
Salvationism Examined

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There is much to examine regarding the nature of The Salvation Army, its role within Christianity, and Salvationists as members of a cohesive global community. From their outward focus to the reverence they have for their history, there are many distinguishing features which set Salvationists apart and warrant further study. In this article, various aspects of the Salvationist experience are examined, points researched and observed in person, to present the reader with several different aspects for their consideration.

Overview

The Salvation Army is a movement within Christendom with much to teach us. I spent time in 2020 and 2021 working alongside Salvationists and doing ethnographic research at the same time. It became readily apparent to me that within the Salvationist ethos lies much treasure. Within that treasure, there is much which may apply to all beneath the Christian banner. Ultimately, the all-encompassing commitment to fighting for the faith is something that Salvationists embody to the fullest and is a rich treasure trove of lessons for all.

Salvationists live out a mission that is all-encompassing. To be a Salvationist is to partake in a grand battle that covers all areas of life. Drawing on my experience and research, I aim to point to the ways in which the Salvationist experience is shaped by an overarching ethos which drives the entirety of the paradigm of the organization. The most significant current to run through the Salvationist experience is the notion that a global community can form a cohesive unit, with themes, motifs, and expressions which unite the movement's adherents across time and space.

Incarnational Observations

My firsthand observations of Salvationists took place throughout the ten months I worked at a Salvation Army corps in 2020 and 2021. A "corps" of The Salvation Army is essentially the name of one of their brick-and-mortar locations meant to serve the public. This naming convention is typical of The

Salvation Army, with many of the elements making up the Salvationist experience being named in the manner of various facets of militaria, from "officers and soldiers" to "commissioning" and more.

This imagery is not a mere hollow element of the Salvationist experience. Instead, these words are charged with meaning. Far from being empty symbols of formality, these militaristic designations point to a central focus of the Salvationist mission. The Salvationists I worked with always kept to the terminology, never substituting in more traditional Christian terms. For instance, the officers were never referred to as "pastor," but were instead referred to by their rank, even though officers in Salvationism are roughly synonymous with pastors in other Christian denominations. Far from being merely ceremonial, the terms unique to Salvationism are used ubiquitously and are thus integral to the Salvationist experience.

The ethos of warfare is not out of place in the broader Salvationist paradigm. This harkens back to the earliest days of The Salvation Army, when it wrestled against the forces of darkness amid the misery of Victorian slums. Theirs was not a casual sort of mission, not the sort of mission wherein the do-gooder tosses a few coins in the direction of the needy and then proceeds upon their merry way. Much to the contrary, theirs was a mission of total war, fought in the trenches hand-to-hand against some of the greatest forms of desperation ever to be unleashed upon the human condition. This mission has continued into the present, where the total war for lives and souls continues.

The history of the movement is something that is commonly held in high regard by Salvationists. Fidelity

to the founders of the movement, William and Catherine Booth in particular, is at the forefront of much of the Salvationist experience. Anecdotes from the lives of the Booths are often shared among Salvationist officers and soldiers. I heard many of these stories myself, and found them to be very enlightening to the nature of the Salvationist mission. One I heard several times was of a speech by William Booth in which he returned to the line, "I'll fight!," after listing people's various dire straits, thus emphasizing the notion that so long as there are people in need, the fight continues for Salvationists. These sorts of stories serve the purpose of galvanizing the Salvationist mission.

The missionary vision of the Booths is still alive and well within The Salvation Army, the current organization. Despite being beyond a century and a half removed from The Salvation Army's founding, and over a century removed from the death of William Booth (Catherine had died several years earlier), the ethos of the Salvationist experience today is in strong continuity with that set forth by the Booths in those early days of the movement.

For many, Salvationism is a generational experience. It is not unheard of for Salvation Army officers to be the children of Salvationists themselves, sometimes even the grandchildren of other officers. This was certainly the case for many of the Salvationists I met and worked alongside. Some came from Salvationist families with a multitude of ties to the movement. This generational connection reinforces the history of the movement. Many soldiers and officers of The Salvation Army are walking in the shoes of their parents or grandparents.

