COMMUNITY IN MISSION

Phil Needham

Original Foreword by General Eva Burrows
21st Century Foreword by Commissioners James and Carolyn Knaggs
COMMUNITY IN MISSION

By Phil Needham

Original cover art by Jeff Gabriel
This reprint of *Community in Mission* thirty years after its writing invites Salvationist readers to reflect again on who we are as a Salvation Army. The reflection is now aided by questions developed by members of The Open Table, a community of Salvationists in mission together in Southern California. The questions relating to the topic of the chapter and the author's responses are found at the end of each chapter—**Missional Moments (in conversation)**. The author's responses in no way represent official Army position on the questions. They are his own reflections and opinions, and are designed not for total agreement but to stimulate conversation and prayer among Salvationists centered around their corps and its future. Additionally, questions for the reader(s) are provided at the end of each chapter—*Missional Movement (in community)*. These are designed to inspire Salvationists to move together into missional action. Combined, these sets of questions will hopefully lead to greater clarity about the direction God wants for their life and mission together.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21st Century Foreword</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Foreword</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE—CHARTERED BY CHRIST</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The new humanity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the new humanity in Christ begins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the new humanity in Christ is celebrated and nurtured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO—CREATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The redemptive fellowship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the Kingdom is expressed in the Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the Holy Spirit empowers the Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the Church celebrates and nurtures the redemptive character of its fellowship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THREE—CALLED TO A JOURNEY</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pilgrim people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church in the world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pilgrim lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry and tradition in the pilgrim Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating and nurturing the pilgrim calling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOUR—COMMISSIONED FOR BATTLE</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The army of salvation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of the Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of the commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the missional Church organizes for battle:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a structure that serves the mission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the missional Church fights its battles:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evangelism and social action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the Church celebrates its missional purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and nurtures its missional preparedness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIVE—ENCAMPED FOR RENEWAL ........................................ 107

The nurturing community
The ministry of encouragement
(a) The Church as support system
(b) How the Church encourages
(c) Keeping encouragement alive
The ministry of equipping
(a) How the Church equips
(b) Blessing and supporting the equipped
Encouraging and equipping the missional Church

SIX—COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE ...................................... 131

The colony of hope
The future of the Church
(a) Freedom from the oppressive past
(b) Courage for the promised future
(c) Hope for the whosoever
The Church of the future
(a) The future in lifestyle
(b) The future in fellowship
(c) The future in mission
(d) The future in structure
Eschatological celebration and renewal: feasting on the future

Epilogue .............................................................................. 165
Notes ..................................................................................... 167
WHAT makes the difference to a dying world? What hope can there be for our society today, when so many are making fatal choices in their relationships, lifestyles and cultural acceptances? Do we really believe that our world is headed in the right direction? How did we get so far off track? Perhaps this quandary explains why so many are quick to embrace anything and everything that makes them feel good, look good, or advances their cause for personal gain. Their hope for the world around them is dissipating with every day and the future isn’t any brighter.

The Holy Scriptures prove to us that God has a better way for all of us. They reveal a purposeful life of abundance that demonstrates love for each person in powerful, transformative ways. Regardless of our nationality, affluence, influence, or personal attributes, God’s plan is for the healing of nations, marriages, relationships and personal conflicts in a holy and caring manner. He declares by his grace that we need not give up. He, indeed, is the difference maker for a dying world. There’s good news in that he still has hope for us. He sees promise in us and provides a way to realize the joys he made us for. He hasn’t yet given up and neither should we.

Our culture is replete with lost citizens, victimized by their surroundings and people they trusted. Others have made poor choices based upon bad information or a disregard for common sense and morality. They are in despair and hopeless. How will they find the solutions God has prepared for them?

That’s precisely why we need to revisit *Community in Mission* by the brilliant teacher and practitioner, Commissioner Phil Needham. He expertly puts these concerns and their solutions in context for us and for our generation. He reminds us that in God we have a constructive way forward and that his grace is sufficient in all things. This work doubles as a textbook in mission and a personal guide for those lost, or those helping the lost. In these pages you will read and be challenged to live a life of full-on discipleship, which will make a world of difference to a dying world. It’s possible because it’s God’s plan and it’s relevant because Needham communicates convincingly of our role for today.

Not many books written today will stand the test of time as this work does. Join us in discovery, hope, and blessing. The time is now. The people who need our support are all around us. You are the perfect person to do it. Now you have in your hand a guide that will make sense of it all. You can trust the words here to form a hope within you, an attitude of practicality that will lead you to right conclusions and a heart to trust God in the process. He is the way, the truth and the life. You will know this better from now on. God be with you as you take this in and apply it to your journey.

—Commissioners James & Carolyn Knaggs
September 2016
FOR the first century of its history, The Salvation Army was too busily involved in its evangelistic mission to pause and investigate, at any depth, exactly what its form and nature might be within the Church universal. Content to respond to the directives of the Holy Spirit, we concentrated on our work in the world rather than on our role in the Church.

Such questions, however, need to be explored and have taken a significant place in Salvationist thinking in recent years. In this book, Major Philip Needham considers Salvationist insights into mission and the community called to maintain that mission in the world.

The biblical basis and the historical context are presented as definitive and explanatory factors in understanding a Salvationist theology of redemption and holiness, membership and worship, ministry and renewal. Besides clearly setting out the Salvationist stance on baptism, Eucharist and ministry, the writer challenges present-day Salvationists to recognize, apply and practice the Army’s approach in everyday living and service.

Major Needham was invited to produce a volume which would be a supplement to The Salvation Army’s official response to the Lima Document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. This book, therefore, is not a theological statement emanating from the deliberations of an official group, but is something more vital—a positive statement from a dedicated Salvationist working from a biblical and experiential perspective.

I believe he has produced a volume which will become a standard work, giving a sound and convincing view of The Salvation Army’s role and purpose in the Christian Church today.

—General Eva Burrows

April 1987
INTRODUCTION

In the latter part of the 19th century, in England, a Christian missional movement came into being. It was born of the conviction of a Methodist couple, William and Catherine Booth, that the churches were failing to bring the gospel of God’s love in Christ to the large masses of people—the poor and working classes—and new departures were called for in order to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). After repeated attempts to be appointed permanently by the Methodist New Connexion to evangelistic work with the masses, they saw no other alternative outside a courageous embarkment on their own under God’s leading.

Where God led them was to the slums of the East End of London. This was the place—more than any other in that great city—of human suffering, exploitation, degradation and immorality. This was London’s embarrassment, a festering sore which exposed the social and spiritual diseases of the whole body of the metropolis. This was the place where the Church was surprisingly scarce, given its prominence otherwise in Victorian society—as if it had something on its hands here which it did not quite know how to handle. This was where The Salvation Army began.

The beginning, however, was not the same as the ending. The Booths intended the establishment of an evangelistic organization for converting the masses to Christ and referring new converts to local churches for membership. To be sure, the campaigns were highly successful: conversions were numerous. But local congregations were not always prepared to accept converted ruffians, riff-raff, derelicts and prostitutes as full members. All they offered, in many churches, were crude benches in the back reserved for those who could not afford pew rental and needed to be kept separate from the more civilized, dues-paying members. The Victorian Church had its own version of the Pauline “dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14). The Booths’ impoverished converts could see the wall very clearly, and feel it very deeply. They were not wanted.

It was inevitable—and perhaps right—that they return to those through whose ministry and care they had come to new birth in Christ. The Booths found themselves inundated with Christians without a fellowship. Their Salvationist movement was now standing at a new crossroads. An important decision had to be made: either to continue working with existing congregations to find a way for converts of humble estate to be accepted and trained as members, or, to embark on yet another significant departure by allowing that this new evangelistic movement would also be the permanent spiritual home of those converts who felt led to make it such and who themselves wanted to become involved in its mission. Based on expe-
rience, the first option seemed unpromising. The choice—made prayerfully and wisely—was to be the second.

The Booths now had a church on their hands. A very unchurchly church, to be sure; a church which did not like to be called a “church”—remember, “church” was associated with bad memories, discrimination, rejection—but a church which bore all the essential marks of the body of Christ. Whom the respectable Victorian churches were unable to embrace, the Salvationists welcomed home, and in this new fellowship of believers, sharing a common experience and united in a common mission, the Lord found more rock upon which to build his Church.

The Salvation Army—as this movement came to be called in 1878—is as much an integral part of the one true catholic (universal) Christian Church as is any other denomination or ecclesiastical tradition. In the early days, many would have taken issue with such a statement—and did. In this day of ecumenical enlightenment, those who take issue would probably be accused of ecclesiastical arrogance. The true body of Christ is united in the essentials and mutually tolerant on other matters. The Salvation Army claims total allegiance to that which the Scriptures clearly show to be essential to Christian faith and practice.

On the other hand, it has no right to claim ecclesiastical superiority. Like any other denomination, it has its strengths and weaknesses. It has not always maintained its missional commitment, and it has at times been guilty of spiritual Phariseeism. It has sometimes displayed an isolationist and sectarian spirit. And it has suffered some of the deadly consequences of creeping institutionalization. The Salvation Army is no better—or worse—than its sister fellowships in Christ.

It does, however, have an important contribution to make to the Church as a whole. The very reason for the Army’s emergence in Victorian England and its consequent rapid spread around the world, is a clarion reminder to the churches of their calling in the world. The Army came into being because—allowing for some glorious exceptions—by and large, the churches were not carrying out their mission to the poor and dispossessed. If one of the signs that the Kingdom had come in Jesus the Christ was that the poor had the gospel preached to them (Matthew 11: 5), the Victorian churches had forgotten. The Army reminded them.

It stands today as a reminder. Only now it needs to remind itself more than anyone else. It could lose its own missional heartbeat. It could forget that the sole reason for its existence is the world for whom Christ died. Nothing would be more pale and pathetic than a missional movement without a mission.

