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*A Publication of The Salvation Army*

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**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.

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Contributions related to the mission of the journal will be encouraged, and at times there will be a general call for papers related to specific subjects. The Salvation Army is not responsible for every view which may be expressed in this journal. Manuscripts should be approximately 12-15 pages, including endnotes. Please submit the following: 1) three hard copies of the manuscript with the author's name (with rank and appointment if an officer) on the cover page only. This ensures objectivity during the evaluation process. Only the manuscript without the author's name will be evaluated. The title of the article should appear at the top of the first page of the text and the manuscript should utilize *Word & Deed* endnote guidelines. All Bible references should be from the New International Version. If another version is used throughout the article, please indicate the version in the first textual reference only. If multiple versions are used, please indicate the version each time it changes; 2) a copy on a 3 1/2 inch floppy disk, using Microsoft Word format; 3) a 100-word abstract of the article for use at the discretion of the editor (e.g., on The Salvation Army's web page or in advertisements about the journal). Please note that neither the hard copies nor the disk will be returned to the author and that all manuscripts are subject to editorial review. Once articles have been selected for inclusion, the deadlines for submitting final material for the journal are March 1 for the spring issues and September 1 for the fall issues. A style sheet is available upon request.

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# Word & Deed

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## Guest Editorial

In this issue we feature the second of three sets of papers that were originally presented at the International Theology and Ethics Symposium in Winnipeg, Canada on May 24–27, 2001. (The first set was published in the Fall 2001 issue of *Word & Deed*, and the final set will be published in the Fall 2002 issue.) The three-way division mirrors the organizing principle of the Symposium, which was to indicate ways in which Trinitarian faith impacts the Church and contemporary society. The papers in this issue relate to the doctrine of the eternal Son, incarnate in Jesus, Savior, risen and returning Lord.

One point in the published rationale for the Symposium was that “the Army has a contribution to make to theological/ethical dialogue in the Church, especially with respect to the inclusive gospel, a mission-based ecclesiology, the partnership of evangelism and social action/service, the call to holiness and high moral principles and sacramental living, equality in ministry.” The papers included in this issue of *Word & Deed* address these matters in interesting and sometimes provocative ways.

In “Theology of God the Son,” Lars Lydholm, a very able Danish Salvationist theologian, undertakes the task of articulating a Christology for our times. The tension inherent in that task runs through his paper—the tension, that is, of a theology that adequately addresses the situation of twenty-first century humanity

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(as Christologies of earlier eras addressed their situation) without being subservient to or simply a projection of the needs of our times.

"It has been customary," he writes, "to label Christology as either Christology 'from above' or 'from below.'" The formulation of Chalcedon and of much traditional language of the Church has leaned toward Christology "from above." But in our times "the point of departure for Christology must be a Christology from below—from the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth." One reason for this is that we live in a pluralist world now, and the humanity of Jesus is a point at which Christian theology and Christian believers can engage people of other theologies and belief systems. The truth revealed in Jesus is that in His full humanity we find His divinity; or, as Lydholm says, quoting Leonardo Boff, "Only a God could be so human!"

Another of Lydholm's interesting contentions with which readers will want to engage concerns Salvation Army sacramental theology. Teaching about "sacramental living" comes in for criticism as placing too much emphasis on human agency and human striving and too little emphasis on God's gracious agency. (The teaching about sacraments in other parts of the Church comes in for similar criticism.) Lydholm argues that there is really only one primordial sacrament—Jesus Christ Himself. "The Salvation Army's theology can be seen as an attempt to formulate a 'primordial-sacrament' theology that wants to bear witness to the fact that the grace of God also reaches people 'outside' the two traditional sacramental signs [i.e., baptism and eucharist]." Lydholm's ideas stimulated lively discussion among those gathered for the Symposium, and discussing whether he has propounded an accurate and helpful sacramental theology will likely have a similar effect on many readers.

Major Karen Shakespeare's "Jesus the Son in a Pluralistic World" offers a reading of contemporary postmodern culture and posits possible "strategies" for the Church as it lives in this culture. Playing with the military metaphor of The Salvation Army, she describes the four options as "retreat, aggression, surrender and creative peace making."

As she says, pluralism is not an entirely new problem for the Church, since Jesus and the early Church lived at the intersection of many faiths, languages, political structures, and so on. Even so, it is not just the "same old, same old" that faces the Church today. The Church today differs from the primitive church in

that it lives on the other side of Christendom. For centuries the Church held official power in most of the West, and where it did not hold official power (as in the United States) it nonetheless was a major determinant of culture. For better or worse, that day is past. In that respect the Church of the twenty-first century may again resemble the Church of the first century; but the first-century Church knew what it was to live as one minority among many whereas this is a new reality for the twenty-first century Church, and it is a reality for which the Church may be ill prepared.

The pluralism of the twenty-first century also differs from the pluralism of the first century. Shakespeare offers readers a helpful analysis of pluralism's current manifestation. There are, as she points out, ontological, epistemological and moral/political dimensions to it. Ontologically, pluralism challenges the belief of modernity that there is an objective reality: in the field of ethics, for instance, moral realism has been supplanted by moral relativism. Epistemologically, pluralism denies the culture-independent rationality that was a centerpiece of modernity. In its place, as Shakespeare observes, "contemporary understanding maintains that truth is not simply 'true,' but true within a plausibility structure." As for morality and politics, postmodern pluralism prizes tolerance and decentralization. "A fundamental suspicion of the values of modernity has led to a belief that any truth which aspires to universal validity immediately becomes oppressive and dominating."

How can Christianity engage with this sort of pluralism? In some instances, by *accommodating and learning*. Shakespeare intimates that The Salvation Army could nurture the aptitude it has shown through its history to adapt to local customs (a quite postmodern aptitude), and do away with its old uniform centralized governance (a rather "modern" set of structures) in favor of the postmodern model of the "global network." Pluralism cannot always be accommodated; however, Shakespeare rules out the possibility of Christianity's resigning its doctrines, central among which is that "Jesus the Son has universal relevance and that He embodies and reveals in a unique way the truth of God." In the mode of creative peacemakers, Christianity ought to seek ways to voice its non-pluralistic convictions in the contemporary marketplace of worldviews. (Readers interested in more on the subject are encouraged to read evangelical sociologist David Lyon's *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times*, reviewed in this issue

by James Pedlar of Queen's University.)

One of the provocative ideas Shakespeare advances is that Christians in the contemporary West embrace the opportunity "to see evidences of the grace of God in the faithful adherents of other faith communities." And that, on the social front, "for the sake of humanity, we may need to work alongside those with different values from our own."

Major Edwin Okorougo, the Nigerian theologian who responded to Major Shakespeare's paper at the Symposium, wondered whether the challenges and the opportunities facing the Church are rather different outside the post-modern West. Inter-religious dialogue, for instance, may be positive and healthy in a West whose majority give little credence to any religious perspectives, but not so in Okorougo's Africa where religions are very much alive, and where many would be only too happy to find Christians willing to "domesticate the Christian faith by reformulating its major doctrinal schemes to relate to the African experience." There is fertile ground here for further research.

Another perspective on the African scene is contained in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's *No Future without Forgiveness*, which is reviewed in this issue by Daniel Diakanwa. As Diakanwa notes, one of Tutu's objectives in the book is to use the South African experience as a way into understanding the way to reconciliation anywhere on the globe. That same subject figures prominently in the theology of Miroslav Volf, the keynote speaker for the International Theology and Ethics Symposium. I have included my notes of his address to the Symposium as an inducement to readers who are unfamiliar with his published theology to get ahold of it and probe it for themselves.

Colonel Phil Needham's contribution to the Symposium was another interesting—and rather dark—reading of contemporary culture that he titled "Kingdom of the Risen Lord in a World Searching for a Future." Those who are familiar with the already-sizable body of Salvationist theology to have come from Needham may want to compare this paper with that other work. The themes of the Church, and the Church on the move, the Church in mission are here, but one might find the shading somewhat more somber.

The burden of the paper is to elaborate on the need for, and the nature and ethics of, hope in a time that is characterized by the absence of God. "The experience of God's presence does occur today. But it is experienced, it seems, by a

small minority." When Needham says this, he means it to apply to Christians as much as to the world at large. Jesus Christ is risen and in His resurrection He has launched His Kingdom. It is "well on its way ... history is moving toward the Kingdom's consummation." But Christ is ascended and not with us in the same way. The temptation that descends on the Church is to look back to its beginnings in Christ's resurrection or ahead to its consummation in Christ's return and fail to give witness to Christ's presence here and now. "The Church has not been immune to the decline of transcendence and hope. Increasingly it has paid more attention to itself as a social construct and less to itself as a radical Kingdom community."

The Church cannot, and ought not to try to, live as if Christ were already returned in glory, but it ought to live in the relentless hope of that return. If He has been raised, so too shall we be (1 Cor. 15). Living that belief means living hopefully. Readers will want to probe and appropriate the elaboration of hopeful living that Needham gives us. Included in his elaboration is the idea that living the Christian hope means living "expecting miracle," and he ties this thought closely to an interpretation of Salvationist sacramental theology. "The true miracles are the sacramental moments where the bread and wine of the common life become the media of transcendence ... A holy person is one who sees the hidden miracles and observes the sacraments of God at work in the world and in people's lives ... This is the reason Salvationists are pan-sacramentalists. This is the reason they pursue worldly holiness." (Is this, one wonders, congruent with Lydholm's theology of sacrament or not? And how do their theologies compare with that of Volf, who tries to draw the connections between sacraments and the work of holiness?)

Christian ethics has long taught that hope is a moral virtue. Needham adds to our understanding of why this should be so. Despite the fact that ethics sometimes presents the virtues as static (in Aristotle's terms, a state of character), they really are not any more static than life itself. Human life is narrative, evolving, surprising, and risky. Hope is an attribute that equips us for the journey. By its very nature, hope highlights the not-yet-completeness of things.

What is true of hope in the field of ethics is equally true of it in theology. The papers presented in this collection are worthy additions to the body of Salvationist theology, but they do not complete the task. Their authors would not

pretend that they did. Rather they stand as hopeful invitations to others to join in and take us further.

JER

# Theology of God the Son

*Lars Lydholm*

Only a God could be so human! Jesus the man who is God.

Christology stands at the center of Christian theology. If theology is “talk about God—God talk,” then Christology is what gives this “God talk” its identity as Christian. There is no Christian “talking” about God without Christology. In this sense Christology is not only a branch of theology. In a strict sense Christology is Theology and Theology is Christology!

One can only speak truthfully about God when one speaks in accordance with Jesus of Nazareth, what He said about God, and what God said in and through His life, death and resurrection.

Christology and thereby a “Theology of God the Son” is the investigation into the mystery of what was said in and through Jesus Christ. What was His significance? Or to put it in Bonhoeffer’s words: “Who is Jesus Christ for us today?”

Many people would define Christology as the answer given to the question in Mark 8:27, “Who do men say that I am?” In some ways one could hold that the entire New Testament is an answer to that basic question!

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## Classical Christology

Classical Christology found its most famous expression in the formula from Chalcedon (451). The council of Chalcedon brought the Christological conflicts of the past centuries to a preliminary conclusion, and the formula from this council remains normative for most denominations even today.

Chalcedonense states the *vere deus et vere homo* aspect of Christology. Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. The *homoousios* (of the same being) from Nicaenum–Constantinopolitanum is not only stated about the relationship with the Father, but He is also *homoousios* with us in our humanity. In other words, He is “like us in all things apart from sin.”

In the second paragraph follows the famous two–nature doctrine that the “one and the same Christ” is to be acknowledged in two natures (*en duo physisin*). He is two natures in one person, one subsistence (*hypostasis*). The natures are to be conceived as without confusion, without change, without division and without separation in the one Christ.

One important thing to notice when reading the formula from Chalcedon is that it is not only Christology but also soteriology. This is underlined at the end of the first paragraph, where it says that He was born “for us and for our salvation.” It does not only state that Christ is truly God and truly man, but He was born for us and for our salvation. Christology and soteriology are linked closely together.

The formula from Chalcedon formulates Christology in Greek philosophical terminology like *hypostasis*, *physis* and *ousia*, and this is a form of terminology which has moved quite far from New Testament terminology. But the two–nature doctrine is in its essence an attempt to construct a terminology whereby one can speak of the incarnation. But today the formula of Chalcedon is met with a lot of criticism.

It is a Christology which is formulated in ontological, static and abstract categories—categories that have lost their meaning today. Jesus Christ is defined under the ontological category of “nature,” which leaves very little room for His history, what He said and did—in other words His life, and some would say His humanity. Of course this is in some ways an anachronism. It is a reflection of the fact that our conception of what a person is has changed. We do not define “per-

son” in the static category of “being” or “nature.” We define person in dynamic historical categories. A person is one who acts and speaks.

It is also true of Chalcedonense that we hear very little positively of how we should understand the formula of two natures in one subsistence. We hear negatively that they should not be mixed, changed, divided or separated. One can say that the formula of Chalcedon explains that God and man were in Jesus Christ, but not really how they were. In that way one could hold that Chalcedonense is a soteriological and doxological statement.

In many ways Chalcedonense is a Christology from “above.” The terminology used leaves very little room for an understanding of the humanity of Christ. I remember Jon Sobrino putting it in the words of Van Buren, “He was like us, but not really one of us.” If this is true, it goes against the very intention of Chalcedon, and I think it is put too harshly. But it is certainly true that it does tend to be a Christology from above. Some would say that when the formula states that Christ is “like us in all things apart from sin,” then Christ is not really *one of us*—really human. On the contrary I would say that with this Jesus Christ is precisely the true human being. He is without sin. He is exactly what we should have been, but are not. In this way Jesus Christ shows us the true humanity God intended.

It is also true of Chalcedonense that in some ways it explains mystery with mystery. When Jesus Christ is confessed as truly God and truly man, it is somehow conceived that we already know what is truly God and truly man, when in fact the opposite is the case. It is precisely in and through Jesus Christ that we know and see who and what truly God and truly man means for us.

Theologically, I think the most important objection to Chalcedonense is the fact that it applied the same term “nature” both to designate divine and human in Jesus Christ. One cannot speak of divine nature and human nature as if they were on the same plane or level. This was already Schleiermacher’s objection to classical Christology.

In spite of all the criticism, there are some important points to take with us in our further exploration of Christology. The council of Chalcedon expressed the basic criteria of all Christology. We must at the same time hold that the one and the same Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. For those who criticize the formula for diminishing the humanity of Christ, it is important to notice that it is

precisely Chalcedonense that in contrast to Nicaenum (NC) use the term *homoousios* not only about the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Father, but also about His relationship to us. He is also *homoousios* with us in our humanity. This is a very strong statement.

One could say that Chalcedonense is a way of formulating the inescapable paradox of Christology—Jesus Christ as *vere deus et vere homo*. But the critique has shown that it has not said all there is to say. It formulates mystery and gives the coordinates for the further discussion, but dogmas are not eternal truths in themselves. In the words of the great Catholic theologian Karl Rahner:

The clearest formulations, the most sanctified formulas, the classic condensations of the centuries—long work of the Church in prayer, reflection and struggle concerning God's mysteries; all these derive their life from the fact that they are not end but beginning, not goals but means, truths which open the way to the ever greater Truth.<sup>1</sup>

## Christology in Modernity—Christology and History

The Reformation brought about great changes in the Church and in theology, but classical Christology was not really contested. There was a great Christological concentration in Luther's theology (*Solus Christus*), but it is a classical Chalcedonian Christology—as is also seen in *Confessio Augustana* (art. 3 Melanchton).

A major change and challenge for Christology (and theology) came with the Enlightenment. G.E. Lessing in his famous text, *Über den beweis des Geistes und der kraft*, formulated the famous words about “the great ugly ditch” of history that separates us from Jesus: “If no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated by means of historical truths. That is: the accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.”