Additionally, corps locations often serve as multi-generational presences in their surrounding communities, sometimes for a century or more. The Salvation Army corps I was at had a plaque inside it from the previous corps building located in that same town which had been established many decades before. The Salvationist presence in a community becomes an imbedded part of the community fabric. From humble beginnings in Victorian London, The Salvation Army has grown into an enduring presence in myriad communities around the world.

One aspect of Salvationism that adds an interesting dynamic to the community engagement of corps locations is the fact that Salvationist clergy (those called "officers") are reassigned to new locations every few years. So, while a corps may be a steady presence in a community for over a century, the officers managing

that corps will have changed a significant number of times during that span. While this can lead to some congregational uncertainty, as successive officers manage things differently than their predecessors, it can also result in a paradigm in which the corps is defined by the laypeople (those called "soldiers") who make it their home. These soldiers are the families who anchor themselves at particular corps locations and serve those surrounding communities throughout the years. In many ways, this creates a situation in which the soldiers are the lifeblood of the corps locations. While officers come and go over the years, the soldiers, by contrast, serve as an enduring presence.

Beyond the corps level, Salvationists come together on a few other levels. Keeping with the militaristic language, the next level up is that of the division. The division oversees a larger area than the individual corps. Divisions gather together from time to time, and there tends to be a high degree of collaboration and cooperation between the various corps locations within a given division. At the corps where I spent my time, other Salvationists (particularly officers) from elsewhere in the division were a common and welcome sight. At the level above the division is the territory, encompassing several divisions. Beyond that, the global Salvation Army works together as a whole, overseen by their elected general, who functions as the head of the movement, and others at their global headquarters in London. These various levels each have their unique foci, and local institutions may have their quirks, but they nevertheless tend to work together well with others and amongst themselves. A Salvationist visiting other Salvationists on the other side of the world will still feel among their kindred in the movement, with shared imagery, language, and vision. This was relayed to me by a number of the Salvationists with whom I spoke.

This wide ranging cohesion and integration is significant. To maintain an organization that is so widespread as a single united force is a daunting task when viewed in the abstract, yet it is something that Salvationists have managed with great success since the Victorian era. The endurance of the movement speaks to the motivating power of the Salvationist mission and message.

In its day-to-day expression, the Salvationist experience is centered around the notion of "others." One story from the life of William Booth that has great importance to Salvationists and is told frequently to this day is an account of Booth and the word "others."

As the story goes, William Booth once intended to send an encouraging telegram to all the officers. However, telegrams were quite expensive at the time, and thus a brief message was decided upon. The message that Booth sent to the world's Salvation Army officers simply read "others". This story encapsulates the Salvationist ethos. It is truly an others-centered movement. This is the reality on the ground for thousands of Salvationists around the world and was a sort of mantra which I personally heard repeated many times. William Booth hoped to instill in Salvationists "hearts made hot with love for God, for Comrades, for perishing souls, for noble work, and for every other good thing possible to men or women on earth or in Heaven" (Booth 1902, 50). This disposition of the heart is something that his message instills in Salvationists to this day.

Many Salvationists work to assist those trapped in cycles of addiction and other self-destructive behaviors. This has been a hallmark of Salvationist work from the very beginning of the movement, as Salvationists have always been known for their opposition to the vices that burden humankind. In fact, William Booth met his future wife Catherine for the first time at a temperance meeting in 1852 (Murdoch 1994, 27). Today, The Salvation Army provides several different outlets and resources to those struggling with addiction. I recall sitting with a Salvationist who had worked for a time at one of The Salvation Army's facilities dedicated to substance abuse rehabilitation and hearing their stories of the different happenings at that location. The overriding sense was that Salvationists pour themselves wholly into the mission of providing compassionate assistance to those who are struggling.

Additionally, The Salvation Army assists those who are in dire straits financially. This takes several forms, from thrift stores selling affordable items to corps locations to providing a wide array of free or otherwise affordable activities for the larger community. Salvationists have long been known for helping those in various degrees of destitution. One well known story that I heard during my time with the Salvationists, and subsequently read more about, was the story of how in the early 1890s The Salvation Army got into the match manufacturing business in London, opening a factory that only used red phosphorus for making matches, as opposed to the more dangerous form of phosphorus used by other match manufacturers at the time (Horridge 1993, 121). In other words, Salvationists provided a safer working environment for match

workers, who otherwise faced very harrowing conditions in the workplace. This same spirit of bettering the conditions of many is alive and well in the organization to the present.

