

# The KING'S WAY

Christ the King Parish -- McFarland, WI 53558

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## THE THEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF THE SALVATION ARMY

### More than Just Bell-Ringers during the Christmas Season

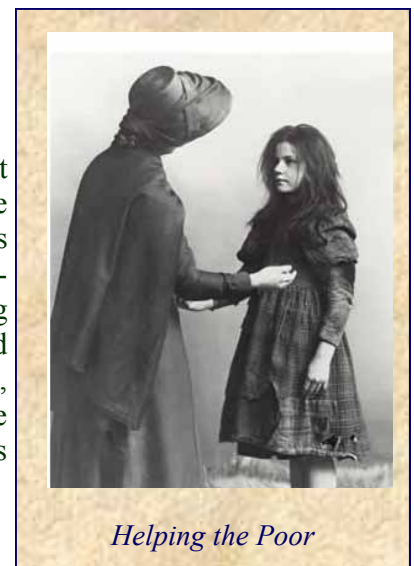
A local executive of a national organization took part in a conference call. Each branch of this organization had been directed to select a needy family whom they would assist during the Christmas season. A national executive asked how the local executive chose the family. He answered, "Through the St. Vincent de Paul Society." The national executive responded, "But that is a religious organization." The local executive asked how her area had chosen its family. She responded, "Through The Salvation Army." The national executive missed the irony of her remark.

*The Salvation Army is a religious organization. This group has deep – and often unrecognized – theological roots that find their expression in social ministry.*

What she missed was the "salvation" in "The Salvation Army." The Salvation Army is a religious organization. It is, in fact, a Christian religious denomination in its own right. Most of us see their red kettles and hear their bells from Thanksgiving through Christmas. We read about the good works of this group locally and nationally. The Salvation Army assists many needy people and, when disaster strikes, they are usually the first group on the scene with their emergency kitchens. But this group has deep – and often unrecognized – theological roots that find their expression in social ministry. These roots are what is called "the Holiness Movement."

### THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT

The Holiness Movement was a significant religious development that saw its ascendancy in the early nineteenth century. Even adherents of the Holiness Movement can find it difficult to define. The movement has aspects that are charismatic, evangelical, Pentecostal and fundamentalist. Yet defining it is not as simple as placing it under certain categories. While beginning as a revival of the theology of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and his doctrine of perfection, the theological roots of The Salvation Army came, ironically, not from the United Kingdom (where Wesley lived and where The Salvation Army began) but from sermons by the American evangelist James Caughey.



Most Americans would likely not recognize a list of Holiness churches even though they are growing very rapidly. The most recognizable might be The Church of the Nazarene, The Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), The Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Wesleyan Church. Fractures within this movement make it even more difficult to precisely define the Holiness Movement. In 2008 a collective publication titled “The Holiness Manifesto” worked toward a renewed unity around the holiness theme. Even so, the following explanation can only be provisional.

Here are some of the influences from which the Holiness Movement emerges:

- The Protestant Reformation, with its stress upon faith over good works and salvation solely through the grace of God
- The Moravians and German Pietism that emphasizes the spiritual life of the individual and the responsibility for living a moral life
- The Quakers and their Quietism, with its emphasis on one’s power to experience God and to follow God’s will
- Puritanism, which emphasized the Bible and the right to dissent from existing churches
- England’s Evangelical Revival (1730s), which was led by John Wesley and that introduced German Pietism to England and eventually to the United States
- “The First Great Awakening” in the United States (18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), which stressed the initial conversion experience of Christians
- “The Second Great Awakening” in the United States (19<sup>th</sup> century), which stressed personal holiness and led to the rise of evangelistic revival meetings

The Holiness Movement holds that by faith and the grace of God, and with assurance by the witness of the Holy Spirit, one is forgiven and cleansed of one’s sins. This process is called “regeneration.” “Entire sanctification” or “Christian perfection” follows and enables one to live a holy life. No human effort can achieve holiness. Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ who atoned for human sins. Subsequently, all should strive for perfection.

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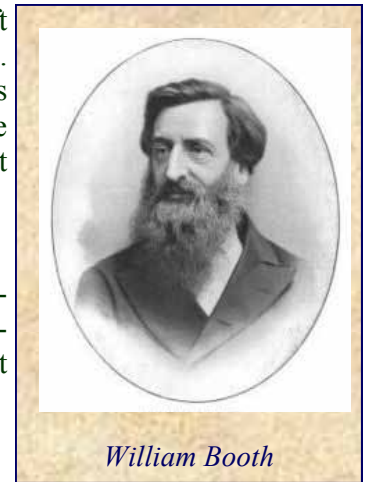
The Holiness Movement very strongly emphasizes moral principles and laws in the pursuit of Christian perfection. Adherents are to be Christ-like and not to conform to the world. Unlike the belief of certain contemporary liberal Protestants, the law of God is relevant today. Most Holiness Movement adherents would, for instance, consider all homosexual acts as contrary to the law of God.