Lessing's distinction between accidental truths of history and necessary truths of reason and his basic argument that we cannot logically move from one class of truths to the other has been a standing challenge for all serious theological work and thinking ever after.

It was also Lessing who published the writings of Reimarus. Reimarus was

very critical of the way in which the Church and official theology pictured Jesus Christ. He saw a great gulf between the Christ of faith and the real historical Jesus. Reimarus' writings together with others gave birth to all the different methods we call historical-critical methods. Ever since then the relationship between history and Christology has been controversial.

The Enlightenment gave birth to the quest for the historical Jesus. The *Leben-Jesu* movement tried to find the self-consciousness of Jesus. But Albert Schweitzer, at the beginning of the last century, showed the failure of this movement. Rudolf Bultmann and his followers concluded from all this that the historical Jesus was of no importance to theology. It was the Christ of faith—Christ preached—that mattered. In Bultmann's theology there was a move away from history. But a new quest for the historical Jesus began, and now we are in the midst of what is called the third quest for the historical Jesus. But the basic question remains. How important is the historical aspect of Christology? What is the relationship between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith?

The New Testament is written in the light of the resurrection. That means that we do not have direct access to the historical Jesus. The gospels are not historical biographies. They are written in "retrospect"—on the other side of the resurrection. They are theological interpretive accounts that want to proclaim the resurrected Jesus Christ as Lord. It means that it is extremely difficult to separate the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith.

But does this mean that Christology can just move away from the historical Jesus? Is Bultmann right when he says that it is only *das Dass* and not *das Was* (that Jesus lived, not what He said and did), that is important for theology? Is it only the *kerygma*—the Christ preached that is of importance?

No! Here the incarnation and the humanity of Jesus are reduced to a minimum. Christology opens itself to all kinds of criticism. If we do away with the historical Jesus, what is then the basis for Christology? Christology will be left open to all kinds of manipulation. Theologically the incarnation means that we must take the historical Jesus seriously. Christology must start from Jesus of Nazareth.

Some of the criticism directed at Christology and the Church follow this line. In the synoptic gospels Jesus does not so much proclaim Himself as He proclaims the Kingdom of God. But the Church ended up proclaiming Him as Lord and

Savior. The Proclaimer became the proclaimed! “Jesus preached the Kingdom of God—instead came the Church,” as some would put it! I think it is part of any serious Christology today to try and show that this movement from the Proclaimer to the proclaimed is not a manipulation by the early church. But this can only be shown if we take the continuity in Christology seriously.

There is continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. He who died and was buried is the same as the One who resurrected. There is continuity between the crucified and the resurrected. The continuity means that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus must be kept together. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ should be seen in the light of His life and His message. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God. That proclamation brought Him to the cross, but He lived that proclamation right upon the cross. The resurrection is basically the verification that Jesus’ life and message was and is God’s own life and message! Christology must not be separated from the life and message of Jesus Christ. Only that way can we justify the move from the Proclaimer to the proclaimed.

## Christology and Soteriology

Christology and soteriology are closely interrelated, as I pointed out earlier. Melancton said: “Who Jesus is becomes known in His saving action.” Modern protestant Christology since Schleiermacher has maintained this view. But there is a danger inherent, if we treat Christology as a function of soteriology. There is the danger that Christology will be constructed out of soteriological interests. When Bultmann and his followers say that the issue is not Jesus Himself, the historical Jesus, but only His significance for us, then there is a danger. No one has seen this as well as Wolfhart Pannenberg, when he writes:

Jesus possesses significance “for us” only to the extent that this significance is inherent in Himself, in His history, and in His person constituted by this history. Only when this can be shown may we be sure that we are not merely attaching our questions, wishes and thoughts to His figure ... Soteriology must follow from Christology, not vice versa. Otherwise, faith in salvation itself loses any real foundation ... Christology must start from Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>2</sup>

If we do away with history and treat Christology as a function of soteriology,

we basically open ourselves to the critique of Ludwig Feuerbach, who claimed that religion is projection. According to Feuerbach, man was not created in the image of God. On the contrary we create God in the image of us—our hopes and our wishes.

## Christology “From Above” or “From Below”

At least from the 1970s and forward it has been customary to label Christology either as Christology “from above” or Christology “from below.” These labels are not entirely satisfactory because in the end they have to come together in any genuine Christology. A Christology that only operates “from below” dissolves itself and ends up being just a Jesuology. A Christology that only operates “from above” will ultimately be docetic. Christology “from below” is only meaningful if it also contains a Christology “from above.” I think that the resurrection is really the place these two Christological paths meet.

But having said that, I think that the point of departure for Christology must be a Christology from below—from the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. In much traditional language of the Church and of theology I find a “docetic” tendency. Jesus Christ is depicted in a way more in terms of a “super-human” than the “true” human.

We are human beings; we cannot speak from the standpoint of God. We must begin with the historical man Jesus of Nazareth and try to work out how it could be that in the end the disciples and the first Christians confessed Him to be Lord and Savior.

Theologically the divinity of Jesus and the incarnation must be at the center, but methodologically they cannot be our point of departure.

Most of the political theologies take their point of departure in a Christology from below. Usually the ethic of Jesus and the following of Him (in German, *nachfolge*) are made normative. But some of them have a serious deficiency in that they will only speak in terms of the humanity of Jesus. Any talk of divinity and of God is dismissed. Christology is reduced to Jesuology. But then there is a problem with the normativity. Why should one follow Jesus? Why not follow somebody else? Jesus can fascinate like so many others in the history of mankind. But such a fascination cannot imply an obligation or normativity. If one

literally, and in a proper sense, wants to make the demand for the ethic of Jesus—the following of Him—then one has to speak Christologically. One has to be able to speak of Jesus Christ, both as truly God and truly human, or in other words both “from below” and “from above.”

## The Crucified God

In John 1:18 we read, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.”

We believe that in Jesus Christ, we see God. There is a real revelation. The Christian faith postulates a real *novum*, but do we take the radicalism in this confession seriously enough? The cross is the symbol of Christianity. But what does the cross signify? What does it mean for our understanding of and belief in God?

I think that the radicalism and the scandal of the cross too often are forgotten. Too often, we make the cross into a beautiful ecclesiastical symbol. We forget that Jesus was not crucified between two candles on an altar, but between two criminals on a hilltop outside the city!

The Jesus who cried out to God on the cross, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”, we Christians confess as Lord and Savior. What does that mean for our conception of God?

The cross revolutionizes our concept of God. No one has stated this as clearly as Jürgen Moltmann in his famous book *The Crucified God*: “Either Jesus who was abandoned by God is the end of all theology or He is the beginning of a specifically Christian, and therefore critical and liberating, theology and life.”<sup>3</sup> And Moltmann goes on:

In spite of all the “roses” which the needs of religion and theological interpretation have draped round the cross, the cross is the really irreligious thing in Christian faith. It is the suffering of God in Christ, rejected and killed in the absence of God, which qualifies Christian faith as faith, and as something different from the projection of man’s desire . . . For He who was crucified represents the fundamental and total crucifixion of all religion.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, in the face of the cross all our thoughts and conceptions of God break down. It is the death of our normal concepts and images of God. But

in this powerless and abandoned man we see God. It is the breakdown of all our "systems," but it is the birth of the Christian image of God.

We are all influenced by the normal concepts of God. We often use categories and the language of power—God as the Almighty or Christ as Majesty, King, etc. We preach it and we sing it in songs and choruses. But is it really the God that comes to us from the cross? On the cross all categories of power fail. Therefore our language of God as "power and glory" has to be qualified, if we want it to be Christian. It is not the God of "power" we see on the cross. The cross ultimately reveals God as love. Love in pain. Easter morning proclaims to us that this love in pain had the power to overcome even death. It reveals God's love as the ultimate power. After the cross God must be seen in categories of the love that can survive even the powerlessness and abandonment of the cross. That is the scandal of the cross.

## **Only a God Could be so Human! Jesus, the Man who is God.<sup>5</sup>**

It is the task of Christology to maintain the confession that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. Much of modern Protestant theology has been very careful to make the sharpest possible distinction between humanity and divinity. Karl Barth is the prime example here. For Barth there is an absolute difference between the human and God. God is the absolute "other." There is no way for us to bridge the gap. Only because God has chosen to reveal Himself can we speak of Him. I have much more appreciation for Karl Barth now than I had when I began studying theology. In the beginning I just saw him as an angry old man. Barth's point is important and there are very good reasons for his saying so. But a too rigid understanding of his standpoint might close some doors to us that should not be closed.

What if there is a close interrelation between Christology and anthropology? What if true humanity and divinity are interrelated?

There is one sentence in working with Christology that has never left my mind. It is the headline of one of the chapters in Leonardo Boff's book, *Jesus Christ Liberator*. It says: "Only a God could be so human! Jesus, the man who is God."<sup>6</sup>

The title for this address is "Theology of God the Son." The term "God the

Son" also means the humanity of God. What if it is precisely in true humanity in its fullest sense that we find divinity? The basic point being that in Jesus Christ we find a humanity that is so deep and profound that "only God could be so human"! The divinity of Jesus Christ is to be found precisely in His humanity! Jesus lived His "being for others," His "humanity—that-is—divinity" to such an extent that in the end the disciples, the first Church and we must say, He is truly God! He was completely open to others. He was human in a way that we can never be. But precisely by being human He was divine!

Jesus Christ not only preached the Kingdom of God, He incarnated it in His life. He lived it in obedience right up to the end, to the death on the cross. Therefore He is *vere deus et vere homo*.

## The Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

There must be continuity in Christology. If we emphasize only the resurrection, there is a tendency towards triumphalism. If we emphasize only the cross, then theology can become "hopeless." The resurrected was the crucified. Sometimes soteriological interests get in the way of the continuity in Christology, but the life, death and resurrection of Jesus must be seen as a "wholeness."

The cross and death of Jesus was a scandal and a crime. He died as a blasphemer (Gal. 3:13). But very often in theology we move too quickly away from the scandal of the cross. We tend to focus on the soteriological "value" of the cross—Jesus Christ died for our sins. The scandal of the cross is devalued.

But the cross is not just part of a divine drama. It was an outcome of the life and preaching of Jesus. When He preached the Kingdom of God, when He forgave sins in God's name, when He placed His authority over the Law of Moses in the Sermon on the Mount, when He healed on the Sabbath, etc., He placed Himself in conflict with human authorities. His death was an outcome of His life and preaching. It was basically a conflict of interpretation of God and God's will. Therefore the resurrection is also the confirmation that in fact Jesus' life and message was and is God's own life and message. Therefore there is a continuity in Christology that we must never forget.

## Excursion

A preliminary outline for a connection between Christology and Salvation Army sacramental theology.

Now I will make a leap of subject and thought, and I won't even try to pretend that I have worked my way systematically forward to this point. But this is definitely new and important. I have long been dissatisfied with the way we theologically and Christologically have explained and argued the Salvation Army's position on sacramental theology. For example, the argument of "sacramental living—the sacrament of serving" places too much attention on "our side"—the human agent. From a traditional view of the sacraments, the sacraments are first and foremost actions of God. God is the one at work. They are visible signs of God's grace. (As is also explained in the new Salvation Army book of doctrine *Salvation Story*<sup>7</sup> in the appendix on the sacraments.)

A few years ago in 1995 I was writing a contribution about The Salvation Army for a book about the different churches in Denmark. In that contribution I tried to argue the Salvation Army's stance based on Christological thoughts.

### Jesus Christ as the Primordial/Original Sacrament

While teaching on Catholic ecclesiology from the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*) and at same time teaching the Lutheran confession, *Confessio Augustana*, it struck me that some of the creative sacramental language used in post-Vatican II theology actually could be used to articulate the Army's position.

*Lumen Gentium* talks about the Church in Christ being a kind of sacrament. Vatican II sparked a discussion about the sacramental character of the Church. The term "primordial sacrament" (German, *ur-sakrament*) has been widely used. Here Christology, ecclesiology and sacramentology are integrated.

When talking about the Church as a sacrament, it has a Christological basis. The reason for talking about the sacramental character of the Church is that it is seen as the continuation of the presence of Christ in the world. From a Protestant view it is difficult to talk of the Church as a sacrament or primordial sacrament. Protestant theology usually place more emphasis on Christology than on ecclesiology. But the concept of the Church as being the primordial sacrament has also been criticized from within Catholic theology. Basically I would say that the

error in this sacramental language of the Church is that it is not the Church in itself that is a sacrament. The sacramentality of the Church is based on Christ. This is in reality also the line of thought in the theology of those who speak of the sacramental character of the Church. Whatever sacramental character the Church possesses, it derives from its relation to Christ. It is therefore not the Church that is the primordial sacrament.

### **It is Christ Who is the Primordial/Original Sacrament!**

This line of thought is not only found in or inspired by post-Vatican II theology. To give you another example, I turn to Luther and reformation theology. Sacramental theology played a great part in the reformation. The reformers disagreed with the Catholic Church on the number and content of the sacraments. The Catholic Church said seven. Luther and the reformers ended up saying two. Later on the reformers themselves became divided on sacramental theology. But I would like to mention a line of thought that we see in some of the theology of Luther. Luther sometimes distinguishes between the sacrament in itself and the sacramental signs, Jesus Christ being the sacrament and baptism and the Eucharist being the sacramental signs. Now, of course I know that I am leaving Luther behind in the following discussion. In Luther's theology the "sacramental signs" are not merely signs. They are "real." The signs include the "real-presence" of Jesus Christ. That is of course the discussion between Luther and Zwingli/Calvin.

But going back to that distinction between the sacrament and sacramental signs, I would say that this distinction could be a way of formulating The Salvation Army's position in theological language. The sacrament has to do with the grace of God. They are the mysteries of salvation. The ultimate revelation of God's grace to the world is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God to the world. The Army's view is really an "*ur-sakrament*" theology. Jesus Christ is the primordial/original sacrament and at a time where the discussion of the two sacramental signs (baptism and the Eucharist) threatened to "block the way" to the one true sacrament—Jesus Christ, the Army ceased practicing the two sacramental signs. The Salvation Army's theology can be seen as an attempt to formulate a "primordial-sacrament" theology that wants to bear witness to the fact that the grace of God also reaches people "outside" the two traditional sacra-

mental signs. The Salvation Army may have ceased practicing the two sacramental "signs," but it never stopped proclaiming and giving witness in word and deed to God's one and true sacrament—Jesus Christ.

In Christological terms we must say that Jesus Christ was and is "God's presence" in this world. Therefore He is also the sacrament of God. As the primordial/original sacrament He conveys grace and salvation to the people in this world.

## **Christology in a Pluralist World**

The Christian proclamation has always taken place in a pluralist world. The expression of the gospel in a Hellenistic world is just one example from the first days of the Church. The theologians of that time showed great creativity in using different aspects of culture and philosophy in their formulation of the Christian gospel.

But there is one important distinction to be made between seeing pluralism as a fact of life or as an ideology. Christianity must maintain that the truth is to be found in Jesus Christ. But at the same time another important distinction has to be made. It is not Christianity or the Church that is the Truth. It is Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. One of the great challenges we face is that, while many contemporary people are skeptical about the traditional forms of Christianity, they are still fascinated by Jesus Christ. There is something in Him that fills them with respect and fascination.

In the New Testament we find two lines of thought that are important to us. There is the affirmation that salvation is to be found in and through Jesus Christ. And there is the belief in the universal saving will of God. Any Christian theology in a pluralistic world has to be formulated within this dialectic.

