

The Salvation Army
2014 USA Salvation Army Conference for Social Work and Emergency Disaster Services
25 to 28 March 2014, Orlando, Florida

GLOBAL CONVERSATION SESSION 2B

“How can we make our voice heard and speak prophetically from our experience?”

Dr David Nku Imbie

Medical Director of the Department of Health of The Salvation Army
Democratic Republic of Congo

Speaking prophetically is the “dreamed” Initiative - a workshop for creative, innovative thoughts on pursuing wisdom, justice and virtue in the human experience.

A space for conversation about what it means to see the big picture and seek wisdom in pursuit of the common good. In an age of clutter, noise, distraction, addiction, and consumption, there is now more need than ever to think through what it means to communicate wisely as part of a holistic transformation for a more virtuous world.

The prophet is one who begins with a message of doom, but ends with a message of hope.

The late General John Gowans and the Retired General Linda Bond challenged the whole Army in setting the pace for a global Salvationist culture which stands on three legs, “Save Souls – Grow Saints – Serve Suffering Humanity” (John Gowans), “*One Army – One Mission – One Message.*” (Linda Bond).

To make our voice heard our communication must be born of convincing experience, a concept well defined. What is our experience as Salvationists in these three areas of our conviction?

- Where we come from – the way travelled so far
- Where we are – Our presence and testimony today
- The way forward – where we go from here

What do we know about The Army in its primary mission? Is the Army still orthodox to its primary mission today, what are the strengths, weaknesses, and how do we address this?

How do we go for the expansion of The Army as a militant movement (church) in mission around the globe? What have we learnt through the century; are early strategies still working? Are there any new discoveries, adjustments? (Romans 10:14)

Are we still this evangelical part of the universal church? As an Evangelical Movement, is our message still relevant? Are we addressing people of our time the way Jesus would do if He was physically here vigorously leading the Army. Acts 1:8

We should be an Army... To save souls we need to go boldly and decisively where the Spirit of God is leading us ...To grow saints we need a convincing message born of personal experience of being born again, lead and kept by the power of the Holy Spirit ... To serve suffering humanity we must exemplify Christ's compassion and love without discrimination of race, gender, colour.

Where do we go from here?

In this time of vertiginous changes we have not to lose any opportunity; using all ways and means that God allows us to use (for example social media). Today we can make our voice heard starting from the pulpit in the church, through conferences, to media such as television, internet, You Tube, Facebook etc. The Christian Church is called to recover from the Evil all the best tools to make our voice heard.

The three SSS's (Soup, Soap, and Salvation) trilogy in the early days of the Army is very significant in the life of any human being. In terms of salvation, they go together. This is the single quickest way to define the holistic gospel. So, the Church needs to show interest in the socio-economic needs of people. Jesus was concerned with the rights and well-being as a whole.

Social programs have affected all aspects of human life. It is clear in His mind that the gospel is not complete if it does not embrace the work of salvation in the entire area of human life. Christ asks us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Therefore, our spiritual salvation must be seen through our social relationship as well.

During his earthly ministry, Christ did not limit his spiritual mission to just one area. We believe that Christ in his mission is the model of the Church; therefore, the mission of the Church cannot be limited to teaching about one sided "Kingdom of Heaven" message.

Many Salvation Army Generals have described The Salvation Army as a bird with two wings; (spiritual and social) without both it cannot fly. This means we must also contribute to the welfare of the poor of the earth. We cannot practice the religion of Christ without the social gospel. The letter of James 1: 27 states "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Therefore, preaching the gospel of Christ means to be concerned with the spiritual and social well-being of man.

Most recently, the sense of mission was carried by the gospel to other nations. Things have changed, and the overall mission has become increasingly common. Churches are showing more

and more interest in emphasizing the unity that should exist between evangelisation and other areas of Christian mission, such as its socio-economic aspects. The Scriptures clearly speaks of a new heaven and a new earth already. It is a way to see the Christian mission through holistic dimension. It is our responsibility to share the Good News of the Lord, but it must be done completely.

William Booth had his heart broken to see unemployed men who could not take care of their wives and hungry children. He faced opposition at the beginning of his ministry but he was not deterred in his mission to support those that society did not. He not only spoke of his love for others, but he went to the trouble of 'doing' it. He preached the gospel holistically showing compassion to those who were poor and less friendly. He did not work for his own glory, nor expect any personal benefit; he was faithful to his calling.