These services and those like them bring Salvationists close to the various scenes of struggle and misfortune that befall people. Experiences serving the less fortunate strengthens the resolve and the continuing efforts in the face of difficulties to carry out the Salvationist ethic of living the fight. That is, the fight that Salvationists engage in is something that is to be lived out with one's whole life. The battle in the trenches for souls and the betterment of the masses is something that requires a total devotion. This was woven into the movement by the millenarian vision of William and Catherine Booth, that of a world won to Christ and all the needy served and rescued from their various afflictions and infirmities. While Salvationism is not an explicitly millenarian movement today, I nevertheless heard fond praise of the millenarian visions of the Booths on more than one occasion from Salvationists I worked with. In various forms, this millenarian vision still provides a great deal of the fuel for the fire which burns within the heart of the movement and provides it with optimism and determination.

The hope of the Salvationist is a Christian hope, and indeed the Salvationist movement is, at its core, a thoroughly Christian movement. This has been the case from its very inception. William Booth did not begin his journey in ministry as the first general of The Salvation Army. Rather he cut his teeth as a circuit-riding Methodist revivalist prior to the foundation of the Christian Mission (which was later renamed, "The Salvation Army"). The Methodist-holiness roots of the organization come through in its theological leanings to this day. In fact, I once asked some Salvationists about what other Christian denomination they felt was closest to theirs, and they as one pointed to Methodism, highlighting the Booths' connection to Methodism and the holiness movement.

Beyond this, however, much of The Salvation Army's approach to bringing nonbelievers into the fold could be categorized as being welcoming and open to all. Just as with their service, Salvationist evangelism is open to everyone, often (though not always) with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable in society. The Salvation Army is seen as a safe Christian outlet in many communities with good reason. I was once told that Salvationists in some regions are often asked to perform services such as funerals for the homeless,

since their compassion extends to those in society who are overlooked and neglected by others. For the most part, Salvationism has succeeded in its goal of being a branch of the Church known for its service to the needy and its compassion and openness to all.

In keeping with the spirit of openness, Salvationism is strongly egalitarian. This is something that has been a hallmark of the movement from its inception and used to draw a lot of fire, particularly in the early days (Sandall 1979b, 161). It included giving full equality to women, for instance. In my time with the Salvationists, I never detected as much as a single hint that men were given preference to women in any way, and indeed I saw the movement as thoroughly, genuinely, and holistically egalitarian. In fact, the equal role given to women within Salvationism is a distinguishing characteristic of the movement.

Another uniqueness of the Salvationists is in their treatment of the sacraments. The Salvation Army is non-sacramental, meaning they do not practice sacraments such as baptism and communion as part of the church services they offer. However, it should be highlighted from the outset that Salvationists are *non-sacramental* and not *anti-sacramental*, a distinction that they are understandably keen on emphasizing. In other words, they do not perform the sacraments, but are in no way hostile to such practices. In fact, it is not unheard of for Salvationists (particularly soldiers) to be baptized and take communion in other church settings, acts which do nothing to harm their reputation among their fellow Salvationists. Ultimately, the fact that The Salvation Army does not practice the common Christian sacraments serves to reduce the sense of a barrier-to-entry for participation in their church services. In short, the fact that Salvationists are non-sacramental means there is no pressure for a person in the surrounding community to be baptized or take communion in order to attend a Salvationist church service. However, this can cause some consternation for those coming to Salvationism from other, more sacramental, Christian denominations. In these cases, the Salvationist stance on the sacraments can be a more sensitive subject.

For the Salvationist, the fight is all-encompassing, and the whole world is a mission field. William Booth expected the believer to “give themselves to the work of enlightening and saving their fellow men” (Sandall 1979a, 65). The enduring service of The Salvation Army serves as a sort of sacramental act in and of itself, a notion that was not lost on the Booths. In fact, Booth himself frequently said that he wished for Salvationists

“to observe continually the sacrament of the Good Samaritan” (Sandall 1979c, 67). There is a sense in which service brings one especially close to God in a way that is akin to that experienced in the waters of baptism or in the partaking of communion. For that reason, one would not be altogether mistaken to consider service as a sort of sacrament for the non-sacramental Salvationists.