I do think that it is essential to affirm that God revealed Himself uniquely in Jesus Christ. But this does not mean that there are no truths in other religions. One of the most important events in the past century was the Second Vatican Council. In the texts from the council there is an inclusiveness that opens for the ray of truths in other religions, while maintaining a particularistic soteriology. One of the most influential Catholic theologians in recent times is Karl Rahner. On the ground of the universal saving will of God, he goes even further. While maintaining that Christianity is the absolute religion, and salvation is ultimately

to be found in Christ, he opens up the possibility that even though the non-Christian religious traditions are not true, they may nevertheless mediate the grace of God by the lifestyles they evoke (a selfless love of one's neighbor). This he calls "anonymous Christianity." These are very inspiring thoughts, but there are a lot of theological difficulties involved. The term "anonymous Christianity" can be a very imperialistic concept. It's like saying to the Hindu, "You are not really Hindu; you are an anonymous Christian!" Rahner did not intend an imperialistic use of the term, but it is nevertheless bound up with great difficulties.

But there is an inclusiveness, that I find much more biblical than, for example, the universalism in the theology of John Hick.

## **The "Human" as the Point of Departure for Dialogue Between the Religions**

In the future, dialogue between the world religions will be absolutely necessary. However, I do not think that this dialogue can find its point of departure in God, since some religions do not have a concept of God (Buddhism). I think the point of departure must be found in the human. All religions speculate about what it is to be human. We are all unconditionally born and we shall all unconditionally die. The "unconditional" fact of human life is something that all religions speculate about. It is a basic fact of life, and for me as a Christian it is a great joy of life and a sign of God's grace. If the point of departure for a dialogue is taken in "humanity," then the contribution from Christology could be that as Christians we find "true humanity" in Jesus Christ. He was human in the fullest sense of the word. He was human in a way we can never be. Therefore we say that in Him we as Christians find the Way, the Truth and the Life. In other words: Only a God could be so human! Jesus the man who is God.

## **A Theological and Christological Critique of Religion is Necessary**

Much of the traditional critique of religion has died away. In many ways pluralism has become an ideology in this time of post-modernism. Now, one point of view is as good as the other. There are a variety of truths. So in many ways the

traditional humanistic critique of religion has gone into a post-modernistic coma. This is in many ways a shame. The humanistic critique of religion (e.g., Feuerbach, Marx, Freud) was not all bad. It did in many cases point to weakness and faults in the way we in the Church proclaim and live the gospel of Christ.

So, I would say, that we need to develop and maintain a theological and Christological critique of religion. Since the traditional critiques are silent, it is now up to the theologians to articulate the critique. In so many cases humans have been caught up in faiths, religious systems and demands that have crippled them and estranged them. It is a theological task to be critical of the religious "praxis" both in Christian churches and other religious denominations. The ground for this is found in Christology. Jesus Christ always defended the human—the person. So where the freedom and integrity of the individual human is threatened, it is precisely on the ground of Jesus' life and message that we have to be critical of religion.

## Christianity and Modernism

Some of the most inspiring and challenging theological thoughts in modern times came from Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his *Widerstand und Ergebung (Letters and Papers from Prison)*.<sup>8</sup>

Here we find a theologian on the edge of life and death, asking hard questions about the essence and role of the Christian gospel in the modern world. According to Bonhoeffer, two basic challenges come to us as Christians. There needs to be a non-religious interpretation of Christianity and we have to take seriously the fact that the world has come of age (*die Mündigkeit der Welt*).

Bonhoeffer follows the same track as Karl Barth. There is an absolute difference between religion and the gospel. And he asks: Who is Christ for us today? How can we talk of God without religion?

What if the time for religious and metaphysical language of God is over? One of Bonhoeffer's major points is that the religious always talk of God at the edge or border of human life and reason. But this is basically the *deus ex machina*. We try to reserve room or space for God. But God is not at the edge or border of human life. He is in the midst of life.

One of the most challenging things in Bonhoeffer's thoughts is that he looks

at secularization not as a fall, but as something positive and natural. The world has come of age and a Christian apologetic that attacks “the world come of age” is in Bonhoeffer’s words pointless, ignoble and un-Christian (*sinnlos, unvornehm und unchristlich*). Pointless because it tries to make man dependent on things that he is no longer dependent on. Ignoble because it tries to exploit a moment of weakness in the human; and lastly and most importantly, it is unchristian because it confuses Christ with a certain stadium in human religion/culture. So the challenge to the Church is how to preach the gospel of Christ in an unreligious world that has come of age—a world that has to be taken seriously. If we make a great division between the Church and the world, then Christ will never become Lord for those in the world. A theology and a Church that closes itself to the world ends up betraying the gospel of Christ for that was meant for the world. Theology must never become a positivism of revelation that closes itself to the world. This was actually Bonhoeffer’s critique of Karl Barth. According to Bonhoeffer, Barth concentrated on the Church but left the world to itself.

## Theology as Wrestling with Mystery

After a lot of words on Christology, let me just finish with these words of Karl Barth on the nature of theological discourse. It is taken from his *Church Dogmatics*, when he enters into a discussion about the Triunity of God. He writes:

Theology means rational wrestling with the mystery. But all rational wrestling with this mystery, the more serious it is, can lead only to its fresh and authentic interpretation and manifestation as a mystery. For this reason it is worth our while to engage in this rational wrestling with it. If we are not prepared for this we shall not even know what we are saying when we say that what is at issue here is God’s mystery.<sup>9</sup>

Theology means rational wrestling with mystery. But finally the incarnation is not only something that should be explained but worshipped.

Notes

1. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1 (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1961), p. 149.
2. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (London: SCM, 1968), p. 48.
3. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1974), p. 4.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
5. Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator—A Critical Christology of Our Time* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 178.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1998), appendix 9.
8. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM, 1971), In the following, I am referring especially to the letters dated April 30, 1944 and August 6, 1944.
9. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, part 1—The Doctrine of the Word of God (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), p. 368.

# Kingdom of the Risen Lord in a World Searching for a Future

*Phil Needham*

As this paper was being written, Christians were once again approaching a day in the Christian year when one greeted the other with this simple statement: "The Lord is risen!" and the other responded: "He is risen, indeed!"

These are not words spoken at the end of worship, as if the worship had provided the needed confirmation, bucking up an assembly of believers who were unsure of their belief and needing the assurance. These are beginning words, foundational for everything else in Christian theology, and indeed in the living out of the life of a disciple of this risen Lord. Without these words, there is really nothing else in the gospel to confess. The Apostle Paul put it bluntly: "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Cor. 15:14).

The resurrection of Jesus launched the Church, and it keeps it on course. The early disciples were ready to abandon their Lord's bold mission; He was dead. A fishing trip seemed the best prospect to some, an escape to the familiar. Perhaps they were beginning to hatch plans to start a new rabbinic school in honor of the memory of their great teacher. One thing and one thing alone caused them to overcome their deep grief and drop their plans for mere commemoration: Jesus appeared, first here, then there, let loose in a world which they quickly came to

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believe would now never be able to put Him away. The cross really was a battle won. Sin could no longer sting us with death. Life was the winner. "The Lord is risen, indeed!"

## Kingdom of the Risen Lord

To what end is He risen—as a demonstration of God's capacity for raw miracle? Is God the original cloning scientist, creating an exact replica from a cell? Or was there something else going on here, something far more revolutionary than replicating, resuscitating, reviving, prolonging, surviving?

What was going on was the launching of an eternal Kingdom by its risen Lord. Jesus had announced, preached, taught, demonstrated and lived the Kingdom of God. Fired by His words, the disciples had been eager for its establishment. They had thought Jesus would usher it in—that is, until His life was aborted early. Now, the Kingdom was a fading hope, a shattering disappointment. What next?

The answer to that question came as a surprise, which, according to the accounts, took time to sink in. As it did, and those disciples saw evidence that death could not take their Lord, they began to realize that the world would never be the same and neither would they. A short time later, filled with the Holy Spirit—identified in some passages as the Spirit of Jesus (see Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:11)—they began to tell the story of Jesus. It was the story of a man unjustly crucified whom death could not contain. The turning point of the story, the shocking claim, was the resurrection: "But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him" (Acts 2:24). When He preached the Kingdom of God, when He forgave sins in God's name, when He placed His authority over the Law of Moses in the Sermon on the Mount, when He healed on the Sabbath, etc., He placed Himself in conflict with human authorities to keep its hold on Him.

The question, "What next?" had been answered in a way they never imagined. The resurrection changed everything, changed them and set before them an agenda for life.

In the last recorded encounter of the resurrected Jesus with His disciples (Acts 1:4), the question foremost on their minds is the Kingdom question: "Lord

are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Surely there was some connection between the message that dominated their Lord's ministry and the agenda that He would now pursue as their risen Lord. They were right, of course, but the agenda was far bigger and inclusive than they ever imagined. After the power had come, they were to be witnesses to the new Kingdom not only in Jerusalem, indeed not only in all Judea and Samaria, but astonishingly to the ends of the earth.

Though the disciples were thinking too small, they were right on target in raising the Kingdom question in light of the resurrection. The question then and now is: What is the connection between the Kingdom Jesus announced and His victory over death?

Jesus' life and ministry had been the Kingdom of God in action (see Luke 11:20). He told His followers that the Kingdom was here, among them (see Luke 17:21). He died for the Kingdom. He was raised for the Kingdom. His resurrection, followed by the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, released the life of the Kingdom into the world. Through faith in Christ, the believer accessed life within this new reality, and through hope anticipated its completion at the end of time.<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of God was now the Kingdom of the risen Lord. The resurrection transformed Jesus' particular teaching into a pervasive reality, established the Kingdom as inescapable, reaching "to the ends of the earth."

The resurrection of Jesus was the founding event of the Kingdom. What had been a Messianic teaching and demonstration which his followers did not know what to do with—or perhaps did not have the courage to trust—now became a raving revolution for them. What do you do with the insanity of a teacher's words, like those recorded in Matthew, chapters 5 through 7? This is not a code of conduct by which one can actually abide. It is an unrealistic extremity.

Then the resurrection, leading to Pentecost. The mindset changes. The timid, fearful disciples we meet as the Gospels reach their climax now become the recklessly confident apostles of the Acts. Those who seemed so clueless about the Kingdom now become its demonstration community. They now are aflame with passion for establishing Kingdom colonies beyond their borders. The mission to spread the Kingdom is the legacy of resurrection. He is risen, indeed—and His Kingdom is well on its way.

What do we mean when we say it is "well on its way?" We mean that histo-

ry is moving toward the Kingdom's consummation. We must be clear: the consummation is not some magical trick at the end, God's peremptory action salvaging a few faithful souls for heaven while history becomes the inferno of His unrelenting judgment. The consummation is what the Church is living and working toward as it risks Kingdom living in a world living quite differently. The Church is called to be consummate practitioners of life in the risen Lord's Kingdom. Convincing practice will lend credence to their claim that the Kingdom is well on its way.

Often and unfortunately, the Church has not taken seriously the living of the Kingdom life. Clearly, this corresponds to failure to grasp—or perhaps to be grasped by—the resurrection. The resurrection may be held as a non-negotiable tenet of one's creed without an understanding of its full meaning. Usually, this happens when it is relegated to an event in the past (the resurrection of Jesus) which assures its repetition for the believer at the end of time (the resurrection). In focusing on past and future, this view of the resurrection leaves the present untouched and postpones the Kingdom indefinitely. It robs us of our story, as we have no real story, if we are not on a pilgrimage of personal transformation. It robs the world of its history, as events have meaning only if there is an emerging Kingdom at work in, around, or against them. As H.A. Williams has demonstrated in his classic work on the resurrection, the failure of the Church to allow the resurrection to change its thinking and transform its living in the present has had disastrous consequences.<sup>2</sup>

Williams' contention is that the Church has largely failed to hear and respond to Christ, the eternal Word, because it has turned its back on life. Its strategies are tainted with politics, its dogmas are dry and disconnected, its personal relations are divisive, its creativity is rare, its sanctity is institutional, and its policies are often repressive. The eternal Word cannot be received by those who have given themselves over to the death-dealing ways of the world. The risen Christ comes only where hope is strong enough to trust resurrection—living in the present. He comes in the common life where normalcy is disrupted by miracle and predictable patterns by improbability. In Williams' words:

The background of resurrection is always impossibility. And with impossibility staring us in the face, the prelude to resurrection is invari-

ably doubt, confusion, strife, and the cynical smile, which is our defense against them. Resurrection is always the defiance of the absurd.<sup>3</sup>

More typically, the Church accommodates the risen Christ to the status quo and subjects His Kingdom to a world order that is its antithesis.

What is this world order? What is the profile of the world which the Church has been called to transform like leaven in dough but which all too often transforms the Church? The profile is absence. The pervasive feeling is abandonment. The attitude is despair.

## Kingdom of Lost Hope

Jacques Ellul finds that over the course of the Church's history there is an "unconscious movement back and forth between a theology of the presence and a theology of the promise." He describes this swing of the theological pendulum in this way:

When the Word of God is present strikingly and unquestionably, what need is there for a theology of promise? What counts is not the possible future but the incarnate presence. Under those circumstances Church produces a theology of the presence, forgetting somewhat the decisive eschatology. When, on the other hand, we find ourselves in a period of silence and sterility, when the Word of God is rare, incommunicable, and incomprehensible, then we are thrown back upon the eschaton, and the theology of hope becomes a necessity. The one is not more true than the other, but the alternation depends upon the times.<sup>4</sup>

Ellul claims that we now live in a time of abandonment, a time when God is silent. "Faiths" are proliferating precisely because no one has faith. The loss of transcendence brings the absolutizing of the relative.<sup>5</sup> People believe anything because they believe nothing. The world is overflowing in multiplications of myths and faiths.

Has God actually withdrawn Himself for the time being, as Ellul claims? Are we living in a time similar to those times when God hid His face from Israel, gave Job no answers, moved the writer of Ecclesiastes to name the meaningless around him, stunned psalmists and prophets with His inaction, and broke the heart of Jesus on the cross? Is this a time of the ninth hour best defined by the

question, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken us?" If this is a time of God's absence,<sup>6</sup> then it is a time which calls for hope. It is a time when the future of the Kingdom of the risen Lord is in question precisely because the experience of the risen Christ in the present is so rare.

Of course it must be said that the experience of God's presence does occur today. But it is experienced, it seems, by a small minority. Furthermore, many of the contemporary claims of an experience of God, when looked at closely, betray an amazing superficiality or define the divine in ways that have little relationship to the biblical revelation. Faith has become belief in anything that brings some kind of temporary satisfaction or relief. It is oversold, fickle, forever changing, connected to anything. The time has come, says Ellul, to turn to hope, the future which is the consummation of the Kingdom of the risen Lord, to God's fulfillment of history, to the reality for which authentic Christians have thrown everything else away. It is time, not so much to claim the Christian hope, as to be fully claimed by it. Ellul believes that now we must live in the hope if the world is to find faith again. Today, he says, it is "hope which is called upon to arouse, incite, and induce faith; and to define it, that is to say, to give it content."<sup>7</sup>

Let us get more specific about this absence of God, or should we say the world's absencing itself from God. What are the signs of this condition? Does an analysis of our situation lead us to the conclusion that the situation today is pervasively (and precariously) one of lost hope? Within the limited space of this paper, let us consider the profile.

First, and generally, we<sup>8</sup> are experiencing the *loss of a future*. The proliferation of doomsday sects precisely at a time in history when we supposedly have more control than ever over the means of our well-being is instructive. The obsession with "last things" by many Christians reveals a parallel despair over the history of the world. In these theologies, God is the *deus ex machina* who rescues the faithful from worldly conflagration. The killings reported daily by the media, whether mutual exterminations carried out by ethnic groups, or sudden eruptions of gunshots by a seemingly harmless high school student, betray another form of doomsday thinking and total despair over the future. The impossible idealisms and the blind fanaticisms of this world attempt to fill in the vacuums of despair. But perhaps nowhere is the loss of a future more poignantly demonstrated than in the impoverished nations of the world, where people who feel

powerless over a future in which no more than survival and decency of life are often at stake, throw their hopes on a movement or a leader, both of whom end up mortgaging the future for self-aggrandizement and personal kingdom-building. To most people in the world today, the future is in question, and those who want to believe that there is a future do not know where to look.

