



## Who is offering for Officership today?

“Christian leaders who are growing disciples today are people who feel, think and act differently than leaders of the past. Curiosity oozes from them, they have deep passions, they think outside the box.”<sup>1</sup>

Does the above quote sound like the leaders that we are attracting to lead the Army into the future? Is the average Cadet, or Officer for that matter, daring, innovative and risk taking? Do we even want them to be and would we cope if they were?

The question of the type of leader who is attracted to the Army today is vital as we face the missional challenges of our day.

Society in the West is in a period of rapid change and along with this change must come some reflection of its implication for us and our mission. As a staff member of The School for Officer training, I am called to reflect upon the implications for the recruitment, development and training of leaders today. In this article, I would like to look briefly at some major changes that are taking place the West today and explore the question of what type of leader we are attracting to help us engage missionally in our world in The Salvation Army Australian Eastern Territory.

### The world we are in

You have possibly read much on post-modernity and its cousin, post-Christendom, but just in case it's new to you, let me sketch you a few ways our society in the West is changing today. In fact, if I could, I'd show you a 2 DVD's rather than typing the words, but since I can't do that, let me explain what you would see if I could show you images instead of words.

If you watched the opening sequences of 2 film productions of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliette you would be able to see demonstrated some of the changes that have

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<sup>1</sup> Easum, Bill. *Leadership on the Other Side*, Abingdon Press Nashville, 2000. pg 31

happened in recent times in the West.<sup>2</sup> The opening sequence of the 1968 Franc Zaffarelli version of the film is a single shot which pans over foggy landscape to the castle where the action will take place. The text is narrated by a male voice. The opening sequence of the 1996 Baz Luhrmann's version stands in stark contrast to the earlier film. Same text, same introductory sequence, completely different experience. This clip starts with static on a TV, is then narrated by a black woman and then moves into a series of extremely fast moving, fragmented shots filled with cities, violence and religious icons.

The Franc Zaffarelli film gives a snap shot of the world of modernity. In it we see an ability to view from a distance, we hear a disembodied male voice, there is a dispassionate assessment of the city and it is sequential and linear.

The Baz Luhrmann film demonstrates a multi-media world where there is static and channel surfing, there are constant options & change, a celebration of ethnic and edge, a shift from objectivity to immersion & engagement, the text and images merge and there is much religious iconery.

We are living in post-modern times, or at least, a time of transition out of the period of modernity. This is not a good or a bad thing, it is simply a short hand way of describing some of the ways our society functions today.

In the West, many would say that we are also moving into a period of Post-Christendom.<sup>3</sup> Post-Christendom is not the same as post-modernity. There are significant connections between these concepts, but they are different.

Stuart Murray defines Post Christendom this way;

"Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence." <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I found this idea in the book. *The out of bounds church*. By Steve Taylor. Zondervan. Grand Rapids. 2005. Page 20

<sup>3</sup> I acknowledge this is not a world wide phenomenon and I recommend reading Philip Jenkins, *The New Christendom* for an excellent analysis of world wide trends in Christianity today.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, Stuart. *Mission After Christendom*. Morling College Press July 2007

Basically, the church once held a privileged place in the society of many countries in the West and a basic knowledge of the Christian story could be assumed. Frost and Hirsch<sup>5</sup> speak of the church operating with an attractional model of mission during this period. They likened this approach to doing mission as the 'Build it and they will come' which was made famous by Kevin Costner in the movie *Field of Dreams* where he was instructed by a disembodied voice to build a baseball field for past greats of the game and he was assured that 'if he builds it, they will come'<sup>6</sup>. The church was here and people we invited to come to it and encounter God within its doors. People were familiar enough with the Christian story to know what the basic message of the gospel was.

Times have changed and we can no longer assume that the Church has a privileged place in our societies nor that people know or have encountered the basics of the gospel message.

### **How is the church faring in this new context?**

Eddie Gibbs has said "the present cultural upheaval from modernity to post-modernity ... will necessitate not merely the structural re-engineering of denominations, but their death and resurrection"<sup>7</sup>

It seems in many places this process is beginning. In the UK, the Anglican and Presbyterian churches undertook a major piece of research which made far reaching recommendations in the 'Mission Shaped Church' document.<sup>8</sup>

In the chapter explaining the changing context in which the church now operated they state that "during the twentieth century Sunday school attendance dropped from 55 per cent to 4 per cent of children, meaning that even the rudiments of the Christian story and of Christian experience are lacking in most young people"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Frost, Michael & Hirsch, Alan. *The Shaping of things to come* (Massachusetts, Hendrickson, 2003)

<sup>6</sup> And in the movie, of course, they did!!

<sup>7</sup> Gibbs, Eddie. Cited in Yuill, Chick. *Leadership on the Axis of Change*, The Salvation Army publications Alexandria. 2003 Page 13.

<sup>8</sup> Church of England General Synod, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing 2004)

<sup>9</sup> Church of England General Synod, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing 2004)

They acknowledged the consequences for a national church that had always operated within the context of a Christian culture where the stories and values of Christianity were understood, if not shared. Obviously this is no longer the case in the UK, nor is it in Australia.