As Christians we are called to serve others. As agents of the Lord, he sends us to win others to Him; He says in John 20:21 "As the Father has sent me, I send you." Therefore, Christians must act for the well-being of people everywhere at any time.

In my country the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Army is very intensively carrying out spiritual, social, and relief programmes because of the war in East Congo. Our humanitarian program takes care of giving clothes to people, feeding the children and sending them to school without neglecting their souls. The Gospel must be preached in words and deeds. The Lord says in Matthew 25:35-36 "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me."

Speaking to those who did the opposite, He spoke in total contrast to them:

"Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; For I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take me in, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me
Matthew 25:41-43."

These two categories of people will be considered with regard to their social actions towards others. Therefore, the objective of the overall mission is to meet basic human needs such as the need for food, shelter, clothing and education, physical and mental health, without ignoring the need for God.

The Army in DRC has never missed an opportunity alongside its spiritual ministry to serve the community through the operation of 449 schools, 29 health centres, two hospitals, and others social programs. We meet most of the needs of the people through these programs. We serve everyone without discrimination.

The mission is not holistic if it is not integrated into the life of the community. This concept joins the one of integrated mission. Faith-Based Facilitation is an important tool in the way we work with the community.

In integrated mission, all aspects of the ministry must work together as the Body of Christ to convey corporately *One Message*. The purpose of the gospel is to create communities that confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The Lord calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. To fulfil this mission we must show our love and compassion towards those who are marginalised.

Jesus is the light of the world. The Church as His representative shall be the light in her neighbourhood. This light must shine not only in words but also in deeds. In 1 Peter 5:2-3, the apostle advises church leaders to keep their ministry in a holistic manner, so that the people of the community can enjoy the benefits of their salvation. Acts 4:32-37 gives us the model of Christian communities. The Church does not accomplish its task only by proclaiming the news of salvation, but also to share the material properties.

The individual Salvationist must take personal responsibility for being lights to our neighbours. As to my personal experience, in 2002 I was privileged to be chosen by the President of Republic of the Congo to be Governor of the City of Kinshasa, the capital city. It was a real privilege but the responsibility was enormous. I was received by the President who asked me to organize the management of the Province City; from 2002 until 2004. We brought in The Salvation Army management system where expenditures must be decided by an expenditure board with double signatures, a bank branch was opened in the City Hall so that all the money received must be sent and kept in.

This was unusual for those who were not used to working under such control; but the Territorial Commander and the Chief Secretary supported us in prayer.

When I left the office of the Governor in 2004, for the first time in the history of this Province City, my administration left enough money in the treasury and no property was taken away. Gossipers went on mocking me that I missed my opportunity to become rich, I will die poor. My only answer was, I do not need to be dishonest to become rich, my God is alive, He will provide and I am never alone.

God blessed me again, because in 2006 I was elected as Senator and Spokesman of a special committee (Senate and Provinces Relationships), and very recently in 2011 I was elected as a Member of the Parliament (MP) and President of a Parliamentary Group.

I continue to see the faithfulness of God, I am amazed and this keeps me humble and faithful as well.

As a Christian politician I have learnt some important lessons:

1. God never forsake his children
2. Relying upon God keeps us from any evil, because the Blood of Jesus covers and protects us
3. As Christian Politicians we bring in values that others do not have, so if many honest people get into politics, situations can positively change.
4. The Christian remains a light for the world, as such; his/her behaviour in politics must be blameless because he/she must stand for the credibility of his/her church.
5. There is no incompatibility between Christian life and politics, on the contrary, light should be brought in those obscure places (areas), bringing in real love and compassion that the people we serve need.
6. As Christians, people of bad practice do not approach you and do not even suggest you join in their bad conduct. Just imagine if true Christians were numerous in politics arena, trends can be reversed, good could prevail over evil.

We, Christian politicians, earnestly need your prayer and your support to develop our communities.

Conclusion

Considering today's holistic concept of the gospel, we can conclude that the church has a lot to do to fulfil its mission. Traditionally, the church thought she followed its mission accurately. But there came a time when the church focused especially on the spiritual needs of men and despised social needs. The church focused on the salvation of the soul without any concern for the body. Therefore, the Church neglected a high percentage of its mission in the world. Our mission is to deal with the salvation of all men as well as all areas of their earthly life.

We as The Salvation Army should rediscover the Dream of William Booth the Founder in those early days. "Is there anything whereof it may be said, see, this is new? It has been already of old time, which was before us (Eccl.1:10).