the rise of Chartism in Britain. The different contexts within which socialism emerged, such as France, Germany, and Britain, gave rise to differing forms of socialism or socialist thought more generally.

The word socialism first appears in print on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1832 in *Le Globe*. Over the course of the nineteenth century socialist thought developed into a collection of competing beliefs, including Utopianism, Marxism, Owenism, Fabianism, Christian Socialism, Anarchism, and Georgism. These theories differed in whether there should be private ownership, state ownership, or a mixture of both. They argued over whether the social revolution could come through democratic methods or whether there needed to be a violent overthrow of the ruling systems and powers. What joined them was their eschatology: they all believed in the promise that there would be a time when all would be well, and all manner of things would be well.

Socialism and, to an extent, communism, draw from typically Christian themes for their underlying philosophy. Not only in a commitment to the poor, the critique of wealth and power, and in the importance of evangelism, but fundamentally in its eschatological vision. The various socialist theories envisioned a time in the future when there would be an age of justice and peace through either a specific moment or as a consequence of a sequence of changes.

Into the mix of socialist theory, we must include Salvationist Socialism. If you are not aware of the more niche elements of Salvationist history, the idea that there was such a thing as Salvationist Socialism may well have passed you by. However, the principles and theology of Salvationist Socialism underpinned the development of the Social Reform Wing in the early Salvation Army. I suggest that without the influence of socialist theory on the early Army, the Social Reform Wing, particularly the Darkest England Scheme, would not have existed in the way it did. The influence of Henry George on Frank Smith was especially influential for the development of the Army.

However, something obviously happened because the Army does not today describe itself as socialist. Salvationist Socialism did not survive beyond the 1920s at the very latest. Harold Hill argues that the Salvationist Socialist principles of the early Army gave way to more conservative beliefs. He wrote:

Because the Army needed public support and funds, both public and private, in order to carry out its work of social amelioration, it was tied irrevocably and permanently to the chariot wheels of conservatism. And the sense that this was the case may have contributed to the disillusionment and departure of those left-wing Salvationists who chose the ‘shorter way’ to bringing in the Kingdom of God offered by political activity.<sup>2</sup>

I agree with Hill that in many parts of the world, the Army tends towards social and religious conservatism. This is at least partly because of its commitment to nonpartisan politics. The refusal to take a side in the misguided understanding that taking a political position means entering partisan politics almost always leads to identification with or support for the status quo and existing power structures. The Army began with a radical position on social reform and became more conservative because of its increasing relationship with the establishment.

I would also include the tendency for the Army to ‘class up’ its members. People who joined the Army gave up drinking and gambling and going to theatres. They worked more industriously, gained better social networks, and invested in the

education of their children. The first generations of Salvationists were working class. Their children and their grandchildren were increasingly middle-class. This was not a new phenomenon. Plumb quotes John Wesley speaking about this issue:

The Methodists in every place grew diligent and frugal; consequently they increased in goods. Hence, they proportionately increase in pride, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps it is simply the case that a radical movement very rarely maintains its radicality beyond its initial generation. As the generations became increasingly middle class, they naturally lost touch with the working class and instead evangelised people who were like them, generally well-to-do middle-class families. The transition from the generation which plants to the generation which grows can lead to a move from a more radical approach to a more protectionist focus. Niebuhr put it this way:

By its very nature the sectarian type of organisation is valid for only one generation...Rarely does a second generation hold the convictions it inherited with a fervour equal to that of its fathers, who fashioned those convictions in the heat of conflict and at the risk of martyrdom.<sup>4</sup>

However, not everyone agrees that the early Army was radical or socialist. Norman Murdoch argued that William Booth and the early Army were not in any form socialist. Instead, the left-wing position taken by the early Army was because of the influence of Commissioner Frank Smith, once called the 'Red Major,' who resigned three times and eventually became a Labour MP in London. Murdoch wrote:

Booth opposed hurting capitalists while he aided those who did not benefit from capitalism; he did not share Smith's socialism. He did want to repair capitalism's flaws, however. Booth's aim was to change a man when character was the reason for the failure. For him, man's nature was grounded in the heart, not the environment. He was not a classical Christian socialist; he believed that only conversion could rid the heart of sin and change outer maladies, although at times the cause of ruin was beyond one's control.<sup>5</sup>

For Murdoch, Smith was the socialist, and William Booth was the evangelical committed to converting people. However, the evidence does not support this

position. Murdoch gets this wrong. William Booth and the early Army clearly developed a uniquely Salvationist understanding of socialism grounded in holiness and eschatology. This is key. William Booth's understanding of Salvationist Socialism, and the Army's theology more generally, is very much in the mode of an apocalyptic prophet. William Booth's postmillennialism, combined with his commitment to the universality of sanctification and a radical understanding of social salvation, come together to form Salvationist Socialism.

Salvationist Socialism did not survive as an explicit principle of Salvationist theology beyond the death of William Booth. However, it remains an ongoing melody weaving through Salvationist theology and praxis. This paper traces the origins of Salvationist Socialism by highlighting external perceptions of the Army as socialist and Booth's articles in 1886 titled 'Socialism,' and 1889 on the coming Millennium. This paper concludes by drawing out key themes of Salvationist Socialism and calls for a return to the more optimistic theology of Salvationist Socialism for the modern Army.

## External Perception

The contention that the early Army was socialist does not depend only on interior sources, although sufficient evidence supports the argument from Salvationist material alone. Significantly, people external to the Army considered the Army's work to be socialist. They may not have known or understood the Army's theology, but they recognised what the Army was doing as fitting into what they understood as socialism.

The Australian writer Francis Adams was a member of the Social Democratic Federation, the first Marxist political party in the United Kingdom. In his 'Australian Essays,' Addams praised the Army for its 'religious socialism' and the way it attacked 'middle-class hypocrisy.'<sup>6</sup> Whilst Adams clearly approached the Army from his own political perspective, he perceived the work of the Army as within the same framework as he understood socialism.

From the opposite political perspective, Aldous Huxley wrote a series of scathing letters in *The Times* throughout 1890 and into 1891 criticising the *In Darkest England* scheme. In his letters, Huxley condemns the Army and the *Darkest England* scheme as socialism in disguise. Then, as now, social and political conservatives utilise the label 'socialist' to simply mean 'bad guy', but Huxley was being more specific. He argued that the work of the Army was a way of sneaking a socialist approach to social reform through public scrutiny by hiding it behind evangelical religion.<sup>7</sup>

Where Adams called the Army socialist in praise, Huxley called it socialist in criticism. When both sides of the political divide called the Army socialist, then there was more than just name-calling going on.

*The Methodist Times*, that notorious bastion of stolid middle-class religious sensibility, thought William Booth was embracing socialism. They said this was because the General had realised “that Christianity must save society as well as the individual ... [He has therefore] accepted Social Christianity.”<sup>8</sup> According to *The Methodist Times*, William Booth’s approach to social salvation meant that the Army was part of Social Christianity, one of the distinct flavours of British socialism in the mid-nineteenth century.

These three examples demonstrate that for people outside of the Army—from the left, the right, and the centre—the Army appeared to be socialist in its schemes for social reform and the breadth of its soteriology.

## 1886 – Salvation Socialism

In 1886, protests and riots occurred in the West End of London. They began with a meeting of the Fair-Trade League, which led to a counter-protest by the Social Democratic Federation on the 18th of February 1886. The counter-protest and the following disorder were known as the Trafalgar Square Riots or the Pall Mall Riots, depending on which newspaper you read. Up to 100,000 people took part in the protest, potentially including Frank Smith. The demonstrations were broken up by the Metropolitan police, who used such brutal tactics that the Commissioner resigned on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February following questions asked in the House of Lords.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, William Booth published an article in *The War Cry* titled ‘Socialism.’ In it, he set out his (and thus the Army’s) understanding of socialism. He said, “Socialism refers to the condition of society, and the condition of society at the present time is deplorable in the extreme.”<sup>9</sup> He also said, “the rich are growing richer, and the poor are growing poorer.”<sup>10</sup> This is something which is still happening today. The wealth inequality gap is only increasing in severity. Booth took a particularly critical position on the inequality of wealth in London. As the capital city of the wealthiest nation and the most powerful Empire in the world, Booth was appalled that London was also such a sink of poverty and thus also depravity:

Almost every week men and women are dying, leaving fortunes ranging from a hundred thousand to a million pounds, and every week numbers of poor gaunt creatures are striving to keep themselves and

their children alive by sewing shirts at one penny each, and making match-boxes at twopence-farthing a gross, finding their own paste.<sup>11</sup>

However, Booth was equally critical of solutions that recommend radical social reconstruction. He was concerned that the “remedy may be worse than the disease” in any revolutionary socialism that resorted to the deconstruction of political systems or the use of violence. There was nothing to be gained by destroying the foundations of society to try to fix society’s problems unless there was something to replace what was being destroyed. This was also based on Booth’s understanding of sin as will be explored below.

William Booth held a view of socialism that many today would probably have. He said that “it’s varying forms and different names, so far as I can gather its meaning, can be expressed in the sentence that everything belongs to the nation, and nothing to the individual.”<sup>12</sup> Which is, of course, only correct for scientific or utopian approaches to socialism and not for every form of socialism more generally. He offered seven objections to this kind of socialism: it is felt to be unjust, it is impracticable, it is contrary to the teachings of the Bible, it is contrary to universal history, it clashes with the understanding of heaven, it does not go far enough, it does not consider the impact of sin.

The last two points are of particular importance. William Booth believed that Marxism, also called scientific socialism, did not go far enough in its claims for social reformation. It only changed the systems of government and state; it did not seek a proper social reformation, which was only possible through sanctification. Further, scientific socialism did not consider the impact of sin. Any new system of government or economic processes would not create a utopia because people remain sinful; these systems would result in corruption just as every system before them had done so. Sin was the cause of the world’s problems, including wealth inequality and poverty. However, William Booth did not leave it there. He offered a different form of socialism.

If, however we cannot accept this form of socialism, there is another form we can approve, one that squares, we believe, with the principles of everlasting truth and righteousness, this we will call Salvation Socialism.<sup>13</sup>

William Booth outlined what he believes Salvation Socialism entails. He began by saying that salvation socialism is grounded in the assumption that if you make the people good, their circumstances will become good. Salvationist Socialism starts with the reformation of the individual to reform society as a whole. You

cannot reform a system and expect real systemic change because the problems underpinning the system are not only the system's form but also the people who make up and operate that system. At least to some degree, the inequality in society is because of the people's sins. Booth wrote:

One says poverty produces crime, therefore remove the poverty and you will prevent the crime... But what is the fruitful source of poverty? Is it not sin? Salvation Socialism therefore says remove the sin and you will save from poverty, and consequently prevent the crime.<sup>14</sup>

William Booth argued that a society is determined by the conditions of the individuals who form that society. He was by nature an individualist, which was not uncommon in Victorian Britain. He then took a more radical step and said that the only way to mend society was to make it entirely new. Unlike Murdoch who argued that Booth wanted to fix the problems with Capitalism, here Booth is saying that he regards the whole of society as fallen and broken and needs to be replaced with a society shaped by the Kingdom of God. Social, political, and cultural reform may give society a new shape without making any radical change in the conditions of the people.

The underlying problems remain even when the structure has changed. A socialist or social democratic government would still be a government of sinful and fallen people. They might well create a better society than the currently existing one, but they would themselves lead to the need for another revolution when they inevitably fall into the corruption that sin brings. The only thing that can make a fundamental and lasting change is the power of God.

If the bricks of which the social fabric is built up are bad, changing them to another colour, or throwing them into different forms, will not be sufficient. The bricks must be made over again; they must be made good.<sup>15</sup>

The whole substance of society needs to be remade with new material, not by simply reshaping what already exists. You cannot put new wine into old wineskins.<sup>16</sup> When the individuals of a society are saved and sanctified, then their temporal wants will be supplied because everyone will give to their neighbour, not take away from them. They will be happy because they will no longer be trapped in the cycle of greed and fear but will be liberated by charity and love. They will be filled with hope because they will know that the Kingdom of God is possible here and now and is not only a promise to be known after death. This principle is calculated to

bring about the regeneration of humanity because people who have been saved and sanctified are the “true saviours of society.”<sup>17</sup> The whole edifice of Salvationist Socialism depends on the transforming power of sanctification.

It is already evident that William Booth regarded the Army and its mission as a form of socialism, which was even more radical than Marxism. Marxism fails to go far enough because it only seeks to reform the structures and shape of society. It cannot address human sin, and so it will ultimately fail. Salvation Socialism seeks the reformation of all people around the world in an ultimate and universal revolution that will transform society. Three years later, William Booth developed his thinking further.

### **1889 – The Coming Millennium**

At the beginning of 1889, William Booth was starting to explain more fully how he understood social salvation to operate. In an article in *All The World* titled “Salvation for Both Worlds,” he wrote:

I saw that when the Bible said, ‘He that believeth shall be saved’ it meant not only saved from the miseries of the future world, but from the miseries of this [world] also. Then it came from the promise of Salvation here and now; from hell and sin and vice and crime and idleness and extravagance, and consequently very largely from poverty and disease, and the majority of kindred woes.<sup>18</sup>

Later that year, his theories were put into practice. About 100,000 dock workers and casual labourers went on strike for better wages. They were generally paid about 4d an hour, but there was never any guarantee they would have work on any one day. Each morning, they stood at the dockyards’ gates and waited to see if they would get picked to work. As casual labourers, they had very little chance to organise and unionise and so possessed no leverage over the employers. The leader of the dockers, John Burns, had been inspired by the recent strike of the Match-Girls, which Annie Besant inspired and supported.

