



A Publication of The Salvation Army

Word & Deed Mission Statement:

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

Salvation Army Mission Statement:

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

Editorial Address:

Manuscripts, requests for style sheets, and other correspondence should be addressed to Major. Ed Forster at The Salvation Army, National Headquarters, 615 Slaters Lane, Alexandria, VA 22314. Phone: (703) 684-5500. Fax: (703) 684-5539. Email: Ed_Forster@usn.salvationarmy.org.

Editorial Policy:

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 manuscripts 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, 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 disk or CD, using Microsoft Word format; 3) a 100-word abstract of the article to be used at the discretion of the editor (e.g., on The Salvation Army's web page or in advertisements pertaining to 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 and September 1. A style sheet is available upon request.

Editor in Chief: Ed Forster, Salvation Army National Headquarters

Co-Editors: Roger J. Green
Jonathan S. Raymond, Trinity Western University

Editorial Board:

Harry Brocksieck	Donald Burke
Edgar Chagas	Peter Farthing
John Merritt	Lyell Rader
Barbara Robinson	Brian Jones

Word & Deed: Vol. 9 No.1 November 2006

ISSN 1522-3426

Copyright 2006 The Salvation Army. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Word & Deed

Vol. 9, No.1

November 2006

Editorial: The South Africa Conference and the Doctrine of the Church

Roger J. Green and Jonathan S. Raymond 1

Guest Editorial: People of God: Salvationist Ecclesiology

Earl Robinson 3

Salvationist Ecclesiology: Past, Present and the Way Forward

VIP Earl Robinson 9 - P. 31

Foundational Discipleship, Education and Training

Philip Cairns 43

Life is Worship – Worship is Life

David Noakes 65

An Ambivalent Embrace: The Implications of Financial Support on Church Identity

Glen Shepherd 85

Word & Deed Ad Policy

Word & Deed will consider advertisements that relate to educational or ecclesiastical institutions, events, and publications aligned generally or specifically with the mission of The Salvation Army or which support the broad interests of the Church. Books, journals, conferences and symposia, lecture series, congresses, and programs of Christian educational institutions are potentially appropriate topics for *Word & Deed* advertisements. The Salvation Army reserves the right to accept ads based on their affinity with its mission and position statements.

Word & Deed is issued twice a year, in May and November. The journal is distributed to individual subscribers, universities, libraries, academic symposia, and organizations and publishers.

A maximum of eight pages per issue will be reserved for advertising space. The number of advertisements run is subject to change, based on the page count of each issue. Deadlines for submitting ads are March 1 for May issues and September 1 for November issues.

Full-page advertisements are available at a cost of \$100, invoiced upon acceptance. Ads must be camera-ready or submitted on disk in TIFF or PDF format. (Disks will not be returned.) The latter method is preferred. Advertisements are sent to:

Word & Deed
The Salvation Army National Publications
615 Slaters Lane
Alexandria, VA 22314

The South Africa Conference and the Doctrine of the Church

It is clear that ever since the days of William and Catherine Booth and the evolution of The Christian Mission into The Salvation Army there has been a need for an understanding of the relationship of the Army to the broader Church, the Body of Christ. With the opportunity for an international symposium in South Africa, it was determined that the theme of the conference would be the doctrine of ecclesiology. The international symposium was called "People of God: Salvationist Ecclesiology." The papers in this issue of the journal as well as the May, 2007 issue were given at that conference, and it is our prayer that the careful thinking that these papers reflect will assist our readers in their understanding of The Salvation Army.

We are grateful to Colonel Earl Robinson, for many years the chair of the International Doctrine Council, for putting the conference in perspective by way of a guest editorial. Colonel Robinson is also the writer of the lead article in this issue, setting out the parameters of the conference and dealing with some of the themes that are central to the conference. This is followed by a paper by Major Philip Cairns, in which he addresses the need for understanding the foundation upon which Salvation Army education and training is based. Of inestimable value to the broad topic of ecclesiology was Major Cairns' approach to this topic from a theological framework. We often begin discussion of this subject either

historically or sociologically, but the theological understanding of both essence and form as ways to clarify the nature of the Church is very helpful to any ongoing discussion.

The paper by Major David Noakes follows and quite naturally complements what Major Cairns has written in his paper. Major Noakes examines a foundational question of the relationship of the Christian life to worship, and develops this subject well with special emphasis on The Salvation Army. The challenges that the paper addresses in the final section are of inestimable worth as discussions of ecclesiology continue.

Those who planned for this symposium were intent that any discussion of the doctrine of the Church should deal with practical but pressing questions within the context of theological discussion. The final two papers of this issue begin to deal with that intent. Colonel Glen Shepherd agreed to write and deliver a paper entitled "Financial Support Implications Related to Church Identity." Drawing on his international experience as a Salvation Army officer, Colonel Shepherd deals with the financial realities as well as challenges that the Army faces internationally with both our social ministries and the work in our local churches.

This South Africa symposium is only a beginning, a first but important step, and it is expected that the theology expressed, the discussions begun, and the questions posed will continue in the future to raise a significant awareness of who we have been called to be as a people of God. As mentioned, the May, 2007 issue of Word & Deed will continue with papers from this symposium, and it is the prayer of the editors of this journal that our readers will benefit greatly from these papers and will rejoice with us that the Army is called to be a living witness to the Church in our time and in our age. "Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

RGJ, JSR

People of God: Salvationist Ecclesiology

Earl Robinson

Background

The first International Theology & Ethics Symposium in Salvation Army history was held in May 2001 at The Salvation Army's William and Catherine Booth College in Winnipeg, Canada. This was described by the co-editors of *Word & Deed*, as important to "Our Theological Moment" because "it bears witness to the importance given by the Army today of centering our life and ministry carefully in biblical theology and the theology of the Christian Church."¹

General John Larsson (Ret.), who delivered the final paper of the symposium in his then office as the Chief of the Staff, said this of the occasion:

This symposium on the theme of "Salvationist Theology and Ethics for the New Millennium" is of great significance for the future of The Salvation Army. Let me suggest three reasons why this is so ... Firstly, it is thought in the form of deeply-held convictions that gives birth to action ... Secondly, this symposium is important because The Salvation Army has reached a watershed in its self-understanding ... We are in a period of transition towards a fuller understanding of ourselves as a church – and theological concerns lie at the very heart of

Colonel Earl Robinson served as Chair of The Salvation Army International Doctrine Council during the Council's planning, preparation and direction of the 2001 and 2006 International Theology & Ethics Symposia

this process ... A third reason why this symposium – the first of its kind – is so significant is that it can be seen as both the culmination of a process, which has greatly quickened in recent times, and the launching point for the next stage of the journey.²

One of the recommendations of the 2001 Symposium was that symposia with similar objectives be held locally. Since then, in 2003, a territorial theological symposium was held by the USA Western Territory and a tri-territorial theological forum was set up to become a regularly held theological meeting ground for Salvationist theologians from the Australia and New Zealand territories. In 2004, the United Kingdom, Mexico and South America West Territories each conducted a territorial symposium. The ground was laid by those territorially sponsored events for the implementation of the first recommendation from the 2001 event, “that there be another international Salvation Army theology symposium within five years of this first symposium.”

Rationale

The rationale behind holding Salvation Army international theology and ethics symposia was developed by the International Doctrine Council prior to the 2001 Symposium. It was suggested that each symposium have a specific theme with differing outcomes but that general objectives be applicable to each similar event, although with possible minor changes due to experience and reflection. Those general objectives behind symposia rationale are as follows.

1. As we face a better-educated 21st-century world, we also face the pressing need to nurture Salvationist theologians and ethicists who can think/discuss/write biblically and critically about issues that matter and who can help to keep the Army on course theologically and ethically.

2. We especially need to develop a younger generation that is well-grounded in Salvationist theological and ethical issues, committed to the Army's mission, and in touch with the mindset and values that dominate their age.

3. The Army has a contribution to make to theological/ethical dialogue in the Church, especially with respect to the inclusive gospel, a mission-based ecclesi-

ology, the partnership of evangelism and social action/service, equality in ministry, the call to holiness, high moral principles, and sacramental living. We will not be able to make that contribution in significant ways if we do not provide effective means of nurturing theologians and ethicists in Salvationist theological/ethical debate.

4. As our internationalism is crucial to the credibility of our witness to a universal gospel, so the nurturing of Salvationist theologians/ethicists from all regions is crucial to our theological/ethical development.

5. At the same time, it is important to nurture those theologians/ethicists from all regions in the context of the one international Army, so that our diverse theological/ethical expressions are united in the one gospel, the one family of God, the one community of Salvationists, the one universal mission.

6. The Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine, *Salvation Story*, was published in 1998 and *The Salvation Story Study Guide* was released in 1999. Both of these publications provide a foundation for understanding current Salvationist theological and ethical thinking. The *Study Guide* particularly links theology with practical moral and social issues under the heading of "Lifestyle and Ethics." International Theology and Ethics Symposia provide the opportunity to call together Salvationist thinkers to interact with one another, and dialogue over the issues raised in our own literature as well as other theological/ethical issues of crucial importance for our future.

7. There is a need for the greater Army to have a focal point for, and link to, theological/ethical dialogue in a Salvationist context and for our theological and ethical perspectives to be transparently available to all. This will be made possible through a commitment on the part of the editors and publishers of *Word & Deed* to consider papers presented at symposia for possible circulation to the greater Army and for possible publication to allow for more general availability.

The Second International Theology & Ethics Symposium - 2006 in South Africa

That rationale for the 2001 Symposium also applied to the recently held symposium in South Africa, which is the focus of this issue of *Word & Deed*. Our international leaders encouraged the holding of the second International Theology & Ethics Symposium in a southern or eastern region of the world. The

goal behind that encouragement was to provide an environment for the practical development of cross-cultural theology and ethics while at the same time preserving an international Salvationist perspective on basic statements concerning theological and ethical issues. It was decided, therefore, that the 2006 Symposium be held on the African continent, with the Southern Africa Territory kindly agreeing to be the host territory for the event. So 57 participants (including the guest keynote speaker) from 37 different Salvationist territories/commands of the world met in August 2006 at the Church of the Nazarene Good News Convention Centre just outside Johannesburg, South Africa, for the Salvation Army's second International Theology and Ethics Symposium.