Hence, this Salvationist ecclesiology is written primarily for The Salvation Army.
It is written with the conviction that the Salvationist movement has embodied key characteristics of the Church and its calling in the world, and in the hope that these characteristics, when understood, will give Salvationists today a vision of the missional future into which their Lord is leading them. But it is also written for the whole Church as a basis for theological reflection upon the Salvationist movement itself, but primarily as a perspective on ecclesiology as a whole. Salvationist history has something to say to the Church.

One thing should be made very clear at the outset: this is not an ecclesiology of The Salvation Army but a Salvationist ecclesiology. The Salvation Army is only one concrete expression of the Church in human history; it is also a human institution which is subject to many of the forces and influences to which all institutions are subject. 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.

This is not to say that a true ecclesiology cannot be historically conditioned; all theology is. Every Christian generation needs an ecclesiology which is both faithful to the gospel as revealed in the Scriptures and attentive to the particular historical context in which it finds itself. A true ecclesiology finds its source in the Scriptures and its thrust in the hopes and challenges of the social context. It must speak both with authority and to the times. Unless it does both it is of little use.

Each generation provides its peculiar challenges to the life and mission of the Church. In responding to those challenges, the Church searches the Scriptures and its faith and inevitably rediscovers aspects of its life and calling which need to be taken more seriously in the light of the present situation. In this way historical circumstances stimulate the recovery of neglected areas of ecclesiology.

The Salvation Army came into being in an era when the urban Church was, for the most part, neglecting its missional calling. The social, economic and spiritual alienation of the poor masses cried out to the Church for response, but few heard. The early Salvationists were among the few who did. The cry drove them to rediscover the pre-eminence of mission in the work of the New Testament Church, and out of this rediscovery The Salvation Army came into being.

Hence a peculiarly Salvationist ecclesiology necessarily reflects this prejudice toward the Church’s missional calling. It could never be seen as an ecclesiology for the whole Church, for no other reason than the fact that Salvationist history and experience have created a selection of emphases and priorities which would not be shared by all Christian
fellowships. But this is not the same as saying that Salvationists hold tenets that deviate from universally accepted and scripturally supported doctrines held in common by most Christians. On the contrary, The Salvation Army claims that all its eleven doctrines are in keeping with the Church’s historic faith and practice founded upon the teachings and emphases of the Scriptures. Thus, the ecclesiology which is here being written finds its basis in the Scriptures and its uniqueness in historic Salvationist mission. Such an ecclesiology is a worthwhile enterprise because, first, Salvationists need to understand why their fellowship was called into being and how it can continue to be faithful to its calling and, second, a Salvationist ecclesiology stands as a reminder to the Church that its mission in the world is primary, and that the life of the Church ought largely to be shaped by a basic commitment to mission.

How, then, will a Salvationist ecclesiology that is scripturally based and missionally biased unfold? From a Salvationist perspective, how are we to understand who the people of God are and what their purpose in the world is? The answer is that we will seek to develop this ecclesiology under six headings which can be considered the essential realities constituting the true Church. They can be expressed in the following phrases:

Chartered by Christ—The new humanity
Created by the Holy Spirit—The redemptive fellowship
Called to a journey—The pilgrim people
Commissioned for battle—The army of salvation
Encamped for renewal—The nurturing community
Committed to the future—The colony of hope

In these descriptions we see all that the Church is. Everything that must be said about the Church is rooted in the realities to which they point. These are the foundations of our ecclesiology.
The new humanity

The Church is a community which comes into being in response to the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus the Christ as the one in whom the Kingdom is realized.

JESUS came preaching the Kingdom of God. By this term he meant both the establishment of God’s rule in human life—individual and corporate—and the amazing consequences of accepting this rule. The consequences were a reversal of the relationships characteristic of a fallen world order—for example, love not only of friends but also of enemies (Matthew 5:43-47), unlimited forgiveness of others (Luke 17:3, 4), service over status (Mark 10:42-45).

The gospel is the good news that in Jesus this Kingdom is now present and accessible (Luke 7:22; 17:21), that all of history is moving toward the Kingdom’s full realization in a transcendent order (Revelation 21:1-4), and that through faith in Jesus as the Christ (the Messiah of God) the Kingdom may be entered (i.e., salvation received) and a new life begun (Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:8). Through his voluntary death
on the cross (John 10:18), the incomparable act of self-giving love, Jesus released power enough to bring this salvation into the world (1 Corinthians 1:17, 18) and to reconcile fallen humanity to himself (Colossians 1:20)—i.e., power enough to establish the Kingdom as a reality in human life. Through his resurrection from the dead, he demonstrated the Kingdom’s triumph in the cross and gave the promise of its completion in human life and history (1 Peter 1:3-9).

How the new humanity in Christ begins

This gospel is the starting point for the Church. The Church comes into being when the gospel is received—that is, when persons accept and enter the Kingdom through faith in Jesus. It is the fellowship of those who believe in Jesus as the Christ sent from God to heal the brokenness of human life and restore lost fellowship with God and man. It is the community of those who are bound together by a common faith in Jesus. We call this community “the new humanity” because it is based upon that which contradicts and supersedes the old, fallen humanity; it is, in fact, a new order of life based upon the gospel.

Because Jesus as the Christ is the one through whom the Kingdom is entered and realized, we speak of the Church as the community which is “chartered by Christ.” He is the one who delivers the Kingdom to the faithful and grants all the privileges, rights, protections and powers which life in the Kingdom entails. He is the Lord of the Church, and the Church therefore lives in obedience to him. This obedience defines the Church’s life and action under Jesus’ lordship. The Church has a bias toward obedience rather than observance because of this called lordship. It is called not to perpetuate ritual but to step out in trusting obedience to its Lord’s commands. Discipleship is the Church’s way of life. The Church looks to its Lord not only as its Savior from the Kingdom of sin and death, but also as the source of authority and the norm of conduct in the new Kingdom. As the reliable, Spirit-inspired witness to Christ as the Word of God, the
initiator of this new Kingdom and the Lord of life, the Scriptures are
the written authority and norm for Christian faith and practice, and
therefore for all ecclesiology.

In obedience to its Lord, the Church goes into all the world preaching
the gospel (Mark 16:15, alternate ending) and attempting to make
disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19): its starting point is a universal
gospel. The privilege of the Kingdom is for the whosoever (John 3:16).
This means, of course, that citizenship in the Kingdom is freely chosen.
The Kingdom is entered by faith, and since faith is the only act without
merit, it is possible for any true seeker after God. The universal gospel
implies entrance into the Kingdom as a free choice.

**How the new humanity in Christ is celebrated and nurtured**

In order for there to be true unity in the (universal) gospel, there must
be freedom in the diversity of culturally conditioned forms, rituals, cer-
emonies and governments in the Church as a whole. The strength of
the universal gospel is that *it is the power of God for salvation to everyone
who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek* (Romans 1:16). In order
to protect this universality, the Church must allow for considerable di-
versity in the expression and nurture of faith, so that acceptance of the
gospel does not depend upon simultaneous acceptance of a particular
culture or ecclesiastical tradition and thereby nullify the universality. It
is a disservice to the gospel to insist that grace must be received through
the mediation of a particular ritual or procedure, and there is no evi-
dence in the New Testament from which a case can be argued for such a
view. Grace is immediate and accessible. When the Word became flesh,
God’s grace appeared for the salvation of all men (Titus 2:11), *and from
his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace* (John 1:16). *Each one of
us... has been given his own share of grace, given as Christ allotted* (Ephe-
sians 4:7, JB).

The immediacy of grace, however, does not require the elimination
of sacred rites. Man has a need to nurture and celebrate profound spiritual realities through symbolic acts. A Gnostic disparagement of palpable symbols and rituals which communicate through the senses is, or borders on, Christian heresy. What the immediacy of grace does imply is that no ritual can be seen as somehow necessary in order for someone to receive grace and that *any* ritual which faithfully conveys the gospel and adequately allows for response is appropriate. Each Christian fellowship is therefore free to develop those symbolic acts which best nurture and celebrate a response to the gospel which is attentive to the social, cultural and historical context of its life and mission. Such freedom is necessary if the free grace of God is to be accepted by the Church and prescribed rituals in particular traditions not understood as the requisite means of experiencing that grace.

What, then, are the criteria for those rites which evoke and reinforce the reality of the Church as the new humanity chartered by Christ? The criteria are in fact those significant aspects of this reality which ought to be communicated in the rite. We list them as follows:

The new humanity in Christ comes about through entrance into a totally new reality, the Kingdom of God now present in human life.

It involves a change in life patterns and goals.

This change is made possible through personal repentance and divine forgiveness.

Jesus the Christ is the one through whom this forgiveness is offered and effected.

Since he is also the one who is Lord in the new Kingdom, citizenship (discipleship) requires obedience to him and emulation of him.
Personal response to Jesus as Savior, Lord and pattern is made in freedom.

Becoming a part of the new humanity in Christ is a step which should be recognized and celebrated publicly as a witness (Matthew 10:32).

It has the character of enlisting in an army, the discipline of which is necessary in enduring the hardship of living in the new Kingdom in the midst of a fallen and opposing world order.

In addition to conveying these aspects of the new humanity in Christ, the rite ought also to celebrate the immediacy of grace. Nothing in it ought to imply that grace is automatically prescribed or purveyed through the performance of the rite itself. Rather, the rite must be a celebration of the immediacy of grace to those who are the active participants. When a rite loses this celebratory and spontaneous character, it is near to becoming a peremptory ritual which claims to control and channel grace. In no way can a rite effect salvation; in no way can saving grace be received representationally.