With the dockers on strike, the Army responded. The Army provided cut-price meals from its food and shelter depots, particularly on the West India Dock Road in Whitechapel. Money came in from rich and poor alike to support the dockers, including £200 from the Australian Salvation Army. On average, seven thousand meals were served daily during the strike.<sup>19</sup> Frank Smith was responsible for organising and instigating the Army’s efforts on behalf of the Dockers.<sup>20</sup>

Following the work with the Dockers, William Booth published an article in

*All The World* titled “The Millennium; or The Ultimate Triumph of Salvation Army Principles.” In this article, he described the culmination of his Salvationist Socialism. Just as in 1886, Booth regarded Socialism as not going far enough. For Booth, Salvationist Socialism had to be held within the framework of eschatology. Booth, like most of the early Army, held postmillennial beliefs. These beliefs are key to understanding Salvationist Socialism (and, I suggest, the theology and mission of the early Army more generally). Booth wrote:

The unutterable longings, and hopes and beliefs of many of God’s most faithful people seem to signify the new approach of his universal kingdom. Some say that the general triumph of godliness will have ushered in by the personal reign of Christ. We Salvationists, however, expect it to be preceded by further and mightier outpourings of the Holy Ghost than any yet known, and reckon that the war will, thereby, be carried on with greater vigour, although, in substance, on the same lines as those on which the Apostles fought and died.<sup>21</sup>

He believed that when everyone had been saved and sanctified, there would be a millennium of peace and holiness filled with the outpourings of God’s grace and power in the world. Then, Christ would return in glory. This was the motivating idea of the Army – to conquer the world for Jesus to create the conditions by which he would return. This would be made possible through sanctification. Postmillennialism was at the heart of the Army’s militarist ecclesiology, its missional drive, and its commitment to social reform. Booth wrote about what the coming millennium would look like:

But in these days, by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, the purpose of Christ, which is the destruction of the works of the devil, will be accomplished; men will be entirely sanctified, and the prophecy will be fulfilled which says, ‘Thy people shall be all righteous.’<sup>22</sup>

The promised millennium would lead to the actualisation of Salvationist Socialism – a socialism grounded in sanctification and emerging in expectation of Christ’s return. The key element is sanctification. Without sanctification, salvation socialism would be impossible. It is only when the roots of sin are removed from the heart of an individual, when their moral will is transformed into the likeness of Christ, then and only then is it possible that society can be transformed into the utopian ideal of the coming millennium—a millennium with all the promise of Salvation Socialism.

When all had been brought to Christ, God's reign would end all misery by destroying the cause of that misery — sin. When the roots of sin in individuals were destroyed by sanctification, people would no longer be compelled to selfishness but would share all they had with people in need. Booth wrote:

With the possession of God, and a life in harmony with his wishes and the goodwill of all around, it will be impossible for there to be other than abundance. Whether of compulsion or choice, there will be, for all practical purposes, a real community of gifts. He that hath more than he needs will, out of his abundance, gladly supply his brother's necessity; and he will do this, not only of his own free will, but in the acting out of his own loving nature.<sup>23</sup>

This did not mean people had to give up everything they had. William Booth's vision of a Salvationist Socialist future included a perfected economic form. People would work out of enjoyment and for the love of helping others, rather than for wages or the need to avoid starvation. Masters would treat their servants like family, while owners would work for the interests of their workers. People would still have property but hold it with an open hand. There would be no accumulation of wealth because that emerges out of fear and out of sin. Instead, property and ownership would be a matter of use, not hoarding resources at the expense of others. As such, there would be no poverty.

Because the Holy Spirit had driven out the sin in the hearts of humanity in sanctification, the coming millennium would create a world where everyone was motivated by the love of their neighbour. Just as the Army fed the Dockers, so would everyone share what they had with people in need. This would not need the compulsion of the state, which Booth believed was necessary for scientific socialism to function. Instead, it would come from abundant love and joy in their transformed hearts. This led Booth to write:

A genuine Salvationist is a true reformer of men. He alone is a real Socialist, because he is the advocate of the only true principles by which the reformation of society can be effective. His confidence for the future is not based alone on the theories he holds, nor on his own willingness to lay down the things he has, even to his life's blood, on behalf of the bodies and souls of men, but in that Millennial heaven which God has already established in his own heart, and, through him and his comrades, in the hearts of so many thousands more.<sup>24</sup>

Once again, the evidence is clear. William Booth was a socialist and regarded the Army as a socialist movement. However, this was Salvationist Socialism – not utopian or scientific socialism.

## **Salvationist Socialism**

Towards the end of William Booth's life, W. T. Stead asked the General if he had any socialist inclinations. Booth replied:

I am a socialist, a Salvation socialist, and always have been. A Salvation socialist differs from a Fabian socialist because we begin at the other end. I am working in the tunnel at one end of the tunnel on one side of the mountain and your political parties or governments are working at the other ... [asked about the differences between Salvation socialism and political socialism Booth replied] ... Primarily in this, that I deal with individuals first.<sup>25</sup>

Booth believed that "It is beyond question the duty of society to supply the absolute necessities of existence to such of its members as are in danger of perishing from the want of them."<sup>26</sup> William Booth was not alone in this belief. According to Stead, Catherine was a "socialist of the heart."<sup>27</sup> She wrote a scathing condemnation of the wealthy:

I concur in the denunciation of all these evils (i.e. drunkenness among the poor which leads to family quarrels and fighting and the break-up of homes). But what sort of taste is it which, in the presence of this state of things among the poor, spends not fourpence on a quart of beer, but four shillings – and double and treble that sum – on a single bottle of wine for the jovial entertainment of a few friends and from twenty to forty pounds upon a dinner to be swallowed by a dozen or two of people? I maintain that no splendid furniture, no well-trained and liveried servants, no costly pictures or display of finery or jewels, can redeem such a scene, viewed in the light of the teachings of Christ, from being called 'brutal' – and all the more brutal because delighted in by persons whose intelligence and knowledge of the world around them must make them fully aware of the good that might be done with the money which they lavish upon themselves.<sup>28</sup>

William Booth also believed that the only lasting answer to the miseries and despair of the world lay in sanctification and the coming millennial reign of Christ.

The Millennium would be distinguished by three characteristics: the reign of God, the reign of righteousness, and the prevalence of love.<sup>29</sup> The Army was to work towards the coming millennium. Through feeding striking Dockworkers, establishing labour exchanges, homeless shelters, and rescue homes, and providing the assistance of practical holiness for those in need, the Army would bring in the Kingdom of God.

Salvationist Socialism meant working for the restoration of the problems in society now, with an eye towards the coming age when the goals of socialism would be achieved exponentially more than could have ever been conceived by Owenites, Fabians, or Marxists. Salvationists were the only true socialists because they understood what was at stake. Scientific and Utopian socialists sought the reformation of society through changing the existing systems and structures. The Salvationist knew something greater, lasting, and much deeper needed to be done. Society would be reformed when everyone came to know Christ and was sanctified. Then, when sin was rooted out and destroyed in every heart, the world would be as Christ intended.

## **Conclusion**

The Army has lost its postmillennial eschatology and, as such, has also lost the theological underpinning for Salvationist Socialism. What once compelled the Army to seek to radically reform the problems of the world in expectation of the coming of Christ has been forgotten. Instead of social reform, the Army now does social work. We seek to remove the miseries of this world to support people to come to know Christ, to help people have a better life, and to make a more just society. To be clear, these are not bad reasons to help people. But it is not done in any hope of speeding Christ's return or in the expectation that feeding a person is part of bringing about a transformed society where everyone will love each other and serve each other. There is a pessimistic quality to bandaging the wounds of those who have been crushed beneath the weight of sin and oppression by the systems and structures of society. A pessimistic quality which does not have to exist.

If the Army were to reclaim its hope for the future of this world, not only a hope for the next, then a greater weight of meaning would be attached to the social service of the Army. It would help to create and embed a deeply missional understanding of social service, and potentially move away from ideas of social service and take up a commitment to social reform. By moving away from the privatisation of salvation and broadening it to include a commitment to social salvation, social

reform rather than social service becomes a critical component of the Army's mission and ministry.

Perhaps the Army would reclaim its radical and revolutionary zeal for social reform instead of doing social work. This would see a more nuanced understanding that avoiding partisan politics does not mean being politically neutral. The Army would side with striking workers rather than the employers who enforce poor working standards for their profit. The Army would condemn the people who use sex workers and call out the industries which work to sexualise the vulnerable rather than the victims of that transaction. The Army would stand in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed over the rich and the oppressor. Salvationist Socialism means taking sides.

Perhaps the time has come to find our Salvationist Socialism again and seek to speed Christ's return through the reformation of society.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>3</sup> J. H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), 97
- <sup>4</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, (New York: Meridian, 1957), 20
- <sup>5</sup> Norman H. Murdoch, *Origins, of The Salvation Army*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 161
- <sup>6</sup> Francis W.I. Adams, *Australian Essays*, (Melbourne, 1886), 27-50
- <sup>7</sup> Frederick Coutts, *Bread for My Neighbour: The Social Influence of William Booth*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), 115
- <sup>8</sup> *The Methodist Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1890, 956
- <sup>9</sup> William Booth, "Socialism," *The War Cry*, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 9
- <sup>10</sup> Booth, "Socialism," *The War Cry*, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 9
- <sup>11</sup> Booth, "Socialism," *The War Cry*, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 9
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- <sup>13</sup> Booth, "Socialism," *The War Cry*, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 9
- <sup>14</sup> Booth, "Socialism," *The War Cry*, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 9
- <sup>15</sup> Booth, "Socialism," *The War Cry*, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 9
- <sup>16</sup> Luke 5: 37-39
- <sup>17</sup> Booth, "Socialism," *The War Cry*, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 9
- <sup>18</sup> William Booth, "Salvation for Both Worlds" in *All The World*, January 1889, 1-6
- <sup>19</sup> Coutts, *Bread for my Neighbour*, 13
- <sup>20</sup> Glen K. Horridge, *The Salvation Army: Origins and Early Days 1865-1900*, (Surrey: Ammonite Books, 1993), 150
- <sup>21</sup> Booth, "The Millennium; or The Ultimate Triumph of Salvation Army Principles" in *All The World* (August 1890), 337
- <sup>22</sup> Booth, "The Millennium", 338
- <sup>23</sup> Booth, "The Millennium", 340
- <sup>24</sup> Booth, "The Millennium", 343
- <sup>25</sup> *The War Cry*, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1908, 8
- <sup>26</sup> *The Darkest England Gazette*, 19th August 1893, 5
- <sup>27</sup> "The Late Mrs. Booth" in *The War Cry*, 11 October 1890, 2
- <sup>28</sup> Quoted in Coutts, *Bread for My Neighbour*, 66
- <sup>29</sup> Booth, "The Millennium", 337

# Suffering 101: A Scriptural Resource for Pastors to Address the Suffering in Our World

*Rebekah Swyers*

It would be quite a task, in this time of fast information, to find one adult or even adolescent in this world who has not been touched by suffering, at least in a remote way, if not fully inflicted with some horror from the evil in our world. Hate in one locale can create anger anywhere with our global and instant communication abilities<sup>1</sup>. Christians, who just a century ago made up 20% of the population of the Middle East, today, only make up 4% of its people. This is due in large part to the ethnic cleansing occurring through torture, beheading, and crucifixion by extremists and it is “one of the crimes against humanity of our time”<sup>2</sup>. In the Western world, most of us live in a blissful assumption that somehow, we will escape anything truly unbearable in our lives such as murder, rape, or the death of a child, particularly if we are living “good” lives. We expect annoyances perhaps but are likely to count anything beyond getting our own way as a trial<sup>3</sup>. When we are afflicted by these, or when we are overwhelmed with what is happening to our neighbors across the globe through evil or natural disaster, we are in shock to find that “we all face evil in its various forms”<sup>4</sup>. It would seem, as Amanda Wortham laments, “that grief, terror, violence, and rage are destined to become part of our cultural fabric”<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps the most common question addressed to pastors in these times of suffering is, “Why?” Answers from even Christian believers range from punishment for sin, karma, divine plan, for our spiritual growth, and for no reason at all.<sup>6</sup> This thread of thought can lead to questioning the goodness and purpose of our world which leads us down a potentially dangerous path.<sup>7</sup>

Most concerning is the path toward doubt in the goodness and purpose of our world

which also leads to questioning the nature of God and our human lives.<sup>8</sup> According to T.J. Wray, “The failure to adequately address this perplexing issue is often cited as the reason behind the mass exodus of (mostly) young people from the religious institutions in which they were reared”.<sup>9</sup> If we, as the Church, as pastors, continue to avoid the difficult questions stemming from a hurting world, we not only leave hurting people floundering in grief and anger, but we may also be leaving them behind altogether. Our simple answers and platitudes are often hurtful when we are trying to help. We need to resist the urge to offer false statements that fill our own holes of theology. It is imperative to “respond helpfully and reparatively to these questions of perception” to deal with the number of “theological, existential, and anthropological questions raised by horrors”.<sup>10</sup> What if we knew what the Bible said about moments of enormous tragedy, of evil, of suffering? What do we do instead of using thoughtless, reckless, and sometimes damaging phrases in the face of tragedy? In this paper, I will outline a number of scriptural resources available to pastors to address the suffering in our world. This is by no means exhaustive, but it is my prayer that it helps all of us to speak into the lives of those we shepherd with knowledge, wisdom, and authority.

It seems to be a common thought that God the Father, primarily associated with the Old Testament, is the hard disciplinarian, punishing every sin with suffering. It is also a popular belief that Jesus is the softy standing in between the punishment of the Father and the world. However, God’s character has not changed. In fact, God’s character as it relates to his love for his creation and His suffering can be traced from the very beginning. The books of the Law are not typically books thought of as being full of God’s love, but they are, and they have something to say to us about suffering. Before we look at suffering though, it is important to note that in Genesis 1-2, God creates the world, all that is in it, and people are good, in a state of “shalom,” an Edenic state, the way things ought to be, universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight.<sup>11</sup> This is how God created the world to operate, for humans and animals to live in harmony with the world and each other.