2006 Symposium Theme – “People of God: Salvationist Ecclesiology”

In his paper at the 2001 Symposium, General Larsson had a section entitled “The ‘What’ of the Task Ahead,” in which he posed a challenge which led to the 2006 Symposium theme:

A key question for us is how we make the transition from a movement to a church in such a way that we do not lose the original dynamic that brought the Army into being. Or if we have lost something of that dynamic, how do we regain it? ... For all of his genius, William Booth never tackled in his thinking, writing and speaking, the matter of Salvation Army ecclesiology. He might even have spluttered at the mere mention of such a phrase! To him – or at least to part of his mind – it was a contradiction in terms. But we now know and accept that we are an Army in transition – from a movement to a church. We are self-confident enough to believe that we are a church with a difference, with our strong sense of mission, and a three-fold mission at that (“To save sinners, grow saints and serve suffering humanity” – General John Gowans (Ret)). But if in making the transition we lose the dynamic of the mission conviction, we will have lost the principal reason for our existence. Much therefore hinges on that phrase “mission-based ecclesiology.”³

The theme related to that challenge was developed as follows at the 2006 Symposium:

A. Salvation Army Church Identity

1. Salvationist Ecclesiology: Past, Present and the Way Forward
2. Being an Evangelical Part of the Universal Body of Christ in a Pluralistic Society
3. Financial Support Implications Related to 'Church' Identity

B. Salvation Army Church Mission, Ministry and Leadership

1. Holistic Gospel Mission and Ministry
2. Women and Men in Ministry, Leadership and Governance
3. Foundational Discipleship, Education and Training

C. Salvation Army Church Worship

1. Salvationist Expressions of Worship
2. Ceremonies and Symbols in Worship
3. Life is Worship – Worship is Life

In this and the May 2007 issue of *Word & Deed*, you will read several of the papers having to do with the above subjects. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Robert Lang'at, an African Wesleyan theologian with a keen interest in the development of Wesleyan thought and praxis in Africa. He has served as head of the department of education and theology at Kabarak University in Kenya where he now holds the position of Provost. His address, "The Salvation Army as a Christian Church with a Social Conscience," concluded by indicating that The Salvation Army has established a viable self-understanding as a church that balances its sodalistic "church institution" form with its modalistic "missionary band" existence. Its church foundation in the Wesleyan/holiness movement has provided it with a theological rationale for its social agenda. The Salvation Army was ahead of its time in its approach to African social issues. But he suggested that The Army needs to re-engage and clarify its place within the universal Christian church. What it means to be a Salvation Army church in the African context still needs clarification. Its social programs need to be redemptive and to be continually informed by theological roots and theological reflection, particu-

larly in the third world.

In the concluding remarks of his paper on the final day of the symposium, General Shaw Clifton spoke on the overall theme, "People of God – Salvationist Ecclesiology." He advised that if it is a settled matter that the Army is a church, the question to engage us all is: "What kind of church?" He said:

It is precisely here, at this point and in this matter that my hope resides in this symposium being of lasting help to the wider Army. What kind of church are we called under God to be? This is the ecclesiological question for our times. The answers for our generation will appear as part of a constantly creative continuum coming from the mind of God, who does not conduct his dealings with his people in an arbitrary fashion. By this we know that God will build creatively upon the traditions he has given us.

ER

Notes

1. Roger Green & Jonathan Raymond, "Editorial," *Word & Deed*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Fall 2001), p. 1.
2. John Larsson, "Salvationist Theology and Ethics for the New Millennium," *Word & Deed*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Fall 2001), pp. 9, 11, 13.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

Salvationist Ecclesiology

Past, Present, and the Way Forward

Earl Robinson

The title of this symposium, "People of God: Salvationist Ecclesiology," means that it is essentially an ecclesiology symposium, a symposium about the doctrine or theology of the Christian Church. More specifically, it is a "Salvation Army" ecclesiology symposium, seeking to understand how The Salvation Army relates to the concept of Church.

The symposium derives its name from the Greek term that is most often translated as "Church" in English versions of the New Testament, the term *ecclesia*. The concept of the Church of Christ is scripturally related to that term in its first century New Testament setting and with its Old Testament background.

This is not the first Salvation Army Ecclesiology Symposium that I have had the privilege of attending. The first was in 1987 when I was President of the Catherine Booth Bible College in Winnipeg, Canada. The November 1999 issue of The Salvation Army's theology and ministry journal, *Word & Deed*, focused on the doctrine of the Church under the editorial heading, "The Salvation Army and the Body of Christ." In that issue, four papers were published that had been presented at the 1987 ecclesiology symposium. In this presentation I will be using some selected material from two of those papers, beginning with my own 1987 paper, "The Salvation Army - Ecclesia?" which the editorial stated was necessary "to establish a biblical understanding of what we mean by ecclesio-

Col. Earl Robinson served as Chair of the Salvation Army International Doctrine Council during the Council's planning, preparation and direction of the 2001 and 2006 International Theology and Ethics Symposia.

gy.”¹ If we would wish to understand to what extent The Salvation Army is ecclesia, we must first seek to grasp the scriptural concept of that term.

The Scriptural Concept of Ecclesia – Old Testament Background

In the Greek Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *qahal* is frequently translated *ecclesia* with the basic meaning of having been called to an assembly. It is often used of a people or nation assembled to hear the word of the Lord, as on the day the Israelites were gathered to hear the commandments of the Lord on Mount Sinai, with that day referred to as the “day of assembly” (*yom qahal* – Deuteronomy 9:10).

The Septuagint Version uses synagogue rather than *ecclesia* to translate *qahal* in Leviticus 4:14 and Deuteronomy 5:22. This may be significant, suggesting that the Jewish synagogue is the Old Testament Church or the forerunner leading to fulfillment in the New Testament Church. T. F. Torrance comments on this aspect of the use of *qahal* in the Old Testament.

Qahal denotes the Old Testament Church actively engaged in God’s purposes of revelation and salvation, that is, caught up in the mighty events whereby God intervenes redemptively in history, and involved in the forward thrust of the covenant toward final and universal fulfillment. *Qahal* is the community, expecting eschatological redemption. In that sense it is appropriated in the New Testament to denote the community in which the covenant promises of God to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the pouring out of His Spirit.²

David Watson, in his book, *I Believe in the Church*, also suggests that the *qahal* or assembly of Israel is the Old Testament shadow of the New Testament Church and expands on particular aspects of God’s summoning the congregation of Israel.³ The people of Israel were God’s “called out” ones (Hosea 11:1ff) just as the Church of Christ is “called out” of the darkness of sin to be God’s people (1 Peter 2:9). They were “called for” a special relationship with Him, “called together” into a new community to experience God’s miraculous power with each other, “called to” a new purpose as a people on the move towards the land of promise.

Gentile Setting

The term *ecclesia* also has a significant Gentile Greek setting which adds to our understanding of its New Testament usage. The Greek term *ecclesia* derives from two roots literally meaning “to call out of,” like the Hebrew *qahal* also referring to the “called out ones.”

Specifically in the secular Gentile setting, *ecclesia* referred first of all to an assembly called for battle,⁴ and later to the governing body of Greek cities consisting of all citizens who had not lost their civic rights. William Barclay indicates that in Athens the citizens or *ecclesia* met ten times in the year, and when they were due to meet, a herald would announce the meeting as an invitation for attendance and participation. He further points to two other items of interest. First, all of the meetings of the assembly began with prayer and sacrifice. And second, it was a true democracy where everyone had an equal right and duty to take part in directing the policy of the city.⁵

If we were to take this secular use of the term and apply it to the New Testament Church, this Greek Gentile background to the term *ecclesia* may be paralleled with the coming together of those who hear and respond to the invitation of the Herald, the invitation of God given in Jesus Christ. They are called out of the world, but they are also a company of God’s people who are concerned for that world and who bathe that concern with prayer and self-sacrifice to bring solutions to its problems.

New Testament Usage

New Testament writers chose *ecclesia* rather than synagogue to describe the new community of believers. Where the Greek word synagogue is used it usually refers to the Jewish building or congregation. *Ecclesia* on the other hand almost exclusively refers to the Christian Church.

Varying designations for *Ecclesia* in the New Testament

L. Berkhof refers to five of the most important uses of the term *ecclesia* in the New Testament.⁶

It refers most frequently to the local church, much as we use the term today to refer to a community of believers who generally focus their programs in one

location. Galatians 1:2 for example salutes "the churches in Galatia."

It also refers to what we today think of as a "house church," a group of believers who meet in a home for worship and study and prayer. 1 Corinthians 16:9 speaks of the church that met at the house of Priscilla and Aquila, the church of two or three or more persons gathered for worship in the name of Jesus (Matthew 18:20).

A third usage is in Acts 9:31 where it occurs in the singular to denote the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria. This apparently suggests a grouping of separate congregations that form a type of organizational or geographical unity. The parallel with a church as a denomination was certainly not in the mind of the New Testament writers, but there is some correspondence to the present day denomination made up of individual churches that form a unified grouping.

Fourthly, the word is used of the Church catholic or Church universal, the whole body of Christ throughout the world (as in 1 Corinthians 12:28).

And fifthly, Berkhof indicates that the term is used to signify the Church militant on earth and the Church triumphant in Heaven, all who are united in Christ (as in Ephesians 3:21).

Ecclesia can therefore refer to the Church at large or even a house church as representative of the total Christian community. A Wesleyan theology textbook; *God, Man and Salvation*, emphasizes this concept in referring to 1 Corinthians 1:2: "the church of God which is at Corinth."

The church is not the sum of all the congregations. Each community, even a house church, represents the total community, the Church... The church in Corinth is not part of the community of God; rather it is the Church of God... In Christ, there could be only one people of God, one *ecclesia*. Though expressed in local fellowships of believers, the Church - remained always and simply "the Church of God." 7

Other Descriptions of the Church in the New Testament

Descriptions of the Church of Jesus Christ other than *ecclesia* add to an understanding of the New Testament concept of the Church. It is the "body of Christ" (Ephesians 1:23), pointing to its unity and community and to its being the

manifestation of the Christ in the world of today, just as Christ revealed Himself in physical bodily form in the first century.

It is the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 3:16), indwelt and directed and empowered by the Spirit of God within the Church as a whole and within its members individually (1 Corinthians 6:19).

It is the bride whom Christ loved and for whom He gave His life that she might be made holy (Ephesians 5: 25-27, 32).