Most Christian fellowships celebrate entrance into the new Kingdom through Christ by means of the rite of water baptism. Baptism is seen by these fellowships as a “rite of passage” signifying entrance into new life through Jesus Christ and union of the one baptized with Christ and with his people. The significance of the rite is drawn from Scripture references which associate baptism with important dimensions of conversion to Christ: participation in Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12); a washing away of sin (1 Corinthians 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); an enlightenment by Christ (Ephesians 5:14); a clothing in Christ (Galatians 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (1 Peter 3:20, 21); an exodus from bondage (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2); and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Galatians 3:27, 28; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

A Salvationist ecclesiology affirms these dimensions of conversion. It also acknowledges that water baptism was adopted by a major part
of the New Testament Church as a rite which had both the potential to evoke suggestions of these spiritual dimensions and precedent in both Jewish and pagan cultural practice. But it also avers that neither Jesus nor the apostles intended to establish that particular rite as an indispensable part of true Spirit baptism, and that readings of scriptural references to “baptism” as a spiritual experience, that see water baptism as a necessary component of the event, are theologically unjustifiable.

Water baptism, then, cannot stand on its own—no more than can any other religious rite. It is no more than a sign of an inner experience, and without the independent reality of the inner event, the rite is a mere form. The sign of baptism can be a very effective witness to the world of the transformation wrought by faith if, in fact, the evidence supports the claim. It reinforces the convert in his new commitment, and it reminds the gathered fellowship of the commitments they have made. Rich in the symbolism of death and resurrection, a washing away, cleansing, rebirth and renewal, it is a fitting representation and confirmation of the conversion that has taken place.

But it is not the only public witness to this spiritual reality. The Salvationist fellowship has its own rites of public witness to conversion. When the gospel is preached in Salvation Army meetings (services of worship), persons are invited to respond by coming forward and kneeling at a mercy seat (a place of prayer), thereby signifying their penitence, desire for conversion, and personal resolve. The symbolism of this action is reminiscent of Jesus’ frequent call for would-be disciples to step out, leave what they have and follow him (see Luke 9:57-62). The kneeling at the mercy seat points to the true humility of those who see the inadequacy and shame of their life outside discipleship, and the longing to be converted to true discipleship through spiritual death and resurrection. Through faith the seeker rises from the mercy seat a new person in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

There is, of course, no guarantee of conversion by virtue of the act of coming to the mercy seat, nor is this regarded as an essential precondition of membership. The coming forward is only a sign that a search is in progress and conversion is contemplated. As such, it strengthens the
seeker and elicits the support of the congregation in concerned prayer. In actuality, the mercy seat itself is symbolic of any place where a seeker after God comes in prayer. The true mercy seat is of the heart, and the outward act of kneeling at a prayer bench, or any other place, is nothing if not the outward sign of the kneeling soul.

The new convert is prepared for soldiership (membership) during a period of time as a recruit. Then he is enrolled as a soldier in a public ceremony. This enrollment or swearing-in signifies an important dimension of response to the new Kingdom through faith in Jesus: it stresses discipleship. Having entered the Kingdom, the convert becomes a disciple who follows Jesus as Lord and patterns his life accordingly. The soldier enrollment makes clear that discipleship is the purpose of conversion, and it celebrates the convert’s acceptance of this calling by utilizing the military metaphor of enlistment into a life of spiritual discipline and warfare (Ephesians 6:11-17; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4). The convert is enrolled as a soldier under the flag of The Salvation Army whose pattern and colors are symbolic of the redeeming blood of Christ, the refining and empowering fire of the Holy Spirit, and the purity of God and of those who single-mindedly serve him. Again, the ceremony of itself has no efficaciousness apart from the integrity and seriousness of the convert who is taking the step.

It should be noted that in The Salvation Army young persons can be enrolled as junior soldiers. There is no requirement that a person must reach young adulthood before he is capable of discipleship. Rather, since Jesus used the trusting attitude of little children as analogous to religious faith (Mark 10:14, 15), the Army allows children to make a faith response and to be enrolled as soldiers. As such they are nurtured in the faith, and they serve according to their abilities and maturity.

Summary

Let us now summarize the contributions of Salvationist ecclesiology to an understanding of the Church as the new humanity chartered by Christ. Here are the doctrines emphasized by the Salvationist movement.
First, the Church is comprised of those who have received and give witness to the immediacy of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. The Kingdom is received through faith, and this faith saves quite apart from rituals and ecclesiastical prescriptions. The new humanity takes its stand in the accessibility of saving grace over against all attempts to mediate grace through office or ritual. Along with the Society of Friends (Quakers), The Salvation Army witnesses to the whole Church that in Christ the saving grace of God is accessible to the whosoever and efficacious for all who have faith in Christ irrespective of office or ritual.¹⁰

Second, all who have entered God’s Kingdom of grace share one baptism of the Holy Spirit and one obedience to Jesus Christ. The new humanity in Christ is a unified body, and this corporate unity consists of a shared status through spiritual baptism and a shared mission under the command of Jesus Christ.¹⁰ Hence, the basis for Christian unity can never be uniformity or even similarity of government, ritual, or claims to historic apostolic succession. Christians are truly united in their spiritual baptism, quite apart from the specific ritual that is followed in order to express and celebrate this conversion; and in their commitment to obey the missional Christ while affirming the unique missional strengths of different Christian fellowships. There is no other basis for Christian unity. This is clear when we view the varieties of ritual practice among those who accept Jesus as Lord.

Third, entrance into the Kingdom and participation in the new humanity in Christ are synonymous with accepting the challenge of discipleship. Conversion in the initial sense is not an end in itself. It is that beginning experience of divine love, acceptance and forgiveness which frees the convert to realize his potential in Christ by becoming a disciple. Discipleship is the corollary of confessing Jesus as Lord. It is the means by which the Church pursues its calling and carries out its mission in the world. It is obedience to Jesus Christ, and, as such, the way of life of the new humanity. There is no other way to participate in the Kingdom.

Fourth, the rituals of the Church—whether spontaneous or institutionalized—are signs of spiritual events, celebrations of God’s grace in
human life, and witnesses to God’s transforming presence. They point to
divine reality. They are not themselves that reality, nor do they some-
how effect the work of grace. They can be spiritually illuminating and
often elicit an overwhelming sense of God’s presence, but that is the
case only when they are performed in response to the gracious work of
God in human life, and as a symbolic witness to what God has in fact
wrought. Rituals such as water baptism or soldier enrollment effect
nothing. They are outward, symbolic expressions of spiritual trans-
formation. They are the witness of a community which has come into
being in response to the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus the
Christ as the one in whom the Kingdom is realized.
Chartered by Christ—The new humanity

Missional Moments (in conversation):

SMITH: On the question of baptism you state: “A Salvationist ecclesiology affirms... that neither Jesus nor the apostles intended to establish [water baptism] as an indispensable part of true Spirit baptism, and that readings of scriptural references to ‘baptism’ as spiritual experience, that see water baptism as a necessary component of the event, are theologically unjustifiable” (pp. 9–10). Can you clarify the point further?

NEEDHAM: Salvationists today do not need to expend energy in defending The Salvation Army’s position on non-practice of water baptism. As the chapter explains, there was necessity and good reason for discontinuing the practice. Nor is there need completely to close the door—as William Booth refused to do—to the possibility of allowing the voluntary practice of water baptism consistent with Salvationist theology and missional priority.

SMITH: How do you personally respond to those who say that although baptism may not be necessary to salvation nor to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, it is commanded as an act of obedience. They say this implies that those who do not practice water baptism are being intentionally disobedient.

NEEDHAM: Why would Jesus command his followers to do some specific thing—like baptize with water—just to demonstrate a meaningless obedience to him? Does Jesus’ ego need that? The obedience Jesus asks of us is the obedience of disciples, the obedience that is aimed at forming us in his image. Water baptism is either commanded of Jesus’ disciples, or it is not. If not, how we mark, affirm, and celebrate conversion in helpful ways is left up to the spiritual wisdom and discernment of his disciples in their particular missional context. (See note 6.)
SMITH: You state: “The immediacy of grace... does not require the elimination of sacred rites. Man has a need to nurture and celebrate profound spiritual realities through symbolic acts” (pp. 7–8). With many wanting to be more closely aligned in practice with the universal Christian church, what would you see as the advantages and disadvantages of The Salvation Army incorporating water baptism as a symbolic ritual?

NEEDHAM: Assuming that we defined and practiced water baptism consistent with Salvationist theology and missional priorities, the advantages would be: a) a clear and practical identification with Christ’s church, which (with the exception of the Society of Friends) universally practices water baptism in one form or another; b) a strong statement distancing ourselves from a gnostic understanding of salvation; and c) facilitation of our legal recognition and status as a church in countries which deny it because of the influence or history of a state church. The disadvantage would be that non-practice has been our tradition for so long, re-institution would be complicated and potentially divisive. It would have to be handled with considerable wisdom.

SMITH: What are the ritualistic dangers we The Salvation Army can fall into, or have already fallen into? How can we avoid them?

NEEDHAM: Our claim not to be dependent on “rituals” has two problems. First, the claim is false. We do have our rituals, and they are sometimes as sacralized as we accuse the practice of water baptism by other Christians to be. Second, we are often unaware of (or too willing not to admit) the possible pitfalls of our replacements of historical Christian practices. We have replaced these rituals with our own inventions, which may more easily lack the proven value, focus, and doctrinal foundations of almost twenty centuries of Christian discovery, experience, and theological reflection. The only way to avoid the dangers is ongoing objective reflection on our practices, combined with honest insight into the specific ways the rituals are, or are not, helping Salvationists on their journey as disciples of Jesus.
Missional Movement (in community):

1. What are some specific steps your corps could take to cultivate a way of life within the corps fellowship that reflects the values of the Kingdom of God introduced by Jesus and made possible by his death and resurrection?