However, sin broke and keeps breaking and distorting the created world along with its people, created in His image and called “good”. We humans now live in a “hostile world to which we are maladapted,” becoming “horror makers, interested in our own survival above the interest of others”.<sup>12</sup> This is seen almost immediately with Cain killing his brother Able because God accepted Able’s sacrifice and not his own. No wonder by Genesis 6, God is “grieved to his heart” and sorry he had ever made humans. God’s grieving and suffering goes back at least as far

as man's<sup>13</sup>. However, after destroying the world with the flood, God's promise to Noah in Genesis 9 to never destroy the earth in that way again, as Terrence E. Fretheim says it:

...necessitates divine suffering [again and forever]. By deciding to endure a wicked world, while continuing to open up the heart to the world, means that God has decided to take personal suffering upon God's own self.<sup>14</sup>

It is one thing to think of God choosing to suffer in giving up His son to the cross, but it is a deeper level of awe to think that God chose to love His creation from the beginning of time knowing that He would continually suffer because of the evil we would continually create as mankind.<sup>15</sup>

The books of the Law also outline suffering of man, mostly at the hands of one another. We seem to be trained to only see the suffering, to root for the underdog so to speak. However, as Scott Harrower writes, if we read with a "blessed perspective," we can see the story with new eyes.<sup>16</sup> Ishmael was sent away with his mother, but his riches and children were as great as Isaac's. Jacob may have received his father's blessing of becoming head of household (better suited to his interests and education), but Esau was able to continue hunting and was blessed with plenty as well. Each of these sons was chosen for a different task, and God provided for them differently. Rabbi John Sacks puts it this way, "We are precious in the sight of God. We are blessed. And to be blessed, no one has to be cursed. God's love doesn't work that way".<sup>17</sup> This doesn't just speak to the love of God, but to our view of caring for one another to alleviate suffering. We don't have to cause suffering in others in order to continue to be blessed. We don't need to slay our brothers and sisters (literally or figuratively) for our offerings to be better, preferred, complete, or attractive.

Perhaps the most misunderstood on the subject of suffering are the prophetic books. T.J. Wray argues that the prophets believed that the "suffering of a people as a whole is because of the failure of the nation to uphold the covenant".<sup>18</sup> Although this is true, it misses the important note that "the focus is not on Israel's disobedience to an external legal code, but on the broken state of a relationship between a parent and child".<sup>19</sup> Often Isaiah and other books are seen as God expressing his anger, but the speech that opens the book of Isaiah in 1:2-3 that "sets the tone for all the utterances of the prophet, deals not with the anger of God, but with the sorrow of God. The prophet pleads with us to understand the plight of a father whom his children have abandoned".<sup>20</sup> The book of Jeremiah (2:2) begins in a similar way,

using marital imagery rather than parental.<sup>21</sup> Over and over, the Israelites are given a chance to return to God before suffering consequences alluded to in the prophecy. God wants a relationship, not punishment. Hosea 11:1 reads, “I loved him...” Hosea presents a picture of God as “one in great anguish over what the children have done, but her love is such that she cannot let go.” This is unlike the human reaction, which would be to despair, let go and give up.<sup>22</sup> So, the prophets tell us that God is like “a person who has been rejected not only by his spouse but by his children as well”.<sup>23</sup> In his lament-accusation pattern, God cries over and over with the same question that Job, the Israelites and we often echo to Him-“Why?” Yet, “these cries have no answer, even to God, and never will”.<sup>24</sup> God’s suffering heart due to our constant betrayal echoes our same heart cry.

Another important book to study for our understanding of suffering is the Psalms and books of wisdom. The Psalms of Lament often follow the same pattern as the Lament-accusation of God in the books of prophecy. The Psalms of Lament in particular are often overlooked today. We don’t seem to allow people to grieve, to express anger, doubt or sadness in church. We do not give them the language or space to express not “being okay.” Only half of churches are ever talking to their congregations about mental illness, although as of 2018, 29% of pastors admitted to suffering from mental illness.<sup>25</sup> The number of pastors suffering mental illness and seeking to exit ministry skyrocketed after COVID impacted our world, shut down our churches, and forced pastors to pivot on a daily basis. Although that number has tapered a bit since 2020, 18% of pastors have considered self-harm or suicide in the last year.<sup>26</sup>

We desperately need the language to talk about grief, loneliness, and suffering as a body of believers. In the Lament Psalms, Israel moves from “*articulation* of hurt and anger to *submission* of them to God and finally *relinquishment*”.<sup>27</sup> This seems such a healthy process for grief. Gerstenburger supports the thought that these songs would have been used by a community to enact ritual rehabilitation as an act of hope.<sup>28</sup> What if we walked together through grief, not just at funerals, but with time to articulate our pain and anger, submitting it to God, and letting it go? The Lament Psalms give voice to this. As Brueggemann observes, in the Psalms, “the speech of the petitioner is heard, valued, and transmitted as serious speech,” but without lament the petitioner becomes “voiceless or has a voice that is permitted to speak only praise and doxology”.<sup>29</sup> Lament Psalm is heard by God and the community. The Psalms nearly always pair the suffering of individuals with God’s presence with those who suffer.<sup>30</sup> We are not alone. It is not only Jesus of the New Testament who walks with us; it is also our Heavenly Father, as seen in passages like the familiar Psalm 23:4 (NIV):

*Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;*

It would be nearly impossible to discuss suffering in the Scriptures without a discussion of the book of Job. Job is a righteous man who has been blessed in every way. All of his blessings are stripped one by one, including wealth, land, family, friends, spouse, and eventually his health. He prays, laments, accuses, and asks the never-ending question of suffering, “Why?”

*Therefore I will not keep silent;  
I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit,  
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. (Job 7:11)*

However, when God finally responds to Job in chapter 38, He does not address any of Job’s accusations or questions; He instead returns Job’s accusations and questions with His own questions, like in verses 4 and 5:

*Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?  
Tell me, if you understand.  
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!  
Who stretched a measuring line across it?*

Perhaps, as Job, and as expressed in C.S. Lewis’s, *A Grief Observed*, we must simply learn to live with the question.<sup>31</sup> After all, as previously pointed out, God has chosen to live with this question in His great love for us as well. Perhaps, Lois Tverberg ponders, “since we are small and finite, we honor God more by trying to love as he loves than by trying to know all that he knows”.<sup>32</sup> In this age of information at our fingertips and voice command, living without the answer to a question seems a tough sell for a pastor. However, we need to share the truth, not a Googled platitude.

We turn now to the gospels and what we learn of suffering from the fully human, fully divine, Jesus Christ, God with us. T.J. Wray summarizes Jesus’s view of suffering as “the result of pervasive moral evil...Suffering, however, is a temporary condition that can be made less difficult through the compassion of others”.<sup>33</sup> Jesus’s healing ministry, as recorded for instance in John 9:1-3, demonstrates that illnesses and death are not punishments, but “occasions to reveal God’s love. Indeed, for Jesus the antidote to pain and suffering is love.<sup>34</sup> The Lord’s Prayer indicates we have a need to be delivered from evil, and it is a cry of trust to God, trust in His way, His provision, His timing. In her book, *It’s Not Supposed to Be*

*This Way* (2018), Lysa Terkerust points out, related to the obedience required to trust God enough to pray the Lord's Prayer, "God doesn't want you or me to suffer, but he will allow it to increase our trust...to save us from a life where we are self-reliant, self-satisfied, self-absorbed, and set for the greatest pain of all... separation from God".<sup>35</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus indicates that those who suffer these days will "reap rewards in the end when the Kingdom of God ushers in the New Age".<sup>36</sup> Perhaps most important in the gospels is the suffering endured by Jesus himself. If ever we are tempted to ask why a good person should suffer, looking at the road to the cross, the betrayal, the torture, and the death of Jesus should help us to think twice. Often referred to as our Kinsman Redeemer, Jesus, the only perfect human, who would not even call Himself good, suffered false accusations, betrayal, abandonment, loss, skepticism, torture, harassment, and ultimately a painful, public, and humiliating death. How dare we say, "why me," and then sing, "To be like Jesus..." in the next breath.

The epistles continue to speak to suffering. Paul wrote about suffering more than any other apostle. For Paul, Christ's death and resurrection is the climax of everything. It is the "remedy for suffering".<sup>37</sup> Paul saw suffering in this life as an opportunity. If he were not imprisoned, he could not minister to the prisoners and guards in the prison. "It is our woundedness," L. Harris says, "which enables us to become a source of life for others".<sup>38</sup> Our experiences in suffering allow us to minister with empathy in ways we might never imagine without the wounds. Paul would also indicate that suffering is "vital to getting our attention." It is the most effective way.<sup>39</sup> Terkerust supports this with her claim that the pain of her tumor saved her life, saying "He loved me too much to do the very thing I was begging Him to do. His mercy was too great. His love was too deep".<sup>40</sup> The book of James indicates that suffering or testing also develops perseverance (endurance, determination) (James 1:3). We are blessed to be a blessing, even in our suffering.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Finally, we will explore the apocalyptic view of suffering as described in the book of Revelation written by the apostle John. According to Wray, "the apocalyptic view asserts that there is an evil force at work in the world that opposes the will of God".<sup>41</sup> Thankfully that is not the end of the story. She goes on to say that it will ultimately be defeated and "God's kingdom will reign...assuring the righteous

sufferer that God is on their side and goodness will prevail” in the end.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps one of the most comforting passages for those who suffer on the earth today is the passage from Revelation 21:3-5 saying that in the end “it will all be okay”.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

We can see that God has suffered along with us due to the evil in this world, and that though he must judge, he still mourns our suffering in our punishment. As Harris points out, “learning to understand ourselves in light of God’s suffering over us can be painful,” but understanding this brings a deeper relationship with The Father who longs to be in relationship with all His children.<sup>43</sup> We can perhaps let go of the question, “Why?”, realizing He is asking His people the same question. However, the lament Psalms are important and need to be used corporately, giving language and space for expressing and moving through grief. As Pastor Rick Warren is quoted, “We were wired for each other. We need each other.”<sup>44</sup> Let us find a way to walk through suffering honestly, and lovingly, allowing grief to last beyond funerals and platitudes.

This paper does not answer all the questions. I still find myself wanting to ask “why?” when godly people I love suffer or even after watching the evening news but knowing that God is asking the same question is somehow comforting. What do we do with all of this scriptural knowledge? Pastors and their congregation need to stop using social media phrases, folk wisdom, and bad theology to answer hard questions about suffering. We do not have to have an answer for everything, but we need to have a good base for our theological bridges about suffering. Life is hard. We need to do it together. We need not look the other way when there is injustice to avoid having tough conversations. Our churches need to be a space for honest discussion, lament, anger, doubt, and everything else we feel when we, or those around us, suffer. Then, we are called to do something about it. “Followers of Jesus are called to work in his name to ease suffering through acts of faith, hope, charity, selflessness, caring, and most of all love”.<sup>45</sup> There are many instances in which we can provide practical solutions to suffering, and it is truly part of our

Salvationist DNA- a meal to someone who is hungry, clothes for the naked, shelter for the homeless. But what about those sufferings that we cannot physically fix? These moments are awkward, hard, and unable to be alleviated by anyone but God. Let us hold one another up, sit beside our brothers, and hold the hands of our sisters in the spaces when there are no answers to our questions and no immediate relief for the suffering of our sheep. Soldiers, local officers, corps officers, Army leadership-let us walk together, pray together, love together, be honest together, and grieve together.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> J. Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York: Schocken, 2017), 21.
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- <sup>3</sup> James Wood, "Holiday in Hellmouth" *The New Yorker*. June 2, 2008. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/06/09/holiday-in-hellmouth>
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- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> T. J. Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), 61.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> Harrower & Cole, *God of All Comfort*, 32.
- <sup>9</sup> Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us*, 60.
- <sup>10</sup> Harrower, S., & Cole. *God of All Comfort*, 33.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-11.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.
- <sup>13</sup> Terrence Fretheim. (1984) *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*( Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), Loc.1530-1535.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Loc. 1542.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Loc. 1518.
- <sup>16</sup> Harrower & Cole, 117-134.
- <sup>17</sup> Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, 267.
- <sup>18</sup> Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us*, 74.
- <sup>19</sup> Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, Loc. 1566.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
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- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

<sup>30</sup> Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, Loc. 1757.

<sup>31</sup> Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us*, 86.

<sup>32</sup> L. Tverberg, *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewish Words of Jesus Can Change Your Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 160.

<sup>33</sup> Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us*, 80.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>35</sup> L. TerKeurst, *Its Not Supposed to Be This Way: Finding Unexpected Strength When Disappointments Leave You Shattered* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson), 45.

<sup>36</sup> Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us*, 80.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> L. Harris, 'Looking on Suffering and Seeing God: Reflections on Charity Work and Suffering' *The Way*, 47(4), 110.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>40</sup> TerKeurst, *Its Not Supposed to Be This Way*, 41-42.

<sup>41</sup> Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us*, 76.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> Harris, "Looking on Suffering and Seeing God", 111.

<sup>44</sup> C. Kent, *He Holds My Hand: Experiencing God's Presence & Protection* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, p. 100.

<sup>45</sup> Wray, *What the Bible Really Tells Us*, 80.

# Living from the Center

*Lyell Rader*

## **Introduction**

... Over the margins of life comes a whisper, a faint call, a premonition of richer living which we know we are passing by. Strained by the very mad pace of our daily outer burdens, we are further strained by an inward uneasiness, because we have hints that there is a way of life vastly richer and deeper than all this hurried existence, a life of unhurried serenity and peace and power. If only we could slip over into that Center! (Kelly, 1941:115).

John speaks to our condition. He holds before us, in monosyllables, holy humanness, activated by the life and light and love of God. No one in the Gospel has an easy life.

But one and another find the way toward wholeness in the presence of Jesus. In the symbolism of farmer-theologian Wendell Berry,

In a place that is my own place, whose earth/ I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old tree growing,/ a great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of itself./ Fences have been tied to it, nails driven into it,/ hacks and whittles cut in it, the lightning has burned it./ ... It bears the gnarls of its history/ healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection (Berry, 1998:27).

So we too may grow, rooted in the vitality of the Holy Spirit.

We reflect in these studies on three encounters with Jesus, which St. John uses as windows into Jesus' personhood and our own. The three are angular

characters confronted with stern choices. In their stumblings toward discovery we see ourselves. In the grace extended, we find our way to living from the center.

## 1. LIFE

### *John 1:1-14; 3:1-10*

Little Penny, starry-eyed timbrelist, unschooled, untried, unprepared, unmarried, great with child, catapulted into adulthood like a rock over the wall, gave birth this week. It was induced labor, a drip with a vengeance. A careening, terrifying passage through unimaginable pain, with screams to tear the heart, then tearing, pounding, agony into life. So her child appeared, as Wordsworth put it, “trailing clouds of glory as he came.” Pink mystery and promise. Every birth, someone said, is a statement of God’s opinion that the race should go on. Life from life. A spark from the Source.