Secondly, lost hope is also the outcome of the *loss of community*. In the West this loss is the logical outcome of unrepressed individualism, which breeds suspicion of others, the divisiveness of competition, and obsession with personal survival and wellbeing. The loss of community is one of the most poignant indicators of lost hope. If there is no hope, then it is every person for himself, it is for every person to grab what he can get for the time he has. This is a prescription for eroding communities, and it is working extraordinarily well. To be sure, there are forms of community today, and there are certainly plentiful signs of our hunger for community. But many of the fellowships, when viewed closely, have rigid, exclusionary boundaries, questionable belief systems, self-protective motivations, and narrow worldviews—all of which are in stark contrast to the profile of communities which anticipate and intimate the Kingdom of God.

Thirdly, the loss of hope brings the *loss of freedom*. Freedom movements today seem destined for slavery. A new religious movement promising liberation for despairing souls becomes, over time, a conformist sect. A self-help movement promising personal realization becomes a mind-control cult. A revolutionary movement promising the overthrow of oppression becomes the oppressor sooner or later after the overthrow succeeds. It is also worth noting that in the age, presumably, of critical, objective thought, propaganda and highly sophisticated forms of manipulation through the media are both overwhelming and invasive—one could say almost irresistible. Our thinking and our behavior are being insidiously orchestrated. If Ellul is right when he says, "freedom is the ethical expression of the person who hopes,"<sup>9</sup> then hope is fast fading in this new age of slavery. If we see no real future, freedom is irrelevant or at best, pretense for slavery that serves someone's profit margin or power move.

Fourthly, the loss of hope can be seen in the *loss of values*. If there is no clear future toward which the present points, then there are no values that are other than passing conveniences. In our despair we reach in desperation for values to give meaning to our living and direction to our decisions, but without a future we

are left to grasp at that which has no enduring significance. The mindless pursuit of the newest consumer goods to give one's life value is one expression of this desperation. Another expression is an almost demonic contemporary genius for making anything mean what we want it to mean. Ellul speaks of complete value reversals: "each value has become its own opposite."<sup>10</sup> When a Chief of State begins talking about justice, he is probably preparing to perpetrate a large injustice. Even words that used to convey a simple, commonly understood moral value can be used to convey the opposite. To call someone "bad" is often a compliment; to call someone "good" is often a put-down. The future is so uncertain, hope so unbelievable, that values have no enduring content. All that matters are the conveniences and posturings that get us through the day. Tomorrow is unreliable and unknown.

This loss of values leads inevitably to the fifth sign of hope's absence the *loss of accountability*. Accountability is possible if values have meaning, are shared, and are seen as enduring. Without a sense of history's movement toward a God-given purpose, without a consensus of what permanently matters, accountability is an empty concept, which few take seriously. It is not surprising that those who have no hope feel they have nothing for which they need be accountable:

All of this points toward a sixth sign of lost hope the *loss of history*. The concept of history is predicated on a progression of events that has meaning. Remove God from the equation, and the progression is in the hands of those who constitute the history itself. Remove hope, and immanence controls the future. Nineteenth and twentieth-century liberalism posited the inherent movement of history toward the fulfillment of the Christian hope. Process theologies converted history into theology. Death of God theologies attempted to put us on our own, masters of our lives and histories without God—a view presented as God's final act of self-abnegating love.

Where has all this led us? It has led us to a course with no direction, a history without meaning—to no history at all. The course of events has been given over to the control of forces with no moral connection or eternal reference. The logic of materialism releases an approved flood of acquisition, drowning us in material goods, diverting us from plumbing any depth of meaning. Technology creates an unending succession of "improvements" which fascinate and bewitch

us, and which we seem powerless to resist. Neither materialism nor technology has a moral dimension, there is no discernable immanent spirit in control, and when they dominate our decision making, history is constituted by the progressive sophistication of science with little or no regard for the implications and threats of that advancement. The future is in the hands of scientists and salesmen—those who can create the illusion of progress through scientific and technological development and those who can sell it. Meanwhile, God's future is obliterated and history is without meaning.

In order to be what it is, history must have reference to the Absolute. The relative has no meaning apart from, indeed it is defined by, the Absolute. This is why the seventh sign of lost hope is the *loss of God*. With no hope in sight, no future toward which to aim, God becomes an irrelevance, a disconnected idea foreign to reality. In such a situation, says Ellul, there are only two possible courses of action. First, one can attempt a radical skepticism that attaches no value to anything. Second, one can elevate some aspect of the relative to the status of an absolute.<sup>11</sup> As we are created in the image of God and therefore cannot resist some form of the Absolute, the second course seems inevitably to draw everyone, even the most self-conscious skeptic. A human race that has given up on the Absolute and absolutes seems unable to resist the temptation to absolutize the relative. We find something or someone to which we can commit ourselves completely (a revolution, a political party, a leader, a cult, an idea, a theology, a therapy, a cure, a Salvation Army, etc.) and that relative becomes our Absolute. The most profound manifestation of the loss of God is the acquisition of gods. People believe in the relative absolutely.

This is why in this scientific age mythologies and magic multiply. As old ones die, new ones are always there to take their places. It is amazing what people will believe and what they will fall for. The loss of the sacred brings sacralization of the secular. Disbelief in miracle brings a desperate search for the miraculous. Criticism and abandonment of the Church bring the proliferation of churches.

It is to the Church that the final sign of lost hope refers. This sign describes how the other signs manifest themselves in the Church. It is the *loss of theological integrity*. The Church has not been immune to the decline of transcendence and hope. Increasingly it has paid more attention to itself as a social construct and less

to itself as a radical Kingdom community. (The church growth movement has sometimes fallen prey to this tendency.) It has occupied itself with effective communication methods, to the detriment of the substantive message.<sup>12</sup> Hermeneutics has been practiced as an interpretation of revelation without revelation.<sup>13</sup> The horizontal is nudging out the vertical as churches become enamored of technology, and the means of greater efficiency replace the strategies of missional effectiveness. (One example of this trend is our obsession with raw numbers/statistics and our avoidance of penetrating analyses of our effectiveness in accomplishing our mission. We reason that if we are getting the numbers, we must be on target. It is an insidious deception.)

These trends point to a diluted, if not a seriously distorted, and certainly a relativized, theology—almost a parody of theology. Theology can be informed by, but not based upon, science and sociology. It must be enlightened and directed by the luminous hope of the living Word and the experience of true resurrection. When this is not the case, night falls in the Church and integrity wanes.

When the light of the world becomes a darkened light, when the rainbow is reduced to the physical phenomenon, when the Ark of the Covenant is eaten by termites, when the empty tomb is filled with our hermeneutics, when the Kingdom of God is a political product, when the life in Christ is a mere symbol, when the dethroned King takes refuge in speeches, then the dead of night has won the heart and darkened the eyes.<sup>14</sup>

In this time of abandonment, we need a theology of promise and a path to hope.

## The Call for Relentless Hope

As we have seen, the abandonment calls into question the hope. This is a serious challenge: if Christ is risen indeed, if He is with us always, to the ends of the earth, if His agenda is transformation, if we are to pray for His Kingdom coming and His will being done on earth as it is in heaven, and if we are to live in a way that is consistent with that hope, where are our signals, what is our strategy in this time of abandonment?

We know, first, that the Kingdom will not be established by the natural

course of history, nor by the good work of the Church within that course of history. Clearly, the Kingdom is God's doing (see Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; Mark 9:1). Secondly, we know that the Church is not called simply to batten down the hatches and hold on till rescued from the coming conflagration by the risen, now returning, Lord. God has a larger agenda to transform the world (see Rev. 21:1-5) and He calls the Church to be His participants (see John 20:21; Matt. 28:19).

What does this participation mean in an age of abandonment? How can we participate in the coming Kingdom in a world where the evidence indicates either obliteration or the triumph of cold technology? Let us consider our strategy.

The strategy is relentless hope. It is hope against hope (see Rom. 4:18). It is seizing the hope (see Heb. 6:18, NRSV), taking hope by the horns, refusing to let go, as rough as the ride may be. It is trusting the hope, come what may. It is being impatient like Job, refusing to give up on hope though evidence around and on him laughed that hope to scorn (see Job 12:1-13:15). Nothing less than relentlessness in hope will do. How else will those who see no cause for hope take our claims seriously? How else will we ourselves see light in the darkness?

Let us now consider how we proceed with the strategy of relentless hope. The first step in that strategy is a matter of looking for *God's future in the present*. The only way God's future can have meaning, says Williams, is to let it catch up with us.<sup>15</sup> Jesus spoke again and again about the Kingdom breaking in on us and about our need to live in readiness and receptivity (see Matt. 4:17; 11:12; 16:28; etc.). Clearly, we Kingdom people need to be looking in every direction, expecting in surprising ways, and addressing our own lack of preparedness. Is the Kingdom sometimes, or often, hard to find? Yes it is, especially in this age of abandonment. But we know it is there, often incognito, waiting to be identified and claimed, often in the most amazing places, like treasure found in a common field and hope found in a prodigal son's humiliation.

It can also be seized within ourselves. As we allow God's future to catch up with us, we can allow it to transform us, or to set the agenda for our transformation. I think this is part of what the Apostle Paul means when he says, "we are saved in hope" (Rom. 8:24). In a very real sense, the life of holiness is the miraculous manifestation of the future in our living.

The second step in the strategy is expecting miracle. Let us be clear that we

are not referring to fascination with the miraculous, indulgence in the paranormal, nor the manufacture of miracles (healings, most particularly) by autosuggestion, hypnosis, emotional catharsis, or any other means of manipulation—though it would be wrong to insist that true miracles never take place in connection with these means. Nor are we referring to the miraculous breakthroughs or powers often claimed by scientific discoveries, as in the advent of a new miracle drug—though again, science is not devoid of miracle. Our contemporary obsession with such “miracles” is typically compensation for our inability to grasp the true miracles.

The true miracles are the sacramental moments where the bread and wine of the common life become the media of transcendence, the places where new creations come into being, the encounters where we share the deepest communion with God, or his family, or his world. These are transformations. These, says Williams, are not so much miracles that can be verified by external scientific means—“Look at that now.” As they are miracles to which we give testimony—“Whereas once I was blind, now I can see.”<sup>16</sup> Such miracles can happen anywhere because God does not work within the dichotomy of sacred–secular—a dichotomy sometimes perpetrated by a false understanding of “the sacrament” as a transformational miracle that only takes place within the precincts of a high altar. This is the reason Salvationists are pan–sacramentalists. This is the reason they pursue worldly holiness. A holy person is one who sees the hidden miracles and observes the sacraments of God at work in the world and in people’s lives. In that sense, he communes more deeply with the world than anyone and is more worldly than anyone. The true miracles are in the common life, and the strategy of relentless hope is to expect them.

The third step in the strategy is *risking the openness of the kingdom of God*. If miracle can happen anywhere, if the kingdom of God can break in where we consider it most unlikely, if the risen Christ sends us to every corner of the earth—then hope is open. Exclusionary concepts are overruled. The strategy is inclusiveness. Relentlessly, we must rule out the false boundaries of our fear and our pride. We must break down walls and build bridges (see Eph. 2:14). This is not obliteration of differences, nor is it a compromise of integrity for the good feeling of non–judgmentalism, shallow agreement and conflict–avoidance. It is allowing the kingdom of God to break down the false barriers of our prejudice

and open its banquet hall doors to outcasts and strangers (see Mark 22:1-14; Luke 14:12-21).

This strategy of inclusiveness is a risk because it goes against the grain of greed and selfishness that the world takes for granted. Attempts to be inclusive can bring abuse from those who are thriving on their own success over others. Action toward inclusiveness is too much of a threat to be overlooked. It is a revolution too radical to be popular. But it is the only true revolution.

The fourth strategic step, then, is *inciting true revolution*. True revolution looks to the risen Lord for orders and shapes its actions by the living hope of his Kingdom coming. It is first and foremost a spiritual revolution. It may support and encourage other movements (social, moral, political), but it never fully identifies with them and it always recognizes that their effectiveness is limited in relation to the Christian hope. Left to themselves, they often succeed in committing the same inhumanities, as do those whom they oppose.

Ellul uses Jesus' analogy of the kingdom of God as leaven in the dough to describe the Christian revolutionary driven by hope. As the transforming leaven is actually not part of the dough, so the Kingdom is not part of the world but still transforms it, and so the Christian is not identified with this or that movement for change but works within them (sometimes against them) to identify and give witness to the Kingdom of God, the only real hope. Indeed, the Christian must involve himself in movements for change because the leaven has no effect unless it is placed with the dough; but his allegiance is always to the Kingdom of the risen Christ and this allegiance always relativizes any other.<sup>17</sup>

This means that the Christian never stops inciting revolution. Revolutions and revivals can go only so far before they reach their conclusion or burn out. The temptation at that point is to think that the work is done, that God's purpose has been accomplished. This judgment is never true. The Christian revolutionary knows that the revolution is ongoing and that hope must relentlessly push on till the kingdom of this world truly becomes the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (see Rev. 11:15).

Relentlessly and persistently, then, the Christian today pursues the strategy of hope. She longs and looks for God's future in the present. She expects miracles in the unexpected places. She risks the dangerous openness of the Kingdom. And she incites the deeper revolution. This strategy is challenging; it is not for

the weak of heart. Consider the demands.

The first demand is *waiting*. The temptation to say, "Lo here, lo there," in times of inspiration and blessing must be avoided (see Mark 13:21). The tendency to absolutize the relative, or to mistake the intimation for the completion, must be resisted. We must not settle in as though hope had arrived. Yes, like Chanticleer, we learn to herald each hopeful burst of light, but we do not mistake them for the ultimate Dawn that will kill the darkness forever. We herald hope, not finality.

In the times of God's absence, the temptation is to abandon hope altogether. Here we are like the ten wise virgins who appear foolish because they unnecessarily act to fill their lamps with oil though everyone knows there is no Bridegroom, or if there is He is not anywhere in sight. We are like Noah, hard at work preparing an ark for the future though laughed at by those who refuse to see it coming. Our waiting is not passive or cowardly. Our waiting is a preparation for Christ, an insistence on living by the breaking light of His coming. While we cannot say that our action brings in the Kingdom, Scripture still makes clear that we are participants in its coming and that our actions are extremely important in the completion of the salvation story. (The term "waiting" makes this plain. We wait for something coming to us or given to us.) There would be no story of the coming Bridegroom without ten virgins who acted. Without the dialectic of readiness—unreadiness, there simply would be no story of hope, no meaning in the return of Christ. There is no story in a peremptory Kingdom cataclysm meeting complete unreadiness and non-participation. Hence, Ellul, who harshly critiques any presumption of our action creating the Kingdom, can actually say:

This [active] waiting is decisive, since we should know that nothing will come to pass without it—nothing. There is no return, no Kingdom, if we fail to live in this fervor of ... the watchman, trembling with fear, awaiting the dawn.<sup>18</sup>

We are waiters for the dawn, seen as fools by exploiters of the darkness and pessimists alike, yet relentless in our preparation for Christ's coming.

To be sure, while appearing the fool, we, like the Apostle Paul, can get used to it (see 1 Cor. 4:10). We can get used to *humiliation*, which is the second demand of relentless hope. Jesus' humiliation was the demand of His mission.

His announcement of a Kingdom without boundaries, a banquet invitation without exclusions, and an ethic without condemnation was so out of order that He had to be humiliated. Our own humiliation comes with our insistence on His strange Lordship and our out-of-step Kingdom living. If we pursue hope with courage, we must be humiliated because the upper hand is destructive and we refuse that position. Hope demands the lower hand, even when we are in a position to take the upper.