2. When we, as Salvationists, observe the symbolic Salvation Army rituals, what should the outcome be for the practical day to day mission of The Salvation Army? What are the ritualistic dangers we in The Salvation Army can fall into? How can a local corps avoid them?
3. What symbolic rituals in The Salvation Army are most often seen or more likely to be seen by people as a rite necessary to a higher relationship to God and not just one of a number of possible helps to this end?

4. What are the symbolic rituals we should continue and why? Are there any rituals we should consider dropping? Explain why each of your choices (both to continue and to discontinue) is a good idea.
5. With our large social service programs, can The Salvation Army as a movement fall into the danger of being ritualistic—and therefore decreasingly responsive to real, current needs and open to better responses—in its service and outreach? How can we avoid this?
CREATED BY
THE HOLY SPIRIT

The redemptive fellowship

The Church is a fellowship created by the Holy Spirit in which those who have responded to the Kingdom of God through faith are empowered to live redemptive lives.

THE Church is not the Kingdom of God. It is that community which comes into being in response to the Kingdom. It is that community which receives the Kingdom and reorders its life in the light of the Kingdom’s dawning. As the community which has been chartered by Christ to live in the reality of the new Kingdom, how does the Church realize itself? How does it become what it is? What enables it to actualize the promise of the Kingdom in human life?

The answer is that the Church is actually created by the Holy Spirit. The unity of believers in fellowship and service is the Holy Spirit’s work. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers a diverse group of converts to come together into a fellowship that lives redemptively and, by so doing, intimates and illustrates the Kingdom that has come in Christ. Nothing other than Holy Spirit power creates the Church.
How the Kingdom is expressed in the Church

What exactly does the Holy Spirit create when he creates the Church? How is the Kingdom expressed in the life of the Church through the Holy Spirit? There are four characteristics of this expression.

First, the Spirit creates a visible expression of the peace that has been made in Christ. When the early Spirit-empowered Church met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life (koinonia), to break bread, and to pray (Acts 2:42, NEB), they were, through the Spirit’s power, visibly expressing the reality that in Christ divided men had become one new man... one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end (Ephesians 2:15-16). By allowing the Spirit to create unity, the Church demonstrates its attentiveness to Jesus’ prayer for them:

“[I pray] that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). Clearly, the credibility of the gospel is dependent upon the unity of those who in response to the gospel have allowed the Spirit to break through their dividing walls. Hence the apostle Paul utilizes the analogy of the human body to illustrate the Church as a unity of diverse parts which work together empathetically for a common end, the growth and health of the body (Romans 12:2-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31). This body of Christ is the “new creation” in Christ by which the redeemed are changed... from enemies into his friends (2 Corinthians 5:18, GNB). In the power of the Spirit, reconciled living becomes possible.

Second, the Spirit creates a community of shared life. The Church is not a grouping of individual Christians; it is a community in which Christians share in one another’s struggles and hopes. In the fellowship of believers, Christians bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), weep together, rejoice together (Romans 12:15), lift one another up in prayer (Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 9:14; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 4:2; etc.), and love one another as Christ loved them (John 13:34). There is a togetherness in this fellowship that goes far deeper than mere camaraderie. The pledge which the Spirit empowers the
Church to carry out is the pledge of members of the community of faith to be with one another in every circumstance.\textsuperscript{12}

Third, the Spirit creates a \textit{high level of participation in the fellowship}. In affirming the diversity of gifts within the Church, the apostle Paul charges members to participate in the life of the community by putting their gifts to use: \textit{Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them} (Romans 12:6). This utilization of the gifts of each member is made possible through one of the Spirit’s most important endowments: genuine appreciation for one another’s uniqueness as essential for the balance of the whole. In the Christian fellowship, persons who are very different from one another can work together because they believe that \textit{to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good} (1 Corinthians 12:7). A Spirit-empowered fellowship achieves a high level of participation because members appreciate the special way in which the Spirit manifests himself through the uniqueness and gifts of each member (1 Corinthians 12:14ff).

One of the most important areas of participation in the fellowship is the decision-making process. In the early Church, decision making was neither highly structured nor done in isolation. It involved the community.\textsuperscript{13} As time went on and the priesthood developed, however, diversity of gifts was depreciated. The clergy were seen to be concerned with the spiritual, the laity with the secular. Hence, clerical privilege and power expanded. The result was a considerable diminution of lay participation in the life and decision making of the Church. From time to time in the history of the Church, movements such as lay monasticism and the Protestant Reformation have made attempts to restore the laity to their rightful place, but the dilemma is still with us. The life and mission of the Church always suffer where the power and wisdom of the people of God are not at work in the fellowship. The Spirit does not create a fellowship in which participation and decision making are concentrated in a few. The Spirit creates a living organism in which every part is contributory to the whole.

Fourth, the Spirit creates a community which seeks to \textit{simplify life}. Simplicity of living enables Christians to free themselves from confus-
ing distractions and compulsive busyness—that is, from pursuits which serve to distract from their spiritual pilgrimage. It enables them to address the important issues of life and to give attention to the spiritual commonwealth which they have entered and which is the focus of their pilgrimage. As such it serves as an invitation to others to cultivate their lives and their relationships in some depth. And finally, it is a requirement for the mobility and adaptability which the mission of the Church requires.\textsuperscript{14} This ability to focus on the essentials and to withstand the temptation to be pulled into diversionary entanglements and unworthy pursuits, is given by the Spirit to those who are living their lives in response to the Kingdom.

Having described in this summary way what the Spirit creates when he creates the Church, let us also point out emphatically that the community of believers is called to demonstrate the interpersonal and social relationships which are the goal for \textit{all} of humanity. In response to the Kingdom which has come in Christ, the Church exemplifies—albeit imperfectly—the fulfillment of human life in community. What the Spirit makes possible for the Church, God intends for all mankind.

Hence, the Church is called by God to invite the world, the larger community, to the fellowship of the Kingdom of God through Christ. In doing so, it seeks faithfully to live in response to the Kingdom itself, lays claim to its own gospel-given resources for the development of community, boldly proclaims and demonstrates the meaning of community in Christ, and offers itself as a welcoming community to those who live in personal isolation. If the world today is searching for community,\textsuperscript{15} the Church is inviting it to find community in the fellowship of those who have been reconciled to God and man and are now empowered by the Spirit to live redemptively with one another in the world.

\textbf{How the Holy Spirit empowers the Church}

We now come to a very important matter. We have described the nature of the (Church) community which the Holy Spirit creates, and we have
asserted that this community is an expression of the social life which God purposes for all persons. The statement at the beginning of this chapter asserts that the end result of what the Spirit creates in the Church is the power to live redemptive lives. What do we mean by this power?

Before answering this question, we must first point out that the Church is God’s purposeful setting for freeing Christians to live redemptively. It is in a community where persons have been reconciled to God and one another, where life is shared, where participation is valued and all gifts are appreciated, and where the focus of life is on matters of eternal significance, that redemptive living becomes possible. Redemption is the repossess of that which is of value. Those who have been reconciled can cease fighting battles that have no real victories and can get on with repossessing those experiences and concerns and relationships which hold promise. Those who share life in the Church community are repossessing the blessing of human fellowship, which sin is constantly at work to undermine. Those who experience the acceptance of their participation and the appreciation of their special gifts within the fellowship are repossessing their self-worth and the value of their contribution to the lives of others. Those who have simplified life in order to focus on the essentials are repossessing eternity. The Church is the place where the Spirit makes this repossess an exciting possibility.

We now see that redemptive living is what the Spirit-created Church frees the Christian to pursue. We also see that redemptive living is the process of repossessing that which God gives to life and sin seeks to extort. How then can we best describe this redemptive living? What kind of life does the Spirit empower the Church to repossess.

First, the Spirit empowers the Church to repossess the sacramental life. Whereas we are opposed to the idea of any formal sacrament as a means of salvation, we are deeply committed to the sacramental life as that which salvation through faith in Christ makes possible. In the early years of the Salvationist movement, William Booth described this new life by deritualizing the language of the Lord’s supper:
Let us remember him who died for us continually. Let us remember his love every hour of our lives, and continually feed on him—not on Sunday only, and then forget him all the week, but let us by faith eat his flesh and drink his blood continually: and whatsoever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.\textsuperscript{16}

The sacramental life is based on the continuity of God’s incarnational presence in all human biography and history. It aims at living in a way that imbibes this Real Presence and gives witness to it. In this context there can be no sacraments divorced from everyday life; there can only be the sacramental potential of each moment of everyday life. This was how Horatius Bonar put it:

\begin{quote}
So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free;
But all my life, in every step,
Be fellowship with thee.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

In keeping with its Wesleyan heritage, The Salvation Army has traditionally used the word “holiness” to describe the sacramental life, and “sanctification” as the gracious act of God which makes holiness possible. The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus gave his life on the cross so that righteousness could become a living possibility for those who responded in faith to this supreme act of divine, self-giving love (Romans 8:3-4; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 3:5, 8). Hence, the apostle Paul and others boldly proclaim the death of the “old man” (Romans 6:6, AV), the elimination of any claim the “lower nature” had on us (8:12), the acquisition of a “new nature” (Colossians 3:9-10), the sanctification of life (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10, 12-14), the state of holiness (1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Peter 2:9)—all for those who respond in faith to the God who was in Christ. This new life in the Spirit, or holiness of life, is God’s will for his people (1 Thessalonians 4:3) and a reflection of his own-
ership (Leviticus 11:45; 1 Peter 1:15-16). It can also be described as the sacramental life.