“At the beginning God expressed himself. That personal expression, that word, was with God and was God In him appeared life and this life was the light of mankind” (John 1:1,4, IBP).

John, the film director, is working in black and white. The shadows have fallen sharply. A vague, furtive figure melds into view. It is Nicodemus, only here in the Gospels, “Conqueror of the People” Nicodemus. John’s description is parsimonious: “Man of the Pharisees,” Torah-observant, 613 laws and each with a centipede’s appendages. His circle will lead and redefine Judaism after the Fall of Jerusalem - a Fall which has already occurred when the Gospel is written - producing what we know today as mainline Judaism. He is a ruler, a man of privilege, of vested interests, cautious, thoughtful, mature.

But what is in his mind? Is he an Inquisitor? Is he a sacred handler. (“Nothing is so deadening to the divine as an habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things” (MacDonald in Lewis, 1948:113)). Is he a seeker, charmed and caught up by the magnetism of Jesus?

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs [semeia] that you do, unless God is with him” (Jn 3:1).

“The miracles of Jesus,” said George MacDonald, “were the ordinary works of His Father, wrought small and swift that we might take them in” (MacDonald in Lewis, 1948:46). *Semeia* in John.

Whatever the motive of the clandestine meeting, it became an “opening,” a point where God arrests our attention and requires of us response.

Read case studies 1 and 2. One is from a “conservative” tradition; the second from a “liberal tradition”. What do you make of them?

### Interaction

Read case studies 1 and 2. One is from a “conservative” tradition; the second from a “liberal tradition”. What do you make of them?

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew [gennethe anothen, from above] he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”*

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes and whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

This is a language matched to its time. It runs through the New Testament (1 Pe 1:3,22,23; Jm 1:18; Tit 3:5; Ro 6:1-11; 1 Co 3:1-2; 2 Co 5:17; Ga 6:15; Ep 4:22-24; He 5:12-14). When a proselyte came into Judaism by prayer and sacrifice and baptism he was regarded as being reborn. Among the Mysteries, the most real religion of the Greeks at the time, initiations commonly took place at midnight, when the day dies and is reborn. In the most famous ceremony, the candidate was placed into a pit under a lattice-work cover. A bull’s blood was let from its throat and the initiate, face upward, bathed in its blood, to come forth *renatus in aeternum*, reborn for all eternity.

A new biography of Beethoven spells out the paradox of the tragic genius. A contemporary visits his Vienna apartment at the time Beethoven is producing the sublime Emperor concerto. It is “the dirtiest, most disorderly place imaginable.” The piano is buried under dust and papers, and below is an unemptied chamber pot - a glimpse of a brilliant, conflicted, alienated, disheveled life. “To study the lives of great artists is often a positive hindrance to the understanding of their works, for it is usually the study of what they have not mastered” (New York Times Book Review, January 19:11). In matters of the spirit, there is something about the concerto and the chamber pot in all of our histories.

“In him appeared life” (1:4, JBP). The poet writes:

In a time that breaks/ in cutting pieces all around./ when men, voiceless/ against thing-ridden men./ set themselves on fire, it seems/ too difficult and rare/ to think of the life of a man/ grown whole in the world./ at peace and in place./ But having thought of it/ I am beyond the time/ I might have sold my hands/ or sold my voice and mind/ to the arguments of power/ that go blind against/ what they would destroy (Berry, 1998:xiii).

Life to grow whole in the world, at peace and in place. Major Edwin Sheard and his wife, were appointed, some years ago, to work among the Sultanas. The government of India proposed to ship the tribe, criminals all, to the Andaman islands, off the coast of Calcutta. "Sleep with your revolver under the pillow," the police advised Sheard. But he had no fireann. Instead he struck the shackles off their legs, led them 25 miles into the interior, and began pegging out the lots, marking the gardens, erecting detached cottages. Progress was slow. The rats and leeches, and malarial mosquitoes, the dense jungle, the a originals who picked off stragglers with poisoned arrows, nearly had the best of it. But the Sheards prayed and soldiered on. Their immediate helpers, the Burmese cook, a Punjabi bearer and a Pathan orderly were all murderers. The grip of the older criminals persisted on the young. But in ones and twos the Sultanas began to come to Christ. They fggned, to give their halting testimonies, to shape viable fellowships of the twice-born.

And, by and by, virgin soil was cultivated, crops raised, trees planted, better strains of seed obtained, handcrafts created, government loans repaid, law-abiding villages established. It is a Salvationist paradigm (Harris, 1962: 123-4).

But the Spirit-wind (*pneuma*) blows where it wishes. "The sound of it you hear. But you do not know where it comes from and where it goes" (literal). So much for our efforts to to co-opt and confine.

My "how" or "when," Thou wilt not heed,/ But come down Thine  
own secret stair./ That Thou may'st answer all my need./ Yea, every  
bygone prayer (MacDonald in Weatherhead, 1958:236).

The new life characterizes a society where God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

### **Interaction**

Read case study 3. How does the author's analogy of the frog in the well relate to "seeing" the kingdom? What is your experience?

*"How can a man be born when he is old [geron] ?(Jn 3:4). "How can this be?" (Jn 3:9). Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'*(Jn 7:37- 38).

The pathos.

“Twilight. With darkness coming on through the open door, I am losing more and more of the gold” (Shaw, 2000:85).

Poor man, at the limit, the end. “... When he is old.” What then?

Life’s second half is a wake-up time. An unexplored inner and outer world awaits us and demands our attention. These are the years for the exploration of our inner space. These are the years for reclaiming lost, unknown, unused, unconscious aspects of myself. This is the time for the longest stride of our souls (Brennan and Brewi, 1999:9).

Serendipities abound.

He who would be born again indeed,/ Must wake his soul unnumbered times a day;/ And urge himself to life with holy greed;/ Now ope his bosom to the wind’s free play;/ And now, with patience forceful, hard, lie still,/ Submiss and ready to the making will;/ Athirst and empty, for God’s breath to fill (MacDonald, 1994:55).

Nicodemus appears again in 7:50-52, to make a costly defence, and in 19:38-42, bearing myrrh and aloes. We may believe that the Spirit-wind blew his way. Such is the adventure of spiritual life.

### **Interaction**

Read case study 4. According to Paul Tournier adventure is a manifestation of oneself a form of self-expression. It innovates and invents. It is coherent. It is sustained and directed by love. It involves risk. Relate the case study to John’s depiction of spiritual life. Where is your next spiritual adventure?

## **2. LIGHT**

### ***John 9:1-34***

### **Video**

*The Search: New Age in a New Light* (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship 2100 Productions, 1990). How do these conversations relate to truth, represented in John’s metaphor of light?

Rabbi, who sinned [hemarten, missed the mark]? (9:1).

*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents. but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. I am the light of the world [phos eimi tou kosmou] (9:3- 5).*

I feel more precious, I am more than one./ For, since you held my heart, my worth grew more:/ A marble block, when carving has been done./ Is not the rough, cheap stone it was before.

As paper painted or just written on/ No longer is rag one can ignore./ So, since you looked at me, and I was won./ My value has increased for evermore.

Now, with your splendor printed on my face./ I go like one who, dressed with every kind/ Of amulets and arms, can dare all wars./ I can walk on the ocean, brave all blaze./ Give in your name the light to all the blind/ And my saliva heals all poisonous sores (Michelangelo, 16<sup>th</sup> century, from Italian, in Atwan, 1998:166).

“Rabbi, who sinned?” Did they see a man? Or did they see a Jeopardy question, a theological conundrum, a pesky puzzle? Who was blind in the deepest sense? A community group working with AIDS sufferers bid to join cause with Salvationists under the Army’s aegis. “You don’t want to get involved with those people,” a consultant told the Army. Is this a man or a sinner?

I recall the bristling of Commissioner Paul duPlessis, M.D., when in discourse someone spoke of “the lepers.” “There are no lepers,” he said angrily, “there are only persons with leprosy.”

“Rabbi, who sinned?” Sin is not at the forefront here. Law is not at the forefront (Pharisaic law forbade the setting of a broken bone on the Sabbath or the sipping of vinegar to relieve a tooth infection). It is need. A place for mercy manifest.

‘Tis mercy all, immense and free./ For, O my God, it found out me  
(Salvation Army Song Book SB 283).

*... He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”. Then he went and washed and came back able to see (9:6-7).*

Spittle the blind man knew. But here it was spittle that healed. And so the Word of God is revealed.

Biblical faith is distinguished from all religions, all philosophies, and all ideologies by its redundant insistence upon the presence

and vitality of the Word of God in common history; and Christians particularly confess that the involvement of the Word of God in the life of this world becomes most conscientious, comprehensible, and intentional in the event of Jesus Christ. This historic, incarnate activity of the Word of God signifies the militancy of the Word of God, both in cosmic dimensions of space and time, and in each and every item of created life, including your personhood and your biography or mine....

The Word of God is implicated in the actual life of this world, in all its tumult and excitement, ambiguity and change, in the existence of the nations and principalities, human beings and other creatures, in every happening in every place in every moment (cf. Rev 19:11-16) (Stringfellow, 1994:20).

What then has happened to our trust in truth? Is it related to loss of trust in truth-bearers? This week business executives, government officials, social activists, academics and religious leaders will be gathered at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland: their major theme, the decline of trust. Polling 47 nations, an official of the conference points to the decline of trust in religious institutions and religious and spiritual leaders "by statistically significant margins" in more than two of every three nations surveyed. The decline is especially steep in the United States (New York Times, January 18, 2003:A14).

We see, spectacularly in our time, how faith can turn toxic. We know that more wars have been waged, more people killed and more evil perpetrated in the name of religion than by any other institutional force in human history - and alas, Christians have been in the midst. What are the factors leading people of faith into destructive and evil behaviors? Charles Kimball, a Baptist minister, lists several: claims of a monopoly on truth, blind obedience, efforts to establish the "ideal" time, justification of means by ends, holy war (Kimball, 2002).

So upon the beggar's darkness the inextinguishable light shines (1:5). None is excluded (1:9).

{The Pharisees} reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from. "

For the revilers, truth had become inert. "He moves in darkness as it seems to me" Robert Frost wrote in "Mending Fence," "Not of woods only and the shade of trees./ He will not go behind his father's saying..." (Frost in Foerster, 1957:1310). But the

light of Jesus is dynamic. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear [*bastazein*, carry, support] them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide [*hodgegesi* from *hodos*, path, track, road, highway] you into all the truth” (16:16:13).

In training a child to activity of thought, above all things we must beware of what I will call “inert ideas” - that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations (Whitehead, 1957:1).

*The man answered, “Why this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. “ They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us? “*

Unteachable for want of obedience.

### **Interaction**

Read case study 5. How does this translate into our local officer ministries of words?

*And they cast him out [en hamartiais su egennethes holos kais su didaskeis hemas](9:28- 34).*

Where light is denied or neglected attrition sets in. Light-bringing congregations are learning communities.

How central are the Scriptures in our common life? Is our teaching only a kind of baptism by sprinkling?

The poet Ntozake Shange writes:

Quite simply a poem shd fill you up with something cd make/ you swoon, stop in yr tracks, change yr mind, or make it up./ a poem shd happen to you like cold water or a kiss (Cited in Dykstra, 1999:151).

How much more, the Bible? The story is told of a village woman in East Africa who used to walk around with a bulky Bible. Her neighbors began to tease her: “Why always the Bible? There are so many books you could read!” But she was undeterred, neither angry nor disturbed by their jibes. One day she knelt in the center of her detractors.

Holding the Bible above her head, she said with an innocent smile: “There are many books which I could read. But there is only one book which reads me!” (From Hans - Reudi Weber, cited in Dykstra, 1999:151).

From this source is spun the web of instruction which sustains the learning congregation - first, the family altar and family evening in the home, then Sunday worship, Sunday School, mid-week Bible study, small groups (discipleship, support and recovery, ministry, in-depth study), Home League and Men’s Club, youth and music activities, camps and other divisional and territorial events, service projects, ecumenical learning experiences, retreats.

### **Interaction**

Explore the diagrams and worksheets in case study 6. Choose faith maturity, congregational life or Christian education for focused dialogue. What concerns and tasks do you discern for the year ahead?

This is the only miracle in the Gospels in which the sufferer is said to have been afflicted from birth. Poetess Vassar Miller, disabled by cerebral palsy since birth, writes:

I kneel,/ my heart in my hands --/ a cold fish,/ a stale loaf.  
 What are/ these among so many?/ Lord, Your business/ is to know.  
 I rise,/ my body a shell/ heavy with emptiness,  
 You whom/ worlds cannot contain/ not disturbing/ one pulse beat.  
 My bones/ being boughs aflame/ with Thy glory,/ Lord, suffices  
 (Miller in Atwan, 1998:146).

### **3. LOVE**

#### ***John 7:53-8:11***

The Word, for our sake, became poverty clothed as the poor who live off the refuse heap.

The Word, for our sake, became agony in the shrunken breast of the woman grown old by the absence of her murdered husband.

The Word, for our sake, became a sob a thousand times stifled in the immovable mouth of the child who died from hunger.

The Word, for our sake, became rebellion before the lifeless body of Gaspar Sanchez Toma, “scientifically” murdered.

The Word, for our sake, became danger in the anguish of the mother who worries about her son growing into manhood.

The Word became an ever-present absence among the 70,000 families torn apart by death.

The Word became Light, The Word became History, The Word became Conflict,

The Word became Indomitable Spirit,

And sowed its seeds upon the mountains, near the river and in the valley And those-of-good-will, heard the angels sing.

Tired knees were strengthened, Trembling hands were stilled,

And the people who wandered in darkness,

Saw the LIGHT! (Julia Esquivel, from *Threatened with Resurrection: Prayers and Poems from an Exiled Guatemalan*, 1982 in Moore, 1998:91).

The word *love* does not appear in John's prologue and yet its tincture spreads through the text.

He was in the world./ the world was there through him./ and yet the world didn't even notice./ He came to his own people./ but they didn't want him./ But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed/ and would do what he said./ He made to be their true selves./ their child-of-God selves / The Word became flesh and blood./ and moved into the neighborhood./ We saw the glory with our own eyes./ the one-of-a-kind glory./ like Father, like Son./ Generous inside and out./ true from start to finish (1:10-12,14, Message).