It is the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), and as such defends the truth of God over against the enemies of that truth.

It is a spiritual house made up of living stones (1 Peter 2:4-5), "a chosen people, a royal priesthood; a holy nation, a people belonging to God... called out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2.9).

The Salvation Army as *ecclesia*

To what extent is The Salvation Army *ecclesia* in terms of the New Testament usage of that term? Could there be such a theological entity as a Salvationist ecclesiology, or is the term "The Salvation Army" incompatible with the term *ecclesiology*?

Our lack of precision in responding to this question may be considered to some extent to be part of our Wesleyan heritage. David Smith in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology* suggests that some contemporary Methodists question whether there is a Methodist ecclesiology.⁸ He points out that Wesley did not think of his followers as being incorporated into a separate church but rather forming a group of societies within the Anglican Church, an "ecclesiola in ecclesia, a little church within the Church."⁹

Past Salvationist thought – early years

As we will see later, that same ambiguity to some extent exists still in Salvationist thought, but it particularly existed in the early days of The Salvation Army.

General William Booth.

We were initially founded as the East London Revival Mission and not as a separate church or denomination. But even after our change of name to The

Salvation Army with a type of denominational structure in 1878, our founder, William Booth, said this: "It was not my intention to create another sect ... we are not a church. We are an Army - an Army of Salvation."¹⁰

However, at the 1904 International Congress in London, England, General Booth did declare that "The Army is part of the living Church of God - a great instrument of war in the world, engaged in deadly conflict with sin and fiends."

¹¹He still did not go as far as saying that the Army is a church, but admitted that we are "part" of the Church.

Catherine Booth

It would appear from the writings of the co-founder of the Army, Catherine Booth, that she does not specifically say that The Salvation Army is a church either, but she does group us with other churches, emphasizing that we are one with them but called to a distinct witness to them. "The main difference" between us and them, she said, "is in our aggressiveness ... The Bishop of Durham, the learned Dr. Lightfoot, says: 'The Salvation Army has at least recalled us to the lost ideal of the work of the Church - the universal compulsion of the souls of men.'" ¹²

General Bramwell Booth

Our second General, Bramwell Booth, went a little further than our founder's assertion about the Army being part of the living Church of God in his book, *Echoes and Memories*:

There is one Church. Just as there was only one people of Israel, no matter how widely scattered, so there is only one spiritual Israel ... Of this, the Great Church of the Living God, we claim, and have ever claimed, that we of The Salvation Army are an integral part and element - a living fruit-bearing branch in the True Vine ... In this, we humbly but firmly claim that we are in no way inferior, either to the saints who have gone before, or - though remaining separate from them, even as one branch in the Vine is separate from another - to the saints of the present. We, no less than they, are called and cho-

sen to sanctification of the Spirit and to the inheritance of eternal life. And our officers are, equally with them, ministers in the Church of God having received diversities of gifts, but the one Spirit - endowed by His Grace, assured of His guidance, confirmed by His Word, and commissioned by the Holy Ghost to represent Him to the whole world. ¹³

General Albert Orsborn

In spite of that fairly clear declaration by Bramwell Booth concerning our church identity although still not saying that we are a church; General Albert Orsborn said repeatedly during his office from 1946 - 1954, "We are not a church - we are a permanent mission to the unconverted." ¹⁴ It was during Albert Orsborn's tenure as General that The Salvation Army became a founding member of the World Council of Churches, but it was in an article on our relationship with that ecumenical body that he expanded on why he was not comfortable with the Army being regarded as an established church or sect.

To this day, we are still accepted by some churches only as social welfare workers; they do not admit our claim that we have within ourselves a corporate spiritual life, with its own authority, able to provide for our people all the services and rights exercised by a church toward its members. But we are almost universally recognized as a religious denomination by governments, and for purposes of a national emergency - such as war services - or for convenience in designating our officers, they group us with the churches. That is as far as we wish to go in being known as a church. We are, and wish to remain, a Movement for the revival of religion, a permanent mission to the unconverted, one of the world's greatest missionary societies; but not an establishment, not a sect, not a church, except that we are a part of the body of Christ called "The Church Militant" and we shall be there, by his grace, with "The Church Triumphant." ¹⁵

General Frederick Coutts

General Frederick Coutts did not specifically say that The Salvation Army is a church but the implication is there in his writings. This can be seen in his booklet entitled "The Salvation Army in Relation to the Church" that he wrote in 1978 at the request of General Arnold Brown. In the first section of the booklet entitled "The Nature of the Church," he says that, "The place of The Salvation Army within the Christian community ... has long been an area of sensitive concern both to those without as well as within the Movement itself."¹⁶ He suggests; however, that William Booth never left the Methodist Church but simply had an eagerness to fulfill the mission of the Church more effectively when he gave up his place among the Methodists.

It should be remembered that when, on July 18, 1861, William Booth left his assured place as a Superintendent Minister in the Methodist New Connexion, he did not think of himself as leaving the Church. "I offer myself," he wrote even in his letter of resignation, "for the evangelistic work, in the first instance to our own connexional churches, and, when they decline to engage me, to other portions of the religious community." This was not the language of a man who was washing his hands of the Church, but of one who could only be faulted for his greater eagerness that the mission of the Church might be fulfilled more effectively.¹⁷

He then follows that comment with a summary of the New Testament definition of the Church.

Any definition of the Church must ... be a New Testament definition - where it is set out not in terms of ecclesiastical structure but of a spiritual relationship. Members of the Church are those who are "incorporate in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1, N.E.B.). This is the one thing needful. The Church is the whole of the worshipping, witnessing Christian community throughout the centuries into whatever groupings, large or small,

accepted or persecuted, wealthy or poor, her members may have been structured in the past or are governed in the present.¹⁸

In a sermon preached at a united church service during the week of prayer for Christian unity, he linked the Army with other denominations of the Church present at that gathering. Referring to Romans 15:7 on Christians accepting one another, he said this:

As freely and as generously as God for Christ's sake accepted you when, by everything in the rulebook, you were not worth accepting, so accept one another. Spelling this out, this means that each of us – Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist, Anglican, Friend, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Salvationist – is to be welcomed as he is for what he is. He is a man in Christ. The Spirit bids us welcome him as a brother beloved.¹⁹

General Clarence Wiseman

In an article in *The Officèr* magazine of October 1976, General Clarence Wiseman clearly pointed to the need for a Salvationist ecclesiology, a Salvationist doctrine and theology of the Church. As the international leader of our movement at the time, he ventured towards suggesting what the basics of that theology might be. The article was entitled "Are we a church?" and General Wiseman concludes with a positive response to the question of the title. He indicated that he was comfortable with our using a number of terms to describe ourselves, and suggested that all of those descriptions relate to the New Testament concept of "Church."

It appears ... that we are a permanent mission to the unconverted and a caring social service movement; in some places we assume the features of a religious order. These various aspects exist within the God-given shape of the Army, the worldwide Army of Salvation! Can all these elements be sub-

sumed under the generic designation "Church?" With a few exceptions, I think most authorities would agree with us that the Army is part of the living Church of God - the Body of Christ. I believe also the Army can be truthfully described as a "church" in the more circumscribed, denominational sense of the word ... The Salvation Army is one of those churches whose members, born again of the Holy Spirit and obedient to the heavenly vision, constitute the great Church of God ... The precious companies of redeemed soldiers of God gathered together in Salvation Army corps give credence to the claim that we are both a church and a part of the universal Church.²⁰

The 1969 Handbook of Doctrine

Preceding that declaration, General Wiseman had been chair of the International Doctrine Council that produced the 1969 *Handbook of Doctrine*. The council met from 1960 to 1969, and he was chair from 1962 until June 1967, the month in which the final typescript of the 1969 handbook had been completed. The brief section of that book having to do with the Church therefore has some relationship to his ecclesiological position as well as that of the primary writer, Colonel Gordon Mitchell, and of Frederick Coutts under whose tenure as General the book was approved and published. The section occurs in the chapter on "The Holy Spirit" in an item that is headed: "The Holy Spirit called into being that fellowship of believers known in the New Testament as 'the Church,'" an item not included in the former 1923 *Handbook of Doctrine*.

Although there is no direct reference to The Salvation Army being *ecclesia*, the inference is that what the passage says about the theological meaning of Church applies to The Salvation Army. There is direct usage of the Greek word *ecclesia*, which, it says, "means an assembly, or 'that which is called out.'" "In fulfilling his purpose for the world God works not only through individuals but through a chosen community ... The Church is composed of the people whom God has called together in Jesus Christ, a fellowship which includes all disciples of Jesus irrespective of national and racial backgrounds ... In the figure of the vine and the branches (John 15), the branches are not only joined to the vine but joined with one another through the vine. What is essential to the Church is not

a particular form of administration but the living union of its members with Christ and with one another through Christ.”²¹

Past Salvationist Thought – Later Years

With reference to later years of Salvationist ecclesiological thought I have chosen to make the mid-1980's the beginning of that era because of consideration we will be giving to two specific areas of ecclesiological thought that were written at about that time. I have chosen to make 1998 the end of that era because of 1998 being the year when the first officially approved exposition on a Salvationist ecclesiology was published in *Salvation Story, Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine*.

Church/Sect

Prior to the mid-1980's, there was discussion both inside and outside of The Salvation Army as to whether we are church in the sense of being an established denomination of the larger Church, or whether we are more appropriately to be considered as a sect with unique characteristics separate from those of established churches. Research concerning that discussion is contained in another paper of the 1987 Catherine Booth Bible College ecclesiology symposium, a paper also reproduced in the November 1999 issue of *Word & Deed* under the title, "Towards a Sociology of Salvationism." The author is Major Bruce Power, a retired Canadian officer who serves as an adjunct professor at the William & Catherine Booth College.

Concerning the term "sect" being applied to The Salvation Army he says this:

The Salvation Army has most often been termed a "sect" by sociologists. Usually it is termed a "conversionist" sect, although a case could be made for its manifestation as a "holiness" sect as well. "Sects are ideological movements having as their explicit and declared aim the maintenance, and perhaps even the propagation of certain ideological positions."²²

Concerning the term "church" or "denomination" being applied to the Army, Bruce Power indicates that Salvationists have always argued that they are a part

of the Church in a theological sense, going back to the statements already referred to by William and Bramwell Booth. He suggests, however, that we could benefit by defining ourselves as both sect and church or denomination.