Thirdly it also demands *suffering*. To live in the Kingdom of the risen Lord, which is to be a Christian, is to face suffering as an experience which is never final and which always points toward fulfillment. As Williams puts it:

In resurrection the suffering which bids fair to diminish and exterminate any personal identity is used on the contrary to enlarge and enrich it. Instead of becoming less myself by suffering, I become more myself. Instead of ceasing to live because of what I suffer, I live more fully and deeply because of it.<sup>19</sup>

Contemporary obsessions with painless cures for the causes of personal suffering belie a rejection of true resurrection, which is also a rejection of the crucifixion. There is no resurrection without crucifixion, no life without death.

This is not to say that Christians are not called to alleviate suffering in the world, nor that they are not called to rectify the causes of suffering. They are. But they do not effect this calling by sparing themselves. They do not enter the arena of the world's pain by protecting themselves from it. They enter it vulnerable, and they bear the scars. It is the price of undergoing personal transformation and pursuing relentless hope.

The suffering, the humiliation, the waiting all come together in *prayer*, the fourth demand of persistent hope. How can we endure without prayer? We cannot. Let us be clear that we are not speaking here of proper prayers, adapted to a culture of pious phrases and easy explanations. We are speaking of banging on the doors of heaven, pleading the promise like Abraham (see Gen. 15:1-6), demanding the hope like prayer-wrestling Jacob (Gen. 32:22-29), begging the courage to suffer for the hope like Jesus in the garden (see Mark 14:32-36).

The person who claims to be full of hope but fails to lead a life of

prayer is a liar ... Prayer is the referral to God's decision, on which we are counting. Without that referral ... we would have nothing to hope for.<sup>20</sup>

Prayer is more than sweet communion with God. It is also a brazen challenge of His intentions, an insistence that He prove the hope. He, in turn, makes His demands of us. He commands our *witness*. Witness is the fifth demand of hope's strategy. It is obedience to God's command to share the hope. Hoarding the message of hope is disobedience to God and an act of abuse against the world. Restricting the Kingdom to an escapist or survivalist understanding is missional heresy. The witness must be adequate to the hope.

It must also be articulated. The coming Kingdom is neither a vague idea nor an ethereal idealism. It is a concrete reality taught by our Lord and clearly witnessed to in Scripture. It is not palatable to many because it is the Kingdom of righteousness which brings the world under judgment. To articulate it, therefore, is to court rejection, but at the same time to name and profile the future and to invite the receptive to make it theirs.

But naming the hope is still not enough. The witness is more than words spoken. It is our living catching up with hope. It is the risen Lord raising us up to a taste of Kingdom life, to a credibility of Kingdom citizenship. It is grace touching us with holiness and performing a miracle with the meagerness of our lives. This, too, is witness.

And finally, the strategy of hope requires *accountability*. We are accountable for living faithfully in the light of the Kingdom's dawning. Jesus makes this clear in His parables of the landlord's absence and those of judgment. It matters how we live. "[The] accountability is essential to our dignity as bearers of the divine image: God takes us seriously."<sup>21</sup> The risen Christ is the returning Christ. Holiness is the cultivation of our personal readiness; ethics is the character of our public action.

## The Ethics of Hope

Hope, finally, is a matter of living. Our talk about hope always falls short. Our systematizing, legalizing and moralizing of it always diminishes it. It is a promise that excites and motivates us. It is a full dawn coming, of which we can

only live in the incomplete, breaking light; but live we can. It is the grace of the future, which gives us plenty to live on, if only limited details. It is the Kingdom of the risen Lord, which invites us to dynamic citizenship more than theoretical discussion. In an age of abandonment, people are looking for a hope that gives them not only a future to trust but also a way to travel. The ethics of hope is the travel guide for a world searching for a future.

It begins with *Christian realism*.<sup>22</sup> The ethics of hope requires the discernment of reality. This discernment is possible because the Kingdom of the risen Lord is the absolute through which all other kingdoms are seen. The absolute of hope requires the relativizing of all hopes, the exposure of the shortfall and corruption of all claims to build a hopeful future, or even the best possible present. The ever present tendency to absolutize the relative and make idolatry of the lesser can only be critiqued and overcome by a stubborn Christian realism born of God-given Christian hope. Without this realism, ethics is seduced and compromised by a host of lesser claims and false promises.

The discernment which Christian realism provides opens the door to a second important aspect of the ethics of hope. True ethics encounters the challenges of every dimension of life; it applies itself everywhere precisely because hope relativizes everything but the Absolute—or to put it more accurately, it seeks to discern the presence of the Absolute in everything. The second aspect, then, is the *sacrament of common experience*. Realism leads us to see the presumption in every claim for finality, the inadequacy of every system (be it political, social, philosophical, or theological), the idolatry of every attempt to contain truth on one side of any dualism. It forces us to break down the false distinctions and demonizing, the constructs of evil's agenda to divide. In doing this, it opens the door to the non-exclusionary bias of a true Christian ethic. It invites us to experience and affirm the presence of our risen Lord in the ordinariness of our day. Williams puts it this way:

The miracle is to be found precisely within the ordinary round and daily routine of our lives. Resurrection occurs to us as we are, and its coming is generally quiet and unobtrusive and we may hardly be aware of its creative power. It is often only later that we realize that in some way or other we have been raised to newness of life, and so have heard the voice of the Eternal Word.<sup>23</sup>

Why is this so important for ethics? It is important because the division of life into sacred and secular leads inevitably to a division and compromise of ethics. If the sacred is the divine incognito which can emerge at any secular time and place, if it is something which we cannot contain, package, segregate, and institutionalize—i.e., make into our own useful version of “sacred”—then our ethics must be applicable to both priest and plumber (inclusive) and to every circumstance (universal). It must be a way into the possibility of divine encounter in any situation. It must be a protection of the ordinary for the possibility of resurrection. It must be a way of helping us to see and celebrate all of life as a sacrament and all the world as a place of miracle. “Ethical behavior,” says Williams, “... is a miracle which at sundry times and in diverse manners happens to almost everybody.”<sup>24</sup>

This aspect of the ethics of hope leads us to a third—relationship. If hope is an affirmation of common experience as the locus of resurrection, if it is an attack on polarizing dualisms, it leads us to a discovery and development of our connectedness.

In his poignant little book on dying titled *Our Greatest Gift*, Henri Nouwen says that the crucial task in facing our death is not leaving this life with the strong sense that we have accomplished something worthwhile: it is not to affirm our unique separateness. Neither is it to face the painful separation. Rather, the crucial task is to die in solidarity with others, to take the joy of being the brother or sister of all people, to release oneself completely to the family of God. Death is the way to unity, not separation. Stripped of the accoutrements of our pride and accomplishments, we embrace the real treasure—“the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39)—from which nothing, and finally not even death, can separate us. This, says Nouwen, is our greatest gift.<sup>25</sup>

The strategy of the Enemy is to divide; the strategy of the risen Christ is to unite. His command is that we love one another as He has loved us (see John 15:12). His prayer is that we become one as He and the Father are one (see John 17:22). The future toward which we are moving is the antithesis of our sinful dividedness: it is our connectedness. This means that the ethics of hope focuses on relationships, on righteousness or “right relationships”—on moral action that releases the love of God rather than moral uprightness that displays a stony pride.

What, then, is the place of individualism in the ethics of hope? It is the place of creativity. The recognition of our connectedness is not a call to conformity. To conform is to obliterate the distinctiveness, which is essential to our unity. Creativity is an essential part of our nature as creatures in the image of God. It is the release from bondage, which enables us to participate in God's creativity. It is the expression of a sanctified individualism in which gifts and personalities are used for the common good (see 1 Cor. 12:7). The fourth aspect of the ethics of hope is *creativity*.<sup>26</sup>

When ethics aims at conformity, it is not the ethics of hope. It is the ethics of repression. In this time of abandonment, it is not surprising that conformist sects are on the rise. Without hope, people obliterate themselves in communities of conformity where they will not be able to risk creativity, where ethics are hard and fast, without promise, where creativity is crushed and condemned, where the future of the risen Christ is distrusted by a predetermined plan for the rescue of the faithfully compliant. In such an atmosphere, ethics is a subversion of creativity and a rejection of the image of God, which constitutes our humanity. The ethics of hope encourages people to action with God, to a full use of creative gifts to build up the Body of Christ and release the hopeful signs of the kingdom of God in the world.

This action is not easy. It requires the fifth aspect of the ethics of hope *defiance and denial*. Living by hope is not a placid existence. It is a defiance of the signs of absence, a denial of the finality of despair. It is, as John Gowans put it, "to shake the living daylights out of hell." To coin a sentence from radio personality and writer Garrison Keillor, "Sometimes you need to look reality in the eye and deny it." Sometimes it is like an Old Testament argument with God, demanding a sign, an answer, a reassurance. It is a refusal to step down and be content with absence. It is hope so stubborn it will not be laughed away. That is how hope is meant to be.

... the one thing useful to the world, and indispensable, is to recover the fighting and the burning expectation ... the waiting person has the hardness of a rock, and an absurd firmness and fixity of purpose.<sup>27</sup>

This holy determination and defiance are essential if hope is to be lived, if Christian ethics are to be authentic, in a world of abandonment. But we are not

primarily speaking here of heroism, although there is the character of the heroic. We are speaking of a surrender to the hope so complete and consuming that death is never given the last word. We are speaking of a sellout to hope.

This sellout constitutes the final aspect of the ethics of hope *mission*. The ethics of hope makes sense only in the context of the mission of the Church. It is not the ethics of a careful moralist whose actions have no context other than his own principles. It is not the ethics of a moral separatist who sees the world only as the other side of a dualism, a threat to his Christian existence. Rather, it is the ethics of a Christian committed to the mission of the Church to bring hope to the hopeless, to herald the Kingdom's dawning, to open the door to its reality, to challenge the voices of death and despair, to suffer the humiliation of hope, to give oneself to nothing less than God's transformation of the world—in short, to live the hope. It is the ethics, not of moralists who imagine that by their good work they will bring in the Kingdom, but of missionaries who know that the Kingdom of the risen Christ is bursting even into the darkness of abandonment, and who risk the righteousness of that Kingdom whatever the immediate consequences.

It is the ethics of what Ellul calls a "third order" comprised of those who are unrelentingly loyal to the Christian hope.<sup>28</sup> It is the ethics of those who in their hearts have "set apart Christ as Lord," who "suffer for what is right" (i.e., for the Kingdom), and who are "always ... prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [them] to give the reason for the hope that [they] have ... with gentleness and respect" (see 1 Pet. 3:14,15).

Nothing less than the ethics of such a life is a compelling demonstration of hope. Nothing less is an adequate response to the reality of the resurrection. Nothing less will give persuasive witness to the Kingdom of the risen Lord in a world searching for a future.

## Notes

1. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1998), p. 116.

2. See H.A. Williams, *True Resurrection* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972). Williams' incisive analysis of the Church's failure, generally, to receive the resurrection as transformational of the present is undoubtedly worth more consideration than it has received. He sees this failure as intentional on the part of accommodated Christians who have decided to make do with a dead, status quo "faith" rather than undergo the discomfort, disruption and risk of transformation. His book is a compelling argument for a holistic way of life made possible by a resurrection experience that effectively undermines destructive dualisms. The forces that separate, that polarize, that break integrity, that detach us from God, the world and each other, that divide us in every way possible and that postpone any possibility of wholeness until the end of time—they are the enemies of true resurrection. "When we begin to recognize the power of resurrection present in the ordinary gritty routine of our daily lives, then we shall see for ourselves that all that separates and injures and destroys is being overcome by what unites and heals and creates ... only then shall we be able or ready to receive the hope of final resurrection after physical death" (pp. 12–13).

3. Williams, p. 57.

4. Jacques Ellul, *Hope in Time of Abandonment*, trans. C. Edward Hopkin (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), pp. 176–177. Though this work was completed more than a quarter of a century ago, I think that Ellul's perception of human existence and experience, at least in the Western world, is accurate, and his analysis incisive. I have found it most helpful in the development of this paper.

5. Ellul, pp. 242ff.

6. I will not explore Ellul's claim that the absence is in reality an abandonment, an action of God requiring us to take hope seriously, to do that which is needful given the loss of faith. Instead, I will focus on an analysis of the signs and experience of God's absence.

7. Ellul, p. 89.

8. I am using "we" in these descriptions to refer to humankind in general, not to Christians who authentically live by hope.

9. Ellul, p. 239.

10. Ellul, p. 27.

11. Ellul, p. 243.

12. Ellul, p. 302.

13. Ellul, p. 146.

14. Ellul, p. 155.

15. Williams, p. 5.

16. Williams, p. 52.

17. See Ellul, pp. 248ff.

18. Ellul, p. 262.

19. Williams, p. 144.

20. Ellul, p. 272.

21. *Salvation Story*, p. 120.

22. Ellul prefers the term "pessimism" or "the pessimism of hope" (pp. 224ff.). For him, pessimism best describes the honesty of admitting that the world and its solutions are completely hopeless without the Christian hope. I prefer to use the term "realism," seeing the reality behind the pretense, honestly admitting the failure of all relatives pretending to be absolutes.

23. Williams, p. 10.

24. Williams, pp. 117–118.

25. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), pp. 23ff.

26. Williams is very helpful on this point. See pp. 107ff.
27. Ellul, p. 263.
28. Ellul, p. 295.

# Jesus the Son in a Pluralistic World

*Karen Shakespeare*

Jesus Christ, Son of God, lived, worked, taught and died in a pluralistic society. His own heritage, Judaism, exhibited many shades of belief. It encompassed the world of the sectarians of Qumran, the aristocratic Sadducees, the pious and sincere Pharisees; the politically extreme but religiously motivated Zealots and the ordinary people, the *am ha arez*, who were neither overtly religious nor politically zealous. To these can be added the influences of Hellenism and the empire of Rome, each with their varied cultures, philosophies, ideologies and religions.

In this world, in the early days of the first millennium, the faith of the disciples in the risen Jesus, Son of God grew and developed. Pluralism was a fact of life, and the followers of Jesus quickly learned to proclaim a relevant message. Jewish hopes were explained (see Acts 13:16–21), philosophical ideas newly expounded (see Acts 17:16–33), and pagan religions challenged (see Acts 19:26). Jesus came to be viewed as the unique gift of God to humanity and, for the believer, a relationship with the risen Lord and empowerment by His Spirit were seen as fundamental to human living.

This relationship led to a particular understanding of the way in which Christians must interact with each other and with society. For the followers of

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Jesus, morality was to be determined by citizenship in the Kingdom of God. The gospel record depicts Jesus as requiring of His disciples a greater righteousness than that of the Jewish leaders (see Matt. 5:20). This was both a spiritual calling and an ethical requirement. Those who belonged to the new community must respond to moral issues, including murder (see Matt. 5:21,22), personal relationships (see Matt. 5:23–26) and marriage (see Matt. 5:27–32) in ways that reflected the radical demands of the Kingdom. The Apostle Paul showed a concern not only for sound doctrine, but also for appropriate behavior. He taught that ethical imperatives flowed from the beliefs of the Christian community, as the practical outworking of faith (e.g., Rom. 12:1).<sup>1</sup> In the pluralistic world of the first century the early church learned that living as a follower of Jesus demands a response to the norms of any culture (see Col. 2:16; Eph. 4:17).

Two thousand years later, at the beginning of the third millennium, pluralism remains a fact of life for the majority of humankind. The growth of technology, science and global communications has resulted in radically changed lifestyles. This has ensured that to a greater degree than ever before, people are aware of diversity of culture and belief both in their own environment and throughout the world. The faith of the first disciples has become the Christian church, worldwide in influence and scope. The expression of that faith is often local, with cultural variations and traditions, but the essential beliefs are shared on a global scale.