“The Church has got to realize its missionary responsibilities. ... we cannot simply work on the premise that all we have to do to bring people to Christ is to ask them to remember their long-held, but dormant faith. Very many people have no residue of Christian faith at all; it’s not just dormant, it’s nonexistent; in so many instances we have to go back to basics; we are in a critical missionary situation.”<sup>10</sup>

The Salvation Army in the UK is operating in similar context to where the ‘Mission Shaped church’ was written, and have also seen a major decline in the amount of people who are becoming soldiers. “Since the mid-twentieth century, the number of soldiers in the United Kingdom has fallen from 120,000 to somewhere around 38,000.”<sup>11</sup>

In Australia 40% of people claimed to attend church at least monthly in 1961 which fell to 24% by 1980 and 20% by 1999.<sup>12</sup> Here in The Salvation Army in Eastern Australia the number of people who are joining as Soldiers has dropped 30% in 12 years (from 14,060 in 1995 to 9,867 in 2007) , and the number of churches (Corps) has dropped 25% in the same period (from 307 in 1995 to 230 in 2007).<sup>13 14</sup>

If Eddie Gibbs earlier comment has any merit then we might be seeing a glimpse of the death and resurrection which he predicted for denominations in light of the present cultural upheaval of our times.

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<sup>10</sup> Church of England General Synod, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing 2004)

<sup>11</sup> Yuill, Chick. *Leadership on the Axis of Change*, The Salvation Army publications Alexandria. 2003. Page 14.

<sup>12</sup> <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8517.htm>

<sup>13</sup> The Salvation Army Year Books, 1995 and 2007. The Salvation Army England.

<sup>14</sup> It is noted that Soldiership or membership as a measure is limited as it may be that people are attending without joining up, a feature of our cultural context today. However I believe that the sharp decline is still symptomatic of the crisis we are facing in The Salvation Army today.

## Leadership in our new Missional context

This presents us with some key missional challenges, not only for mission itself, but also for leadership in this context. What sort of leaders do we need today? Who is offering for leadership through Officership in The Salvation Army today? Who is selected or approved for training as Officers today and who self selects out?<sup>15</sup>

In a recent article in the Leadership Journal, Alan Hirsch reflected upon a time when he questioned what sorts of leaders were being trained for ministry in Melbourne. He said, "we needed a new type of leadership, one with the courage to question the status quo, to dream of new possibilities, and to innovate new ways of being the people of God in a post-Christian culture. We needed missionaries to the West, but our seminaries were not producing them. If we take the five categories of church leadership from Ephesians 4:11, they were training leaders to be teachers and pastors for established congregations, but where were the evangelists, the prophets, and the apostles to lead the mission of the gospel into the world?"<sup>16</sup>

Leaders today will need to have a holy discontent, be embracing of subversive questioning, take more risks and be able to create a climate of change.<sup>17</sup>

In response to the 'Mission Shaped Church' report, the Anglican church recognised the need to recruit, train and deploy people for pioneering ministries.<sup>18</sup> Dave Male is a pioneer trainer who acknowledges that we need leaders who think and act 'outside the box' who are 'risk takers, change agents, spiritual entrepreneurs, networkers and creative spirits'.<sup>19</sup>

I think it would be fair to say that, on the whole, The Salvation Army is not attracting the maverick, the unconventional or the daring. One simple way of assessing this is by looking at the personality profile of people who are being trained at the college. If

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<sup>15</sup> I acknowledge that there is a whole debate to be had about Officer and Non Officer leadership role in The Salvation Army, however, as I am writing from a Training College perspective, I will be focusing my attention on who we are training for leadership through officership.

<sup>16</sup> Hirsch, Alan. "Three Over-looked Leadership Roles " *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2008

<sup>17</sup> Frost, Michael & Hirsch, Alan. *The Shaping of things to come* (Massachusetts, Hendrickson, 2003) Page 192.

<sup>18</sup> Church of England General Synod, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing 2004)

<sup>19</sup> Male, David.

we use the MBTI<sup>20</sup> as a guide, it is clear that the most common 'type' amongst Cadets, and therefore Officers, in Australian Eastern Territory is that of ISFJ<sup>21</sup>. People with this personality style may be described as people who are interested in maintaining order and harmony in every aspect of their lives. They would be described as being caring, thoughtful and trustworthy.<sup>22</sup> Basically one would say that these people are stabilizing rather than revolutionary. They would be more likely to be pastors and teachers than prophets, evangelists or apostles. They are needed, but so are the other Types which are needed today and yet so under-represented.

There will be special challenges way beyond the scope of the training college alone in the future if The Salvation Army is to grapple with what it would take and what would be the implications of attracting leaders who were more daring, ask more subversive questions and take more risks.

The Anglican church in the UK has acknowledged that in the days ahead there will be new challenges for the "discernment, training, recognition and authorization of leaders."<sup>23</sup> I am sure this will be true for all denominations and Christian communities, but maybe especially for one with our military metaphor informing our ways of being, functioning and relating. To attract these leaders will open the organisation to new questions, to being challenged and to new critique. Are we ready for that?

To face the challenges that lie before us we need to be thinking about ways to attract and retain these type of leaders, but without them I suggest that we will be facing some very uncertain days.

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<sup>20</sup> The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment is a psychometric questionnaire designed to identify certain psychological differences according to the typological theories of Carl Gustav Jung

<sup>21</sup> Based upon many years of MBTI profiles of 1<sup>st</sup> year cadets in AUE

<sup>22</sup> Briggs Myers, Isabel. Introduction to Type. APP Press Melbourne 1987

<sup>23</sup> Church of England General Synod, Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context (London: Church House Publishing 2004) Page 135.