So we are not surprised at the account of John 7:53-8:11.

Peter M. Senge in his best-selling work, lists mental models as one of the disciplines of the learning organization. Mental models drive our behavior. Skills for examining them include, says Senge, recognizing "leaps of abstraction" (noticing our jumps from observation to generalization), exposing the "left-hand column" (articulating what we normally do not say), balancing inquiry and advocacy, and facing up to distinctions between espoused theories and theories-in-use (Senge, 1990: 186).

### **Interaction**

What are the mental models of the Scribes and Pharisees in use here?

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

There is an Armenian translation of the New Testament which suggests that Jesus was writing their own sins in the dust. (The verb to write, *katagraphein*, can mean to write down a record against someone.)

*When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him*

"There remained," said Augustine, "a great misery (*miseria*) and a great pity (*misericordia*)."

### **Interaction**

Read case study 7. What is your own experience of standing with the excluded? View the video, *Henri Nouwen: The Passion of a Wounded Healer*. What questions and demands does the Spirit address to you?

*Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."*

So ends a story almost too good to be true. The New International Version includes the note: "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8: 11." It is an authentic story from the life of Jesus, known by Papias early in the second century and to Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome in the fourth.

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them.

Serenity in the sacred precincts. It is prime time. But there are those with no sense of occasion.

So many Christians are like deaf people at a concert. They study the programme carefully, believe every statement made in it, speak respectfully of the quality of the music, but only really hear a phrase now and again. So they have no notion at all of the mighty symphony that fills the universe, to which our lives are destined to make their

tiny contribution, and which is the self-expression of the eternal God (Underhill, 1999:14).

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them...

Before all of them! They could not disgrace her in this way if they did not despise her. From what dark spring does this rage appear? Immediately following the Twin Towers and Pentagon attacks, a prominent Christian said on television: "We make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way - all of them who have tried to secularize America - I point my finger in their face and say, "You helped this happen"" (Cited in Kimball, 2002:219). The theology here deserves a little examination. The murderous mayhem, the crematoria in center city, the chamel pits of ash and bloodless body parts, the hideous, demonic bestiality- because *God* is *mad*?! But note, here is a succinct roster of the people so many Christians love to hate. "... Making her stand before all of them "

... *They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"*

They have the Law dead right. "The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev 20:10). For a girl who is betrothed, she and the man who seduced her are to be brought outside the city gates, "and ye shall stone them with stones until they die." The Mishnah states that the penalty for adultery is strangulation: "The man is to be enclosed in dung up to his knees, and a soft towel set within a rough towel is to be placed around his neck (in order that no mark may be made, for the punishment is God's punishment). Then one man draws in one direction and another in the other direction, until he be dead" (Barclay, 1956:2).

They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament the story appears only in one; in two others there is a blank space where it should come.

Augustine wrote that the story was removed from the text of the gospel because "some were of slight faith" and "to avoid scandal." (Barclay, 1956:336).

O boundless salvation, deep ocean of love.

**Interaction**

Read Case Study 8. How would you define holiness as living from the Center?  
Write a prayer of response to God's word to you today

**For Further Reading**

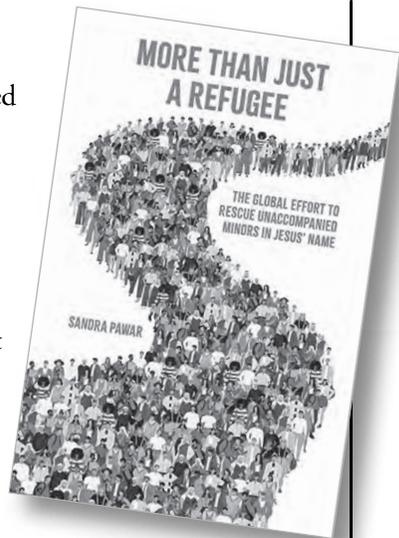
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# *More Than Just A Refugee*

By Sandra Pawar

In this sobering account of global injustice, Sandra Pawar delves into the urgent reality of unaccompanied minors, emphasizing their critical need for secure housing, accessible education, financial stability, and psychological assistance. Through narratives, data, interviews, and investigations, her book sheds light on their immediate requirements and proposes one sustainable solution based in Scripture.

Sandra Pawar is a passionate and dedicated Salvation Army corps officer with more than twenty years of experience in serving and empowering others. Throughout her tenure with The Salvation Army in the UK, Australia, and the United States, she has directly engaged with refugees from Syria, Iran, Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. *More Than Just A Refugee* is her first book.



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# Book Review

Shank, Robert. *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance*. Revised and updated by Steve Witzki, with a foreword by Craig Keener. Grand Rapids, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2024. 605 pages.

Reviewed by Kevin L. Anderson, Professor of Bible and Theology,  
Asbury University, Wilmore, KY.

When it comes to the Calvinist vs. Arminian debate, there has not always been an abundance of popular resources, especially from the Arminian side of the debate. Until the last twenty-five years, there were never as many readily available resources for scholars, pastors, and interested laypersons alike who had questions about the doctrines of predestination and the perseverance of the saints. Today, there are authoritative and systematic treatments by Arminian and Wesleyan scholars such as Robert Picirilli, Joseph Dongell and Jerry Walls, Don Thorsen, and Roger Olson, among others. But in the latter half of the twentieth century, those under the Arminian banner were left mainly to rifle through the works of John Wesley, James Arminius, and a scattering of sermons, pamphlets, and books (often of limited distribution from denominational presses) to seek answers to burning questions.<sup>1</sup>

A notable exception was Robert Shank's *Life in the Son*, first published in 1960. Exactly a decade later, the companion volume *Elect in the Son* appeared. By 1971, *Life in the Son* had gone through eight printings and *Elect in the Son* three printings; and in 1989, both volumes were reprinted by Bethany House Publishers. In *Life in the Son*, Shank did what had not been done before—except in impenetrable theological works designed chiefly for scholars: he provided a comprehensive assessment of the doctrine of “once saved, always saved” from a coherent Arminian perspective.

Shank's work reflects his personality as a faithful Bible preacher, sound theologian, caring pastor, and bold church leader. (It may be noted in passing that Shank's championing Arminianism received a backlash from his fellow Southern Baptists, forcing him to transfer his affiliation to the Churches of Christ.) I recall how, in my college days, Shank's work was renowned as *the* place to go to find answers to troubling questions, refute Calvinistic interpretations of biblical passages, and understand the logical coherence of Arminian theology.

One can imagine my excitement when I learned that Shank's *Life in the Son* was being revised and updated for publication. Though the work was groundbreaking, the truth is (as already noted) many fine works from Arminian and Wesleyan scholars have appeared in the sixty-five years since it was first published. What's more, numerous advances have occurred in biblical studies, theology, and related fields (such as Greek lexicography and grammar, literary analyses, and study of the social worlds of the Bible). It is no surprise, then, that Steve Witzki's revision was ten years in the making.

The immediately recognizable difference in the revised edition is that it is almost twice the thickness of Shank's original volume. The original edition is 380 pages in length, while the revision boasts 605 pages. Also, the revision is set in an eye-squinting type size compared to the comfortably-sized print of the original. A closer look reveals the extent of both revision and expansion. Nineteen original chapters have been expanded to thirty-one. A painstaking source-critical analysis would be required to trace the reviser's work beyond what is possible here. Most chapters have been expanded (sometimes into multiple chapters, e.g., the original ch. 4 has become chs. 7-10); some have been renamed (e.g., ch. 10, "An Advocate with the Father" to ch. 24, "Absolute Safety and Security for Sinning Christians?" and ch. 11, "The Chastening of the Lord" to ch. 25, "The Lord Disciplines His Children"); some chapters have had material parceled out into other parts of the book (e.g., one can detect parts of the original ch. 5 showing up in chs. 4 and 11); and whole chapters have been added (e.g., apparently chs. 19-23). There is at least one place where material from *Elect in the Son* has been adapted and incorporated (see pp. 189-90). Other portions of the original text have been preserved in a forthcoming Supplement to the book. In these, as well as hundreds of major and minor alterations and additions, Steve Witzki has undertaken a massive overhaul of Shank's classic.

The general flow of the book is as follows. Early chapters (1-6) provide a careful exposition of the nature of salvation and of saving faith. A point reverberating

throughout the book is that saving faith is not merely a one-time transactional experience but an ongoing commitment and life of discipleship. The next series of chapters (7-10) discusses, in roughly canonical order, various NT passages that reveal the possibility of apostasy. Another group of chapters (11-14) discusses the nature of the believer's security in Christ, beginning in ch. 11 with a clear outline of the Arminian interpretation of election as both corporate (unconditional) and individual (conditional). Chapters 15-27 return to the subject of apostasy, addressing NT texts that warn against falling away, starting in ch. 15 with the five severe warnings from the Epistle to the Hebrews. These chapters expose the incoherence of the Calvinist position, which takes the warnings as viable only as means toward promoting perseverance, not to caution against any real threat to inevitable salvation. Also, the repeated Calvinistic claim that the apostate never was a believer is illogical, as it is impossible to fall away from or lose the salvation that one never had in the first place! The remaining chapters focus on the doctrine of assurance for those who love God (ch. 28), are kept by God's power (ch. 29), have inward and outward evidences of God's saving grace (ch. 30), and are comforted in knowing that even apostasy need not be irreversible (ch. 31).

There are several ways in which the updated *Life in the Son* goes beyond the original edition. First, it strengthens Shank's original case. It outstrips Shank's aim at a comprehensive treatment of the issues, theses, and texts related to the doctrine of perseverance. It brings the discussion up-to-date by interacting with Calvinists (both of the classical and moderate varieties) who have written about eternal security in the interval since the original publication. Second, it maintains Shank's focus on Scripture as the touchstone for formulating Christian doctrine. It avails itself of a large swath of the finest biblical scholarship, copiously documented in footnotes and bibliography. Importantly, it aims at a careful exegesis of key passages, not least by attending to their literary and cultural contexts (well illustrated in its extended treatment of the strong destroying the weak [Rom 14:15, 20a in ch. 19] and the danger of eating food sacrificed to idols [1 Cor 8-10 in ch. 20]). There are also exquisite exegetical gems to discover, such as the persuasive explanation of the expression "all that" (*pan ho*) in John 6:37 as a reference to all believers collectively (pp. 181-82). Third, it employs doctrinal truths that are more explicitly Wesleyan. These include prevenient grace (cf. pp. 106, 498); enabling grace (not merely free will; e.g., pp. 298-299); and, most importantly, an emphasis on the pursuit of "holy love" (p. 463) as the fruit of genuine Christian life (e.g., ch. 24 is a broadside against the antinomian view that habitual sinning is part of normative Christian experience).

The extensive revision of *Life in the Son* has deepened and strengthened the exegetical support for Shank's original theses. However, it has also lost some of the crispness, clarity, and homiletical appeal of Shank's style. Its strength is also a weakness, given the plethora of footnotes that populate (and often overpopulate) its pages. I'm a big proponent of footnotes over endnotes, but the use of endnotes for this book would have facilitated a less ponderous and distracted reading experience, particularly for busy pastors and laypersons. Similar counsel would apply to the abundance of large block quotes from secondary sources, which may rather have been summarized, with only truly quotable quotes included in the text. The addition of square-bracketed wording to quotations from Calvinists, that cross the t's and dot the i's of the Calvinist position (e.g., "[irresistible] grace" [p. 180 n. 25, 181]), achieves precision but may come off as less than charitable.

There is little to quibble over with regard to the soundness of the revision's interpretive process or results. The mixture of old and new creates a jarring experience for biblical scholars who will find it odd to see outdated resources like Thayer's lexicon or Strong's dictionary often cited alongside BDAG<sup>2</sup> or Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. In this reviewer's estimation, the case could have been strengthened with regard to the message of Hebrews if "the sin" in 12:1 were acknowledged as apostasy (though there is room for disagreement here). A ubiquitous argument is to highlight the presence of the Greek present tense, and nearly always to interpret its default usage as a continuous present. This seems to be overpressed and at times open to question. For instance, a case can be made for the present participle of *hagiazō* in Hebrews 10:14 as communicating a lasting state or condition of holiness (contra p. 400 n. 3). Also, rightly, John Wesley strenuously objects to translating the Greek present as continuous in 1 John 3:9, "commit sin habitually" ("Marks of the New Birth," I. 5; contra pp. 303-304).

The revised *Life in the Son* is a welcome reappearance in the Calvinist/Arminian debate. It has brought renewed visibility to a Christian classic and has succeeded in strengthening an already formidable argument for an Arminian interpretation of the security of the believer. Readers should be forewarned that this updated study invites them not to a casual, interesting read. Rather, its richly researched pages demand patient study and spiritual reflection.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Two other publications from this period are noteworthy: I. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God* (Epworth Press, London, 1969; 2nd rev. ed., Paternoster, 1995); and Mildred Wynkoop, *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology* (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1967). However, neither was as lay-friendly or as impactful as Shank's work.

<sup>2</sup> W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich [BDAG], *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1999).

# *Heavenly Places Revealed*

By Allen Satterlee

*Heavenly Places Revealed* explores Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which explains the riches of the Christian faith as well as the practical application of it so that believers are strengthened in mind and spirit. Lt. Colonel Allen Satterlee takes readers through a month-long journey of the letter that will help newcomers in their awareness of the epistle's great themes while whetting the appetite of the serious Bible student.

Lt. Colonel Allen Satterlee is a retired Salvation Army officer who with his wife, Esther, served over forty years in The Salvation Army. The author of fourteen books, Satterlee received his master's degree from Liberty John W. Rawlings School of Divinity and continues to work part-time in retirement for The Salvation Army USA Southern Territory as the Spiritual Life Development Officer.



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# Book Review

Pedlar, James E. *British Methodist Revivalism and the Eclipse of Ecclesiology*. London and New York: Routledge, 2024. 183 pages.

Reviewed by Christopher T. Bounds, Professor of Theology,  
Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

This volume by James Pedlar, Professor of Theology and the Donald N. and Kathleen G. Bastian Chair of Wesley Studies at Tyndale Seminary, is the fourth installment in the Routledge Methodist Studies Series, edited by William Gibson. The purpose of the series is to address the Wesleyan tradition's history and theology with a focus on the movement's accomplishments as a global phenomenon.