## Many Truths?

However, it might be suggested that pluralism in the twenty-first century presents new and difficult challenges. The world is changing at a faster rate than at any other time in history. An increasing suspicion of the fundamental beliefs of the modern world in science, reason and progress has led to massive upheavals in philosophies and ideologies. Although this began as primarily a Western phenomenon, it has been argued that it is now universal in influence.

These changes are reflected in the personal relationships and attitudes of individuals. For many people, claims of absolute truth disguises a lust for power and the institutions of society are viewed with skepticism and distrust. Progress is no longer viewed as inevitable, truth can only be relative and meaning is con-

structed by the individual.<sup>2</sup> This paper seeks to summarize some of the implications of twenty-first century pluralism for the Christian faith and to explore possible strategies for engagement. It is written from the perspective of the author and therefore inevitably reflects a Western understanding of society. Readers from other cultures, despite the trend toward globalization, will discern both similarities and differences in the interpretation of their own context.

## Pluralism as a Way of Life

Pluralism is a way of life. Cultures and faiths, which for previous generations were distant both geographically and ideologically, are now part of the local environment. This enriches experience, but may also make it more difficult to critique alternatives. Consequently, greater tolerance reigns, deviations from the norm are both expected and accepted, and even the existence of a norm may be questioned.

A pluralistic society is not inevitably a threat to the Christian faith. The varied nature of humanity is part of the richness of creation. It is a gift of God. Pluralism in this sense can encourage a spirit of worship and praise to the Creator and acceptance of those who are different from ourselves.

But diversity of human culture is no longer simply a fact, it has become a creed to be celebrated and a way of life to be defended. Pluralism has become linked with relativism,<sup>3</sup> and together they would seek to ensure that no culture, philosophy, faith or ideology can be assumed to be true or right in a universal sense, but each can be true and right for those who believe. Pluralism has become normative and essential, diversity vital and any choice acceptable. This results not only in variety, but also in multiple realities, each deemed to be equally valid and none privileged as universally relevant.

Pluralistic tolerance acknowledges the existence of a variety of ethical options, each of which must be judged according to its own perspective. Stanley Grenz writes, "The underlying assumption, of course, is that what appears wrong from one vantage point, when viewed from within the community that practices the act, may actually be right."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, any moral choice can only be accepted as good or bad, right or wrong, in its own context, and no universal moral principles can apply.

## **Fragmentation and Faith**

This inevitably results in a fragmented society. Any faith is valid for those who are its adherents, any philosophy is true for those who accept it, any ethic is right for those who live by it. In this culture, certainty is elusive and the concept of faith is diluted and believed to be dependent upon personal choice. Where there is a proliferation of plausibility structures, answers to the deep questions of life can only be tentative and reliance upon the subjective necessarily develops. In this world, the approach to ethical questions may be so varied and contradictory that an agreed response becomes impossible. It might be suggested that this is the context of western society at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As science and technology become rapidly more sophisticated and capable of innovation, ethics struggles to make coherent comment. The traditional frameworks of morality, including Christianity, are marginalized and devalued. Christian beliefs which had been accepted as truth in pre-modern society were questioned and debated in the enlightened thinking of the modern world. In the pluralistic post-modern context, they have become one story among many, one approach to life, which can be accepted or rejected at will, in whole or in part.

In this world, Christian faith is acceptable as one of many options, but the suggestion that Jesus the Son has universal relevance and that He embodies and reveals in a unique way the truth of God cannot be countenanced. Equally, any attempt to suggest that the Christian faith could offer a basis for the development of all-encompassing moral judgements would be rejected. These are challenges that the Christian church, including The Salvation Army, must take seriously if it is to remain effective in the third millennium.

## **Absolute Truth?**

### **Power and Totalitarianism**

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin comments, "In this cultural milieu, the confident announcement of the Christian faith sounds like an arrogant attempt of some people to impose their values on others."<sup>5</sup>

This statement highlights the post-modern fear of the imposition of truth systems. A fundamental suspicion of the values of modernity has led to a belief

that any truth which aspires to universal validity immediately becomes oppressive and dominating. Within the will to bring others into a knowledge of the truth is discerned an inevitable movement towards power over them. Therefore it is suggested that the only way to avoid such controlling behavior is to deny the universal importance of any belief and to adopt a policy of pluralism. This is defined by Zygmunt Bauman as "living with ambivalence."<sup>6</sup>

This theory also seeks to discredit any ethic that would claim universal relevance. Global or national ethical systems are judged to be the product of a controlling leadership that would manipulate society, imposing order and a certain kind of morality, rather than allowing personal development and choice.

It is true that a pluralistic society does provide a safeguard against the possible development of totalitarianism when an ideology or religion is neither challenged, nor held accountable. History supports the notion of oppressive truth systems and the denial of human choice as a possible consequence. Some political regimes have been swift in their destruction of dissidents. Religions, including Christianity, have sometimes tried to impose their beliefs and lifestyle upon populations.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it can be argued that oppression is not the inevitable result of a system that believes to know what is right and true.

### **Love and Power**

At the heart of Christianity is love, the love that is shown by God the Father to His suffering world, demonstrated by Jesus the Son in His sacrificial death and manifested in people through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a love that is sensitive to suffering, a love that in essence is re-creative and empowering. Such love is incompatible with the will to gain power over others. Anthony Thiselton<sup>8</sup> suggests that the will-to-power results in continual conflict in which those who seek to gain supremacy must be constantly on their guard and those who are subjugated suffer loss of hope, purpose and peace. In contrast, the Christian message of self-giving love leads not to conflict and domination, but to relationship, wholeness and a negation of the desire to dominate others.

Thiselton writes "In theological terms the transformation of will-to-power into will-to-love means being transformed into the image of Christ. As such, the self finds itself beloved and cherished by the Father and the Spirit, and bearing the likeness of Christ discovers the joy of finding its life in losing it, of receiving

and giving, of experiencing resurrection through the cross.”<sup>9</sup> This is truth; the truth that in Christ can be found the real source of human flourishing and this truth can never be oppressive, self-seeking, or totalitarian.

The love, which is demonstrated and poured out by Jesus, is indicative of His own relationship with the Father and the Spirit. Sonship is not defined in terms of hierarchy but by dynamic interaction and by reciprocal self-giving and receiving. So the language of human family is employed metaphorically to signify perfect mutual indwelling (see John 14:7,10,11). In the relationship of the Son with the Father is seen an expression of the love that is free from domination and oppression. This love provides a model for human living and Christian community. “The fellowship of the triune God is thus the matrix and the sphere of life for the free community of men and women, without domination and without subjection, in mutual respect and mutual recognition.”<sup>10</sup>

Authentic moral Christian living, true salvationism, in a pluralistic age, will always be a witness to the love shown in Jesus the Son. This love, when properly experienced, and properly demonstrated in the life of the believer, can never lead to the abuse of another human being, it is a love which “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Cor. 13:7).

## Contextual Truth?

### Worldviews and Plausibility Structures

Contemporary understanding maintains that truth is not simply “true,” but true within a plausibility structure.<sup>11</sup> A “truth” makes sense because it relates to a way of thinking about the world and understanding reality. Within this context, the answers to questions such as “what is worthwhile?” “what can be believed?” and “what brings meaning to life?” result in a way of viewing the world. From this are derived notions of right and wrong, good and evil.

Consequently, faith is given coherence within a particular framework of understanding. The worldview of the Christian community is derived from the nature of Christian thought about God, the world and humanity. In turn, the community provides the foundation for Christian morality. Values that are deemed important, such as justice, respect for persons and the stewardship of creation, are rooted within the traditions of the community and particularly within the biblical

story. At the center is Jesus, who is not just teacher and example, but who embodies the ethic. True Christian morality is not a set of codified laws, which must be followed blindly, nor a set of principles to be imposed upon people, it is a way of life. This life makes sense when it is set in proper context, that of self-giving love. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon write: "they [i.e., Christian ethics] make sense, not because the principles they espouse make sense in the abstract, as perfectly rational behavior, which ought to sound reasonable to any intelligent person. Christian ethics only make sense from the point of view of what we believe has happened in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>12</sup>

## Relative Values

If this were the case, in the relativistic ethos of the pluralistic world, the corollary would be that any ethic is only valid within its own context. Relativism maintains that it is wrong to pass judgement upon groups or individuals, even if their moral values are different from, or even contradict, our own. Each must be accepted as right according to their own worldview. Therefore, any suggestion that the ethical norms of Christianity make sense outside the Christian church would be rejected and interpreted as an attempt to impose and dominate. Whilst not disputing the right of Christianity to its own morality, the pluralist would argue that no universal or absolute claim could be made.

But it may be suggested that the presence of pluralism does not necessarily lead to affirmation of the ideology, and it is not inevitable that all beliefs or moral systems must be equally true, equally significant. Ethicist Robert Kane states that the existence of alternative beliefs may lead to the questioning of personally held convictions, but need not entail acceptance of those alternatives. "We can be open and tolerant to other points of view while believing that some views are better than others and while believing that one is absolutely correct."<sup>13</sup>

It is self-evident that this reasoning would be declared invalid in the post-modern environment, where all truth claims are viewed with suspicion. However, it can be argued that when this distrust is accorded absolute status it becomes self-defeating. In order to retain any credibility, the suspicion of absolute truth itself can only be provisional and open to revision.

While the relativist view claims to be tolerant and accepting, it is difficult to understand how it can have practical application. There are instances when opposing sides of a moral conflict cannot be reconciled without compromise and it would seem to be impossible to simultaneously uphold the validity of both opinions. An appeal to common sense may also be relevant. There is no doubt that, despite creeds of tolerance and pluralism, all people do privilege certain beliefs and few, if any, are so tolerant that any creed could be acceptable. Realistically, Kane is correct in his reasoning; even the most dedicated pluralist would have some taboos.

Some radical post-modern theorists may deny the possibility of any shared understanding, dispensing with community and limiting validity to the individual who inhabits a solipsistic world where the only reality is personal and anything is only "true for me."<sup>14</sup> Taken to its logical limits, this theory implies that any corporate discussion or decision-making, including in the sphere of ethics, becomes untenable. But human experience would indicate that although many things are intensely personal, including to some extent faith and values, there is possibility of real communication with others based on mutual understanding of concepts and ideas. In terms of religion and lifestyle, the experience of the individual and the community of shared belief are interdependent and both contribute to wholeness.

## Context and Communication

Consequently, it might be suggested that although Christians may concede that the morality of the Church is fundamentally rooted within our own worldview and cannot be imposed upon those who do not share it, we would reject the contention that this demands acceptance of a relativistic pluralism in which the morality of all groups, nations or individuals is accepted as equally valid.

While privileging the norms of a particular faith tradition, moral theologians have argued that there can be areas of agreement between Christian and non-Christian ethics. For example, the natural law tradition would suggest that there are values which are accessible to all human beings, independently of any religious faith, and that these can form a common basis for morality in society and can lead to human flourishing.<sup>15</sup> This theory, while rooting ethics in common

humanity rather than in specific revelation; does not necessarily lead to consensus, as the interpretation of agreed principles may differ considerably in practice. An alternative approach would retain the need for specific revelation but would suggest that a shared practical response to circumstances may be possible for groups who do not begin with a common understanding or motivation.

## Only Truth?

In the pluralistic world, the relationship of Christianity in general, and of Jesus Christ in particular, to other religions cannot be either ignored or assumed.

The aggressive exclusivism of former generations is now judged by some Christians to be intolerant, needlessly harsh and alien to faith in a loving God. To assert that the only way to salvation is through explicit faith in Jesus Christ before death is interpreted as misrepresenting the meaning of biblical texts such as, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6) and "... there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Although exclusivism is consistent with much of Christian history, many contemporary scholars would be more inclusive in their approach, and while retaining a belief in the ultimate significance of Jesus, would acknowledge that within other faiths there are evidences of the grace of God.<sup>16</sup>

Religious pluralism would claim that all religious traditions are independently valid paths to salvation. This most closely resembles the ethos of society at the beginning of the twenty-first century and is viewed as the tolerant antidote to the exclusivism which, at times, has led to oppression, injustice and war. Pluralists would argue, therefore, that dialogue for the sake of humanity could only take place when each religion is accepted as having value and worth equal to that of all others.

However, pluralism has implications for belief in the unique nature of Jesus Christ, who becomes one mediator among many, one revelation of God, one way to salvation. For Christians who assert that the status of Jesus as the "one and only Son" (see John 1:14; 3:16) precludes a pluralistic theology of religions, this compromise is unacceptable. The Manila Manifesto, which was endorsed by The Salvation Army as part of its Vision 2000 initiative, states: "There is only one gospel because there is only one Christ, who because of His death and resurrec-

tion is Himself the only way to salvation. We therefore reject both the relativism which regards all religions and spiritualities as equally valid approaches to God, and the syncretism which tries to mix faith in Christ with other faiths.”<sup>17</sup>

But neither can condemnation of another faith be justified. Final judgement is the prerogative of God, who alone will judge what is good and what is bad in all faiths, including Christianity. In the interim, the best course of action for all Christians, including The Salvation Army, must be as a faithful witness to Christ, coupled with an attitude of respect for those who do not share our faith. We are called to proclaim the message of Christ, but are not ultimately responsible for the decision of others to accept or reject that message.

## The World and the Truth

It would seem, then, that post-modern pluralism presents both challenge and opportunity. As Salvationists, we must take these challenges seriously and must learn to exploit the opportunities. There are a number of possible options for the Christian faith, including The Salvation Army, in the twenty-first century. In terms of our military metaphor, these might be described as retreat, aggression, surrender and creative peace making.

### Retreat

The Christian church could become nothing more than a minority pursuit, thought to be vitally important by those who belong, but marginalized by mainstream society. In the seclusion of this psychological, and sometimes physical, Christian “bunker” Christ might be celebrated as Savior and Lord, but it would be a faith for the few. From this safety we might critique the world, but would not engage with it. An alternative lifestyle may be developed, providing for all our needs. No criticism of any existing separatist Christian community is either intended or implied, nevertheless, for The Salvation Army to ignore or retreat from the relativism and pluralism of the contemporary world would be to lose sight of our goal. It cannot be a possibility, for it is incompatible with the ethos and motivation of our movement and its mission to “preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Aggression**

Alternatively, in keeping with the blatant military style of early Salvationism, the possibility of new "war" could be suggested. Salvationists and other Christians may defy the challenges of the pluralistic world, taking every opportunity to condemn and to retaliate with militant and aggressive Christianity. This would result in a new fundamentalism, which could well contribute to the isolationist group already described.

However, both of these solutions fail to engage successfully with contemporary culture. They would result in a faith that was independent of the socio-historical situation, or so alienated from society that it would have no relevance. Changes in society resulting from a pluralistic ideology cannot be ignored, discounted nor denied. To attempt to do so would be to seek to remain relevant to an earlier phase of society, a world that no longer exists.

### **Surrender**

A third possibility would be to accept the verdict of the times, to concede that Jesus is only one way among many to find salvation and that the Christian way is coercive when it is proclaimed as universal truth.

But this is not consistent with the essential nature of the faith we declare. A Salvationist understanding of Jesus is that in His relationship to God, He was and is unique. We acknowledge that He, by His sacrificial death, made possible reconciliation with God, with others and with ourselves, in a way that is not paralleled or surpassed in any other faith or ideology.<sup>19</sup>

We may agree that those acting on behalf of Christianity, and perhaps some within our own denomination, have sometimes been guilty of imperialism and authoritarianism.<sup>20</sup> But we would assert that this is not inherent in the absolute truth of Christ, but is the result of human understanding, which is inevitably flawed and incomplete.

Surrendering to the ideology of the age is not an option, even if we must accept some of its criticisms.