The sacramental life is lived in the power of the Spirit. Those who “walk by the Spirit” look for the sacredness of every moment, the presence of God in every encounter, the divine possibility in every human soul, the sacrament in every experience. They shun the compromise and accommodation of sacred here and secular there: they look for God everywhere. They may not “see” him everywhere, but they know he is there, and they pray for better eyesight! They believe in Incarnation.

We contend that the sacramental life is a repossession, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, of God’s original and enduring intention for human existence. The Genesis account of the Fall describes the beginning in human history of that great rift which is the consequence of sin. Out of that rift come other divisions, as sin seeps into the vulnerable crevices of a fallen race. Perhaps the most insidious division, which at times has reached the proportions of a gaping canyon, is between that in life which is considered sacred and that which is not, between that which is defined as holy by nature and that which is irrevocably consigned to the realm of profane, between that part of personal life which is seen as concerned with serious discipleship and that which is not. The sacramental life is lived on the premise that all such “dividing walls” have been broken down in the cross, that all of life is now sacred and should be celebrated as such, that holiness is the freedom to live every moment in God’s presence.

The second repossession which the Spirit makes possible is life together. We have already made note of the importance of reconciliation through Christ’s death, through which koinonia, the Church’s shared life, becomes a reality. Let it also be noted that a serious consequence of the Fall is the loss of fellowship—with both God and other human beings. Human beings are not only driven from the garden (Genesis 3:24), never to return again to the sublime relationship with God which it symbolized, they also live henceforth at enmity with one another (4:15). This loss of human fellowship is an agonizing strand that runs through Old Testament history, with illustration after illustration of
hurt, unfaithfulness, tragedy and brutality in every area of social life. It characterized the world into which Jesus was born. It contributed to his crucifixion.

But here’s the irony. The New Testament proclaims that Jesus’ crucifixion put an end to this enmity, and yet his first generation Church is torn by divisions of its own: Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, this party and that. And it hasn’t ended yet. Will it ever?

It will surely end when the Kingdom is consummated in human history and the “former things” have passed away (Revelation 21:4). But what about the present? Is the Church to wring its hands in despair, acquiesce in the inevitability of man’s inhumanity to man—even within the fellowship of believers—and govern its relationships under the safety and protection of the law? Can grace not abound in our life together?

The answer is that it can and does. Christ suffered and died to restore unity to a world fragmented by sin. The apostle Paul spoke of him as the One through whom God was reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). He is the one in whom all things are to be united (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 1:9-10). Hence, reconciliation through Christ must continue to work itself out in history, and the Church is called upon to participate in this reconciling work. This participation has little to do with the laws and organization and programs of the Church; it has everything to do with experiencing the grace of God in the life of the fellowship. Only as the Church allows the grace of God to bring reconciliation in the fellowship does the gospel of grace which it proclaims in the world have credibility. The God who calls his Church to a life of reconciliation is not mocking his people. He is not calling them to that for which he does not empower them. In Christ peace has come and enmity is ended. The Church can be defined as the society of those who have accepted the peace treaty and are learning step by step how to live at peace with God and man. We say “step by step” because the ways of enmity linger insidiously and are so ingrained in human relationships that the new ways of peace must be tried out one risk at a time, and sometimes there is a good bit of clumsy stumbling and trial-and-error. But where there is
genuine acceptance through faith of the peace that is in Christ, the Church is moving decisively beyond enmity.

The Church, then, is the fellowship of believers-in-the-peace. It is the people who have been reconciled who know, and experience in significant ways, peace with God, themselves and their neighbors. For them, the decisive battle is over; they operate on the assumption that in Christ God has reconciled the world to himself. Both their life together and their missional involvement in the world are based upon this assumption. When the second-century Christian apologist, Athenagoras, said that Christians followed the practice of not striking back when struck, of not suing when robbed, of giving when asked and of loving their neighbors as themselves, he was describing attitudes and actions which characterized the Christ who was now incarnate in the life of the Church (1 Peter 2:21-23). The same could be said of many of the early-day Salvationists who were subjected to scorn, derision, abuse and open attack, but blessed their enemies.

The Church, then, is not only the society in Christ which is repossessing the integrity of sacramental living, it is also a society which is repossessing the peace of the human community which sin seeks to shatter. In the unfolding life of the Church, the Spirit frees Christians to restore the lost bond of love and mutual affirmation. As a fellowship of reconciliation, the Church is in the process of becoming.

Third, the Spirit empowers the Church to live life for others. It is clear that God chose servanthood as the form of his reconciling mission in the world (Philippians 2:5-8). Therefore, his Christ, the one through whom that mission was to be carried out, became a servant. The source of Christ’s servanthood was to be found in his radical obedience to God (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42); and its focus was persons (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).

Hence, Christ served men, but at the same time was obedient only to the Father. He was servant of all, but slave only to God. He was servant of all without doing what everyone wished. In fact he could be servant of all only by his obedience to the One who sent him. The higher obedience made possible an inclusive service: the reality of Christ’s servant-
hood is that it was lived for all mankind, the true family of God, with no exceptions, because its source was obedience to the impartial Father. When God “emptied himself” in Christ (Philippians 2:7), he set himself to offer a redemptive alternative to self-serving lifestyles and bigoted religion. He became a slave who was totally obedient to the Father and a servant who was fully available to the human race.

This radical obedience and this loving availability came together powerfully in the cross. The world does not understand the cross because the cross is the potent symbol of God's servant way, which, to a power-hungry world, seems foolish (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). But to the Church, it represents the true character of life and mission. As the embodiment of Christ's radical obedience to the Father and his servant love for all humanity, it becomes the norm for the Church's servant calling (John 13:34-35; 15:12-13; Philippians 2:1-8; Ephesians 4:1-3, 5:2; 1 John 3:16-18).

Servant love is the other side of radical obedience and is inseparable from it. It is possible, in other words, only where God is being obeyed. The Church is free to live its life for others because it is not torn in many directions; it obeys only God. Hence, singularity of obedience frees the Church for servant love.

It is God who calls the Church to servant love and who in the crucified Christ provides the model for that love; and what he calls the Church to, the Holy Spirit empowers it to possess. In Christ the new reality has triumphed, the reality that peace has come and that all manifestations of enmity are un-reality: they have no basis and place in the new Kingdom. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church takes the risk of living by the peace, meeting enmity with love, living for one another. It does so imperfectly, and sometimes its actions belie its claim to a reconciled life and a servant calling; the former life patterns often persist and accommodation to society brings susceptibility to influences which are absorbed from the old destructive order which, while passing away, is still pervasive. But the Church, with all its shortcomings, is still the society of those who have received the Kingdom in Christ and are called by God and empowered by the Spirit to live the Kingdom's re-
ality and by doing so, to repossess the incredible possibilities for human life of which sin would deprive every person. In the midst of a world drenched with enmity, the Church is that society of persons who take their stand where enmity was robbed of its power (the cross) and who serve one another in love through the power of the Spirit. Servant love is the way of life for those who are at peace with God and man; it is the only way to proliferate the reconciliation which has come in Christ. It is also the way of the sacramental life; when God’s presence is recognized to be everywhere and his will the object of every action, there is absolutely no place for self-importance and self-service, and with these being so totally out of place, love of God and man is understood to be what it really is: the only way to live redemptively in society.

How the Church celebrates and nurtures the redemptive character of its fellowship

As a redemptive fellowship created and empowered by the Holy Spirit, how does the Church celebrate and nurture those realities which we have described?

First, let us consider the sacramental life. Undoubtedly in the Church the most prevalent celebration of sacramental living is the Lord’s supper. Interpretations of the significance of the supper range from the memorial feast (a feast of remembrance) to the highly institutionalized sacrament which is considered in and of itself a means of saving grace. Few scholars would say that the institution of the Lord’s supper as a sacrament has clear scriptural foundation.\(^{19}\) What is clear is that Jesus’ last meal with his disciples was fraught with spiritual meaning, and he knew and intended that it be remembered as such.\(^{20}\) They had shared many meals together. In the eastern tradition eating together signified a deeper shared fellowship. The customary Jewish supper, or Chabura, was a daily repetition of breaking bread and passing around the “cup of thanksgiving”—a decided contrast to the cultic rites of the mystery religions. It was, in fact, according to Emil Brunner, “the hal-
lowing of everyday living." One can therefore sense the import of this, their last meal together—an import which Jesus fully sensed at the time and which they would realize later. Then link the meal with the Jewish Passover observance and with the crucifixion which was now very near. In Jesus’ mind they all converged at the meal, where he spoke of his yet-to-be-fulfilled Passover (Luke 22:15-16), his body offered up for them, the cup of the new covenant (Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-29).

There is no question in our minds as to the importance of this meal. It was a highly significant event which embodied the new community which Jesus called into being through his life, death and resurrection. It is an event which the Church ought to remember. But it is much more than that: it is an event through which the Church is continually called to the Lord’s table—that is, to the beloved fellowship of those who claim reconciliation through the cross, and consider themselves part of Christ’s body, and are prepared to risk themselves for one another.

We recognize that the great majority of Christian fellowships observe the Lord’s supper as a sacrament and that this observance is a means of grace whenever the believer partakes as an act of faith in the crucified Christ and as an anticipation of his Kingdom. Salvationists are not anti-sacramental; they are simply non-sacramental. In the early days of the Salvationist movement, the Lord’s supper was administered, and Bramwell Booth reports that many of these occasions were accompanied by great spiritual blessing, strengthening, vow renewal and even conversions. But practical problems emerged and theological misgivings developed.