Pedlar's contribution centers on the success of revivalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century British Methodism and the resultant challenges for the church. While appreciating revivalism's emphasis on the "extraordinary means of grace and extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit" (171), Pedlar explores particular problems it posed for the formal church. While revivalists were open to fresh movements of the Holy Spirit through altar calls, camp meetings, protracted services, and individual empowerment, they often neglected or minimized the role of sacraments, connectional structures, and leadership in the church. To resolve this historical tension in Methodism, Pedlar argues for the necessity of a robust Wesleyan ecclesiology that brings together the best of revivalist impulses with the historic continuity of the institutional church.

More specifically, Pedlar traces the role of revivalists in divisions that birthed new movements among British Methodists, beginning with unsettled issues in John Wesley's ecclesiology that sowed the seeds of later splits. Next, he looks at Hugh Bourne's (1772-1852) leadership in the establishment of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. Bourne's "individualistic Spirit-centered theology" (63) led him to

minimize formal ordination and discount ecclesial oversight in favor of his own personal experience. Pedlar then examines James Caughey's (1810-1891) indirect, but influential role, in the formation of the United Methodist Free Churches and the Wesleyan Reform Union. Caughey focused attention on the role of the revival preacher as the primary means of "dramatic, immediate, and empowering" (96) divine grace, which contributed further to the increasing conflict between "low" and "high" Methodism. Finally, Pedlar covers William Booth's (1860-1932) work in the establishment of the Salvation Army. Booth represents the logical end of revivalist thought: "the full eclipse of ecclesiology" (125). Booth believed "the church *per se* was not the only corporate means that God might use" to bring saving and sanctifying grace to the world. As a missionary agency, Booth saw the Salvation Army as "an equally valid and effective instrument for the salvation of the world" (120).

While Pedlar acknowledges social, historical and political factors in these splits, his focus is on the impact of these revivalists' ecclesiology or "practical divinity." He shows how these revivalist's innovative Spirit-centered theology, which emphasized individual and instantaneous encounters with Christ, brought spiritual vitality, personal transformation, and lay empowerment to many. In doing so, however, they diminished historic, corporate, and progressive experiences of divine grace in the formal church. Intentionally or naively, they subordinated ecclesiology and sacramental theology to pneumatology. They believed the fruits of their ministry established its validity. Like John Wesley, they were inclined to disregard ecclesial authority in response to the certainty of their divine call.

Pedlar's historical survey and theological analysis also finds hope among the 19<sup>th</sup> century British Methodists to bridge the divide between revivalists and institutionalists. He highlights those who sought to preserve "revivalist spirituality," while tempering its excesses through a more expansive ecclesiology. These "unionists" sought to hold together the extraordinary with the ordinary means of grace, individual experience with historic corporate wisdom, and the instantaneous with the progressive work of God.

Central here is Samuel Chadwick (1860-1932), long-time Principal of Cliff College, who was trained at Didsbury College under William Burt Pope. Chadwick's "catholic revivalism," according to Pedlar, balanced the experience of personal salvation and holiness, without neglecting the pressing social issues of his day, holding together revivalistic impulses with institutional commitments. He understood the church "primarily as the body of Christ, 'united by the Divine Spirit' – a

spiritual organism rather than an organization, sustained (but not constituted) by institutions and ordinances such as the sacraments” (144). As such, he sought to ground Methodism in a more Christocentric ecclesiology without neglecting the necessity of the Holy Spirit.

Pedlar concludes his study with constructive insights for a truly Methodist, Wesleyan-holiness ecclesiology. First, he argues that a Wesleyan theology of the church must “fully account for corporate ecclesial practices as a means of grace” (174). Revivalists were right to emphasize individual spiritual discernment and empowerment of every believer, but they needed to “relativize” their own judgment in relationship to others, through the Conference – an essential corporate means of grace.

Second, and what Pedlar sees as the “thorniest” issue: a Wesleyan ecclesiology must see “oversight” as a means of grace. Superintendency in the church must be seen as a “charism” among other spiritual gifts, “a gift that enables the discernment and coordination of gifts, not as an office of external authority over and above the rest of the church” (175). Furthermore, these “Christian leaders must be open to spontaneity and change but they must also resist the temptation to discard the received wisdom and practices of the Christian past” (175).

Pedlar, more generally, is to be commended for his recognition of the contributions of the larger 19<sup>th</sup> century holiness movement to the life of the church. Wesleyan scholarship has endured a lengthy period of exceedingly critical appraisal of the holiness movement, often lamenting its departure in theology and practice from the perceived “pristine” era of John Wesley. So much so, some holiness denominations have abandoned or forgotten their distinctly theological “revivalist” emphases. While significant problems existed in the British (and American) holiness movement, there is much to be embraced and reappropriated. Pedlar’s work represents the type of scholarship needed in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition, one that clearly sees the assets of its 19<sup>th</sup> century heritage without minimizing its liabilities.

More specifically, Pedlar has placed his finger on one of the most glaring challenges in the larger Methodist movement: ecclesiology. It should be noted, as well, that the doctrine of the church has been a vexing problem for larger Protestantism and may be the most pressing concern in evangelicalism today. Unfortunately, Wesleyans and evangelical Protestants operate here more pragmatically, less biblically and theologically. As such, the church continues in the direction of greater fragmentation.

Pedlar’s work functions as a necessary historical prolegomenon toward a sound Methodist, Wesleyan-holiness ecclesiology. He carefully lays out the need for a

theology of the church that is flexible enough to remain open for new ways in which the Spirit communicates preventing, justifying, and sanctifying grace, while rooted in the historic wisdom, practices, and structures of the church. His most significant contribution theologically is the “charism” of leadership, which has roots in his earlier book, *Divisions, Diversity, and Unity: A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms* (Peter Lang, 2015).

Pedlar’s constructive proposals, however, are limited, only briefly addressed in the last three pages of the text, teasing a reader for more extended reflection. Pedlar, in the end, has set a foundation for a truly Methodist (and more specifically a Wesleyan-holiness) ecclesiology. Perhaps, he, or another theologian, will follow his established trajectory and develop the ecclesiology desperately needed in the Wesleyan world today.

# Book Review

Kiesling, Chris A. *Discipleship for Every Stage of Life: Understanding Christian Formation in Light of Human Development*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024. 216 pages.

Reviewed by Brian Hull, Professor of Pastoral and Christian Ministries,  
Asbury University, Wilmore, Kentucky.

Chris Kiesling has given us an excellent overview of faith formation and human development in his book *Discipleship for Every Stage of Life*. Kiesling, professor of human development and Christian discipleship at Asbury Theological Seminary with experience as a pastor, approaches this work as a practical theologian/minister. He states, “My aim is to provide those who serve congregations a tool kit for thinking more comprehensively about discipleship at every stage of life, building on those before me who found meaningful correlation between faith formation and the study of human development” (2). While he recognizes that Christian faith formation and human development disciplines have differences, he believes this dialogue from within each life stage, “is organic to the way people of faith naturally progress through and seek meaning from the stages of life. The approach locates theological reflection *within* social and cultural experience rather than *outside* it...” (3). A careful reading of this book will find Kiesling approaching the faith formation and the ministry implications from within those life stages. He describes his work as both trying to “offer powerful descriptive insights into the patterns and processes that shape the lives of people” for those in ministry, and “to influence those who spend their time in social work and the helping professions” to value the spiritual dimension of life, particularly through the lens of Christianity and Wesleyan theology (4).

Kiesling dialogues about faith formation and human development looking at seven different life stages:

1. Womb and Infancy – Kiesling does an excellent job of helping us “to see more universally what is developing physically, cognitively, emotionally, psychologically, and socially in the life of an infant, and agree on the importance of providing a child with safety, nurture, security, and consistent care as a means of establishing the cardinal virtues of faith, hope, and love in their experience” (26).
2. Early Childhood – Here the author helps us see “that parent and child live religious experience together” and *how* they engage together is as important as *whether* they do it (50-51).
3. Middle Childhood – In this chapter, not only does Kiesling help us see the social science research on this developmental period, but he also explores some Children’s Ministry models and their connection to some of the research. I like this model and found myself wanting more of this approach in other chapters.
4. Adolescence – Before describing the cognitive and identity development of adolescence, the author first addresses “the anchoring convictions we hope to plant in the hearts and minds of our adolescents before we launch them into the world” (103). By grounding the chapter in these convictions, the sending takes on a more hopeful posture.
5. Young Adulthood – Kiesling describes the narrative scripts young adults develop to tell the story of their lives. While describing it as process, he points out that a narrative grounded in Christian faith is better equipped to hold the tension between agency and the cultural and familial pressures.
6. Middle Adulthood – The author describes this stage as filled with the most responsibility and shepherding of any stage. He does an excellent job suggesting Christian practices to help with faith formation in this stage. He summarizes the chapter well, “When I consider all that is entrusted to me at midlife in the shepherding of future generations, despite my susceptibility to falter, slowness of heart to trust, and shortness of wisdom to guide, I still want my striving for a ‘faithful and true heart’ to be the legacy on which my shadow falls” (157).
7. Late Adulthood – Perhaps the best part of this chapter is where Kiesling debunks many of the myths of late adulthood, such as to be old is to be

incapacitated or a curmudgeon or not able to learn anything, and how unhelpful those myths are. His focus on reflection is also very valuable.

The author's research and work on these life stages of development and faith formation is outstanding. He accurately and expertly offers the most important research for each life stage and makes beneficial insights regarding faith formation and ministry. This is invaluable for anyone new to the field of social science or someone who is looking to learn more.

Because of its excellent research, this book is probably best suited to be read by first going to the introduction and then going to the life stage that is most pertinent to your ministry or life needs at the moment. All the chapters are valuable but do not need to be read in order. Perhaps because he writes from the perspective of each life stage, the chapters do not follow any kind of template, which might frustrate those looking for a specific section on application. Rather the implications of the developmental insights on faith formation are woven throughout most chapters.

While the book is well done, there are two things I think will be helpful for the reader to know. First, the suggestions for helping those in local church ministries are overly general. While it is important in this kind of work not to be overly prescriptive (telling others what and how they should do ministry) it is also quite helpful to offer descriptive examples, describing to the reader some examples that achieve the desired outcomes. While plenty of excellent research and information are shared in each chapter, which could well be a foundation for good application in a variety of contexts, Kiesling offers too little description of potential applications for the practitioner, except for the chapters on Middle Childhood and Middle Adulthood.

Second, one of the dangers of the discipline of developmental psychology is to treat human developmental studies as normative, a descriptor of where all people should be. This approach to seeking to describe what is the standard or normal does not allow for differing developmental rates, nor does it allow for the neuro-diverse or persons with developmental disabilities. If only the "normal" and "healthy" are described in developmental terms, then those who do not fall within these categories can be considered less valuable. For example, if I am the age of an adolescent, but cognitively developed to the level of most early children, does that make me less valuable or somehow "broken"? While Kiesling is not arguing for any kind of development theory as normative, he also does not name this temptation, nor does he articulate a view of everyone's inherent value no matter their development level, which would be in line with his stated Christian and Wesleyan values.

Overall, this is a valuable book for those interested in knowing the rationale behind healthy approaches to faith formation at every life stage. Kiesling accomplishes his goal of helping those involved in discipleship training to better understand what is going on in different life stages. This book helps us see from within those life stages and guides us to be informed in our discipleship practices for every stage of life.

# Book Review

Snyder, Howard A. *Francis of Assisi, Movement Maker: The Unconventional Leadership of a Simple Saint*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2024. 487 pages.

Reviewed by Caleb Loudon, Managing Editor for The Salvation Army  
National Publications, Alexandria, VA

The legacy of Francis of Assisi extends to the present day through his contemporary devotees who seek to emulate his legacy, the most famous of whom was the 266<sup>th</sup> pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church: *Franciscus, Pontifex Maximus*. When explaining his decision to be the first pope called “Francis”, the then recently elected Pope said, “He [Francis] brought to Christianity an idea of poverty against the luxury, pride, vanity of the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the time. He changed history.” In his new book, *Francis of Assisi, Movement Maker: The Unconventional Leadership of a Simple Saint*, Howard A. Snyder describes just how St. Francis changed history, detailing in three parts his remarkable story, the movement he founded and his enduring legacy.

Snyder describes Francis, before he became a hallowed religious figure, as an energetic, wealthy and wasteful young man, entertaining friends and dreaming of knights, castles, and banners emblazoned with the Crusader’s cross. Yet, Francis would not fulfill his dreams of chivalry in Jerusalem, taking a detour instead back to Assisi, where his trajectory toward becoming a world-renowned religious icon would begin in earnest. An encounter with lepers, the selling of his father’s scarlet cloth to fund repairs of an old chapel in San Damiano, his hearing a reading from Matthew 10 — Snyder credits these events as the key steps in Francis’s conversion and commission. Following Francis’s call to mission and early ministry, Snyder describes how the Franciscan movement got

going, navigated its relationship with Rome, spread across Europe, and adopted a rule of life.

Snyder then moves to the book's second part: "The Movement and the Motives." In this part, he assesses the movement's fundamental dynamics, the role of Clare of Assisi, Francis's diplomacy at Damietta, his failing health, his inaugural staging of the now long running nativity play in Greccio, his failing health, the mysterious appearance of the stigmata of Christ on Francis, his beloved song *The Canticle of the Creatures*, and his final days. Part III elucidates the implications of Francis's life for faith communities today. Snyder describes Francis's reluctant impact on universities, post-Francis controversies and reform, Franciscan missionary activity, patterns of renewal, and lessons to be gleaned from the movement Francis began.

The book aims to explain Francis as "the maker of a movement, and to show the relevance of that for the church and Christian discipleship now" (19). Thus, Snyder contributes not only an illuminating biography of the enigmatic Francis but also considerable reflection upon the effects of his ministry and their implications for church leaders today. Salvationists need not struggle to see something familiar in a passionate evangelist devoted to serving the poor who has amassed an international following. Indeed, I could not help but reflect upon the similarities and differences between the Francis and William Booth, Clare of Assisi and Catherine Booth, and the Franciscans and The Salvation Army. Indeed, Snyder likens Francis to the person the Booths most sought to emulate: John Wesley.