The Salvation Army in its diversity maintains and encourages both sectarian and denominational responses to religious life. This is a very positive factor in terms of ministry potential and organizational structure, if we utilize the forms to their fullest potential ... Thus, the model I would propose would hold both sect and church type together within the one organization ... Sectarianism provides an important balance to denominationism by constantly recalling us to fundamentals ... Sectarian responses need to be maintained and encouraged to flourish, if we wish to maintain an evangelical presence within our social work. For many of our social work contexts a sectarian approach to religious expression is the most successful. The sectarian wing is most likely to increase the number of "converts" through very traditional Salvation Army methods. ²³

The "fundamentals" to which he is referring may be related to the quotation he provides from William Booth in *Salvation Soldierly* as to the fundamental mission of The Salvation Army.

We are a Salvation people – this is our specialty – getting saved and keeping saved, and then getting somebody else saved, and then getting saved ourselves more and more, until Full Salvation on earth makes the heaven within, which is finally perfected by the Full Salvation without, on the other side of the River. ²⁴

That sectarian mission, however, also needs to be wed to church denominationalism with its strengths.

The denominational side of Salvationism provides education,

support for second and third generations, and develops public support and interest that allow us to undertake social service projects far beyond our strength and capacity without such support. 25

Such a marriage to denominationalism and to the Church universal guards against undermining the unity that is necessary for the success of mission. While mission may on the one hand be seen as a distinctive witness within our movement and to the Church at large, it ought not to be divisive. We seek to be partners in that mission with the universal Christian Church.

This segment of the later years of past Salvationist thought concerning our identity is given as an introduction to a possible way forward for the Army – further thought and action being directed towards our “mission-based” ecclesiology.

Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology

A similar purpose relates to the introduction of another aspect of the later years of past Salvationist thought, Commissioner Phil Needham’s 1987 book entitled *Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology*. In the introduction to his book, he makes clear his own belief that “The Salvation Army ... is as much an integral part of the one true catholic (universal) Christian church as is any other denomination or ecclesiastical tradition.” 26 He further makes it clear that his book, as with this 2006 symposium, “is *not* an ecclesiology of The Salvation Army but a Salvationist ecclesiology ... To write an ecclesiology of this one ecclesiastical expression would be idolatrous, a substitution of the part for the whole. Any attempt at a true ecclesiology assumes that a theology of the Church universal is intended.” The intent of his book was to remind the Army and the Church at large of the necessity of having a “missionary heartbeat” because “the sole reason for its existence is the world for whom Christ died.” 27

For what we will later look at as a possible way forward, I wish to focus our thoughts on chapter 4 of the book, “Commissioned for Battle.” 28 Phil Needham indicates that the Church exists primarily for the sake of its mission in the world, an ecclesiological principle that is part of our Wesleyan heritage. “A Salvationist ecclesiology ... holds that everything connected with the ordering of the Church’s life and work must serve its missionary calling,” 29 with the term “mis-

sionary" in *Community in Mission* referring to "the total outreach of the Church to the world rather than in the more restricted sense of overseas or cross-cultural evangelism only." 30

Phil Needham points out that there is a danger of disunity in mission associated with sectarianism unless there are constant safeguards to protect unity in mission. He quotes John Wesley and William and Catherine Booth in that regard.

John Wesley used the language of warfare when describing the Church's unity in mission: "I desire to have a league offensive and defensive with every soldier of Christ. We have not only one faith, one hope, one Lord, but are directly engaged in one warfare." 31... In an address at Exeter Hall, London, on "The Future of Missions, and the Mission of the Future," William Booth proposed the reorganization of the Church into "one vast missionary society." 32 All Christians, in other words, would be united in this common cause ... Sectarianism ... was seen as a scourge on the missionary Church. It undermined the unity which was so necessary for the success of mission. Unlike the sectarians who placed great stock in their own peculiar doctrines and organizations, Catherine Booth insisted that "God cares very little about our sectarian differences and divisions. The great main thing is the love of God and the service of humanity." 33 34

That love of God and service of humanity are at the core of a mission-based ecclesiology.

The Church gives witness to the gospel primarily in two ways. These can be described as evangelism and social action. Both are concerned with facilitating the transformations that the reality of the Kingdom makes possible. Evangelism is concerned with transformation on the personal level, and social action on the socio-economic level. Evangelism is an announcement of the Kingdom's presence and an invitation to

accept citizen status. Social action is also an announcement of the Kingdom's presence, but in this case by supporting and participating in the social change for which that presence calls. Without both ways to witness, the proclamation of the gospel is hindered. Evangelism without social action is flight from the world and refusal to accept the reality of the Kingdom's transforming presence in the midst of this world that God loves. Social action without evangelism is flight from the personal depth of the gospel and refusal to take seriously Jesus' unmistakable command to his followers to become "fishers of men." (Mark 1:17; Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:10) ... Evangelism and social action, therefore, are the twofold expression of a Church in love with the world for whom Jesus died and at war with every attitude, assumption, force and law that contradict the Kingdom. ³⁵

People of God – The Doctrine of the Church

My own thinking on a Salvationist ecclesiology goes back to my first experience at formal classroom teaching in Christian theology in 1966 at the Toronto College for Officers' Training. I shared the responsibility of teaching theology with Major (later Commissioner) Ed Read, who suggested that I develop something on the subject of ecclesiology. Even though nothing was provided for with reference to this doctrine in our eleven statements of belief, it was agreed by both of us that this was a subject about which we ought not to be silent. Those first attempts to develop lectures on the doctrine of the Church from a Salvation Army perspective proved to be a valuable experience in my own understanding of The Salvation Army as the church to which I had been called.

Similar attempts at a Salvationist ecclesiology have been part of curricula in Salvation Army colleges for officer training throughout the world. Such attempts also occur in Salvationist writings in the context of the history of the Army as to whether, for example, it is a church or, as Major John Rhemick from the United States put it, "a movement with a peculiar understanding of itself as a religious body" ³⁶ in "transition from a movement alone, to a more traditional expression of the Church, within which the sense of a movement can be contained." ³⁷ But

there was no officially approved Salvationist doctrine of the Church in Army curricula or literature until the publication in 1998 of *Salvation Story – Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* with its chapter 10 entitled “People of God – The Doctrine of the Church.” That chapter begins differently from all other chapters of handbooks of doctrine in Salvation Army history, including the other chapters of *Salvation Story*. All other chapters begin with one or more of the 11 Salvation Army statements of belief that are relevant to the chapter’s theme. There is, however, no Salvation Army statement of belief that is related to the doctrine of the Church. Chapter 10 therefore begins with what the International Doctrine Council considered closest to what had been followed in Salvation Army history as a definition of our ecclesiological position, Bramwell Booth’s assertion to which we have already made reference.

“

Of this Great Church of the Living God, we claim and have ever claimed, that we of The Salvation Army are an integral part and element – a living fruit-bearing branch in the True Vine. 38

Salvation Story explains “the Church is the fellowship of all who are justified and sanctified by grace through faith in Christ. Membership in the body of Christ is not optional for believers: it is a reality given to all who know Christ, the head of the Church ... Salvation Army doctrine implies a doctrine of the Church. Each doctrine begins: ‘We believe ...’ ‘We’ points to a body of believers, a community of faith – a church.” 39.

Chapter 10 of *Salvation Story* is a commentary on a Salvationist ecclesiology. The whole book, including that chapter, was approved for publication by General Paul Rader on the recommendation of his Advisory Council. That approval was given after agreed upon changes had been made to the publication draft by the International Doctrine Council on the basis of comments received from territories of The Salvation Army world, all of which had been sent the draft and had been asked for such comments. In his foreword to the new handbook, General Rader indicated that General Eva Burrows had given a mandate to the International Doctrine Council in 1992 to prepare a new Handbook of Doctrine with a fresh approach and that *Salvation Story* was the fulfillment of that charge.

Of the book, he said this:

The vital heart of the faith of Salvationists is the redeeming blood of Christ and the purifying and empowering fire of the Spirit. We are an army of "Blood and Fire." But now other words like "community," "mission," "sacramental," and "church," are more important to our story than ever. They help us to understand what our new life in Christ makes possible and necessary for sustaining our inner life, fighting the good fight of faith and fulfilling our role in the grand scheme of human redemption.⁴⁰

There is still, however, no officially approved additional Salvation Army statement of belief on the doctrine of the Church, even though chapter 10 of *Salvation Story* has the subtitle of "The doctrine of the Church." The fine line is that the chapter is an exposition of a Salvationist ecclesiology, but it does not contain a Salvationist ecclesiological statement of doctrinal belief.

No additions or changes in the doctrinal statements of The Salvation Army were actually allowed from the 1878 Deed Poll and other succeeding documents until The Salvation Army Act 1980 when the following preamble of 1878 was omitted: "That the religious doctrines professed and believed and taught ... are and shall forever be as follows..." Reversing the "shall forever be" wording in the 1878 Deed Poll, the 1980 Act indicated that schedule 1 on Religious Doctrines of the Army "may from time to time be extended or varied by deed executed by the General, such deed having the prior written approval of more than two-thirds of the Commissioners."⁴¹

In keeping with that provision, the Doctrine Council constituted in 1992 that produced *Salvation Story* asked General Eva Burrows if changes could be recommended to the statements of belief to correct omissions, such as there being no statement of belief on the doctrine of the Church or, even more significant of an omission, that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such permission was initially granted by General Burrows and her Advisory Council. Later, the General and a new Advisory Council instructed the Doctrine Council to make no changes to the Religious Doctrines schedule. But the Council had already worked on pro-

posed changes to the statements of belief and General Paul Rader allowed those to be included in *Salvation Story* as summary statements at the conclusion of each chapter. The summary statement at the conclusion of chapter 10 on the doctrine of the Church states the following:

We believe in the Church, the body of Christ, justified and sanctified by grace, called to continue the mission and ministry of Christ. ⁴²

Should a General in office so request, that summary statement could be reconsidered some time in the future as the beginning of deliberations concerning a Salvationist statement of belief on the doctrine of the Church.

The reference in that statement to our continuing the mission and ministry of Christ particularly relates to the Army's mission-based ecclesiology. Near the conclusion of every chapter of *Salvation Story* there is mention as to how the statement or statements of belief considered in that chapter relate to the mission of the Church. In chapter 10 concerning the doctrine of the Church, that occurs in a section entitled "The Scattered Community" having to do with the Church being sent out in mission.