### **Creative Peace Making**

A final strategy is that of creative engagement with pluralism, in whatever

form it takes. The relativistic pluralism of the twenty-first century will confront the Church in every aspect of faith and life. The Christian story will be heard as one among many and the values of God's Kingdom will determine the moral judgements only of those who belong. As Salvationists are confronted by many options and opportunities, a danger for some may be a tendency to doubt the final significance of our faith. In order to counteract this possible loss of confidence, it will be necessary to critique the new cultural trends, to assess those elements which can be affirmed, and to discern what must be ultimately rejected as alien to a true knowledge of God, and to right Christian living. We must discover what elements of the Salvationist story are true for all times and all peoples because they comprise the core of the Christian faith, and what traditions belong to the culture of another time or place and can therefore be superseded. Salvationists of the twenty-first century must understand the prevailing worldviews and judge them in the light of the Christian gospel, rather than judge the gospel in the light of the world. Both theology and praxis must be contextual, but not compromised.

## Telling the Story

In the pluralistic world we must learn to communicate and interpret our faith. Attempts to communicate a relevant and contextualized message must not lead to compromise of the essential truth of Jesus Christ. It is the story of Jesus that will be important, allied with the story of how faith in Him brings hope and fulfilment to all humankind irrespective of age, race or social status. This story will show how it is possible for truth to be universal and unique, yet not oppressive, not controlling. In a world of many "truths," the story of Jesus the Son, who is the truth (see John 14:6) must be told. A major factor will be the faithful witness of Christians to the faith engendered by this story. Post-modern spirituality is not interested in eloquently presented propositional dogma, but in what is effective for the individual. The challenge to Salvationists is evident. It is not careful arguments, but sincere witness that will convince people of the truth of Jesus. We must learn to live consistently in the power of the Spirit of Jesus the Son, so that the story of the love that does not wish to dominate is evident in that living.

## Uncompromising Lifestyle

We must engage with the ethical concerns of the pluralistic world in such a way that the values of the community of Jesus are declared without compromise. For many Salvationists there will be new challenges. Daily life in a pluralistic world where tolerance and acceptance are the norm may lead to uncertainty and confusion. Although few will capitulate to relativism in its most extreme forms, many will, in some way, be affected by the ethos of the age. Changes in society in the twentieth century have to some extent been mirrored by changes in the attitudes of our own movement, and it is likely that this trend will continue. Together with Christians of all denominations, The Salvation Army has a responsibility to critique societal change and to judge it in the light of Christ, accepting what is wholesome and good and rejecting that which is unworthy. As contemporary culture displays increasingly tolerant attitudes towards a wide range of subjects, including gender issues, social responsibility, the family and medical and scientific ethics, Salvationists must be prepared to identify and justify an appropriate response.

The Salvation Army must learn to equip its soldiers and adherents for the pluralistic world so that there is no discontinuity between the lifestyle of the worshipping community and that of the disseminated body of believers in employment, in family and friendship groups and in public life. This is not a new focus for the Christian; it is derived from the New Testament and has been taught through the centuries. However, in a world where there are so many choices and where the ethos of society privileges none, it may be suggested that there is a more urgent need for believers who are able to both articulate and demonstrate the nature of Christian morality.

Dr. Nigel Cameron<sup>21</sup> has argued that the relegation of religion to the world of private pietism in modernity has encouraged the secularization process. Increasingly, Christians in the public arena have adopted the values of secular society. If the Christian faith is not to be further marginalized by mainstream pluralistic society, Christians, including all Salvationists, must be willing to reclaim a public focus for their faith.

## **A Voice in Society**

An inevitable result of pluralism is that Christianity will be one among many voices in society. But it has as much right as any other to be heard. However, this will not be the case if Christians continue to be reticent in declaring their allegiance. The dynamic has changed. The prevailing ethos of western society can no longer be assumed to be Christian, and religious leaders who speak on moral issues are likely to be marginalized. Despite this, the Church cannot abandon society, even if society would abandon the Church. The Salvation Army, with the churches, must continue to address the moral needs of the age, or we will have failed our faith. In the pluralistic chaos, the Church must regain faith in its own relevance and in the power of the Christian story to provide meaning, hope and a basis for morality. Our moral values cannot be imposed upon people who do not share them, for this is contrary to the basis of our faith, but they can be witnessed to and incarnated by those who believe.

Ethics in the pluralistic world will inevitably involve conflict and dissent. Various faiths, nations and sub-cultures may advocate radically different understandings of the good and of how virtues are to be prioritized. Society must learn to provide ways of dealing with this diversity and its effects. Where there is difference or conflict, careful negotiation in order to achieve an acceptable solution that does not compromise the standards of Christianity must be explored. As Salvationists we will not be able to provide easy answers or irrefutable arguments. We need not accept the prevailing values of relativism, but for the sake of humanity, we may need to work alongside those with different values from our own.

## **Faiths and the Future**

This might be demonstrated in the arena of religious pluralism where there are new and exciting challenges to be faced. There are new opportunities, particularly in Western culture, to learn about, to learn from and to see evidences of the grace of God in the faithful adherents of other faith communities. In many countries, Christians, including most Salvationists, live and work alongside people who belong to a variety of other faiths. Together they will experience justice and

injustice, truth and falsehood, good and evil. It would seem imperative that, for the good of society, the possibility of shared communication between religions should be explored, and that an element of this must be a consistent and coherent response to the others' faith. Such inter-faith dialogue may be achieved in a spirit of tolerance and acceptance, without, as religious pluralism would demand, an implicit endorsement of beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

Inevitably, this approach will be more realistic in some cultures than in others. For Christians whose status within their own society is that of a minority, sometimes a persecuted or proscribed minority, this model will have little or no relevance. However, for Western society, where Christianity has majority or equal status, the possibility of working with other faith communities in ways that will ultimately lead to the good of society must be explored.

The fragmentation of a pluralistic world inevitably leads to conflicts into which religions are often drawn, despite, in many instances, a basic commitment to peace. When the opportunity arises to work for justice and reconciliation alongside those of other faith commitments, it would seem to be consistent with Salvationist thinking to do so. Circumstances may reflect a need for religions to focus upon their common humanity, rather than upon credal differences. In the absence of a final and ultimate peace on this earth, we must demonstrate a commitment to working towards peace in all aspects of life and with all peoples.<sup>23</sup> The practical ways in which this can be demonstrated will vary according to the situation and context, and careful thought and deliberation will be necessary before any course of action is sanctioned. But sometimes hope will emerge, not through one faith alone, but through the combined efforts of those of more than one allegiance.

However, despite these opportunities, the dangers inherent in an *ideology* of pluralism cannot be ignored. The witness of the Salvationist must be to Christ, or we will have lost sight of our foundation and goal.

## The International Salvation Army

The beginning of the twenty-first century marks a time of transition. The internationalism of our movement may be both an asset and a restriction. Despite increasing globalization and the belief of scholars that the world is becoming

ever more homogenous in culture, significant differences remain. For some territories, the challenges of post-modern pluralism may not yet pose a significant problem; for others, religious diversity may engender quite different dilemmas from those described. However, the international focus must not be allowed to restrict the local response. Salvation Army history documents instances of appropriate engagement with cultures, customs and moral challenges.<sup>24</sup> This must be an ongoing policy in a world that is at the same time both homogeneous and pluralistic. Each Salvation Army territory of the twenty-first century will need to develop its own approach to ongoing, rapid change. For many territories there will need to be an encouragement of the local and specific initiative, as particular needs are addressed. It may be that in some respects, although still united by faith and purpose, we become a more diverse movement than at any time in our history. However as the first decades of the new century necessitate adaptation and change in many areas of Salvation Army leadership, work and worship throughout the world, the global network can be a source of resources, strength and encouragement.

The challenges of a pluralistic world cannot be ignored, denied nor unconditionally embraced. Creative engagement may be costly, but it will be exciting and ultimately it is the only plausible option in a constantly changing world. Dr. Tom Wright, Canon Theologian at Westminster Abbey, London has written: "Just as integrity demands that we think clearly and rigorously about Jesus Himself, so it also demands that we think clearly and rigorously about the world in which we follow Him today, the world we are called to shape with the loving, transforming message of the gospel."<sup>25</sup> History suggests that the birth and development of The Salvation Army was a radical and creative response to the needs of a particular society, at a particular time.<sup>26</sup> Such creativity must mark our response to twenty-first century pluralism.

Through all changes, challenges and cultural trends, one security remains the final and universal significance of a self-giving God as expressed in Jesus Christ. He is neither fettered by the rationalism of modernity nor marginalized by the pluralistic ideology of post-modernity. He must be the focus for the times.

As the old signposts are swept away,  
    help us, Lord;  
as we stand uncertain and hesitant,  
    help us, Lord;  
as we hear voices bidding us both forward and back,  
    help us, Lord ...  
    Help us to know You better  
    that we may love You better  
    and loving You better,  
    may we fear nothing  
except the loss of Your presence with us in the way.<sup>27</sup>

## Notes

1. Colin Hart, *The Ethics of Paul* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1999), pp. 5ff.
2. For an extended discussion, see e.g., J. Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be* (London: SPCK, 1995), part 1.
3. Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 14.
4. Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest* (Leicester: Apólos, 1997), p. 210.
5. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 7.
6. Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity, or Living with Ambivalence*, quoted in David Hilborn, *Picking Up the Pieces* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), p. 22.
7. Middleton and Walsh, p. 71.
8. Anthony C. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), p. 161.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God* (London: SCM, 1991), pp. xv–xvi.
11. For a discussion of the functions of plausibility structures, see Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (London: Collins, 1980), pp. 17ff.
12. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 71.
13. Robert Kane, *Through the Moral Maze* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), p. 16.
14. Gene Edward Veith, *Guide to Contemporary Culture* (Leicester: Crossway Books, 1994), pp. 77ff.
15. Gerard J. Hughes, "Natural Law," in Bernard Hoose, ed., *Christian Ethics* (London, Cassell, 1998), pp. 48ff.
16. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5 (London: SCM, 1993), pp. 117ff.
17. *The Manila Manifesto* (Pasadena: The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, 1989), p. 14.
18. The Salvation Army "Core Mission Statement," in *Orders and Regulations for Officers* (London: The Salvation Army, 1997), preface.
19. *Salvation Story: Salvation Handbook of Doctrine* (London: International Headquarters, 1998), pp. 37, 67.
20. *The Salvation Army Year Book 1926* (St. Albans: Campfield Press), pp. 110–111. References to "officers that are above the average type of native," being "in no sense behind their Western comrades in the essential qualities of Salvationism." But see also note 24.
21. Nigel Cameron, *Commending the Christian Faith in the Political Arena* (lecture at Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, February 5, 2001).
22. Eric Sharpe distinguishes types of inter-religious dialogue and their respective goals. See Eric J. Sharpe, "The Goals of Inter-religious Dialogue," in John Hick, ed., *Truth and Dialogue* (London: Sheldon Press, 1974).
23. Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), p. 109.
24. Robert Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army*, vol. 2. Frederick Booth Tucker "held strongly that the approach to the Indians should be from the Indian standpoint and that it was no part of the business of a missionary to Europeanize orientals," p. 272. Arch Wiggins, *The History of The Salvation Army*, vol. 4. Captain Yamamuro produced a newspaper in colloquial Japanese, rather than in the classical Japanese that was normally used for writing so that the poorer people could understand it, p. 70 (New York: The Salvation Army, 1979). A recent example of contextualization is that of the retired Salvation Army officer who has written an Osiya language version of the story of Jesus in the style of Indian epic poetry.
25. N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2000), p. x.
26. L.C.B. Seaman, *Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 309. "William Booth had founded The Salvation Army in 1878. Its success (after the inevitable initial disap-

*Notes*

proval of reputable religious bodies and the physical resistance of the ruffianly element) was ascribable to the quite exceptional contemporaneity of its methods.”

27. Edmund Banyard, *Turn But a Stone* (Redhill: National Christian Education Council, 1992), p. 46.

# Notes on Miroslav Volf's Keynote Lecture to the Salvation Army's International Theology and Ethics Symposium

*James E. Read*

Miroslav Volf, presently the Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School, delivered the keynote address on the opening night of the Symposium. We could not possibly have asked for a more appropriate way of beginning the Symposium or a more capable theologian for the occasion. What follows are my unofficial notes of that lecture, offered as a record of the event and published here as an inducement to the readers of *Word & Deed* to discover Volf's theology for themselves if they have not already done so. The points at which his work could illuminate, enrich, critique and be critiqued by Salvationist theology and practice are numerous.

In his introductory remarks, Miroslav Volf said he was "delighted" to be with Salvationists (and this was only his second time to meet Salvationists) at a time when they were reflecting on reflection, belief and practices. He said that the conjunction of belief and practice had been very important in his own theological life. Theologians such as himself, he admitted, struggle with the tendency to spin belief upon belief, playing with their internal logic and never quite touching the ground. But as he sees it, from a Christian perspective, beliefs may

not legitimately be separated from practices, or practices from beliefs. Christian beliefs are by their very nature practice-oriented, he said; and Christian practices are not mindless but have beliefs “inscribed” into their very nature. And so, he said, both practitioners and theologians need to come together.

Professor Volf’s topic for the evening was “The Trinitarian Mission of the Church.” I believe my notes are faithful and they have been reviewed by Professor Volf, but they are strictly my notes, and should not be uncritically attributed to him.

## The Mission of the Church

There are three central aspects to the Church’s mission: the rebirth of persons; the reconciliation of people; and the care of bodies.

### Rebirth of Persons

The Church is called to proclaim that, through the Holy Spirit, God seeks to pour God’s love into the hearts of those who are weak, who are sinners and who are enemies. Facing God’s arms outstretched toward us on the cross, we dare to look into the abyss of our own sin and recognize who we are—weak, sinners, enemies and ungodly. Freedom from self-deception comes, however, not simply because we know that we have been embraced, but also because of the certainty that the embrace of God will liberate us from the enslavement to evil that has so profoundly shaped us. One speaks of more than just liberation: the grace that forgives is the grace that also transforms, makes new. Therein lies the significance of this metaphor of rebirth.

The Church is called to proclaim the event of justification as grace through which God forgives, transforms and promises to glorify human beings and thus take them up into God’s own Trinitarian embrace.

### Reconciliation of People

God’s offer of grace gives us hope. In baptism we are *identified* with the death of Christ and are raised as those who live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself up for us. In the Lord’s Supper, the Church repeatedly celebrates and expresses the very heart of the Christian life. We celebrate the Lord’s Supper to reaffirm our communion with Christ, but also most

profoundly to be *reshaped* in Christ's own image. We are called to do what Christ has done for us: as Christ has acted to reconcile us toward God, so we ought to engage in the ministry of reconciliation between people.

For the most part, the Church has understood its ministry of reconciliation in reference to the call for *individuals* to reconcile. For the larger world of social relations the twin categories of "liberation" and "justice" have come into special prominence. I think this emphasis is dangerously one-sided. Reconciliation is not opposed to liberation, but reconciliation is the *overarching* concept of which liberation is a part. One needs a theological perspective that recognizes the depth of evil that was being perpetrated [e.g., in the former Yugoslavia, Volf's homeland]—that is what is right about liberation theology—but one also needs to offer the possibility of an end to violence and one needs to open the possibility of future reconciliation. Liberation apart from reconciliation easily becomes destructive.

### Care of Bodies

I think central in Jesus' mission was the care of bodies.

Protestants have had a difficulty with this aspect of salvation. Martin Luther could not quite accept that ministry of healing of bodies belongs to Christ's saving work, and so every time he would see a reference to the healing of bodies in the Gospel text he would immediately translate it as a metaphor of healing of the soul and conscience from sin. So the healing of bodies didn't matter for him as such; it mattered as a symbol of something else. But when you read the Gospels with fresh eyes, I don't think that interpretation would never occur to you.