While different in many ways, both minor and significant (Francis's Roman Catholicism being an obvious difference), engaging Snyder's *Francis of Assisi* would prove to be a fruitful exercise for Salvationists. Samuel Logan Brengle found in Francis a "model of simplicity, heart purity, and self-sacrificial service worth emulating," calling him a "thirteenth century Salvationist."<sup>1</sup> Francis provided a lifestyle that replicated the life of the primitive Church without slipping into heresy. His primary purpose was to live as Christ lived, authentically aligning every action and habit with those prescribed by Scripture. A key ingredient to missional success today is authenticity. The degree to which any denomination or evangelistic endeavor, including The Salvation Army, achieves its aims will largely depend upon its ability to demonstrate a lifestyle that enables Christians to authentically embody Scriptural Christianity, as Francis did.

Closely related to Francis's desire to live out the gospel was his allergy to any institutional hierarchy within his fledgling order. While situated within a deeply hierarchical church, Francis possessed a "gift for minimal structure" that nourished

“maximal spiritual impact” (187). The Salvation Army has a hierarchical structure predicated upon the necessity of functional authority, not distinctions of status, to advance the mission. Contextualizing the mission across 134 countries requires delegating authority from international headquarters to the field or appropriate headquarters. The genius of Francis in organizing the Lesser Brothers around their rule, but not fostering legalism, provides an illuminating model of unity for ecclesial movements spanning multiple locations, let alone multiple continents.

Like The Salvation Army, the Lesser Brothers and Francis were deeply committed to serving the poor as an extension of true piety. This nexus of mercy ministry and simple living for the sake of the gospel generated other similar qualities like a common covenant and common clothes, the habit – the Franciscan uniform, if you will. The Franciscans challenge all Christians, including Salvationists, to personally embody Christ’s example of serving the poor, countering the notion that charity is solely the domain of professional social workers. Francis made his rule to foster “evangelical perfection”, or in a similar term, holiness (436). His life testifies to the inability of Christians to embody holiness apart from personal, costly love for one’s neighbors, loving them and God more than one loves oneself. In *Francis of Assisi*, Howard Snyder winsomely tells the story of one Italian merchant’s son who became captivated by his Savior and whose life is a witness to the exceeding value of following Him completely.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> R. David Rightmire, *Sanctified Sanity: The Life and Teaching of Samuel Logan Brengle*, Revised Edition (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Society, 2014), 166.

# *Supper with the Shepherd King*

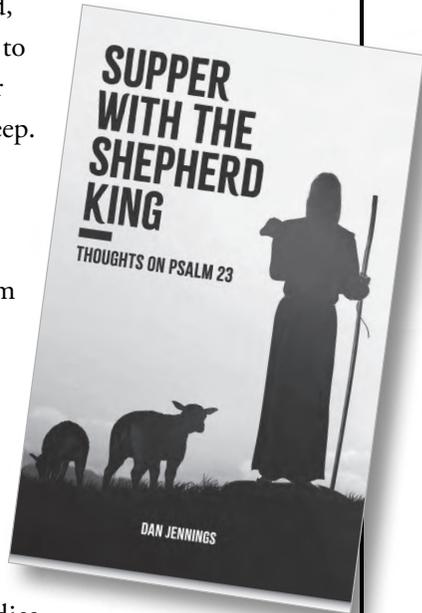
By Dan Jennings

Through the creativity of the Word, God reveals something of Himself to mankind in Psalm 23. He cares for creation as a shepherd cares for sheep.

This book helps to peel back the layers of the familiar words of this psalm and discover timeless truths about a God who loves those whom He has created. Readers will also gain an appreciation for the metaphors employed by King David.

Lt. Colonel Dan Jennings is the Secretary for Personnel in the USA Central Territory of The Salvation Army and has a Master of Arts in Theological Studies

from the Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. Jennings has a desire to unearth and discover the never-ending truths found in the Bible and finds tremendous fulfillment in leading, teaching, and developing others. *Supper with the Shepherd King* is his first book.



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# Book Review

Tennent, Timothy C. *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2020. 216 pages.

Reviewed by Jennifer Perine, Corps Officer, The Salvation Army  
Tustin Ranch, Tustin, CA.

Two foundational doctrines of the Christian faith are the creation of man and the fall of man, yet the 21<sup>st</sup> century church struggles to articulate a strong theology of the human body. In *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* Timothy Tennent (former president of Asbury Theological Seminary) skillfully builds such a theology outlining seven building blocks which guide the reader to an understanding of his relationship to God as a bearer of His image. These seven building blocks are encapsulated in three roles of the body: the created body, which contains the first two building blocks that our bodies are good and they point to Jesus; the related body, which covers the next three building blocks of marriage and the church, family as a reflection of the Trinity and the beauty of singleness and friendship; and the sacramental body, which holds the last two building blocks that our bodies are sacraments for the world and sacraments poured out for God. But Tennent does not just leave it there, he goes on to describe how this theology fits into our culture and gives practical advice for teaching and training within the church as part of a larger catechistic discipleship plan. In his own words “The theme of this book is that our bodies have a story to tell, and we want to listen to that story” (p. 7).

In Part 1: “Our Bodies are Talking to Us,” (comprising chapter 1-7) Tennent begins his construction of a theology of the body by laying the foundation stone squarely in the account of creation found in Genesis. He recognizes that in order

to have a theology of the body one must have a full understanding of creation and the created body. He describes three aspects of being made in the image of God and concludes that there are three capacities wherein the body reflects God: *a representative capacity*, *a relational capacity*, and *a moral capacity*. In his discussion of the created body, Tennent makes it clear that being created in the image of God is not limited to having characteristics like God, but actually being a representation, or image, of God in the world. He explains that the body, soul and spirit are united reflecting the triune nature of God.

The author maintains that “one of the dominant themes in this book is that the body is not merely a biological, functional entity, but a deeper spiritual, moral, and theological one” (p. 19). He recognizes from the creation account in Genesis that the created body is good and therefore trustworthy. This stands in contrast to the gnostic idea that the body is evil and is separate from the inner spirit which is good. Tennent argues that in today’s culture there has been a rise in neo-gnostic beliefs leading to distrust in the goodness of the body and the rise in gender dysphoria. He states: “This distrust has led to widespread gender confusion as people now use terms such as gender fluid, polygender, nonbinary, and transsexual to describe how they feel in contrast to what their body says” (p. 31).

Tennent moves from a discussion of the created body to a discussion of the related body in chapters 3-5, where he discusses marriage, family, and singleness as the next building blocks in the theology of the body. He describes these relationships as icons pointing to God, each revealing a different aspect of the nature of God -- the binary nature of marriage mirroring the relationship between God and man, the triune nature of the family (father, mother, children) pointing to the Trinity, and singleness pointing to the future resurrection where there will not be marriage.

From there he begins a discussion of the sacramental body in chapter 6-7. Tennent asserts that the sacraments of baptism and the communion were commanded by Christ which on the surface seems to put him at odds with the Salvationist reader. He demonstrates, however, that the acts of baptism and the taking of communion are not as important as living a sacramental life. The author echoes the ideas of General Albert Orsborn as he lays out the idea of the sacramental life as the seventh and final building block of a theology of the body – “my life must be Christ’s broken bread, my love his outpoured wine” (*The Songbook of The Salvation Army*, 2015, # 610).

As Tennent outlines his theology which has numerous themes and sub-themes, he carefully reminds the reader how they all work together to form the building

blocks of his theology. Each chapter closes with a conclusion reinforcing the ideas and connecting them to the next idea to be introduced.

After building his theology in part 1 of the book, Tennent applies his theology to our current culture in part 2. He speaks about the brokenness found in the objectified body common in our culture today through various media (chapter 8). Once again, he compares the Biblical concept of the whole body, soul, and spirit to the gnostic view of the body being separate from the spirit. He speaks about the advent of the digital self and the real danger this poses by separating the inner self from the body. The author refers to this as the “disincarnation of human personhood” (p. 132), which is a distortion of God’s plan for creation. He continues his discussion of the objectified body in addressing sexual brokenness (chapter 9). Here Tennent addresses the cultural debate regarding marriage and gender. He acknowledges that there are two controlling narratives in this debate, freedom of choice and civil rights, and asserts that these ideas are foundational for what is known as “ethical egoism,” the concept that anything which brings pleasure or happiness is good (p. 136). The author states that sexual wholeness is a key aspect to the theology of the body, thus he spends a good deal of time looking into the Old and New Testaments as witnesses to human sexuality the way God designed it.

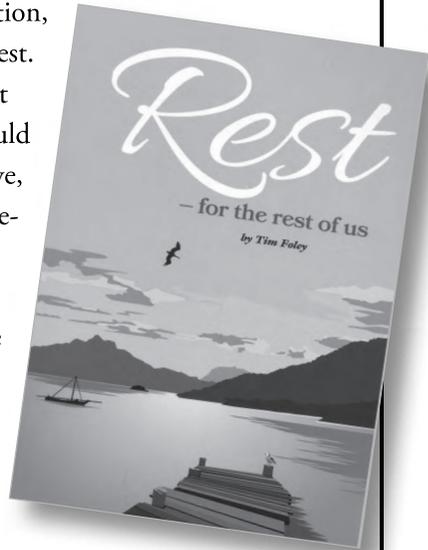
Part 3 of the book (comprising chapters 10-12) is a guide for the disciplined body. Tennent both encourages and challenges the church to be intentional in its teaching about the body. His attention to the cultural implications of such a theology is honest, as he maintains the truth of the Bible regarding the body, yet guides the church in how to present these teachings to a post-Christian culture. In chapter 10, “Bruised and Blessed by the Gospel,” the author identifies three problems the church needs to look at to allow its message to be heard: challenges to Biblical authority, irreparable harm/hate speech, and the loss of moral argument. In Chapter 11, “Discipling a New Generation,” he gives a very practical outline of what churches should teach in their discipleship classes. And in chapter 12, “Guidance for Christian Leaders,” the author explores areas that require additional pastoral care and guidance in our post-Christian world.

While Tennent’s theology of the body is not new, this book is timely for the church as there is a need to focus on a well-developed, articulated theology of the body. As the author aptly states, the body is “...designed for God’s revelatory and saving purpose. In short, the body makes the invisible mysteries of God’s nature and redemption manifest and visible as a tangible marker in the world” (p. 14). Thus, the message found in the human body is a message of hope and love, not chaos and confusion.

# *Rest—for the rest of us*

By Tim Foley

When life demands 24/7 attention, you may find it impossible to rest. We live in a fast-paced world. It doesn't slow down, so why should you? With an engaging narrative, this book by Tim Foley, an experienced scholar and teacher of spiritual formation, provides a refreshing and informative take on the subject of sabbath rest. It speaks to anyone looking to renew their sense of joy and find options for coping with life's pleasures.



Lt. Colonel Tim Foley has been a follower of Jesus Christ since 1978. He was commissioned as a Salvation Army officer in 1982. He currently serves as the Divisional Leader for Officer Development in the Northwest Division of the Western Territory. He holds a master's degree in theology and a doctorate degree in spiritual formation for ministry leaders.

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# Book Review

Middleton, J. Richard. *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*. Baker Academic, 2014. 332 pages.

Reviewed by Gordon S. Sparks, Curriculum Department, The Salvation Army College for Officer Training, Eastern Territory, Suffern, NY.

The author of *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, J. Richard Middleton, began his life in Christ in the Missionary Church, a holiness church in the Wesleyan tradition in Jamaica. Middleton is professor of Biblical Worldview and Exegesis at Northeastern Seminary and adjunct professor of Theology at Roberts Wesleyan College, both in Rochester, New York. He is a Wesleyan theologian and a member of the Free Methodist Church.

Middleton underwent a dramatic change in his worldview in college. He *had* believed that Christians would go to an otherworldly heaven when they die and that creation would be destroyed at Jesus' second coming. Then he experienced a stunning sunrise while climbing Jamaica's Blue Mountain Peak. After basking in reverent silence, his friend Junior who was with him on the climb remarked on the beauty and bemoaned that one day it would all be destroyed. Middleton "remember[s] the "dawning awareness: *I don't think it will be*" (12). He reasons, "It did not make sense to me that the beauty and wonder of earthly life, which I was coming to embrace joyfully as part of my growing Christian faith, could be disconnected from God's ultimate purposes of salvation" (12). Careful Scripture study confirmed his hunch and convinced him that Christians are bound for a new heaven and a new earth, according to Revelation 21-22 – a journey that is less about going to a new place and more about going to a restored place in a new time – from "this age" to "the age to come." Middleton's purpose in *A New Heaven and a New Earth* is

to reveal and explain the biblical foundations of his discovery – a perspective he calls “holistic eschatology.”

The Introduction (chapter 1) discloses this perspective as “The Bible’s Best Kept Secret.” The origin of the promising phrase “new heavens and a new earth” is Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, “which envisions a healed world with a redeemed community in rebuilt Jerusalem, where life is restored to flourishing and shalom after the devastation of the Babylonian exile” (24). Middleton explains the idea to have more than face value, not because it employs earthly-historical imagery to point to heavenly-ahistorical reality, but because it employs Israel- and Jerusalem- and Babylonian-specific imagery to reference creation-wide (cosmic!) reality. Middleton writes, “The this-worldly prophetic expectation in Isaiah is universalized to the entire cosmos and human society generally in late Second Temple Judaism and in the New Testament” (24).

Middleton calls God’s intention to redeem creation “The Bible’s Best Kept Secret” because it’s “typically unknown to most church members and even to many clergy” (24). He attributes this lack of awareness to two factors: first, Christians’ persistent exposure to worship lyrics, most of which anticipate a transcendent, immaterial heavenly future for believers (29); second, the substantial influence of the thought of the Greek philosopher Plato on the theology of the church fathers -- which taught that at death the person shed the body and proceeded through existence as an immortal soul -- and the continuing influence of that thinking among contemporary Christians.