The Church is not a self-absorbed society brought together for security and socializing. It is a fellowship that releases its members for pilgrimage and mission. The Holy Spirit creates the Church not only for our benefit, but also to make our witness and mission possible. ⁴³

That thought is further developed in the *Salvation Story Study Guide*.

Our understanding of the Church must keep each of two important kinds of activities in perspective. These two kinds of activities can be described as "gathering" and "scattering." The gathering activities of the Church are crucial. God's people need to come together to be nurtured, encouraged, and equipped for ministry and mission ... The Church gathers

together in order to receive the presence of God and to prepare and equip itself to be scattered in the world as a leavening influence, a courageous witness, an evangelistic mission and a compassionate servant. ⁴⁴

... If we were to ask which has been the greater emphasis in the Army's self-understanding – the gathering or the scattering – we would have to say the scattering. The Army has almost always thought of itself more in terms of mission rather than fellowship. ⁴⁵

Present Salvationist Thought

Concerning present Salvationist thought with reference to The Salvation Army as a church, the Army's annual *Year Book* has had a recurring article for a number of years responding to the question, "What is The Salvation Army?" That response asserts, "The Salvation Army is an integral part of the Christian Church, although distinctive in government and practice." ⁴⁶

But the confusion as to whether or not The Salvation Army is a church still persists to some extent in present Salvationist thought. In some parts of the Salvation Army world there is discussion as to whether it is legitimate to call our corps - community "churches". In some territories of The Salvation Army, the term "church growth" has been replaced by "corps growth" because of similar concerns. And I have heard a few Salvationists say, "But we are more than a church. We are an Army!" The assumption is that there is a "more than" to the ideal of our Lord for his Church, his Body, on earth.

Nevertheless, within present Salvationist thought there is a general acceptance today that we are *ecclesia*. We seem to think of The Salvation Army as being just as much church as Christians of other denominations do of their part of the universal Christian Church. That is somewhat confirmed by Salvationists of today being bothered by outside public perceptions that we are not a "church" in the proper definition of that term. It is also confirmed by comments from international leaders of The Salvation Army since the anticipated and actual publication of *Salvation Story* with its chapter on "The Doctrine of the Church."

General Paul Rader (Rtd.)

Salvation Story had not yet been published when General Paul Rader convened the spiritual life commission, but he had already given interim approval of the draft of its chapter on “The People of God.” With the anticipated publication of that chapter in his mind, when General Rader addressed the commission at its first meeting in July 1996, he indicated that the Army was coming more to terms with its “churchly identity.” He said this:

In recent years, and for a variety of reasons, we have begun to come more to terms with our churchly identity – that is, the accepted and publicly-acknowledged fact that we are the church home for something upwards of two million people in the world. For most of them we are their primary, if not only, point of insertion into the body of Christ. We are the fellowship within which they experience their connectedness with the body of Christ ... It is through the Army they experience their relationship to the broader Christian community and establish their identity within that community as bona fide Christian believers ... We have a responsibility to ensure that we are not denying our people necessary means of grace and that their participation in the life of the Army through their corps affords them every available advantage in living the Christian life. ⁴⁷

General John Gowans (Rtd.)

General John Gowans, in his foreword to the 2002 publication of the Doctrine Council’s book entitled *Servants Together*, says this of his perspective on the Army’s relationship to the historic Church:

Salvationists pride themselves on being “doers of the word and not hearers only,” and the emphasis we place on rolling up our sleeves and getting on with it is one with which I heartily agree. But action without reflection soon becomes mindless

routine; we must continually review what we are doing and why we do it. There is, of course, an even more fundamental need: to examine in the light of Scripture who we are as a people, and where The Salvation Army fits into the historic Church – that mysterious “Body of Christ” which God uses, in his mystical mercy, to continue the work of his Son in the world. ⁴⁸

General John Larsson (Rtd.)

In 2001 when he served as Chief of the Staff, General John Larsson delivered the concluding paper at the first International Theology & Ethics Symposium, “Salvationist Theology and Ethics for the New Millennium.” In that paper he indicated that the 2001 symposium was important because “the Salvation Army has reached a watershed in its self-understanding,” ⁴⁹ that is, its understanding of itself as a church.

Whether the Army is or is not a church is not a matter of playing with words. When our self-understanding truly is that we are a church all kinds of consequences flow – or ought to flow. And it is in this area that a great deal of thinking has yet to be done. It can also be argued that in one sense it is only now – after more than 100 years of existence – that the Army in reality is evolving into a church and that we are therefore facing a time of transition. How we handle that transition will vitally affect our future ... We are in a period of transition towards a fuller understanding of ourselves as a church – and theological concerns lie at the very heart of this process. ⁵⁰

It is to be noted that General Larsson drew special attention to the reference to a “mission-based” ecclesiology in the doctrine council’s statement of rationale for the 2001 symposium: “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 ...” ⁵¹

He developed that reference to indicate his own thinking on this being a primary consideration on the “what” of the task ahead for the Army.

We now know and accept that we are an Army in transition – from a movement to a church. We are self-confident enough to believe that we are a church with a difference, with our strong sense of mission, and a three-fold mission at that [“to save souls, grow saints and serve suffering humanity,” John Gowans.] But if in making the transition we lose the dynamic of the mission conviction, we will have lost the principal reason for our existence. ⁵²

General Shaw Clifton

In his 1999 book entitled *Who are these Salvationists?* General Shaw Clifton dealt with many ecclesiological issues related to The Salvation Army as a church with distinctives. He looked at similar aspects of past Salvationist ecclesiological thought as have been dealt with in this paper. And he came to much the same conclusion – that most of what has been said “falls short of saying directly that we are a church.” He refers specifically in that regard to The Salvation Army International Mission Statement that has occurred for many years on the first page of the annual *Salvation Army Year Book*: “The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.” ⁵⁴

Many territories around the Army world have adopted this statement as it stands or in a slightly modified form, even though it falls short of saying directly that we are a church. The reasons for this reticence are not immediately obvious, and many within our ranks are looking now for something a little more precise. They are asking: “If we are just a “part” of something else, what sort of “part” are we?

They were rewarded by the publication in 1998 of *Salvation Story*, the new *Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*. *Salvation Story* is an international publication approved by the

General of The Salvation Army and compiled by the International Doctrine Council. Chapter 10 deals with the doctrine of the church and contains this statement at its outset: "The Church is the fellowship of all who are justified and sanctified by grace-through faith in Christ ... Salvation Army doctrine requires a doctrine of the Church. Each doctrine begins 'We believe ...' 'We' points to a body of believers, a community of faith — a church." 55.

At last! There it is! An official Army publication, sanctioned at the highest level, telling all who read it that the Army is a church. This is much more specific, and ecclesio-logically more self-assured, than saying vaguely that we are "part of" the "universal Christian church," though in itself this assertion is important. The new Handbook offers no hedging, no equivocation, no ambiguity — just a plain and simple assertion: the Army is a church. 56

General Clifton's assertion is definite, and he then continues in his book to affirm that belief comprehensively from three different points of view: the theological, the sociological and the legal.

Ecumenical affirmation that The Salvation Army is a Church

In chapter one of his book, General Clifton indicates that there are many denominations within the universal Christian Church which are open to the idea that the Army is a church, a distinctive Christian denomination, although there are still some of our brothers and sisters in Christ who would find that difficult to grasp. 57 There is a significant history to ecumenical affirmation of our place as a church, a distinctive Christian denomination, going back to the beginnings of our movement and friends of our founders from other Christian denominations. With reference to corporate ecumenical affirmation, we had an early association with the "International Missionary Council" and the "Faith & Order" and "Life & Work" movements founded in the 1920's, groups later subsumed under the World Council of Churches of which we were a founding member in 1948. We have also been represented on the Conference of Secretaries of Christian

World Communions for almost 50 years, a broad spectrum of Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, many of whom supported our registrations as a church in Russia in 2001 and in Poland in July 2006.

Ecumenical affirmations having to do with our being invited to be part of such church-related bodies continue to increase internationally, nationally and locally. Internationally, we have direct association with the Conference of European Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, and the Global Christian Forum. Nationally, we are represented on most national councils of churches and locally on most ministerial associations wherever The Salvation Army has a presence. Nationally as well, when he was National Commander in the USA, Commissioner John Busby was elected as the first chair of the committee to establish "Christian Churches Together in the USA," an ecumenical body that includes a similar broad spectrum of denominations to that of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions and the Global Christian Forum.

The most recent of international ecumenical affirmations has to do with our International Doctrine Council now being participants in bilateral theological dialogues with other Christian World Communions. Those dialogues have been occurring amongst other Christian World Communions since shortly after the 1962-65 Vatican II Council, with about 30 now taking place. With the approval of Generals John Gowans and John Larsson, since June 2003 our International Doctrine Council has now been involved in four such dialogues with two separate Christian World Communions. The November 2005 and May 2006 issues of *Word & Deed* contain copies of papers presented at our two dialogues with the World Methodist Council.

Scriptural Affirmation that The Salvation Army is a Church

In the introduction to this paper, before dealing with "The scriptural concept of *Ecclesia*," I said that "if we would wish to understand to what extent The Salvation Army is *ecclesia*, we must first seek to grasp the scriptural concept of that term." We then dealt with the biblical understanding of *ecclesia* in the New Testament sense of that word with its Old Testament and Gentile backgrounds. I have reviewed that section of the paper and itemized 20 statements that would seem to support whether or not a community of Christian believers conforms

with the biblical understanding of what can appropriately be termed *ecclesia* or a "church."

More important than all other affirmations that The Salvation Army is a church - whether they come from Salvationists generally, from our international leaders, from accepting what our brothers and sisters in Christ think of us, or from whatever other possible basis - is whether or not we are a church as Holy Scripture defines, what a church is and will be, scriptural affirmation that The Salvation Army is a church. From our biblical understanding of what constitutes a church, I believe that we can say that The Salvation Army is, and will be *ecclesia* as she links herself to those 20 biblical ideals as to what constitutes *ecclesia*.