## **THE HISTORY OF THE SALVATION ARMY**

William Booth (1829-1912) lived in Nottingham in northern England. When he was 13, his father went bankrupt and young William was apprenticed to a pawnbroker. At fifteen William was converted to Methodism and became a Methodist lay preacher. At the age of 20, he moved to London. He was still a pawnbroker but continued to act as a lay preacher. Frustrated by lack of preaching opportunity, he began evangelizing on the streets of London.

At 22 Booth joined the “Reformers” (the Methodist Reform Church), left pawn-broking, and became a full-time preacher at Binfield Chapel in Berkshire. While at Binfield, he heard the James Caughey sermons that were to shape his preaching and theology. At 24 he married Catherine Mumford, with whom he was to share his ministry. The following year he became a Reformers minister at Spalding in Lincolnshire.

When he was denied his request to be freed of parish ministry and become a full-time evangelist, he left the Methodist ministry and became an independent evangelist. His theology would mirror that of the Holiness Movement with its processes of regeneration and Christian perfection.



In 1865 Booth and his wife started “The Christian Revival Society” in the east end of London – the area of the poorest and neediest of the city. His flock included alcoholics, criminals and prostitutes. His Society was renamed “The Christian Mission.” From its very beginning, social work became the center of his ministry.



In the 13 years from its beginning until its renaming as “The Salvation Army” in 1878, Booth introduced military titles that made the group into an “Army.” Members began to wear uniforms. They had their own flag, their own music and bands, and their own military ranks. William Booth named himself as the General of The Salvation Army.

While the early years were very difficult financially, Booth and his followers carried on. There were many needy in east London, and Booth’s followers were not rich. But this hardship did not stop The Salvation Army from expanding beyond London. In the early 1880s, The Salvation Army extended beyond the United Kingdom to the United States, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, New Zealand, Jamaica and other nations. Often, non-officers would emigrate abroad and commence the ministry. They would then write to London and ask for officers. Within his lifetime, Booth established missions in 58 countries.

## **THE SALVATION ARMY MISSION STATEMENT AND DOCTRINE**

The Salvation Army quite forthrightly states its mission and its doctrines. First, the mission statement:

*“The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical branch of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible, its ministry is motivated by love of God. Its mission is both spiritual and practical, encompassing the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and alleviating human suffering and distress without discrimination.”*



And its doctrines:

*“We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.*

*We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.*

*We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.*

*We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.*

*We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.*

*We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.*

*We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.*

*We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness to himself.*

*We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.*

*We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.”*

The Salvation Army does not recognize any sacraments such as baptism and communion. Sacraments are deemed unnecessary. Rather than put emphasis on outward rituals that can become meaningless and not change the human heart, Salvationists emphasize personal faith and a spiritual relationship with God that depends on nothing external. They do hold a dedication ceremony for children. Parents present their children at regular meetings and promise to protect their children from harmful things. The officer takes the children in his arms and asks God to bless them and to guide their families.



Worship services have no set ritual, but always include hymns and songs. A dance or drama may be included. Every service includes Bible readings. A band may play or a choir may sing. Bands have always been important as an evangelical tool to attract crowds and to help people experience faith. An officer leads the service and gives the “address.” Other people are often invited to take part and to give testimonies.

## ORGANIZATION

What we might call a “parish” is named a Salvation Army Corps, led by officers whom we might call “ministers.” The corps is divided into: 1) officers (ordained ministers); 2) soldiers (who live a Salvationist lifestyle); 3) adherents (the Army is their church, but they have not made sufficient commitment to move up the ranks); 4) people who share other aspects of the corps program; and 5) those who simply attend meetings to worship. Only the first two groups are considered full members.



International Headquarters of the Salvation Army

Since 1978, The Salvation Army has emphasized that officers are ordained ministers with the duties of preaching, evangelizing and administration and of exercising authority within the church. “Seminarians” spend two years in training. At the end of their training, they sign a covenant with God and The Salvation Army.

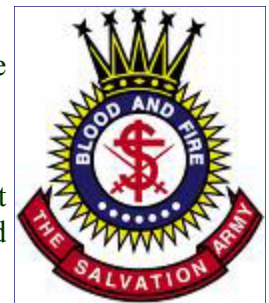
The International Headquarters of the Salvation Army is in London. The High Council elects the General, who directs operations throughout the world. The Chief of Staff is appointed by the General and is second-in-command, holding the rank of Commissioner. The High

Court is composed of all Commissioners and all other territorial commanders who have held the rank of Colonel for at least two years. They divide the world into zones and subdivide it into smaller, national areas. The General appoints the territorial leadership.

## SYMBOLS

**The motto** is “Blood and Fire” – The blood of Christ, which saves and the fire of the Holy Spirit

**The badge** – S (for salvation), cross (for the death of Jesus), swords (for the fight against sin), surrounding shape of the sun (for the fire and light of the Holy Spirit), and crown (for the reward of those who love and serve God)



**The flag** – Blue border for holiness, red for the blood of Jesus, yellow star for the power of the Holy Spirit



**The mercy seat** – At the front of each meeting hall, a bench at which people may kneel, either to make a public commitment or to rededicate themselves to God in order to reach an important decision

**Uniforms** – Plain black or blue epaulets for soldiers; red patches on the collar with silver stars and/or a crest denoting ranks for officers

## SPLITS IN THE SALVATION ARMY

In the United States, at least two groups have broken from The Salvation Army. These groups still remain part of the Holiness Movement. Their schisms came from internal disputes, not theological disagreements.