Adding to the Christian drive of Salvationists, it is worth noting that even within the services provided by The Salvation Army which are not explicitly church services, the Christian message shines through. Many of the community services performed by Salvationists have an evangelistic component. The holistic focus of Salvationism leads to a paradigm in which there is no hard and fast distinction between the “sacred” and the “secular.” The upshot of this is that all the services provided by The Salvation Army, whether these be church services, social services, or a hybrid of the two, contain elements designed to assist in meeting all the needs a person has: those of both a physical nature and a spiritual nature.

The character embodied by Salvationists in their holistic mission is that of wholehearted commitment to a life-defining cause. One could argue that it is only through this sort of tireless devotion that the Salvationist movement has had the kind of worldwide impact that it has over the past century-and-a-half and counting. The reach of their movement is a testament to the power of a global community united around a common cause.

In some sense, it seems that Salvationists have tapped into a strain of primitive Christianity which made the church of Acts into such a powerful gathering, hallowed down through the ages of Christendom. The ethos is one of service and evangelism as a single combined pursuit, rather than two different ones. While it is unclear just how much Salvationists may see themselves as heirs to that special facet of the Acts church, an outside observer can readily pick up on the similarities, as I certainly did in my time around Salvationists. It does not take a microscope to observe that the DNA of that early church clearly flows through the Salvationist’s veins.

The Salvation Army strongly promotes Christian unity. Battle is a unifier for those on the same side of the conflict. This is the case for those engaged in “the fight.” The fact that the Salvationist ethos focuses on an ongoing fight for the holistic wellbeing of others places them within a context of unending struggle. Theirs is ultimately a Pauline struggle against

principalities of spiritual darkness, but a struggle nonetheless. This unites Salvationists with one another in an enduring way. Additionally, this makes the Salvationists beloved siblings of other Christian denominations, as ultimately “the fight” is one shared by all of Christendom, albeit one which Salvationists are particularly adept at addressing head-on.

Every Salvationist has a role to play in this ongoing struggle. There is no such thing as a Salvationist who is unimportant to the cause. Each soldier and officer has work to do, a part in the grand fight. This sense of purpose is immensely valuable. A search for purpose is a common theme among humankind throughout time. People follow all manner of paths in that search, a search that is often quite unfortunately forlorn. For The Salvation Army to offer an answer to that search for purpose in such a positive and mutually beneficial way is a testament to the power and effectiveness of the Salvationist message.

This point relates closely to another, namely the balance between an outward ethos and care for individual Salvationists. Despite the collective focus of The Salvation Army, the individual is not forgotten. Every individual under the Salvationist banner (and those outside) is to be valued in Salvationism. Even collective change begins with change in individual hearts and lives, a fact of which Salvationists are certainly aware. The individual’s needs are of great concern to the Salvationist. Therefore, there is a distinct balance between the collective and the individual that is struck by Salvationism, and while others are to come first for the Salvationist, this is not meant to be at the expense of the individual’s own needs.

With the ultimate goal in mind of helping others, one need only look to the many lives turned around and improved by Salvationists in order to see that this goal has been accomplished many times over and will continue to be achieved by the global community of Salvationists.

Salvationists as a Global Community

Unlike most human communities, Salvationists exist in a wide array of locations around the world yet still constitute a clearly definable culture. Furthermore, their continuity with their history allows for a paradigm in which they operate in the legacy of those who have gone before them and pave the way for those who will come after. Similarly to how the larger Christian Church is sometimes divided into the Church

Triumphant and Church Militant, with members dead and yet living being united into the whole, one can look at Salvationists as a group united through the generations.

