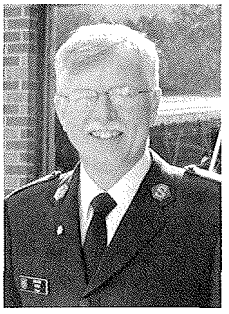
Doctrine in the Salvation Army Tradition

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The Salvation Army is not known for placing a particular emphasis on doctrine. This is not because doctrine is unimportant to Salvationists, but because The Salvation Army has customarily emphasized evangelism and service, rather than theological scholarship. Nevertheless, The Salvation Army's official doctrines are viewed as essential to its corporate life and witness. As Salvation Army field officers and soldiers attempt to serve among "the least of these", their daily ministries are shaped by doctrinal commitments. Though theological scholarship is not a prominent aspect of The Salvation Army tradition, doctrine definitely plays a significant role in giving direction and purpose to all aspects of Salvationist ministry.

Salvation Army mission has always been evangelistic in nature. If doctrine has to do with ideas, propositions, teachings and beliefs, then it plays a central role in the *message* that a church brings to its people. At its founding, The Salvation Army adopted 11 articles of faith, which capture the essential aspects of theological truth for The Salvation Army.[1]

- We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.
- We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.
- We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
- We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
- We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience, they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall, all men have become sinners, totally

depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

- We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.
- We believe that repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.
- We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.
- We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.
- We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- We believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, in the general judgement at the end of the world, in the eternal happiness of the righteous, and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

When reviewed, one quickly notices that the focus of these 11 articles is the saving work of God through the shed blood of Christ. There is no teaching about the church, ministry or the sacraments. In fact, these articles of faith were intended to be sparse and minimalistic. The early Salvationists envisioned themselves as an evangelistic force that was free from the entanglements of doctrinal controversy, and hence adopted what they believed to be only the essentials of the faith as binding for their members. The place of doctrine in Salvation Army life is well summarized in a passage from the *Orders and Regulations for Officers of The Salvation Army*, where the officer is instructed to "impart much sound doctrine in connexion with all his work",[2] while also being directed to "teach Army doctrine to his people in the simplest and most practical manner, avoiding, as far as possible, all controversy or argument".[3]

These 11 articles of faith are taken from the Methodist tradition.[4] William Booth was baptized in the Church of England, but raised in Methodism, and served as an ordained minister with the Methodist New Connexion prior to beginning his work with The Salvation Army.[5] He remained an enthusiastic proponent of Wesleyan doctrine throughout his life and ministry.[6] In these brief 11 articles of faith, one can see the seminal Wesleyan themes of total depravity (Article 5) universal atonement (Article 6), justification by faith (Article 8), assurance through the witness of the Spirit (Article 8), and a strong emphasis on sanctification (Articles 9 and 10).

The Salvation Army's non-observance of the sacraments was not articulated in its articles of doctrine. This is partly due to the fact that the decision to discontinue the use of the sacraments of baptism and eucharist was not made until 1883, 18 years after The Salvation Army was founded, and five years after the Army's constitution was written.[7] The primary theological convictions underlying the Salvation Army's non-observance of the sacraments were: 1) the claim that grace is immediately available to all, irrespective of any particular observance; and following from this, 2) that no particular observance can be said to be "necessary to salvation". A third emphasis, which developed over time and will be discussed below, has to do with the potential sacramentality of all aspects of human life. The Army's non-observant stance on the sacraments had its historical precedent in the tradition of the Society of Friends, but was also justified in part by the above-mentioned desire to avoid theological controversy (since the sacraments have often been a matter of dispute in Christian history). It was not Booth's intent to disrespect the practice of other traditions, nor to make it a matter of

dispute.[8] Moreover, Salvationists have never been prohibited from partaking of the Lord's Supper in other traditions where they are welcome, and are free to be baptized if they feel it to be of importance.[9]

It is in this amalgam of Methodist and Quaker traditions that The Salvation Army grew and sought to demonstrate that salvation was available for everyone, and that each individual had the potential to change. The sinner could be saved from a life of sin to a life of holiness through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Many early Salvationists were "living testimonies" to these truths.

It is perhaps the doctrine of holiness that has had the strongest influence over the corporate life of The Salvation Army throughout its history. While Salvationists have no formal liturgy, and are not likely to rehearse their official articles of faith on a regular basis, one can see the influence of holiness doctrine in the strong tradition of Salvation Army music. Indeed *The Songbook of The Salvation Army* is sometimes compared to the *Book of Common Prayer* in terms of its significance in shaping the faith and corporate life of Salvationists. Songs sung in Salvation Army halls are filled with invitations to accept the call to a holy life. William Pearson's song, "Jesus, save me through and through", which appeared in the army's periodical *The War Cry* in 1881, is but one example of the close connection between the belief that the saving act of Christ's death and resurrection has a direct relation to the personal holy life. The chorus of Pearson's song illustrates this clearly:

> Through and through, through and through,
> Jesus, make me holy;
> Save me to the uttermost
> All the way to glory.[10]

Early expressions of Salvationism were marked by clear preaching and teaching on the topic of personal holiness. William Booth and his wife Catherine spoke often and in depth on this subject.[11] Subsequent to their ministries, and no less important, was the voice of Samuel Logan Brengle, an American convert to Salvationism who developed many practical texts to explain holiness and became known as the "prophet of holiness" in Salvationst circles.[12] The tradition of The Salvation Army has been paved by men and women who have taught holy living and encouraged believers to seek after the holy life.