The practical problems themselves were considerable. Leaders feared that the large number of unschooled and simple converts would misunderstand the spiritual meaning of the sacraments and come to find security in their mere observance. Many of the converts were former drunkards, and the lack of availability of unfermented grape juice was a sizeable obstacle. The congregations at the Army meetings were usually a rainbow assortment of many types—uniformed Salvationists, other Christian supporters, the curious and a wide range of pagans, some of them rowdy, a few drunk. What criteria were to be used to determine who in this group would be allowed to partake, and who was going to
make that decision? There was also the question of administration. Because laymen with leadership ability were often elevated to officership rank and given appointments with little if any formal training, many officers were not equipped to administer sacraments. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the Army commissioned women as officers very early on, and the idea of a woman administering the sacraments was unthinkable in Victorian England. Finally, it should also be noted that as the observance of the Lord’s supper became less and less frequent in the Army, William Booth suggested that Salvationists take communion in the Established Church, but alas, only the few who had been previously confirmed in the church were accepted. This barring of brothers and sisters from the table was an affront to the evangelical faith—and probably the last straw for William Booth. The institutional churches’ table was not big enough.

There had to be a bigger table. Booth found it outside the sacramental liturgy of existing churches: he found it in the everyday life of the common man. If the Incarnation unleashed God’s presence into the whole of human life, and if the crucifixion poured out his saving love throughout all the world, then there is no place where the table of his fellowship cannot be spread, there can be no such thing as a table where any disciple is denied. From its beginning the Army took a firm stand on the gospel for the whosoever. This stand led to major efforts to remove cultural and ecclesiastical barriers to both evangelism and fellowship. Frankly, the churches’ reluctance to admit poor converts to the sacrament violated this major theological conviction of the Salvationist movement. But the conviction stood, and the sacrament went, for it confined the gospel to the existing ecclesiastical boundaries. Hence, the first theological misgiving over the Lord’s supper arose over the perception—based on actual experience with ecclesiastical provincialism—that the sacrament had become a private celebration of cultural Christianity, a barrier to inclusive fellowship, and therefore a contradiction of Jesus’ clear teaching on the Kingdom’s openness to persons of all conditions and social classes (Luke 4:18; 14:15-24).

The second theological misgiving over the Lord’s supper arose out
of the Salvationist’s evangelical pragmatism. We have already discussed some major practical problems that seriously discouraged the observance of this sacrament. Booth was impatient with any practice that stood in the way of the Army’s evangelical mission to the masses. He had little use for methods or observances which, in fact, did not facilitate it. Not only were there practical obstacles to observance within the Army, the Church itself was seriously divided in its interpretation of what the sacrament actually was or what actually happened when it was administered, and in its discipline regarding admission to the table. In short, the Lord’s supper was a source of continuing division within the Church. Should the movement, and especially its converts, be subjected to so much confusion over the observance of a ritual feast? Booth, the evangelical pragmatist, said no.

Third, there was in the movement a growing distrust of rituals as means of grace. We have already alluded to the anti-materialism of Catherine Booth and George Scott Railton. If there was excessive disparagement of the physical in these passionate ascetics, there was also a needed prophetic voice against feasts, solemn assemblies and offerings which could bewitch Christians into a false sense of divine approval and could dull commitment to justice and righteousness (Amos 5:21-24). There is an ever-present danger to ritual observance, and the Lord’s supper is no exception. The ritual can itself become a substitute for that which it is intended to assist in evoking. The participant in the Lord’s supper can mistake the communion table for the real table and his imbibing for the reception of our Lord’s grace through faith. The ritual for the real.

Yet the Army did not intend to eliminate rituals from the life of the fellowship. It has its own rituals and no less than any other must guard against empty ritualism. The abandonment of the Lord’s supper had more to do with a fourth concern which, in our view, is the major theological rationale for Salvationist discontinuance. We refer to the growing emphasis upon the call to holiness as the imperative for Christian character and lifestyle. As the movement became a “church,” that is to say, the church home for its swelling ranks of
converts, greater attention was given to guiding these converts down the path of the new Christian way of life, which for many of them was a radical departure from their former ways. This necessity brought the movement’s distinctive Wesleyan roots into greater prominence. Whereas the doctrine of salvation had been and continued to be the theological hallmark of Salvationism, the doctrine of holiness and the work of grace called sanctification were given increased attention as the key to the realization of what God purposed for humanity through Christ’s saving work.

We have seen that the holy life is the sacramental life, that sanctification is God’s work of grace by which all of life becomes sacred and therefore every moment is a potential sacrament. If God is at the center of every situation, if the Christian life is a pilgrimage in discovering and responding to his gracious presence in human life—a process which can also be described as growth in holiness—then sacramental rites are seen in a very different light. They are seen, not as prescribed occasions which have been designated as essential means by which God’s grace in Christ must be experienced, but rather as celebrations of a far greater grace—the grace which is given to the whole of life and which consequently makes living a continuing sacrament. As a ritual observed in Christian worship, the Lord’s supper is only a representation and reminder of the new sacramental life and the new community of fellowship in the Spirit which are made possible through Jesus’ death and resurrection. It always points the Church beyond the celebration, to the living out of what the body broken and blood spilled made possible: the recovery of holiness of life and the restoration of fellowship with God and man. It is doubtful that the Salvationist movement would have discontinued the Lord’s supper had this interpretation been that of the Victorian churches.

Perhaps it is not quite accurate to say that the Army “discontinued” the Lord’s supper. Let us say, rather, that the sacrament was transported from the high altar to the lowly meal table. It was taken out of the sanctuary and placed back into society. Could we be so bold as to say that the meal was brought closer to its origins in the early Church?
Listen to how the Acts of the Apostles describes the earliest sacramental meals of the Church in Jerusalem:

*And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people* (Acts 2:46-47).

These and other such meals in the early Church were sacramental in the truest sense because, in their observance, the everyday became a remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) as well as a celebration of unity and mutual concern in Christ; the experience of this oneness led to honest self-examination of each participant’s personal life in light of the new reality (11:27-28), to confession of sin, to the experience of forgiveness, and to greater understanding of each other; and the remembrance of Christ’s death and resurrection stirred the anticipation of his return (11:26). But they were basically common meals which became uncommon experiences because they were understood as an ongoing fellowship in Christ, a joyous celebration of his gift of himself, an expectation of the Kingdom’s full realization.

At first they were probably celebrated daily, especially in view of the expectation of Jesus’ imminent return. However, as the Church spread well beyond Jerusalem, infiltrated the large urban centers of the Roman empire, broadened its national and cultural constituency and developed large congregations, the practicality of these “love feasts” (as they came to be called) was lessened. There was no room for such big suppers! Furthermore, thoughts of dividing the congregation into groups for smaller, less supervised celebrations of the feast probably evoked both fear of the abuses which had sometimes plagued congregations previously and concerns about the possibility of factions emerging (1 Corinthians 11:17ff; Jude 12). Increasingly it seems, the love feast became associated with Sunday worship, which had established itself (as compared to worship on the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday) by the end of the apostolic period. At the same time, the more ritualistic aspects became prominent, and the Lord’s supper gradually acquired the title...
Eucharist (meaning “thanksgiving” and referring to the thanksgiving given over the bread and wine, the act which had become the primary “ritual” of the supper). By the middle of the second century, the Eucharist and the love feast were distinguished from one another, if not always separated.26

The New Testament texts, however, document no such separation of rite from shared meal. We affirm, therefore, that the earliest remembrances and celebrations of the Lord’s supper were as love feasts and that these observances were a part of the everyday life of the fellowship. They were not formal rites celebrated by separated priests; they were common meals which were transformed into transcendent experiences because the resurrected Christ was present at the table through the Spirit.

Vernard Eller writes that:

the separating of the Eucharist from the love feast was not the sloughing off of a minor element but a ripping of the ordinance right down the middle. Undoubtedly the only reason it could happen at all was that the service already had lost most of its original interpretation.27

He disparages prevalent interpretations of the supper which center on the highly private act of incorporating the “substance” of Jesus into oneself. Apart from the fact that such views deal in notions of “being” and “substance” which are foreign to the Bible, of greater alarm is the serious loss, or at least diminution, of the importance of the Lord’s supper as a community event, as thanksgiving for the new covenant which binds the fellowship together, as a call to be broken for one another.28 The popularity of the love feast among some religious groups in the 19th century, after centuries of neglect, may be attributable to a deep urge to repossess the communal dimension. The Moravians regularly observe the love feast, and some Methodist denominations have a distinct order of service for it. In the early days of the Salvationist movement, the love feast was observed in addition to the Lord’s supper. When the sacrament was discontinued, the feast remained. However,
its frequency has declined over the years. An article on conducting love feasts in the corps (Salvation Army congregations) which appeared in *The Officer* magazine in 1923, lamented that they “seem to have dropped out of general use amongst us.” What is being lost, says the author (unnamed), is “a means of promoting the spirit of love and unity, healing breaches and bringing about reconciliation between individuals or groups of persons in the corps.” The concern was clearly communal.

This brings us to the second major reality of the Church’s life: life together. How does the Church celebrate and nurture reconciliation with God and man in the power of the Holy Spirit? Many sacramental churches observe the Lord’s supper in such a way as to emphasize the unity of the fellowship through Christ’s reconciling death and the call to give their lives for one another as Christ gave his life for them. Sacramental and nonsacramental churches alike can also observe the love feast as a less ritualized version of the early Christian common meal and approach it as an invitation to affirm the reconciliation of life in Christ by opening themselves to one another and accepting the responsibility of nurturing unity in Christ and service to one another.