She is and will be church as she -

1. is the people of God assembled to hear the Word of the Lord, to offer sacrifices unto Him, and to worship Him;
2. is actively engaged in God's purposes of revelation and salvation;
3. is a community in which the covenant promises of God to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the pouring out of His Spirit;
4. is called out of the darkness of sin to be God's people;
5. is called for a special relationship with God in Christ;
6. is called together into a new community of Christian love and fellowship to experience God's miraculous power with each other;
7. is called to a new purpose as a people of God on the move towards the land of promise, the heavenly city;
8. is, an assembly of God's people called to be an array for battle, an army battling against the forces of evil;
9. hears and responds to the invitation of God given in Jesus Christ to be called out of following the world's ways to being God's expression of concern for the world;
10. is a people who bathes concern for the world with prayer and self-sacrifice to bring solutions to its problems;
11. is a local congregation set apart as a community of believers in Christ;
12. is a group of believers who meet in homes for worship and study and prayer in the name of Jesus;
13. is a grouping of separate congregations which form an organizational or geographical unity;

14. is an integral part of the Church universal, the whole body of Christ throughout the world;

15. is part of the Church militant on earth leading to the Church triumphant in Heaven;

16. is the body of Christ, united in Christian community to manifest Christ in the world today;

17. is the temple of the Holy Spirit, indwelt and directed and empowered by the Spirit of God;

18. is the bride of Christ whom Christ loved and for whom He gave His life to make her holy;

19. is the pillar and foundation of the truth, defending the truth of God in matters such as moral decision making over against enemies of that truth;

20. is a spiritual house made up of living stones who are God's chosen and holy and royal priesthood, belonging to Him through having been brought from darkness to God's marvelous light.

Are we a people of God with those 20 qualities? Our first response must be to admit that no church is absolutely perfect in terms of being completely true to all aspects of the New Testament concept of church. Churches may be divinely ordained but they are also human institutions with human fallibility. Our second response to whether or not we are a people of God with the qualities listed above should therefore probably be another question. If we have not reached the ideal of every scriptural parallel, are we on the move towards those ideals? If so, The Salvation Army is *ecclesia*, the church of God. If so, there is a Salvation Army ecclesiology that is being shaped by God's word. And I would suggest that if we take the whole of The Salvation Army into consideration, there is not one of the listed ideals towards which we are not on the move somewhere, in some place, in spite of the imperfections that we share with all parts of the body of Christ.

The Way Forward in Salvationist Thought and Action

Assuming therefore that we have come to the point in our thinking that we can say that The Salvation Army is a church in the biblical understanding of what a church is, what is the way forward in Salvationist ecclesiological thought and action? None of us can respond to that question in terms of what will actually take place. God alone knows the future. All we are able to do is suggest what our

personal opinions might be and speculate as to what might actually take place, based on what has occurred thus far due to the overall purposes of God that are realized within the confines of human weakness. With that understanding; there are four question mark headings that I wish to propose as possible ways forward for a Salvationist ecclesiology.

A Salvation Army Statement of Belief on Salvationist Ecclesiology?

As already discussed, we still do not have a statement of Salvation Army belief on Salvationist ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. Is this something that could be considered as a way forward? The matter is complex because dealing with one doctrinal omission might understandably bring up the question of other issues that need to be looked at in our statements of belief. Those could include reference to the resurrection and return of Jesus Christ and possibly a statement of belief on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Another complexity is that, administratively and legally, dealing with these issues would require extensions or variations to Schedule 1 of the Salvation Army Act 1980, "by deed executed by the General, such deed having the prior written approval of more than two-thirds of the Commissioners."⁵⁸

A Mission-Based Salvationist Ecclesiology?

Is another possible way forward for Salvationist ecclesiology that of further developing and emphasizing our "mission-based" focus as a church? That is a much less complex matter because our mission-based focus is already in place and to some extent has been in place since our early beginnings and throughout our history to the present day. It was part of William Booth's concept of "Salvation for Both Worlds" with reference to a mission to the poor.

I saw that when the Bible said, "He that believeth shall be saved," it meant not only saved from the miseries of the future world, but from the miseries of this also. That it came with the promise of salvation here and now; from hell and sin and vice and crime and idleness and extravagance, and consequently very largely from poverty and disease, and the majority of kindred foes.⁵⁹

Since William Booth voiced those thoughts, the ways in which The Salvation Army seeks to deliver people from their miseries have become highly sophisticated, professionalized, often detached from grassroots participation by Salvationists and closely linked to government funding. All of those factors present issues that must be closely scrutinized. But what probably particularly requires readdressing today has to do with ensuring that our emphasis on social salvation is more closely wedded with communicating the message of the cross, the marriage of meeting spiritual and material/social needs through a holistic gospel emphasis with the primary aim of saving souls. The Salvation Army must guard against an overemphasis on social salvation to the detriment of the spiritual dimension to salvation. That is something that William Booth saw as a danger as far back as 1909 when, on his 80th birthday, he wrote to his officers with this warning:

But while you strive to deliver (people) from their temporal distresses, and endeavor to rescue them from the causes that have led to their unfortunate condition, you must seek, above all, to turn their miseries to good account by making them help the salvation of their souls and their deliverance from the wrath to come. It will be a very small reward for all your toils if, after bringing them into a condition of well being here, they perish hereafter. ⁶⁰

The Salvation Army's "mission-based" ecclesiological focus has recurred throughout this paper. It is part of past Salvationist ecclesiological thought in our early years – that we are an "Army of salvation" (William Booth); pointing other parts of the body of Christ "to the lost ideal of the work of the Church – the universal compulsion of the souls of men" (as quoted by Catherine Booth); a "permanent mission to the unconverted" (Albert Orsborn); It is part of past Salvationist thought of our later years – the need to maintain what sociologists might refer to as our background of being looked upon as a conversionist sect, upholding an evangelical presence within our social work (Bruce Power); looking to The Salvation Army as a church to give witness to the gospel primarily in

two ways – evangelism and social action (Phil Needham); maintaining our mission-based “movement” expressions as we are in transition from a movement to a more traditional expression of the Church (John Rhemick); the Holy Spirit having created the Church not only for our benefit, but also to make our witness and mission possible (Salvation Story). It is part of present Salvationist thought – if in making the transition from movement to church we lose the dynamic of the mission conviction, we will have lost the principal reason for our existence (John Larsson).

Growing Saints/Spiritual Life Development?

As already mentioned, General Larsson spoke of the Army’s three-fold mission at the 2001 symposium, summarized by General John Gowans as that of saving souls, growing saints and serving suffering humanity. Saving souls and serving suffering humanity are covered in the last section that has to do with the Army’s mission to people outside of itself, what *Salvation Story* thinks of as the Church’s activity of “scattering” or being “sent out in mission” to the world at large.⁶¹

“Growing saints” is a different kind of mission within the Army. It falls under what *Salvation Story* speaks of as the Church’s activity of “gathering.”⁶² or God’s people coming together “to be nurtured, encouraged, and equipped for ministry and mission.”⁶³ It has to do with worship and education and training – maturing in the faith through “discipleship,” more recently referred to as “spiritual formation.” Internationally for The Salvation Army, the term most commonly in use since January 2000 has been “spiritual life development,” related to the Spiritual Life Commission Report.

The effectiveness of the Army’s mission to the world at large is dependent on the growing of its saints, on the spiritual life development of its membership. *Servants Together* warns that in our “passion for mission” to the “suffering, fragmented world” at large, we must be careful not to be so caught up in that passion that it is accompanied by “ignoring the needs of the congregation, failing to disciple the faithful, or giving no attention to stewardship and order in the church.”

64

A further important question concerning the way forward for Salvationist ecclesiology is, therefore, this: what are ways forward in worship, discipleship,

education; and training that would more effectively result in growing saints and spiritual life development and equipping for ministry of Salvation Army leaders and soldiers and adherents and congregations?

Input from the 2006 Symposium?

In his *Officer magazine* article, "Are We a Church?" General Clarence Wiseman denied that his thoughts could even be considered as even one small step towards a theology of the Church, but said, "Some day someone will tackle the task." ⁶⁵ At the conclusion of this Symposium 2006, it may be that symposium participants are the "someones" who will have tackled taking the task a bit further than The Salvation Army has gone before. What will be the result of that effort?

One of the privileges that will be ours on the closing afternoon of the symposium is that of framing recommendations having to do with issues and outcomes related to deliberations during our week together. Later that afternoon we will be participants in a plenary session to arrive at a consensus of recommendations that the symposium wishes to present to the International Doctrine Council for further refinement before being forwarded to the General for consideration of possible territorial/command and international implementation. As is normal in such conferences, our role is simply to make recommendations and it is at the discretion of international and territorial/command leadership as to what is done with those recommendations.

I have been involved in a number of non-Salvation Army conferences in which I have had a "voice but not a vote." And on each occasion, it has indeed been a privilege to be heard even though one may never fully know the result of having been heard.

This present symposium should not be considered as providing a comprehensive and systematic approach to the theology of the church from a Salvation Army perspective. But hopefully we may have had a voice in the international Salvation Army taking some small steps towards seeing more clearly the way forward towards a doctrine of Salvationist ecclesiology that is still very much in formation. Especially for all of us privileged to be here at this time and in this place, another "way forward" question is therefore this: will there be recommendations made and voices heard at the 2006 Symposium that may have some

input towards a clearer understanding of a Salvationist ecclesiology?

Called out of the power of sin to be the people of God communicating the message and power of God to a needy world. That is the Church of Jesus Christ. That is the Salvation Army!

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Notes

1. Roger Green, Jonathan Raymond, "The Salvation Army and the Body of Christ," *Word & Deed*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (November 1999), p. 2.
2. T. F. Torrance, "The Israel of God", *Interpretation*, vol. 10, no.3 (July 1956), p. 306.
3. David Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, pp. 66-72.
4. Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-1978), 1: 291.
5. William Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*, (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 34.
6. L Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 556-557.
7. W.T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, Willard H. Taylor, *God, Man and Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 568-569.
8. David L Smith, "Ecclesiology: The Church, God's Redeemed People," in Charles W Carter, editor, *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1983), 2:588.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 589.
10. Clarence Wiseman, "Are we a church?", *The Officer*, Vol. XXV11, No.10 (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1976), p. 435.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 436.
12. John Waldron, editor, *The Salvation Army and the Churches* (New York: The

Salvation Army, 1986), p. 11.

13. Bramwell Booth, *Echoes and Memories*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), pp: 79, 82.

14. Clarence Wiseman, "Are we a church?", p. 437.

15. Albert Orsborn, "The World Council of Churches", *The Officer*, March/April 1954), reprinted in John Waldron, *The Salvation Army and the Churches*, pp. 88-89.