It would seem that bodies as such mattered to Jesus because the rebirth of persons who live in this material world and who make up the good creation of God cannot be complete without the redemption of their bodies. The new birth of persons is the beginning of the rebirth of the whole cosmos. Similarly the reconciliation of people who live embodied lives will be complete only when reconciliation of all things takes place. There can be no eschatological bliss for God's people without eschatological peace for God's world. Hence, the care of bodies.

Persons, relationships and bodies being made whole is what the Church is involved in with its mission.

## A Mission Grounded in God's Unconditional Grace

How does the recreating, reconciling, healing mission take place? Here we come to the centrality of the notion of grace.

For some time now Christian theology's mission has looked more like an exercise inspired by John the Baptist (the preacher of judgment) than by Jesus Christ. Justice, and hence judgment, was placed at the center of the mission. Now, I think that as a result the Church's own engagement with the world has become as graceless as that world itself. It will be argued later that justice does remain an important concern for Christians, but justice must be framed in something larger than itself. And the something-larger-than-justice is really the notion of grace.

### Excursus on Justice

I want to suggest to you why I believe that concerns with justice are inadequate:

Strict justice is *not possible*. Any action we undertake now is inescapably ambiguous and at best partly just—and therefore partly unjust.

Even if strict justice were possible, *it would not always be desirable*. If I walk down the street and someone punches me in the face and breaks my tooth, it ought to be some kind of justice that the tooth of the other person should be broken. Since I not only lost the tooth, however, but was also suddenly and unsuspectingly violated, I think to myself: "the Old Testament standard of 'a tooth for a tooth' isn't just. Not because it's too harsh, but because it's too merciful. At least two of the other person's teeth should be broken!" A world of strict justice would certainly not be a world in which we would want to live.

Even if strict justice were both possible and desirable, it still would not be sufficient. Even if justice could be satisfied, the conflicting parties would continue to be at odds with one another. The enforcement of justice would rectify past wrongs, but it would not create communion between victims and perpetrators. And yet some sort of communion needs to be established if we are to be healed as human beings. We need more than justice; we need something like reconciliation.

## Two Fundamental Forms of Grace that Qualify the Mission of the Church

The exclusive pursuit of justice will not do. We need more than justice, not less. We need grace.

I don't want to go into a very abstract treatise about the relationship between grace and justice; rather I want to show you by example two fundamental forms of grace and how they relate to justice.

### Hospitality

Hospitality has as its background some *need* of the person to whom we are hospitable (food, shelter, human touch, love, etc.). Essential for hospitality is the fact that the person to whom we are hospitable has, strictly speaking, no *right* to our hospitality. If we don't offer hospitality, we do the person no wrong; if we do offer it, we give something *more* than that person had a claim upon. Going *beyond* justice is essential here—anything *less* than justice is excluded. Hospitality is “justice plus,” not “justice minus.” Even though justice is not directly present in hospitality, the concern for justice is the necessary background for hospitality. You cannot be hospitable without attending to justice for others.

### Forgiveness

The second form of grace is forgiveness. The background to forgiveness is not a simple *need*, but a *transgression* of one person against another. To forgive means to give up rightful anger and to forgo rightful claims of justice against that person. What makes forgiveness “grace” is that the person whom we forgive does not have a *right* to be forgiven. Forgiveness is going beyond justice. It is *more* than justice is—anything less than justice would be excluded by it.

## How Christ's Death Embodies this Grace and Thus Sets a Pattern for the Church

Forgiveness and hospitality—these two fundamental forms of grace affirm justice but go beyond it. That brings us to the very heart of the Christian message, the death of Christ and its relationship to the grace of God. The reason why grace stands at the heart of the mission of the Church is because it is at the heart

of what God has done for us in Christ. Romans 5:1-11 speaks about Christ's death as God's atonement for sins and care for our wellbeing (i.e., forgiveness and hospitality). The divine self-emptying becomes the church's pattern.

## Connecting the Work of Christ and What We are Commissioned to Do with the Trinitarian Life of God

I will not go into very lofty theology, but I must remind you of the important distinction between the "immanent Trinity" and the "economic Trinity." Basically, the distinction is very simple. "Immanent Trinity" describes the way the three Divine Persons are, quite apart from their engagement with the world. "Economic Trinity" describes the relationship which the Triune God has with the world that God first created and then seeks to redeem.

When we ask, "What is it in the Triune God that serves as a model for us?" I think it is really the economic Trinity we should emulate.

In some of my writings I have described the immanent Trinity as "love that dances." It's a perfect love, in which each person gives and each person receives love. In many ways of course that provides an example for us to follow, but the Church lives in a world ravaged by sin and death, and that world needs something other than the love that dances.

So we come to the economic Trinity. We don't quite know *why* the world was created, we just know that this divine love sought a place to "spill itself over." That is the first step: the world was created so we too could be objects of God's love. But, as it happens, the world has also gone astray and that brings us to the second step. Part and parcel of the economic Trinity is not only creating the world in an incredible act of generosity and sustaining it in an act of hospitality, but also engaging the world in love to restore it to a communion it once had with God, a communion that has now been ravaged by sin and death.

The Church's mission is situated at this particular point. The Church's identity emerges from God's estrangement from the world. The Church's mission is a *continuation* of that love that God has shown toward the world and *participation* in that love toward the world.

Grace is the face of divine love turned toward the world gone astray. Grace

is also the face of the Church participating in that love. The mission of the Church is therefore precisely placed between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Put differently, it follows the movement of Trinitarian love from the world of perfect love and bliss to take the engagement of the world in need to lift up the world into the embrace of the Triune God.

Now, is this a *hopeful* message? Some people say, "I don't know—being crucified, self-giving, self-sacrifice—these are not very hopeful terms." And yet, everything in the Church depends precisely on these terms. We tend to think about hopeful acts as power acts that can destroy evil by fiat and establish the good. And yet, I think precisely those acts of power are not so profoundly hopeful because they are destructive.

The power that is hopeful is the power that follows God and His movement downward to humanity and expects from God resurrection into God's Trinitarian life. It is from *this* perspective, I think, that the Church should engage in God's reclaiming the rebirth of persons, in reconciling the people, and in taking care of their bodies.

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*Professor Miroslav Volf, the child of Pentecostal parents (his father was a minister), was born and raised in the former communist state of Yugoslavia. He endured the anti-Christian hostilities of that regime. He also knows the hatred and evil of the ethnic violence that thrived after the demise of communist Yugoslavia. His book, Exclusion and Embrace, which deals with the limits and possibilities of loving our enemies, grew out of these contexts.*

*Professor Volf, in addition to his faculty appointment at Yale, is currently Visiting Professor of Systematic Theology at the Evangelical-Theological Faculty, Osijek, Croatia. Previous teaching appointments include eight years in Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.*

*Professor Volf has authored a number of books, including Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work; A Passion for God's Reign; A Spacious Heart; After Our Likeness; The Church as the Image of the Trinity; and Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation (for which he received the Christianity Today Book Award for 1996). His most recent honor is to be named as the recipient of the 2002 Louis Grawemeyer Award in Religion.*

*Professor Miroslav Volf is married to New Testament scholar Judith Gundry-Volf. They are the parents of one child, Nathanael.*

## Book Reviews

Lyon, David, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times*  
Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000. 188 pp.

Reviewed by James Pedlar, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

Disneyland has become a popular conceptual tool for social theory, particularly among those theorists who deal with developments in contemporary Western culture. Some readers may be familiar with Jean Baudrillard's controversial proclamation of Disneyland as the "real America." David Lyon, a Canadian sociologist and evangelical Christian, is not nearly this radical, although he sees much in the Disneyland experience that mirrors cultural conditions. His book presents a broad-ranging and accessible introduction to some major developments in Western culture and probes the implications of these developments for religion.

Lyon takes as his point of departure a 1996 evangelistic crusade which was held in the Disneyland park in California, using this event as a central metaphor for his exploration of religion in what he terms "post-modern times." In using the term "postmodern," he does not propose that modernity itself has somehow come to an end, but rather that modernity is now in question, and a new social order is emerging. This new order is, according to Lyon, profoundly influenced by the development of communication and information technologies and the growth of consumerism, and could be described as "Disneysque." A virtual fantasy world of simulated and commodified experiences is emerging. The social meanings of both time and space are compressed, reducing history is to nostal-

gia, as the future recedes into an ever-expanding present, and individuals move from "site" to "site" in cyberspace without leaving their chair. "Postmodern" is simply Lyon's form of shorthand for describing these social conditions.

Lyon outlines a number of ways in which these developments are creating problems for traditional forms of religion. Pervasive consumerism leads to an attitude among "seekers" that they can pick and choose from a wide variety of belief systems in the way which best suits their needs. Excessive individualism and a "secularization of the self," as seen in many current "spirituality" movements, leads to an increasing attunement to the "inner voice" and a delegitimation of external voices of authority. Choice has replaced constraint as a central value, undermining the ethical dimension of religion. The above-mentioned shift in social understandings of time and space has the potential to undermine both shared memory and hope for the future, which are central to our message.

But Lyon is also quick to point to the deficiencies of traditional sociological theories of secularization, which hold that religion will continue to decline in significance as humanity develops an increasingly rational-scientific worldview. Religion, according to Lyon, has been "deregulated," but continues to play an important role. It seems that Western societies are open to the belief in God and a quest for authentic spirituality. While this does not translate into bodies in the pews, one can certainly see that there is potential for evangelism in these conditions. However, Lyon does not go so far as fellow Canadian Reginald Bibby, who has argued in his 1993 book, *Unknown Gods*, that the failure of religious groups to grow in this environment is a result of the failure to identify markets and deliver products. Unfortunately, such blatant acceptance of consumerism is seen in some church growth methods. One of the problems that Lyon raises with such an approach is that it leaves the Church without a prophetic voice. How can the Church maintain a critical voice in a culture that is based on fast, friendly and guiltless consumption? What aspects of consumerism, if any, can we adopt for the sake of evangelism without losing our theological integrity?

Dialogue is clearly needed between the cultural and theological disciplines. Certainly there are elements of the contemporary cultural setting which need to be actively resisted by The Salvation Army, and the need is just as great for a critical look at evangelical culture itself. It is striking how much time and energy was spent by the leaders of the early Army in attempting to correct misconceptions

among the soldiery and the Church at large. This is seen most clearly in Catherine Booth's *Popular Christianity*. Such attention to popular Christianity and salvationism today would be fruitful, keeping in mind the trends towards consumerism and self-absorption which are seen in the broader context. One can certainly see both of these themes emerging in the content and packaging of some contemporary worship music over the past few years or even in the marketing of Christian products in general. Lyon's work causes us to question such developments and highlights the need for teaching and correction to be both theologically grounded and culturally aware.

This book does cover a lot of ground and some knowledge of social theory would be helpful for the reader, although this is by no means required. I would recommend it to any who are interested in keeping abreast of the critical issues raised by developments in contemporary Western culture.

Tutu, Desmond Mpilo, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, New York: Doubleday, 1999. 287 pp.

Reviewed by Daniel Diakanwa, Multicultural Ministries and African Heritage Consultant, The Salvation Army, USA Eastern Territory

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's book *No Future Without Forgiveness* is both a memoir and a plea for global reconciliation. We expect him to be able to speak with authority on these matters since he chaired South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the mid-1990s and came to world prominence from that position. Using South Africa as an example, Tutu explains that reconciliation is possible in Rwanda, Northern Ireland, the Middle East and anywhere in the world. He presents a compelling image of "true forgiveness," arguing that true forgiveness is attainable when the culprit accepts his or her wrongdoing and asks for forgiveness, as well as when the victim agrees to forgive.

In the last chapter of the book, Archbishop Tutu deals with various aspects of the nature of forgiveness. First, he points out that "if the process of forgiveness and healing is to succeed, ultimate acknowledgement by the culprit is indispensable ... not completely so but nearly so" (p. 270). In other words, the first stage toward reconciliation is the admission of wrongdoing. This in fact seems to be the crucial starting point of a successful reconciliation process. Tutu goes on to say "true reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth. It could even make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile" (p. 270). He also points out the fact that acknowledgment of wrongdoing allows the victim to forgive the culprit.

Tutu's second point is that forgiving does not require forgetting. He claims that remembering an offense helps ensure that such an atrocity does not happen again. He goes on to say, "Forgiving means abandoning your right to pay back the perpetrator in his own coin, but it is a loss that liberates the victim" (p. 272). Thirdly, he points out that the confession of the perpetrator and the expression of forgiveness by the victim does not complete the reconciliation process. There must be some type of reparation (not to be confused with retribution) on the part of the wrongdoer to justify the sincerity of his or her apology. Tutu says, "confession, forgiveness and reparation, wherever feasible, form part of a continuum" (p. 273). He points out the example of South Africa, a location that is in great need of reparation from the evil caused by apartheid. It is clear that Tutu is not

advocating that there must be reparation in order to accept an apology from the culprit. He is simply saying that reparation, whenever possible, is part of the reconciliation process. For instance, while murder is irreparable, theft or injustice can be reparable.

Tutu argues against the view held by many Jews that it is impossible for the living to forgive wrongs committed against the dead. Recalling the fact that Jews have received substantial compensation from European governments and institutions, Tutu contradicts this idea by arguing that "those who did not suffer directly as a result of the action for which the reparation is being paid should also be incapable of receiving compensation on behalf of others" (p. 278).

While Tutu presents perhaps the most poignant plea for global reconciliation, the weakness of his argument comes from the fact that he singles out the South African experience as his prime example. In presenting more examples of successful reconciliation around the world he might have solidified his argument. Furthermore, the success of reconciliation efforts in South Africa can only be shown over time. In fact, one wonders whether black and white South Africans are truly reconciled or if they have simply reached a certain level of tolerance. Thus, reconciliation in South Africa cannot be considered a solid base upon which to rest a belief in the possibility of reconciliation in other parts of the world.

Aside from the weakness of using the South African experience as an exemplar case for global reconciliation, Archbishop Tutu has given humanity an unprecedented manifesto of forgiveness and reconciliation. Contrary to Tutu's belief that there will be "no future without forgiveness," I believe that there will always be a "future," whether chaotic or peaceful, without forgiveness. However, there will be no *peace* without forgiveness.



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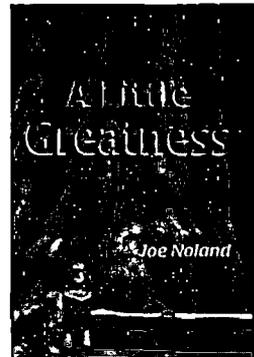
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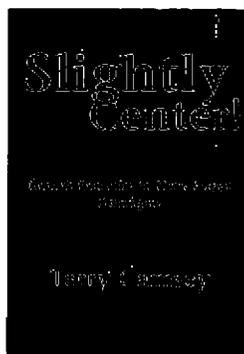
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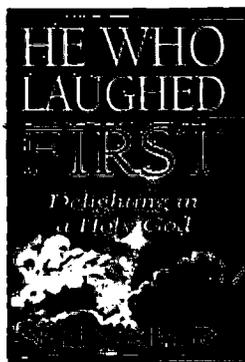
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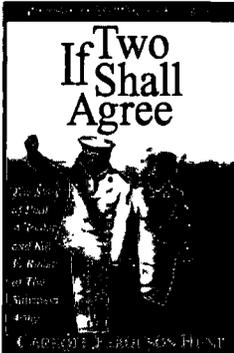
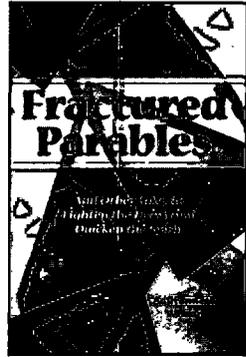
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