The Salvation Army has retained a place for the love feast as a stimulus to reconciliation within the fellowship. The intimate atmosphere of a fellowship meal is created by a simple drink and bread or a plain biscuit. There are no *prescribed* elements: the drink can be water, grape juice, orange juice, tea, coffee, or something else, and the bread or biscuit can be of any kind. If it is possible, the chairs are usually arranged in a semicircle or a circle. The food and drink are shared from a common table by the corps officer(s) (pastor), sometimes assisted by local officers (lay leaders), the words of Scripture are read, and a statement is made to the effect that this is not a sacrament but a fellowship meal, a celebration of oneness in Christ made possible by his death and resurrection. Reference is usually made to the last supper event as the prototype of the new fellowship and as a reminder that just as our Lord presided over that table in the flesh, even so he now presides over this table in the Spirit. It is in this context that the participants are invited to consider their own relationships. As thanksgiving is offered to God
for the gift of reconciliation, opportunity is given for all to examine their interactions with other persons and ask whether they reflect the peace that has come in Christ. Then the leader challenges them to work on those relationships where enmity or apathy has had its grip, where healing is needed, and where forgiveness should be sought or extended. Sometimes reconciliations take place between members of the fellowship at the conclusion of the feast. The love feast is a celebration which has tremendous potential for encouraging the people of God to move decisively toward the defeat of enmity and the triumph of love in all relationships.\textsuperscript{31}

Salvationist theology, however, moves beyond the \textit{ceremonial} love feast. The love feasts which are conducted in the corps setting are really symbolic of what all meals are for those who invite the Christ to preside at every table. Bramwell Booth used to argue with regard to the faith through which the believer experiences grace in the sacrament: “I see no reason why that same faith should not turn every meal into a sacramental feast.”\textsuperscript{32} J. H. Jowett is faithful to this theology when he declares, “That day is marked with glory when our daily bread becomes a sacrament.” Hence, the love feast cannot by its very nature be confined to ceremonial observance in an ecclesiastical setting. It is also a feast held day after day in the home and in the world. The \textit{family} love feast is the celebration at every meal of Christ’s reconciling presence in the home. The \textit{spontaneous} love feast is the testimony of shared cups of coffee or meals outside the home as events which God in Christ wants to transform into a celebration—and realization—of the peace that has come in Christ. In Salvationist understanding every meal partaken in fellowship with others is an invitation to share Christ and partake of his love. In all these settings the participants see the potential for Christ’s reconciling work, and they fellowship as a witness and commitment to that work.

Bramwell Booth recalled some visits to an elderly man early in his ministry. In looking back he recognized that the humble meals with which these visits concluded were love feasts in the deepest sense. The man was a converted drunkard called “Old Cornish” who had little
of value, whose wife had died, he felt, largely because of his own former cruelty, and who was now a common costermonger. When Booth would visit to give spiritual counsel and pray, Old Cornish would prepare a sacramental meal of tea, fried bacon and potatoes. Booth writes:

It was a veritable sacrament. When we knelt down together and when he began to pray he was so uplifted that it often seemed to me that he was another man.... And there came to me, in answer to those prayers... a new feeling of relationship to the souls of men, a new directional impulse, impelling me to love and suffer for the sake of others. Again and again I have come down those old squeaking stairs feeling as though I walked on the wind, and have gone out to Mile End Waste to speak and pray with sinners in altogether a new and self-forgetting fashion.33

Here was a fulfillment of our Lord’s promise that where two or three were gathered in his name, there he would be in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). Here Christ was presiding. Here, the Spirit transforming. Here, the love feast.

On many occasions prayer meetings have become love feasts in the Spirit. The Church is never closer to the Kingdom than when it is at prayer. Salvationist experience has borne this out. Intense sessions of prayer have frequently transformed a corps and led to revitalized mission. After visiting a Clapton Training Garrison prayer meeting, Dr. Benson, Bishop of Truro, later Archbishop of Canterbury, remarked to Bramwell Booth, “O, my dear brother, the Holy Spirit is with you!”34 The Church at prayer is the Church reconciled, seeking the realization of their life together in the power of the Spirit. They pray together in order to be together, to care together, to hope together, to travel together, to serve together. The prayer meeting is a sacramental celebration of the new community in Christ. It is the Church on its knees together before God, receiving the Kingdom anew, pledging service for its realization, interceding for its enlargement in specific situations. It
is the people of God getting down to the business of allowing the Spirit to empower them to live reconciled lives and to be agents of reconciliation in the world. Every true prayer meeting begins with a vision of the Kingdom and a prayer for its realization (“Thy Kingdom come”), and ends with the body of believers presenting themselves as a living sacrifice to the God who can work redemptively to advance the Kingdom through those who will allow themselves to be broken for one another and for the world (Romans 12:1ff). Here also, the love feast.

How, finally, does the Church celebrate and nurture the third major reality of its life: servanthood? We must first point out that life for others ought to be implicit in both the sacrament of the Lord’s supper and the celebration of the love feast. The reminder of Christ’s body broken for us translates us into the new reality in which we are privileged to be broken for one another. We see in his broken body both the miracle which brings reconciliation and the principle for living reconciled lives. The representation of the new community in Christ which remembrance of the last supper evokes, also speaks powerfully of servanthood. Here, it is John’s gospel that furnishes the most startling recollection:

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded....*

*When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:3-5, 12-17).*
Very few Christian denominations practice foot washing as a regular observance. Yet Jesus’ stated expectation that the disciples do likewise is very clear here (“...you also should do as I have done to you”) as compared with the Synoptic gospels’ accounts of the last supper, which give no indication of the institution of an observance or rite.

We do not argue that Jesus intended to institute the practice of ritual foot washing. Foot washing was a procedure in first-century Palestine made necessary by the wearing of sandals on dusty roads. A good host provided this hospitable amenity to his guests. While the guests reclined at table, a servant, or sometimes the wife of the host, performed the task. Jesus’ surprising assumption of this menial service was a parable more powerful than the spoken word. His action was so overwhelming that the disciples did not know at first what to do with it: Peter said, “You shall never wash my feet” (verse 8). They were seeing an embodiment of the reason for Christ’s coming, spoken before in words, now in action, soon in a crucifixion: For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He who was in the form of God took upon himself the form of a servant (Philippians 2:5ff). In Jesus, almighty God approached us as our servant. No wonder the disciples were dumbfounded! They were witnessing the new Kingdom concentrated in a single action. As Jesus knelt before them with basin and towel, they were seeing divine humility born out of love willing to go to any length to save, they were unavoidably confronted with their calling to love and serve one another as Jesus did them, and they were being furnished with an illustration of cleansing from sin’s defilement that was soon to be realized. Then Peter, on whom all this was probably beginning to dawn, exclaimed: “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” (John 13:9).

Jesus was giving us what may be his most significant parable of the Kingdom. As such, it is on a par with his last supper as a crucial event for the Church to remember and appropriate. Unlike the Lord’s supper, the foot washing custom has no literal parallel in modern life. We share meals daily; but our feet are washed by ourselves privately. Hence, a symbolic foot washing would not have the psychological correspon-
dence to contemporary intimate social life that the Lord’s supper and the love feast do. But we wonder if an occasional symbolic foot washing among the gathered believers might provide a poignant reminder of who their Lord really is (Servant), what he went about doing (serving others) and what he calls them to (service of others). There is something about kneeling before a brother or sister in Christ and washing his/her feet that brings to the surface feelings of tenderness, appreciation for the sheer beauty of service of others, and awareness of the eternal significance of such a simple, mundane ministry. There is also something about having one’s feet washed by a kneeling brother or sister that makes one feel that he is deeply honored and appreciated as an important member of the family of God. If a foot washing ceremony can evoke such intimations of the Kingdom, if it can serve as a poignant reminder of our servant status and our calling to servanthood, then it may have value as a parabolic reminder of the new life in Christ which is not of this world, but given by the Spirit.\textsuperscript{37}

A closing note about servanthood. We shall see in chapter 4 that the Church is called to be a servant in the world. This servanthood is based and built upon the mutual care and service that take place within the fellowship of believers. Washing one another’s feet is a symbol of how Christians are nurtured into the fulfillment of their calling in the world. It is much more than a celebration of love at home. It is an equipping for loving the world for whom Christ died. When there is genuine, unselfish caring for one another in the fellowship, there is a constant overflow into the world in mission. The washing of our brother’s or sister’s feet is an act that points beyond itself, to someone lying wounded alongside a distant road, waiting for God’s good Samaritan. We shall see that the same community which the Holy Spirit empowers to live redemptively is the community which the Spirit leads into a much larger world which cries out for redemption.
COMMUNITY IN MISSION

Created by the Holy Spirit—The redemptive fellowship

Missional Moments (in conversation):

SMITH: In the thirty years since you wrote this chapter, the world has moved into the electronic age. So much of life is now lived online, through smart phones and tablets, and community is sought through Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram. How do you think this really affects the church that truly desires to be a “community of shared life” where the Spirit still is seeking to “create a high level of participation in the fellowship”? Do you have any suggestions about how to be a “community in mission” in the electronic age?

NEEDHAM: Recent studies are clearly showing that the Internet has become addictive for many people, and that a growing number of young people who rely on the Internet for communication have significantly less empathy in actual face to face dealings with others. To put the issue for the Church and its mission simply, it seems to me that we need to teach Christians what the Internet actually is: a marvelous, highly efficient means of information-gathering/sharing having to do with people, communities, culture, analyses of important trends, new ideas, etc. It is not a means of personal engagement, real conversation and intimacy. Information (even emotional information shared on the Internet) is helpful, but it is no substitute for face-to-face encounters, acts of compassion, true discipling and family intimacy. To be a “community in mission” in the electronic age is to engage people face-to-face with the compassion and courage of Jesus, while using the Internet wisely and avoiding Internet seduction.
SMITH: In this chapter you assert that one of the critical areas of participation in the fellowship is the decision-making process, but at the time of writing you lamented that the exclusion of the laity from decision making was a “dilemma” that was “still with us” (p. 21). Would you say that we have made any progress since Community in Mission was originally published? How can the Army do better at including the laity in its decision-making process?