Middleton develops his case for holistic eschatology in five parts. Part 1: “From Creation to Eschaton” contains chapters 2 and 3: “Why Are We Here? Being Human as Sacred Calling” and “The Plot of the Biblical Story.” Chapter 2 focuses on humanity’s holy calling “to be God’s image in the world” and to develop culture, a task reserved for kings in the non-Israelite ancient world (45), and the compromising effect of sin on that calling (52). Chapter 3 sketches the biblical storyline to show “the holistic and this-worldly” intent of God’s creation project, from Genesis to Revelation (58).

Part 2: “Holistic Salvation in the Old Testament” contains chapters 4, 5, and 6: “The Exodus as Paradigm of Salvation,” “Earthly Flourishing in Law, Wisdom, and Prophecy,” and “The Coming of God in Judgment and Salvation.” In chapter 4, Middleton explains that a biblical understanding of salvation comprises two distinguishable but inseparable healing works of God: *deliverance* from the penalty of sin and resultant *restoration* of right relationship with God (79); *deliverance*

from any situation that hinders human flourishing and *restoration* to wholeness (79). Middleton shows how the exodus and entrance into the Promised Land on the part of God's people is a model of this biblically holistic understanding of salvation (79). Chapter 5 shows how law, wisdom, and prophetic literature also reveal the biblical vision of salvation as earthly flourishing: Law and wisdom instruct us how to live "in harmony with God's original purposes for life" (98); and the prophets urge God's people to live righteously and justly to further "the interhuman flourishing that God desires" (103). Chapter 6 teaches that the coming of God spells the destruction of sin and evil, *not* the destruction of the creation. Yahweh comes "to judge evil and restore justice on earth." That's good news! (109-110). With that restoration, all of God's redeemed creatures (human and non-human) will flourish as God intends. God's salvation will "be as wide as creation itself" (128)

Part 3: "The New Testament's Vision of Cosmic Renewal" contains chapters 7 and 8: "Resurrection and the Restoration of Rule" and "The Redemption of All Things." Chapter 7 explains that since resurrection is the restoration of healthy humanity, it therefore entails the fulfillment of the image-bearers' noble royal work of caring for creation – nature and culture. Resurrection and fulfillment of the cultural mandate are inseparable (154). Chapter 8 continues making the case for "a renewed earthly creation versus an immaterial heaven as the eternal dwelling of the righteous" (155) by summarizing key passages and showing the new creation to be God's dwelling place (170) and the context for the renewal of the cultural mandate, where cultural and national diversity continue per Revelation 21:24 (173-174). Middleton sees this future as a calling to the church *now* to embody the Spirit-powered life and practice of that anticipated flourishing as a social alternative to and for the death and violence-cursed world God so loves (175).

Part 4: "Problem Texts for Holistic Eschatology" contains chapters 9 and 10: "Cosmic Destruction at Christ's Return" and "The Role of Heaven in Biblical Eschatology." Chapter 9 provides exegetically thoughtful alternate explanations of imagery and passages that we usually think teach cosmic destruction. Middleton affirms the biblical certainty and logic of radical purging and transformation of persons and the cosmos, not, however, annihilation and replacement. He writes, "The point is that salvation consists in the rescue and transformation of the world that God so loves (John 3:16)" (206). Chapter 10 continues a careful alternate reading of biblical passages that *seem* to contradict holistic eschatology, exploring three kinds of texts that have led many to believe heaven to be the eternal dwelling of the redeemed: first, texts that have been understood to identify heaven as superior

to earth and, therefore, the hoped-for destination when Christ returns; second, texts that have been understood to support the idea of the rapture of the church; and third, texts that have been understood to promise heaven as a place of interim or intermediate dwelling between death and resurrection (211-212).

Part 5: “The Ethics of the Kingdom” contains chapters 11 and 12: “The Good News at Nazareth” and “The Challenge of the Kingdom.” Chapter 11 asks the question, “So what?” of holistic eschatology. To this point in the book, Middleton has waded into these waters some; however, implications are his focus in this chapter, and he proceeds with characteristic care to examine Jesus’ teaching at the start of his ministry recorded in Luke 4:16-30, treating it as a case study for kingdom ethics. Middleton says that in this announcement, “Jesus is addressing the entire complex situation of his hearers, which includes both their inner bondage (which is why he called people to repent) and their oppressive external situation” (261). Middleton concludes, “The good news of the kingdom is nothing less than the healing (literally, the establishing) of the world (*tikkûn ‘ôlām*), in which we are all invited to participate” (262). Chapter 12 is entitled “The Challenge of the Kingdom” – a fitting title for the final chapter of a stirring *challenging* book. Middleton explains: “The good news of the kingdom can be grasped only through a radical challenge that requires a fundamental reorientation of life” (263). The final sentence of the chapter lays out the parameters of that reorientation: “The overall thrust of the biblical canon (from creation to eschaton) unveils for us – if we have eyes to see – a vision of the kingdom of God that is both applicable to every dimension of earthly life and open to the entire human family. Let us not reduce the gospel of the kingdom to anything less” (282).

Middleton includes an appendix: “Whatever Happened to the New Earth?” The author writes, “Only rarely prior to the twentieth century do we find Christian theologians explicitly addressing the eschatological renewal of the earth” (284). The later John Wesley is one. Contemporary proponents include New Testament scholar, N.T. Wright; Wesleyan theologian, Howard A. Snyder; Editor-in-Chief at *Christianity Today*, Russell D. Moore; former Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, Tim Keller; and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (309-312).

This review began by reporting Middleton’s shift in worldview. He had an encounter of a *conflicted* Wesleyan quadrilateral sort -- “conflicted” because though reason and experience supported the shift, *tradition* – the history of interpretation – did not. This is the most perplexing matter regarding Middleton’s conclusions: the

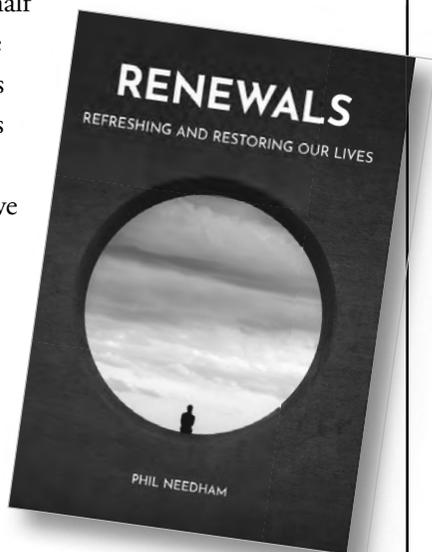
tradition of classic Christianity seems to be in favor of an otherworldly heavenly destiny for believers rather than that of holistic eschatology. Should we, therefore, discount the teaching or reconsider the authority the quadrilateral hermeneutic gives to tradition in this case? Granted the importance of the history of interpretation, careful study of scripture must hold sway. Middleton's case is strong, convincing, and catalyzing for holistic salvation advance.

# *Renewals*

By Phil Needham

*Renewals* launches the second half of the Christian Year that some churches call Trinity and others call Common Time. It explores how the Trinity teaches us to relate to all those with whom we have a close or distant relationship. All our relationships are covenantal: our personal relationships, our church relationships, and our relationships with the world. They call for constant renewal.

Phil Needham was a retired Salvation Army officer living in Atlanta who shared a vision of The Salvation Army as a missional people of God who are called by Christ to follow Him into the world, be His credible disciples, and share His compassion with the excluded. Needham was Promoted to Glory in 2023 and is the author of *Christ at the Door* and *Easter People*. *Renewals* is the fourth in his series of books of meditations based on the Christian Year.



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# Book Review

Kapic, Kelly M. *You're Only Human: How Your Limits Reflect God's Design and Why That's Good News*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2022. 261 pages.

Reviewed by Robert Alan Watson, Corps Officer, The Salvation Army,  
Manhattan Citadel, New York, NY.

At first glance, this title might suggest to Wesleyan readers a pessimistic message about human transformation, but Christians from every stream will discover here a glorious and disarmingly practical vision of renewed creatures in Christ who flourish in holy love, fully present to God and one another.

Kelly Kapic is troubled about a church that is uneasy about being human and seems to think of itself as God, so he serves up this feast of theological anthropology for unhurried savoring. His scholarship is prodigious and accessible and his voice is tender and winsome as he probes the goodness and joy of being finite, limited creatures and discerns critical distinctions between our good finitude and our disorderly sinfulness. He leads us to contemplate anew, with burning hearts, a wide range of Scriptures in a sort of Emmaus Road journey, and he mediates transformative dialogue with treasured sages in philosophy, ancient Christianity, monastic and rabbinic wisdom, Catholic and Orthodox along with Protestant spiritualities and theologies, non-Western contexts, and contemporary psychology and sociology – all toward a sounder doctrine of creation. At several points, he draws from the writing of John Owen, a Puritan Non-Conformist leader during the 17<sup>th</sup>-century English Reformation, whom John Wesley admired and quoted, and whose work on the Holy Spirit, sanctification and the Trinity needs wider rediscovery in this time.

We learn that this book is ladled out of the slow brew of twenty years of experience, deep relationships and growth – most of his teaching tenure at Covenant

College, and a long pilgrimage prolific in speaking and other writing but profoundly marked by the suffering of his wife through sickness. This odyssey helped birth *You're Only Human*, producing savory fare for measured, appreciative digestion.

Kapic devotes the first half of this book to a sobering (and loosing) examination of particularity and limits, digging into pressing questions around doing enough, the complexities of sin and God's liberating love, the limits of our bodies, the importance of physical touch, and the formation of identity. The second half unpacks healthy dependence, Kapic's picture of the path of flourishing in our true selves as creatures. Here he opens up profound conversation around humility, time and presence, God's slow pace in transforming us and the primacy of communion, the beauty of the church and the centrality in local congregations of life together, and life-giving practices for dwelling within our finitude. This section serves as a fresh and robust call to faith, to the experience of new creation, to life in the presence and fear of the Lord, and to deep sighs of *shalom*. Each chapter begins with a powerful, concise articulation of the teaching that follows, providing clear landmarks for sometimes lush terrain and circling back in contemplation. Current issues in culture are often engaged.

Kapic levels a prophetic word particularly to Western evangelicalism, aimed at shaking it out of its idolatrous affair with the pagan gods of productivity, efficiency, control, predictability, time management and self-improvement. He calls out a syncretistic church that is desperate to break free of all limits and do and be everything, and yet is lacking in essentials like wrestling prayer and confession. He exposes the contradictions and distortions in Christology, Trinitarian thinking, hamartiology and soteriology – a famine of hearing the words of the Lord and a loss of intimacy with God – that both inflame and are compromised by such seductions. He unmask harmful patterns in Christian subcultures and the pastoral fallout entailed in the myth of human infinitude. To an often sputtering and stuttering post-pandemic church, he proclaims the Creator as Redeemer and Sanctifier, and he recommends the easy yoke of Jesus Christ, our paradigm of healthy dependence who perfectly reflects God's good creation design of human finitude. These meditations on the gospel of new creation, which speak to issues of human experience rarely addressed in other Christian writing, are vital to the restoration of the North American church and can be fruitful for local communities and denominational systems seeking to grow up with Jesus and desiring a freer and fervent holiness adventure together.

While Kapic writes from his own location within the Reformed tradition, he addresses the whole church and whole persons. His work intermingles the thought

of people like Curt Thompson (cited by the author) whose Christ-centered research on shame, joy and creativity fuses interpersonal neurobiology and anthropology. Or Pete Scazzero (also cited) who has shown the deep connection between spiritual maturity and emotional health. Or even Richard Rohr whose model of the descending wisdom journey of the “holy fool” intersects with Kacic’s plea to embrace our limits. Such recent quests in theological anthropology awaken deep yearnings within us to become our true selves and can muster the gifts of various Christian histories in life-giving ways.

Wesleyan readers may want to engage rigorously with Kacic’s interpretation of Romans 7:15 as describing the normal Christian life, but a careful read yields helpful insights on sin and an emphasis on the saint’s healing and freedom from the tyranny of sin, death and the devil. Wesleyans will resonate with his articulation of holiness as new creation, his exploration of the image of God, and his central theme that humans are made for communion. And they will relish synthesizing Kacic’s four daily practices with Wesley’s means of grace.

Salvationists need to grapple with some key concerns raised in the book. Kacic’s inquiry into humility, for instance, nourished by teachings of Aquinas, Calvin, Luther and the apostle James, could inject a “greatness of soul” into our service, revolutionize corps relationships and reshape organizational leadership. Or Kacic’s frequent reference to our intended communion with the earth with little elaboration may invite further expansion on work initiated by Australian Salvationists in this area and applications in our many camp settings. However, three matters are especially striking.

First, Kacic warns against busyness. The founder’s message, “That and better will do!”, resounds across generations and leaves us heavy laden with burdens. Over-commitment, frenzied schedules, perpetual device notifications, and guilt we aren’t doing more all war against the spiritual formation we now claim to value. The pressure to be trans-human keeps us from having ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. It forfeits wisdom, prevents presence with people, hinders worship and growth, and leaves souls forlorn. It increases anxiety and results in officer burnout, infirmity and resignation. It destroys families. Saying “no” can be true self-denial, says the author. We need to embrace healthier rhythms of hard work and Sabbath rest and approach sleep as a spiritual discipline, as suggested here. Are we too busy to meaningfully ponder our busyness?

Second, while we strategize audaciously, rush to anoint the immature, reward performance and seek extraordinary spiritual experiences, God lingers and takes

much longer to grow his saints, moving at the relaxed pace of love, revealing his beauty and wonder through “slow and gentle disciples” (155). The cultivation of communion and the fruit of the Spirit is lifelong. How might we mature to embody the patience of God as an organization and put away childish things, like prioritizing efficient management behind a laptop over disciplines of messy soul friendship and mutual accountability, or a Corps Council charging into big projects without the labor of learning and practicing discernment?

Third, our Lord invites us to behold the beauty of the Body of Christ and to invest in life together as much as we have poured our energies into programs. A territory or division is only as strong as its local soldiers are banded together in holy communion, multi-sensory and body-affirming worship and fellowship marked, Kopic hopes, by a revival of the holy kiss and footwashing. This is surely God’s moment for his people to creatively reincorporate the simple, powerful practices for life together embedded in our Methodist roots. Nothing less will overcome and cure the chaos of our culture.

Kopic’s acknowledgments and endnotes disclose a man who impressively models the healthy dependence he teaches. He is altogether a human being. And that is good news!



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