In 1882 Thomas E. Moore, along with a number of American Salvation Army officers, withdrew from the Army because of a controversy about financial administration. The group first centered in Philadelphia and was originally chartered as Salvation Army of America. In 1913 the group changed its name to The American Rescue Workers. Now headquartered in Williamsport, Pa., its organization, theology and ministry mirror those of The Salvation Army. The American Association of Religious Data Archives lists annual membership numbers for The American Rescue Workers from 1925 through 2006. The organization peaked at 35,000 members in 1992 and declined to 3,500 in 2004 and 2006.

Volunteers of America is a significantly larger offshoot from The Salvation Army. Founded in 1886 in New York City by Ballington and Maud Booth (son and daughter-in-law of The Salvation Army founders William and Catherine Booth), the younger couple left The Salvation Army allegedly because of William Booth's autocratic ways and the amount of money sent from New York back to England. At a gathering of thousands at The Cooper Union in New York, the younger Booths announced formation of the new group. Its articles of incorporation were signed on Nov. 4, 1886.

Volunteers of America has its headquarters in Alexandria, Va. Prison ministry has been an important part of its extensive social ministry. Maud Booth was the first woman ever allowed inside Sing Sing Prison. From this beginning came an organization of half-way houses for those recently released from prison. The Volunteers of America now operates prisons, including a 42-bed facility near St. Paul, Minn.

While The Salvation Army is known for its bell-ringers, The Volunteers of America is known for its Sidewalk Santas. Not generally known in the Midwest, these holiday fundraisers dress up as Santa Claus and ring their bells asking passersby for donations. This practice began in California shortly after the group's founding, and the Santas continue to be very prevalent in New York City.



## THE SALVATION ARMY CONTROVERSY

In its earliest days, The Salvation Army was confronted by a group of about 4,000 persons known as the Skeletons. Largely composed of tavern owners and their sympathizers – all of whom were upset at the call for temperance from alcohol – the Skeletons would disrupt meetings, throw eggs filled with blue paint, throw rocks and rats, and physically assault Army members.

In more recent times – perhaps because The Salvation Army is more widely seen as a social-service group and not as a religious denomination – the assaults have not been in the streets but rather in the courtroom. The issue is gay rights. The Salvation Army hires thousands of non-members in the United States.

Nineteen current and former employees sued The Salvation Army for discrimination in hiring and for the requirement regarding how employees should behave outside of work. The Salvation Army receives about 11 percent of its total revenues from the government in the form of grants and payments for services.

The employees argued that The Salvation Army has a stated policy of “discrimination” against applicants and employees whose faith or sexual orientation are opposed to The Salvation Army beliefs. The Salvation Army countered that Section VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 explicitly guaranteed the right of churches to discriminate in hiring. In 2005 in New York, U.S. Southern District Judge Sidney Stein ruled that The Salvation Army could use religious criteria in its hiring. This decision was unsuccessfully appealed by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Legislation was then introduced in the state Legislature of New York to require organizations providing employee family health benefits to offer them also to domestic partners of employees in same-sex relationships. The Salvation Army threatened to close all of its soup kitchens and shelters throughout New York State. The bill died in committee.

This was not the first dispute between The Salvation Army and gay-rights activists. In 1998 the Army rejected a \$3.5 million government grant from the city of San Francisco that required the Army to agree to hiring and benefits demands. The Salvation Army runs many AIDS hospices in San Francisco and does not discriminate against hiring gays in its programs. It does require that its officers adhere to the tenets of their beliefs. The Army chose the integrity of its beliefs over the government grant.

In July 2005 The Washington Post, in a report by Dana Milbank, claimed that The Salvation Army had struck a deal with the White House whereby the Army would lobby for charitable-choice initiatives favored by the administration in exchange for regulations protecting the Army from having to hire practicing homosexuals and needing to guarantee domestic-partner benefits. This prompted a barrage of hateful criticisms of The Salvation Army. These included one columnist calling the Army’s belief-consistent hiring practices a “call to hate.”

## **A FINAL REFLECTION**

The Salvation Army is now the largest U. S. charity as measured by assets. According to Forbes magazine, the Army has net assets of \$10.9 billion, annual revenues of \$4.2 billion and annual expenses of \$2.9 billion. It has become such a cultural fixture that people are shocked to discover that it is a Christian denomination and that its first allegiance is to its Lord and its first mission is to evangelize. Its theological underpinnings – with the denial of sacraments and its strong emphasis on regeneration and sanctification – distance it from Catholic beliefs. While sometimes linked in social work ministries, theological dialogue between Catholics and Salvationists has been rare.

*(Continued on back cover)*



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The Salvation Army has never hidden its religious foundation, and its charitable works on behalf of the needy and victims of disaster are highly meritorious. Yet the theological roots and history of The Salvation Army are seldom recognized by the general public. If you have finished reading this article, you likely now know much more about The Salvation Army than the vast majority of those who throw their coins and bills into its kettles.

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