In relation to the holy life, Salvationists have often made a distinction between inner being and external things. The inner spiritual life is of capital value. One is not saved by church allegiance or practice, rather by accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and being baptized by the Holy Spirit. Catherine Booth, in her essay, *A Mock Salvation vs. Deliverance from Sin*, wrote, "Now, we have nothing to say against forms; but they are only, as it were, the bodies in which spiritual ideas and purposes are manifested, and without LIFE they are useless, and worse than useless."[13] More recently, The Salvation Army's Doctrine Council affirmed, "The Army places emphasis in its teaching not upon externals but upon the need for each believer personally to experience that inward spiritual grace to which an external observance testifies."[14]

This leads us to the connection between the Salvation Army's understanding of holiness and its position on the sacraments. As Salvation Army tradition evolved, Salvationists came to view a holy life as a sacramental life. General Albert Orsborn presented this image when he wrote the following song, which is often cited in Salvation Army discussions of the sacraments:[15]

> My life must be Christ's broken bread,
> My love his outpoured wine,
> A cup o'erfilled, a table spread
> Beneath his name and sign,
> That other souls, refreshed and fed,
> May share his life through mine.

My all is in the Master's hands
For him to bless and break;
Beyond the brook his winepress stands
And thence my way I take,
Resolved the whole of love's demands
To give, for his dear sake.

Lord, let me share that grace of thine
Wherewith thou didst sustain
The burden of the fruitful vine,
The gift of buried grain.
Who dies with thee, O Word divine,
Shall rise and live again.[16]

From this perspective, more recent Salvation Army publications have begun to stress the potential sacramentality of all of life, thereby arguing that The Salvation Army's corporate life is "sacramental", though the traditional sacraments are not observed.[17]

As a relatively young tradition, The Salvation Army continues to develop its interest in matters of doctrine. In contrast to the early Salvationists, who, in the words of William Booth, had "neither time nor inclination for book writing in the presence of the fearful necessities of the millions perishing around us",[18] contemporary Salvationists are attempting to further the development of Salvationist theology. In 2001, the Army's first ever International Theology and Ethics Symposium was held in Winnipeg and focused on questions of Trinitarian theology.[19] In 2006, Salvationists gathered for the second such conference in South Africa, and addressed the topic of ecclesiology,[20] and a third International Symposium, on holiness was held in London, UK, in October 2010. Another significant development has been the publication of an academic journal for Salvationists – *Word and Deed: A Journal of Salvation Army Theology and Ministry*, which is now in its twelfth year of publication. Finally, ecumenical partners will be interested to know that in recent years, The Salvation Army's International Doctrine Council has been involved in bilateral dialogues with the Seventh Day Adventists, the World Methodist Council, and, most recently, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

What is essential for the Salvationist, however, is to not lose sight of personal holiness. Doctrine is not viewed as an end in itself, but as a means of guiding the Christian life. Recently, General Shaw Clifton, the Army's present international leader, referred in one of his works to the modern day Salvation Army as a "sanctification Army", and appeals to Salvationists to engage in the holy life "encapsulated in our Tenth Doctrine".[21] Perhaps it is the personal way in which Salvationist doctrine functions that is the most striking, that is, the way in which the Salvationist's life is to be guided by the 11 articles: A life based upon the Bible, governed by the Triune God, cognizant of our fallen state, saved and made whole, sanctified by the Holy Spirit until the general judgment at the end of the world. There is a direct link between who we are, what we do and what we believe, and the call to holiness is or should be pre-eminent in the Salvationist's mind, and should be the bearing by which other faith decisions are made.

One notable outcome of this view of holiness is an extensive social response to human need, wherever it is found. Each Salvation Army Corps meets not only to conduct worship services and to provide Christian education and fellowship, but also seeks to respond to human need in the wider community. In some instances, The Salvation Army is known more for its humanitarian work than its evangelistic ministry. However, within each unit, division and territory, a central question is asked in annual reviews: To what extent does the program or service undertaken contribute to the Army's mission? Is it consistent with our people who claim holiness as a value?

Doctrine, therefore, is critically important to The Salvation Army. Specifically, its mission is based almost exclusively on the

slice of doctrine encompassed by the saving grace available through Christ and the personal quest to respond in obedience to His call to lead a holy life, characterized by love of God and service to suffering humanity. It would be hard to imagine The Salvation Army without salvation, and it would be harder still to imagine that the quest for holiness would not function as the baseline for Salvationist mission integrity. It is not enough to assent to an article of faith which states that Christ died for one's sins and has performed the salvific act. Rather, one must seek to live out this salvation, presenting the gospel message of hope through the life lived, illustrating the restorative power of the Holy Spirit, in response to the call to live a holy life.