As a group bound by shared ties of assent to certain values and beliefs, as opposed to a group bound by birth or geography, one could see the overarching cohesion of Salvationists to be tenuous, always just a few practical disagreements or theological disputes away from fracturing and collapsing. However, time has proven that the glue holding the group together into a cohesive whole is rather strong. It is worth noting that there have been no major splits within Salvationism for well over a century, a feat not achieved by many other Protestant denominations. Therefore, the ties that bind Salvationists together, though they are not ties of blood or location, have nevertheless proven to be exceptionally solid. One reason for this could be the group’s outward focus, which puts an emphasis on serving on the frontlines, thus leaving comparatively little time for the kind of behind-the-scenes squabbles which undermine many similar movements.

An examination of the Salvationist experience shows that a powerful ethos can effectively unite a large group of people. In Salvationism, the message of the fight gives a strong anchor to all that is done. The militaristic language of The Salvation Army is not without cause and has proven itself to be highly effective in galvanizing and mobilizing a movement. This serves as an indication that groups which draw people from a wide range of settings to be their core base can bring that base together despite their differences through a masterful use of ethos. Thus one can find Salvationists on opposite sides of the world engaging in the same fight, the same struggle for souls and the betterment of humanity.

Naturally, getting an entire group of people to agree on one unifying ethos is no simple feat. It does not take much to imagine myriad ways in which people could divert from an ethos and thus sever their union with the ethos-giving movement. Various disagreements, misunderstandings, and drifts in vision and motivation could be involved. Thus, it does not suffice to have just any ethos to unite a group, but instead there must be an ethos that a group can genuinely rally around. A hollow ethos would likely do no good in uniting such a vast array of people as is done by the strong ethos of Salvationism. Therefore, one can discern how the militaristic ethos that makes The Salvation Army rather unique is also likely to be one of the primary

reasons for its long-term effectiveness and relative longevity as a cohesive global movement.

Furthermore, looking to Salvationists provides the observer with evidence that a widespread affection for a movement's history can provide a set of common values and understandings for all its participant members. Such is the case in Salvationism, where Salvationists hold a deep respect for their predecessors. The esteem that Salvationists still hold for the Booths connects their movement in the present to their movement of the past in a contiguous and streamlined manner. When a group is in-touch with its predecessors in such a way, it fosters a sense of purpose and mission within the group, who are thus able to see themselves as walking in the footsteps of those who came before them and perhaps picking up where they left off.

In addition to their admiration for preceding persons, Salvationists are also held together by their admiration for the traditions set forth before them. Many of the elements of Salvationism, not least of which being the unique terminology, could have been discarded over the past century had there not been a deep respect for the traditions handed down through the generations. Because of this respect for traditions of the past, Salvationists have been able to preserve many of the elements which bring them together and make their movement unique.

The nature of an externally focused group is one that creates particular social dynamics. A group that is built in many ways around those who are outside of the group is one that seems poised to have a significant impact on the communities around it. This further requires a paradigm in which members of the group in question are in strong agreement with the group's mission. If the members are not on board with an outward-focused mission, there would seem to be little incentive for them to stay. That is not to say that individuals within the organization are neglected, far from it in fact, but merely to say that the onus is on members of the group to be focused on helping those outside the group. The Salvation Army works to serve the public at large and does not solely exist for the benefit of the soldiers and officers. This promotes a sort of charitable selflessness. Selflessness may not be an easy motivator at first, but once embraced wholeheartedly it becomes a powerful driving force. Salvationism reflects the early Christian church in that an array of people are arranged into a cohesive unit around notions of selflessness and Christian charity.

There is an interesting interplay between two seemingly opposed principles, uniformity and hierarchy, that may also help explain the cohesion found in The Salvation Army. The two-tiered nature of Salvationism, of officers and soldiers, results in a geographically settled base, but an itinerant hierarchy. This creates a social dynamic wherein the base (the soldiers) contribute a significant amount to the on-the-ground, frontlines dynamic of the group in question. Meanwhile, the hierarchal roles within the group (the officers) are far more ephemeral. However, the latter is somewhat offset by the great degree of uniformity within the Salvationist hierarchy in terms of overarching goals and mission vision. Nevertheless, two-tiered dynamics within a movement, organization, or group often lead to two different subcultures forming within the cultural whole. Since the roles of soldier and officer have such unique functions, it is only natural that there would be some differences between the experiences of the two, even if only in relatively minor ways. This is offset by the overall cohesion in the organization, but it is a distinction worth mentioning. Subcultures pose no threat to their parent culture so long as they do not become countercultures. This is applicable to social groups in general. A subculture allows for a diversity of experience and expression, while a counterculture functions as a contrary element within the whole which could ultimately lead to the whole's subversion, weakening, and disintegration.