16. John Waldron, *The Salvation Army and the Churches*, p. 53.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 8.

21. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1969), pp. 70-72.

22. Bruce Power, "Towards a Sociology of Salvationism," *Word & Deed*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (November 1999) p. 20.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

24. William Booth, *Salvation Soldierly*, (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, no date), p. 11.

25. Bruce Power, "Towards a Sociology of Salvationism," p. 28.

26. Philip Needham, *Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology*, (Atlanta: The Salvation Army Supplies, 1987), p. 2.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-74.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

31. Quoted in *The Officer*, February 1983, p. 70.

32. William Booth, "The Future of Missions, and the Mission of the Future", *The War Cry*, 8 June 1889.

33. Catherine Booth, *The Salvation Army in Relation to the Church and State, and Other Addresses*, (London: The Salvation Army Publishing Dept., 1883), p. 29.

34. Philip Needham, *Community in Mission*, pp. 58-59.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

36. John R. Rhemick, *A New People of God*, (Des Plaines, IL: The Salvation Army, 1984), p. 126)

37. Ibid., pp. 223-224.
38. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine*, (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1998), p. 100, a quotation from *Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), p. 79.
39. Ibid., p. 100.
40. Ibid., pp. 11-12..
41. *Salvation Army Act 1980*, (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1980), p. 9, article 14.
42. *Salvation Story*, p. 110.
43. Ibid., p. 107.
44. *Study Guide to Salvation Story*, (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1999), p. 92.
45. Ibid., pp. 92-93.
46. *The Salvation Army Year Book 2006*, (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 2005), p 11.
47. As quoted by Robert Street in *Called to be God's People* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1999), p. vii-viii.
48. John Gowans, "Foreword by General John Gowans," *Servants Together*, (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 2002), p. 7.
49. John Larsson, "Salvationist Theology and Ethics for the New Millennium," *Word & Deed*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (November 2001), p. 11.
50. Ibid., pp. 11-13.
51. Ibid., p. 20.
52. Ibid., p. 22.
53. Shaw Clifton, *Who are these Salvationists?*, (Alexandria, VA: Crest Books, Salvation Army National Publications, 1999), p. 11.
54. *The Salvation Army Year Book 2006*, p. 1.
55. *Salvation Story*, p. 100.
56. Shaw Clifton, *Who are these Salvationists?*, pp. 11-12.
57. Ibid., p. 8.
58. *Salvation Army Act 1980*, p. 9.
59. William Booth, "Salvation for Both Worlds," *All the World* (January 1889), p. 2.
60. William Booth, *To My Officers: A Letter from The General on His Eightieth Birthday*, p. 44. Quoted by Roger Green in *War on Two Fronts*, (Atlanta, GA: The

Salvation Army Supplies, 1989), p. 95.

61. *Salvation Story*, p. 107.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 103 ff.

63. *Study Guide to Salvation Story*, p. 92.

64. *Servants Together*, (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 2002), pp. 109-110.

65. General Clarence Wiseman, "Are we a church?", p. 435.

Foundational Discipleship, Education and Training

Philip Cairns

Introduction

"Every community that wants to last beyond a single generation must concern itself with education." ¹ This statement by Walter Brueggemann and quoted by Charles Foster has within it a warning, but also a strategy. The warning points towards extinction if education is ignored, while the strategy points towards the future if education is embraced as a foundational part of the community.

This sounds straightforward until we ask ourselves questions about the present nature of our "community." The Salvation Army is in the midst of change and in some places, is struggling to understand its identity within the wider community. What sort of education do we need? "Educational theories and strategies mean little if they do not have a clear understanding of the community that is the object of our efforts." ²

The topic "Foundational Discipleship, Education and Training" – in a changing and uncertain environment – poses significant challenges to understanding what the "education and training" should be. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to establish a foundation upon which Salvation Army education and training can be understood. The challenge we face is to discover this foundation in an organization that is living through unprecedented social/generational shifts and is itself undergoing various (and often uncoordinated) changes in response to the

Philip Cairns is a major in The Salvation Army and is principal of the College for Further Education and coordinator of education and training for The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory.

social changes. The result is confusion about who we are and disunity of opinion regarding central issues such as foundational discipleship.

The conclusions drawn will be dependent on how The Salvation Army views itself, on the way it views education and training, and the importance of education to the future of The Salvation Army.

I must acknowledge the western nature of this paper. It is my culture, the one that I am working in and familiar with. I do believe, however, that the "foundations" addressed in this discussion have a universal application and may add to the ongoing discussion regarding education and training throughout the international Army.

Establishing a Framework for Discussion

The Catholic theologian Hans Küng describes the church in terms of its essence and its form. In using essence and form as descriptors of the church, I am avoiding the age-long debate over the understanding of essence and using this concept as it relates to the form. In this way I am applying essence and form as a theoretical construct that will provide a framework for thinking about what The Salvation Army is, and the role education and training play in creating the future.

Küng describes *essence* as the key to understanding the church. It is the essence that is given by God; it is the essence that contains the mission and the message of the church and remains the permanent part of the church; it is the essence that should dictate the shape and nature of the church. The essence is alive - "dynamic rather than static or rigid." ³ It contains the life-blood that ensures life and vitality.

The *form* on the other hand is the outward appearance of the church. This is the visible church active in the world and in our local communities. It is the form that must respond to the changing generations and to the social trends that each generation brings with it. It is through the form that the essence is revealed.

If the church is to speak to each generation it is "vital to distinguish permanent and continuing elements (essence) from changing and transient features (form)." ⁴ The essence is vital for it holds the "inner heart" from which the "first love" of the church flows. The "outer appearance" is the form and must and always reflect the essence, but is free to change as long as it stays true to the

essence:

Essence and form as a descriptor of the church provides a “framework of thinking” in which to consider The Salvation Army. Let me illustrate what I mean:

- One of the qualities of the essence is its dynamic nature. If the Army has ceased to be “dynamic”, we can ask the question - has the essence been lost, or taken over by its form?

- If the Army is holding doggedly to its traditional methods after they have become culturally irrelevant – has it become a “prisoner of the image (form) it has made for itself at one particular period in history?”⁵

Essence and form is not a template that can be applied and quantified. It would be a mistake to use it as a rigid benchmark of the structure. The two are always connected in a shifting and flexible way so that the dynamic nature of the essence can be translated to the form. Even though this relationship could express itself differently in every situation, one cannot exist without the other.

By its very nature, the form of the church must always be going through the process of evolution so that its essence is retained and the church remains “dynamic” within each generation. To remain dynamic, Küng suggests that the church must constantly be returning “to the place from which it proceeded; (it) must return to its origins, to Jesus, to the Gospel. And as a direct consequence, this can only mean forward to a new future, the future God has in mind for mankind.”⁶ Thus the essence is discovered in both the biblical origins of the church and its “changing historical forms.”

For The Salvation Army, the essence is found firstly in scripture, then secondly in how these biblical imperatives have been translated into the organization. They are reflected in the “spirit” of the Army’s mission and ministry through “distinctives” and methods. The challenge that faces the contemporary Army (in the western world particularly) is the question of whether the Army has to rediscover its essence so that it can reshape its form in order to relate to the new generations.

The function of education is to continually engage with the questions of essence and form:

- Essence – what is it that God has called The Salvation Army to be? What is the “foundational discipleship” that Salvationists are called to?

• Form – what shape is The Salvation Army to take if it's going to be effectively used by God to take that which he has called us "to be and do" in the world?

Where Salvation Army education and training has focused on the symbols, "distinctives" and methods, it has been focused on the form. I suspect that much of The Salvation Army's emphasis in the past has been on the "form" – the outward identity of the Army. The future must place a new emphasis on the essence, and then ensure its close relationship to the form.

Therefore the *focus and purpose* of Salvation Army education and training must be the essence, for this is the source of the form. The *urgency* of education and training for the Army is to understand the nature of the essence in ways that will enable it to inform the form so that it will respond to the challenges of "the present age."

The Ecclesiological Debate

People Of God: Salvationist Ecclesiology

The theme "People of God: Salvationist Ecclesiology" appears to embody the two elements of essence and form. The People of God suggests the essence; Salvationist Ecclesiology describes the shape of the people of God and suggests the form.

The "people of God" is pure biblical theology. It is one of the foundation stones of scripture for understanding God's relationship with his people. When we add to this the term "ecclesiology," we enter the realm of systematic theology with all its diversity and contradictions. But we have gone one step further and added another word to our theme -- the word "Salvationist." We now enter the subjective world of experiential theology. We are confronted with a unique way of understanding ecclesiology, according to the experience of a particular group of people – The Salvation Army. How does the essence direct the form we observe as the visible Salvation Army?

The People of God as Essence

Kung directs us back to scripture to discover where the essence of the church starts. It is here that we encounter the foundational theme of the people of God. It is a description firmly established in the Old Testament. Yahweh's covenant

with the patriarchs and then with the Israelites at Sinai reveals a God who has a unique relationship with his chosen people. These "people of God" are variously described as God's property and possession, his servants, his sons, his sheep, and his holy people. More often than not the biblical text personalizes this relationship by referring to God's people as "my people," and "his people." This profound link between God and his people is foundational to the Old Testament.

This image of God's relationship with His people is continued into the New Testament. Now, however, the relationship takes on the personality of Jesus and embraces all who would be disciples of Jesus and follow Him. "People of God" is now applied decisively to the Church with Jesus Christ as the head of His "body." The link with the Old Testament is further strengthened by the crossover of metaphors -- the church is God's possession, servants, sons, sheep, and holy people.

The Salvation Army has always identified with this iron-rod link between God and His people. We have sung for decades songs such as "Stand up and bless the Lord, *Ye people of His choice.*"⁷ Chapter ten of *Salvation Story*⁸ is devoted to the "people of God" and strongly claims that The Salvation Army is among the people of God and therefore part of the universal Church. Thus, in its worship and writings, The Salvation Army claims a close identification with that part of the essence of the Church described as the *people of God*.

The people of God as an element of the essence is common to all churches. In this The Salvation Army is one with the universal Church.⁹ It is foundational to understanding who we are.

Salvationist Ecclesiology as *Form*.