1. The most recent authoritative interpretation of the 11 articles is found in *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (London: Salvation Books, 2010), available for download at www.salvationarmy.org.
2. Booth, William. *Orders and Regulations for Officers of The Salvation Army* (London: Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1925), §IV.VI.3.2, p. 225
3. Ibid., §IV.VI.3.1, p. 225
4. See *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1998) 130 for a discussion of the origins of the 11 doctrines or articles of faith.
5. For an excellent biography of William Booth, see Roger Green's recent book, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005).
6. Speaking of his early years, Booth remarked, "To me there was one God, and John Wesley was his prophet." Frederick Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth* (London: The Salvation Army, n.d.), 1:52. Roger Green notes that he reiterated this claim on his sixtieth birthday. Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth*, 231, n. 34.
7. The history of this decision is summarized well by Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth,* 145-151. For a more detailed historical and theological treatment of the topic, see David R. Rightmire, *Sacraments and The Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990).
8. Roger Green quotes an 1895 interview, where Booth states, "We never disclaim against the Sacraments; we never even state our own position. We are anxious not to destroy the confidence of Christian people in institutions which are helpful to them." *The Life and Ministry of William Booth,* 148.
9. An interesting testament to this freedom is found in the history of the early Salvation Army in Canada. When The Salvation Army was beginning to put down roots in Kingston, ON., Captain Abby Thomson was in the habit of taking her entire group of soldiers to St. George's Cathedral to receive communion in the Anglican tradition. This created somewhat of a scandal at the Cathedral, and the young Curate, The Rev. Dr. Henry Wilson, was eventually run out of town for his associations with the rowdy Salvationists. This fascinating story is recounted in Norman Knowles' "Irreverent and Profane Buffoonery: The Salvation Army and St. George's", in *St. George's Cathedral: Two Hundred Years of Community,* edited by Donald Swainson (Kingston: Quarry Press, 1991), 247-262.
10. *The Songbook of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army, 1987), #340.
11. *The Beauty of Holiness: an Unchanging Doctrine* (The Salvation Army in Canada & Bermuda, 1963) is an anthology of sermons from Salvationist preachers, which includes texts from William and Catherine Booth. See also Catherine Booth's *Papers on Practical Religion* (London: The Salvation Army, 1891) and *Popular Christianity* (London: The Salvation Army, 1887).
12. Samuel Logan Brengle was a prolific Salvationist writer. Two of his most popular works on holiness are *Heart talks on Holiness* and *Helps to Holiness,* both printed by Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, first edition 1896, reprinted 1965.
13. "A Mock Salvation v. Deliverance from Sin" in *Popular Christianity*, 43
14. *The Salvation Army in the Body of Christ* (London: Salvation Books, 2008), 13.
15. Albert Orsborn was the sixth General of The Salvation Army, serving from 1946-1954. This song first appeared in *The War Cry*, May 3, 1947. The *Companion to the Song Book* compiled by Gordon Avery (London: The Salvation Army, 1962) in article 462, page 150, notes that after meeting in Germany with Salvation Army officers in a war-damaged hall he realized "we have no hope of being a blessing to other souls unless our

lives become part of the Saviour's sacramental consecration."

16. *The Song Book of The Salvation Army*, # 512

17. "We observe the sacraments, not by limiting them to two or three, but by inviting Christ to suppers, love feasts, birth celebrations, parties, dedications, sick beds, weddings, anniversaries, commissioning, ordinations, retirements – and a host of other significant events – and, where he is truly received, watching him give a grace beyond our understanding." *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* (London: The Salvation Army, 1998), 114.

18. William Booth, *Salvation Soldiery* (London: The Salvation Army, 1889), 1.

19. Papers from this symposium were published in *Word & Deed: A Journal of Salvation Army Theology and Ministry,* Volumes 4/1 (November 2001), 4/2 (May 2002), and 5/1 (November 2002).

20. Papers from this symposium were published in *Word & Deed: A Journal of Salvation Army Theology and Ministry,* Volumes 9/1 (November 2006), 9/2 (May 2007). General Shaw Clifton's address to the symposium, "People of God – Salvationist Ecclesiology", can be found on the General's website http://www.salvationarmy.org/thegeneral.

21. Shaw, Clifton, *New Love: Thinking Aloud about Practical Holiness* (Auckland, NZ: Flag Publications, 2006), 9. He also describes the "greatest threat of all today for Salvationism is a perceptible *neglect of holiness teaching*." Ibid., 19.

For further reading:

The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine. London: Salvation Books, 2010.

Green, Roger. *The Life and Ministry of William Booth, Founder of The Salvation Army.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.

Gariepy, Henry. *Christianity in Action: The International History of The Salvation Army.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

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