The layers of hierarchy in Salvationism result in a structure in which major decisions are often made through a bureaucratic process. While such structures could be labelled as Byzantine by some, there is an argument to be made for the necessity of bureaucratic machinery in a large organization. The primary argument in favor of bureaucratic machinery is that it allows for work on the ground to move forward unimpeded by concerns which are delegated up the ladder. Thus, when groups reach a certain size, it seems to be a natural consequence of such growth for them to fashion some manner of bureaucracy. So long as those on the bureaucratic level work well with those on the ground level, and vice-versa, this arrangement can flourish. However, issues may arise if there begins to be a disconnect between those at the front and bureaucrats up the ladder. This can be offset by a chain-of-command which puts some degree of separation between those on the ground and those making the decisions. The system implemented by The Salvation Army generally succeeds in this.

A movement founded on millenarian vision can be propelled far into the future on the strength of that vision. The vision set forth by the Booths has given The Salvation Army an organizational lifetime's worth of fuel. The Booths were driven by a genuine desire to save the world and win it to Christ. As Salvationist historian Dr. Roger J. Green puts it, "William Booth can be understood only by seeing him as someone driven by a religious impulse to save the world from itself" (Green 2005, 103).

There is little else that can inspire people to jump into the fray of a movement more than a good millenarian vision. Although Salvationists are not explicitly millenarian today, that spirit of winning the whole world to Christ still resides within the movement. Working toward a glorious future is something that has rallied people for centuries in all manner of settings and conditions. The vision of such a future can serve as a sort of brass ring on which all the members of a group may focus as one. By pushing forward toward the vision of the future that they all share, those within a movement sprung forth by millenarianism can work in their day to achieve that grand vision for the future.

Lessons for Broader Christendom

There is much that the Christian at large can take from the Salvationist experience. Many of the overarching elements which define the experience are not limited to Salvationists alone. They are elements that have been integral to the Christian Church as a whole, including its various denominations. But some of the practices which define the Salvationist experience have become foreign to parts of the larger Christian Church, despite having been present at the Church's very beginning.

For instance, the book of Acts describes the early Christian movement in ways that parallel the Salvationist movement, and that are instructive for the larger Church even now. In Acts 2, for example, the Day of Pentecost is depicted, wherein the Holy Spirit fell upon the gathered believers and many were brought into the fold. In Acts 2:5-11, we are reminded that those who bore witness to what God was doing were of a great and diverse multitude, yet they each heard the message in their own language. This speaks to the multicultural appeal and pan-ethnic aim of the Christian message. In other words, this account shows that the Christian Church (and indeed, one could point to Pentecost as a time in which the Christian Church

came into being in a definitive and distinct form) is an institution with goals ultimately extending to all people, a point that is returned to throughout the narrative of Acts. It was not intended to be tied to a certain earthly nationality or ethnicity, but instead was meant to transcend these erstwhile divisive categories and exist across the vast spectrum of humankind.

The Salvation Army embraces the core ethos of that goal. Salvationists exist amongst all manner of human societies, nationalities, and ethnic groups. Salvationism is not tied to any one portion of humankind, but instead seeks to serve the entire multitude. Social class is also not a matter which excludes someone from Salvationism. Salvationists are known for caring for the marginalized, and in doing so, they conform to the vision of a Church for all that is presented in Acts.

Later in Acts 2:42-47, the text tells of how the believers relinquished their worldly possessions and shared what they had with others, particularly those in need. Salvationists are so well-known for their care for those in need that they are often mistaken for a social organization alone rather than a denomination of the Christian Church.

In Acts 3:1-10, the apostles Peter and John restored a beggar's ability to walk, showing great care to a man who many had passed by each day. In similar fashion, Salvationists frequently show a great deal of compassion to those facing situations of destitution and extreme poverty, as well as those struggling with various physical ailments. Again, the notion of service to those in need rises to the forefront.