We are not, however, looking at something which is formless. The essence and form are always co-joined in some way. Just as ecclesiology is never "pure" in that it always reflects the age it is describing¹⁰, so the essence, which determines the form, will in turn be colored by the form. "Salvationist ecclesiology" is an example of how the form colors the essence.

The challenge we face is that we are immediately confronted with a world of different expressions of the "Salvationist" form. Arguments over orders and regulations, uniforms, music and worship, ritual sacraments: etc., are all about the form. And yet, all too often it is these aspects which take over the debate. The

form does not determine the essence. Understanding The Salvation Army as "Church" must be guided by the essence. The form gives the essence its visible shape, but the essence must always direct the form. Confusion about identity and purpose occurs when the essence and form are out of balance. "

There will always be tension between the two; however, Hans Küng argues that by its very nature, the church will always be a challenge to systematic theology and that "the Church's doctrine of the Church, like the Church itself, is necessarily subject to continual change and must constantly be undertaken anew." ¹¹ In many ways, this tension is healthy because of the debate it causes. The ecclesiological debate may be much more important than any definitive answer on the subject because it encourages the Church (and The Salvation Army) to "constantly reflect upon its real existence in the present with reference to its origins in the past, in order to assure its existence in the future." ¹²

Commentators who are critical of The Salvation Army for its lack of clarity in the area of ecclesiology could well be overlooking the fact that the ongoing debate is part of the wider universal ecclesiological debate.

Form and Essence Out of Balance

The debate about The Salvation Army's identity is happening on at least two levels. As the academic debate grapples with the issues of ecclesiology, there is also the debate that is happening "out there" on the frontline. In some ways this isn't a debate but a response to the felt needs of ministry. In this "debate," officers (and soldiers) are deciding with "their feet" by embracing new forms in an attempt to be relevant and dynamic. In Australia, for example, there are corps who want to be known as "community Churches"; corps that remove anything that would identify with The Salvation Army; and some corps who are adopting practices used in other denominations.

The problem is that these attempts to change are usually no more than grasping attractive forms. One of the worrying aspects of the tendency to experiment with the methodologies of other traditions is that without much apparent thought, the theology and religious practices of those traditions are embraced as well. Again in Australia, the practice of Pentecostal styles of worship, seeker sensitive services, and liturgical worship (and in places the ritual sacraments) all reflect the form and are an indication of Salvationists' confusion over The Salvation

Army's essence.

This isn't rebellion in the radical sense of that word. It is more of a symptom, firstly of the new generations and their unique culture, and secondly, of the Salvation Army's failure to respond to these new winds blowing across society, especially in the western world. This last point is not a criticism. The rate of change is happening so fast that it is hardly possible to keep up with it. The momentum associated with postmodernism is increasingly creating social attitudes diametrically opposed to traditional hierarchical structures. I can understand Salvationists' desire to change the structure in order to be effective.

We need to acknowledge that the new attitudes which view institutionalized religion as isolated and separated from the real world are coming from younger Christians as well. Robert Webber records that "Christianity is more than a set of beliefs, because it is a form of life ... a practice, an existence, a way of being in the world ... It is a pattern of acting and believing."¹³ Established forms are simply failing to meet the needs or relate to the new social constructs being created. The clash of cultures is inevitable and the openness of the debate is necessary. But there exist significant challenges for institutional religion, including The Salvation Army.

As understandable as the situation is, we can still argue that it reflects a failure of the form/essence balance – the embracing of any form that might be considered desirable, regardless of where it comes from. In many cases, it appears to be the form dictating to the essence what the shape of the Salvation Army should be.

Essence, Form and The Salvation Army

Tinkering around with the form will not resolve the problem and will not ultimately make the church (or The Salvation Army) more relevant. Mostly, it will result in confusion. In fact, it appears to me that much of the debate about The Salvation Army's identity and effectiveness has occurred in the spaces between essence and form. A lack of clarity exists when there is no understanding of the relationship between the essence and form.

Historically, this has always been a feature of the debate. For example, the founder William Booth is alluding to the form when he occasionally calls his officers "clergymen and clergywomen."¹⁴ It's form again when he clearly states,

“we are not a Church. We are an Army – an Army of Salvation.”¹⁵ But his suspicion of the structures that made up the institutionalized Church reflects a leaning toward essence and the rejection of traditional forms:

No one can deny that the religious world is full of forms which have little or no practical influence on the minds, or hearts, or lives, of those who travel the weary round of their performance day by day.¹⁶

Bramwell Booth was responsible for the development of the orders and regulations system that shaped and enshrined the *form*. On the other hand he describes the *essence* when he wrote

Of this Great Church of the Living God, we claim and have ever claimed, that we of The Salvation Army are an integral part and element ... a living fruit-bearing branch of the True Vine.¹⁷

This blending of the two elements is still happening.

- Word & Deed (Fall 1999) devoted the entire issue to the subject of Salvation Army ecclesiology.¹⁸ Each essay leans one way or the other, but includes elements of both *form* and *essence* in their content.¹⁹

- Shaw Clifton’s *Who are these Salvationists?* – published in 1999 – tackles the question “Is the Salvation Army a Church?”²⁰ This chapter has both elements of *essence* and *form*, and then comes to a conclusion based on the *form* argument.²¹

- Younger practitioners such as Geoff Ryan are contributing to the *form* by asking questions as to what style of Church is needed to connect with society.²²

Although the ideas behind essence and form are implied in these discussions, they are not identified as such. It is my view that articulating the difference between essence and form will not only assist the debate but will provide a clearer framework for understanding our foundations. It is also my view that any education and training that is to be developed in the future must be done so with the clarity that these two elements bring in understanding The Salvation Army.

Dynamic Essence

What then is the *essence* of The Salvation Army? One of the indicators of essence is its “dynamic rather than static”²³ nature.

The Church that is revealed in the book of Acts was primitive by comparison with the contemporary institutions we call Church. But the New Testament church was dynamic. It described the “essence” in free flow – it was dependent on the Holy Spirit; the gospel of Jesus was preached and thousands were saved; they spontaneously met in groups for teaching and fellowship; and they reached out to each other with gifts and healing. “The New Testament itself does not begin by laying down a doctrine of the church ... [it is] first and foremost a happening thing.”²⁴

As I read the history of the early Salvation Army I gain the sense that here also is an expression of “dynamic” essence. It exuded:

- A passion and excitement for what God was going to do through The Salvation Army.
- A conviction that The Salvation Army was raised up by God for the purpose of getting lost people saved. Salvationists believed that they would save the world for Jesus.
- A commitment to the life of holiness and lives that were totally committed to God.

Did it therefore embody the essence of the Acts Church? The form is clearly different but the results were the same, a growing Church in the name of Jesus Christ – evidence of the *dynamic essence*.

The Salvation Army still displays this dynamic essence in some parts of the world today. Unfortunately, in many of the countries described as western, the situation is less than dynamic. They are struggling with declining attendance, loss of young people to other traditions, a growing dependency on management models and the embracing of any new idea that comes along.

Is this loss of the dynamic an indication that the *form* has overwhelmed *essence*? Has The Salvation Army become “a prisoner of the image it has made for itself?”²⁵

Struggling Forms

These same questions can be applied to the institutionalized Church throughout the western world. The decline of the Christian Church in the West has reached the point where some Christian commentators are declaring the end of Christendom and the Church as we know it.

Writers such as Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch propose that the church of the future (starting now) requires revolutionary changes in style, methods and relevancy. They foresee a Church without buildings and organizational structures, one that is "incarnational" in nature. Discipleship will be recast as Christians "living in the world" and they themselves becoming the message of Christ to the people around them.²⁶

Other commentators such as David Watson suggest that Christians themselves have forgotten what discipleship means. "Christians in the West have largely neglected what it means to be a disciple of Christ. The vast majority of western Christians are church-members, pew fillers, hymn-singers, sermon-tasters, Bible-readers, even born again-believers or Spirit-filled charismatics - but not true disciples of Jesus. If we were willing to learn the meaning of real discipleship and actually to become disciples, the church in the West would be transformed, and the resultant impact on society would be staggering."²⁷

The church in the West (including The Salvation Army) is not transforming the world and is not having a "staggering" impact on society. For many, survival has become the objective.

Many reasons are given for the decline including changing social paradigms.²⁸ I would suggest, however, that the real problem is not the forces affecting the church from the outside, but that which is inside the church. When the essence is neglected or ignored, the energy of the church is expended on perpetuating the form. The evidence of this is:

- Reliance on corporate structures and economic prosperity
- Over emphasis on outcome-based programs (e.g., Church growth)
- The wholesale following of celebrity Church leaders.
- Obsession with methodology
- Emphasis on power and authority ("in the name of the poor and powerless Jesus"²⁹)
- Career minded clergy (officers)

The Salvation Army is not exempt from this situation. Its decline in western countries would suggest that it has suffered as much from being focused on form as any other institutional Church.

Education and Training

It would appear that I am painting a gloomy picture of the Church, especially in the West. There are, however, exceptions to this declining trend. Understanding these exceptions should give us insight into the way forward. Let me illustrate with three such exceptions.

Dr. Roger Green, writing in *The Officer* magazine September/October 2005, described the remarkable growth in the Seventh Day Adventist Church since the mid-1960's (1300% in 45 years). The Church itself identifies three reasons for this growth: "a central administration, a common mission and a common message."³⁰ The Salvation Army would claim to embody these same three factors – why hasn't it shown similar growth? The difference would appear to be in the systematic way the Adventists went about ensuring the "common message." "... all their members, from the childcare class to the adult class, on the same Sabbath are studying from the same Bible texts and the same lesson plan in many languages. The 'common message' is central to their growth and their evangelization."³¹

The Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church is the largest diocese in Australia. It is also one of the fastest growing churches in Australia and the diocese has churches by the year 2011. Central to the diocese is a strong theology driven by their archbishop and centered in Moore Theological College. The current archbishop was the principal of the college for fifteen years prior to his election as archbishop. Moore College is full to overflowing with young people wanting to be ordained as Anglican clergy.³²

The growth of Pentecostalism throughout the world is well documented. Australia has enjoyed similar Pentecostal growth, with the Assemblies of God the fastest growing Christian denomination in Australia. It is, however, well known for a high turnover of church membership. To address this and other issues, the Assemblies of God in Australia established Southern Cross College so that its future leaders and members would be well grounded in Pentecostal the-