In Acts 3:32-37, the point is reinforced that the early believers shared their material possessions with those in need. This underscores the point that material items were of comparatively little value to those of the early Church in comparison to the greater value they placed upon their service to others. Likewise, in Salvationism, most Salvationists are not known for their material wealth, but are instead defined by their gracious and abundant service to others. An unfortunate trend in modern Christendom is for the excessive wealth and ostentation of those within the Church, especially leaders, to be highlighted by critics both inside and outside the faith. This has the potential to bring great shame and condemnation upon Christianity, as its public witness becomes one far from that of the Christian ideal of Christlikeness. However, Salvationists do not often (if ever) appear in these sorts of public rebukes. There is no prevailing notion of Salvationists as gaudy or ostentatious, and thus the

Salvationist movement is generally spared some of the criticisms made of other denominations for their extravagance.

Delving further into Acts, in chapter 6:1-5, we see that feeding the hungry became a focal point of the early Church's ministry. Again, this is an area in which Salvationists excel. Feeding the hungry is a service offered by The Salvation Army around the world. In Acts 6, the text shows how the Christian ministry is not devoted to spiritual needs alone, but instead has something to offer to all areas of life. This holistic ministry focus is something that resonates deeply with the Salvationist mission.

Departing Acts and moving further into the New Testament, one can see the Pauline undercurrents of the Salvationist ethos. Paul was no stranger to militaristic imagery. In one of the most famous portions of the Pauline writings, Ephesians 6:10-17, Paul describes the "armor of God," in which he uses militaristic imagery to describe the virtues that Christians should embody. By connecting Christian virtue with militaristic language, Paul is making clear that militaristic terminology can be tailored to a Christian ethos and effectively convey elements of core Christian thought and practice.

In 2 Timothy, a letter which Church traditions consider to be the swan song of the Pauline writings, Paul returns to militaristic language. In 2 Timothy 2:4, he compares Christian perseverance to the life of a soldier. In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul writes of having "fought the good fight," something which naturally resonates with the Salvationist notion of "the fight." In this letter, therefore, Paul reaffirms the importance and helpfulness of militaristic imagery in the Christian ethos.

In these Pauline texts, the usefulness of militaristic language to the Christian life is made clear to the reader. Salvationists embrace this ethos more than any other Christian denomination in prominence today, and although it makes them stand out as unique, and may even be viewed as quaint, it falls in line with the type of language used in the New Testament.

I believe that this type of militaristic ethos could be useful to a wide range of Christians today. That is not to say that all Christians would necessarily be well-served by adapting the exact terminology of Salvationists (such as having officers and soldiers, corps, and a general), but merely that militaristic language can help illustrate elements of the global Christian experience. It has the potential to galvanize believers into a wholehearted service of the Christian

cause, due to its associations with selfless service and fervent dedication. With all that noted, however, the effectiveness of the militaristic ethos of Salvationists is less in areas in which militarism has negative connotations and painful associations. In these specific cases, Salvationists use discretion and wisdom to not present their ethos in a way that would cause discomfort among the people they seek to serve. This goes to show that while a powerful ethos can be an effective tool, some flexibility with it can be greatly beneficial, especially in the context of a global movement.

Humankind seems to have an innate sense of wanting to be a part of something greater than any one individual self. This bears itself out time and time again as people get swept up into a fervor over movements and causes far and wide. Belonging to a larger unit that pushes for an idealistic goal has been the salve for many a wound of the human experience for a very long time. Salvationism taps into this in a way that seems to go deeper than the average Church denomination. In a normal setting, to be involved in a church to some equates merely with the attendance of Sunday services, perhaps even an occasional attendance at that. Such a connection is much harder to make in a Salvationist setting, as the all-encompassing notion of service that is put forth makes it much harder for one to fall into a nominal, complacent Christianity. Instead, their ethos makes it far more likely that a Salvationist will give themselves to a holistic ministry that gives them a purpose in all areas of life. In other words, it is quite difficult to compartmentalize Salvationism. Because of this, Salvationism is more likely to fulfill the aforementioned longing in human nature for participation in a grand, overarching movement with noble goals. If the Christian Church as a whole were to adopt such a mentality, it is quite possible that many more people would find that need for belonging and purpose met within the Church's walls.

On a similar note, the millenarian vision that still undergirds the Salvation Army is something that would be of great benefit to the broader Church. This vision is not solely unique to Salvationism, and indeed there are other denominations and factions within denominations in the broader Christian Church which are much more explicitly millenarian than today's Salvationists, such as those adhering to eschatological postmillennialism. But the Salvationist mission is millenarian without being postmillennial, and this could be an example to those within Christianity who are not postmillennial in their eschatological

viewpoint, but wish to embrace a strong forward looking vision and goals. If this outlook were universally embraced within Christendom, it would help bring the entire global Church into the fold of those who work holistically to transform the world.

The others-centeredness of Salvationism is something else which would benefit the Christian Church if widely embraced. This too is something that is not altogether foreign to most sectors of the Church, though it is not always emphasized at the level or with the vigor of the Salvationists. In many parts of the Christian Church today, there is an overriding sense that the most important question is, "What is my faith doing for me?" However, this is far from the Christian ideal. That is not to say that the individual should be somehow dissolved or forgotten in the Christian ethic, but merely that the sacrificial approach to the Christian life as modeled by Christ points toward a manner of living in which the primary focus is upon others. Based on the message of Scripture, serving others should be a driving force in the Christian life. This is true of the Christlike ethic, it is also true of the Salvationist ethic more specifically, and it should be true of the larger Church and could produce positive results from missionary work to mutual aid.

The balance that Salvationism strikes between the high standards set for those on the inside of the movement and the low barriers-to-entry set for those on the outside is something else that the Christian Church as a whole could benefit from adopting. People are often alienated by the Church because of a church's wholesale sway to one side or another of these two interlocking principles. A church with low moral standards may be beneficial to those who are merely seeking, but at the expense of antinomianism. On the opposite side of the matter, a church with high standards may beneficially reflect a thoroughly biblical morality, but at the expense of those outside the church becoming alienated from Christianity because of perceived judgementalism and harshness from Christians to the world at large. Salvationists are able to avoid this by appealing to both sides in their proper fashion, with those inside the church being held to a high standard of conduct, while those outside the fold are nonetheless welcomed inside the doors unconditionally and with no judgement. The ideal result of this, then, is that those who come inside the doors with unconditional openness are brought to Christ and stay within the fold, leading to them then committing themselves to the higher standards that are held by those inside. If this sort of approach were

adopted by all Christians, far more within the Church would improve their standard of morality in keeping with the biblical ideal while also allowing for a situation in which those outside the Church are not turned away and are instead welcomed in with open arms. It is a delicate balance to find, but Salvationists have navigated the matter effectively and thus have much to teach the Church at large on the issue.

Finally, it is unfortunate that some within the Christian Church do not even realize that Salvationists are a denomination of Christianity in their own right. If Salvationists received more attention from their siblings in the faith and were thus able to teach the Church as a whole many of the elements which have made the Salvationist movement as successful as it has been, it would be quite beneficial to all.

In Summary

The Salvationist experience is one filled with richness and insight for all. This often-misunderstood movement within the broader Christian Church has a remarkable history, with a record of service to the faith leading right to the present. From their extremely powerful ethos, to their adoration for their history, to their compassionate focus on others, Salvationists embody many noble and virtuous traits which could benefit the whole of Christendom, and even the whole of humanity, if embraced by all.

Salvationists, the officers and soldiers of The Salvation Army across the world, are quite a fascinating group. United by their shared beliefs and participation in the Salvationist cause, this group transcends geographic and ethno-cultural boundaries and forms a united global movement. Despite being so widespread, to the point of ubiquity in countries around the world, Salvationists near and far are of the same accord. The unity and cohesion of this global group of Christians speaks volumes to the effectiveness of the ties that bind them.

Salvationism embraces characteristics that have been prominently featured in the global Christian Church down through the ages. Most especially, they are at the forefront of carrying the sacred fire of selfless service to others that has been a mainstay of the Christian movement since the first century AD. The role they play within the broader Christian Church, though often under-appreciated, is nevertheless vital and integral to the holistic mission of Christianity in the world today.

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