NEEDHAM: My view is that little progress has been made. If participatory decision making is to happen, it must begin with the corps because significant, lasting change takes place at the grassroots level. There are some corps better positioned to achieve substantial inclusion of the laity in decision making. There are other corps where a more dictatorial, or perhaps a disengaged, leadership style by corps officers has delivered passive-aggressive soldiers and/or has driven away good soldiers. Divisional headquarters can help with a review process that requires local leader involvement and that holds corps officers accountable for the developing, mentoring, and trusting of local leaders. Colleges for Officer Training can help by providing quality training for mentoring, developing corps leaders, building teams, and doing strategic planning. Because people tend to lead in relationship to the way they experience being led, College for Officer Training staffs, territorial headquarters, and divisional headquarters can give significant help by modeling participatory leadership and a servant spirit in their own officership.
SMITH: On a related note, what do you think about the idea of including soldiers as part of the High Council?

NEEDHAM: This is not only an interesting question, it gets to the heart of our sometimes questionable devotion to hierarchy. To this point in our history, the choice of our international leader is left to a select group of people at the "top levels" of our international hierarchy, some of whom may not have the gift of discernment or may not even be acquainted with the nominees on whom they must vote or with issues and challenges of importance in other parts of the Army world. If the High Council were to be opened to wider participation by stakeholders within the Army, voting for the new international leader would be better informed. I can envision some means of gathering input in the form of concerns and questions, as well as recommendations, from soldiers, corps officers, other field officers, and headquarters officers to provide more breadth and depth to the pre-council discussions and conversations. I can also see an appointed Council observer from each of these groups as witnesses to the proceedings and as ambassadors representing the concerns of their individual “constituencies.” I’m assuming that such changes would be as far as we would be willing to go at that point. The matter of broadening actual “voting rights” to additional participants, including laity, could only come, I think, after an opening of the High Council similar to what I’ve described has been in place and proven its value.
SMITH: You write, “Reconciliation through Christ must continue to work itself out in history, and the church is called upon to participate in this reconciling work,” which, you add, “has little to do with the laws and organization and programs of the church... [and] everything to do with experiencing the grace of God in the life of the fellowship” (p. 26). It seems that as Salvationists, we are very quick to focus on programs and structures. Can you share some stories of where you have seen this experience of the “grace of God in the life of the fellowship” in an Army context? What does it look like practically?

NEEDHAM: I visited a corps recently which had a long history of strong traditional Salvationism, an excellent band and songster brigade, and solid self-support. I got the sense that this corps drew considerable strength from this history, the high level of its music ministry, and the generous tithing. As I learned more about the corps, I discovered that things had become stale and members had sensed something was missing. It’s difficult to explain exactly how grace takes possession of a congregation; there is no scientific formula for it. It seems an openness came to a number of members, and grace entered. I saw two major manifestations of it. First, I saw a community who became united in caring, intercessory prayer. I saw this in an intimate voluntary prayer time during morning worship when most of the congregation came forward, usually in groups of two or three. I saw it in a group prayer meeting before the meeting where the wall of the room was suffused with written prayer concerns, and the prayer was both sensitive and intense. I saw it in three 40 Days of Prayer during the year. Second, I saw a corps community that opened itself to the world. Leaders decided to target a low-income housing project with love, and members embraced the idea and, more importantly, the people in that development. Relationships were built, people came to faith. The private owners of the project were so overwhelmed by what they saw happening they decided to build a facility to house the ministry. That congregation has become agents of grace and reconciliation, not through programs but by their courageous openness to God.
Missional Movement (in community):

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you evaluate how you are personally responding to the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in your life in regards to:
   
   a. sacramental living: where all of life is sacred. No “compartmentalism.”
   
   b. life together: enjoying true fellowship, or koinonia.
   
   c. life for others: being a servant of all, but “slave” only to God.

   In which one of these areas is God leading you to focus in your personal life? What action steps will you take personally? What would success look like?

2. In which one of the three areas listed in question 1 do you think your own corps or faith community needs to focus right now? Discuss with other members of your community what action steps you will take together in the chosen area? What will success in that area look like within your community?
3. Commissioner Needham suggests that every meal shared can be sacramental, a celebration of the presence of Christ in our life, and a remembrance of his sacrifice on the cross. What could you do differently to make every meal you eat in community “sacramental”? What kind of difference do you think it would make if you did?

4. Jesus asks his followers to “do as he has done” and wash one another’s feet. Since foot-washing is no longer a typical task of a servant in this day and age, what do you think would be today’s equivalent of foot-washing? How will your corps community live this out? Who will you serve this week for Jesus’ sake with your new and improved “foot-washing” venture?
CALLED TO
A JOURNEY

The pilgrim people

The Church is a band of pilgrims who are called to separate themselves from the oppressive patterns of the present world order and to keep moving toward the possibilities which the new Kingdom in Christ offers.

PILGRIMS are literally people who journey, often in foreign lands. The image of the Church as a band of pilgrims embodies three key aspects of the Church’s life in the world. First, it defines the Church as a people on the move. Second, it articulates the tentativeness of the Church’s relationship to the social structures and behavioral patterns of contemporary society. And third, it suggests a Church which is moving toward the future—i.e., to the destination of its pilgrimage. This third aspect will be the focus of chapter 6. In the present chapter we shall concentrate on the first two.

In chapter 2 we spoke of the sacramental life of the Church lived every day and everywhere. At first glance our talk of the Church’s tentativeness and mobility in the world appears contra-
dictory to this affirmation of God’s redemptive presence in the common life. When we take a closer look, however, the contradiction disappears.

The Church in the world

As the new humanity and the redemptive fellowship, the Church is free to live its life in the world. As the object of God’s love (John 3:16), the world is where the Church is called to live redemptively, give witness to the gospel and carry out its mission (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19, 20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Hence, the Church cannot exist in isolation from the world and remain the people of God. A church out of touch with the world is a church out of touch with God, for the call of God to go into the world is unmistakable. It was said of Jesus, *He was in the world* (John 1:10). It must also be said of his disciples.

This is not to say that the Church is to conform to the patterns of the world or to compromise the gospel in any way. Nor is it to suggest that it take its orders from current trends and give in to worldly faddism. It is to say that the Church takes its stand alongside the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The incarnational basis of the gospel cannot be denied. God in Christ entered human existence, redeemed us in the world and made sanctification possible. In Christ the common becomes holy, and through the power of the Spirit the Church is called to holy living in the world. It is God’s intention that his people live in the world as transformed people who seek the transformation of life in all aspects. The Church is called into the world to celebrate God’s redemptive presence in the common life and to be a transforming fellowship through which he can demonstrate the power of God unto salvation.

In our view, the image of the Church as the pilgrim people of God sheds light on the way this calling is realized. Because pilgrims are on a journey, they are not tied to the structures and status quos of the society in which their pilgrimage takes place. Always on the move, they value flexibility and tend not to invest their lives in structures that stifle spiritual creativity. They are always becoming.
Now, how does this view reconcile with our understanding of the Church as the redemptive fellowship which celebrates the sacramental character of everyday life? The answer is that God’s graceful presence in human life is best discerned and experienced by those who are on the move in their own spiritual development. Those, on the other hand, who are tied to blind dogma, perfunctory ritual, and institutional self-preservation, those who see God as guardian of the status quo (no matter how oppressive it may be), have so institutionalized God in their thinking and feeling that they are unable to see him at work outside their narrow—and usually self-serving—perceptions. Pilgrims, however, have the view of a wider horizon, they are open to new experiences of God; to them, everyday life can reveal God’s presence in extraordinary ways. They see God around them because they are not in captivity to their environment.

One of the most potent and useful metaphors of the Church’s involvement in the world without acquiescence to destructive, spirit-killing entanglements, is the biblical view of the people of God as a nomadic people on the move. Consider the wandering Hebrew nomadic tribes of the Old Testament. Consider the rootless folk who made up the majority of the early Church. Consider the significance of this statement by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews:

*For here we have no permanent home, but we are seekers after the city which is to come* (Hebrews 13:14, NEB).

It may be that Christianity’s truest appeal is to rootless people! They are the least tied down to the static structures and the stubborn status quos of this world. They are freer to move ahead. They are more open to new possibilities for the future. Hence, their views of life tend to be more dynamic, and they more easily accept the present order as temporal.  

Another biblical metaphor which captures both the mobility of the pilgrim Church and its focus on the world, is that of the military. The implications of this metaphor for the Church will be explored in greater depth in chapter 4. Suffice it to say for our purposes here that the
concept of the soldier at war is a fitting analogy of the Christian who is committed to mission in the world and whose whole life is wrapped up in that mission. In the words of George Webber it expresses the character of [the Christian’s] life. In Christ men enter into his warfare.... No civilian role is possible. Even off the military reservation the professional soldier is on duty, in uniform, unlike the peacetime man who performs military duty on the army base and then dons civilian clothes of the post.9

The people who are willing to adopt this radical, militant pattern of life are those who are open to change, those who are willing to leave the familiar behind, those who are willing to sacrifice security for participation in God’s redemptive, but painful, mission in the world. They truly seek another Kingdom and because of their commitment to that Kingdom and its realization in human life and history, they do not allow themselves to become entrenched and entangled in the reactionary sectors of the world order which resist the Kingdom.

Eller uses the interesting analogy of a caravan to describe the pilgrim life of the Church. Described at first as “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14, 22), the New Testament Church drew from the Old Testament understanding of God as leader-lord who beckoned his people to move beyond the enslavement of their present state, as in the Passover and the Exodus. In this context:

salvation cannot be understood as a state of having it made, of settling down to enjoy a condition of secure accomplishment. Salvation is the experience of being made free to travel, of being called out by a leader-lord and enabled to follow him on the way that he is making toward the kingdom.40

Eller goes on to contrast the caravan Church with the commissary Church. The former sees itself as a fellowship of pilgrims who are always on the way in response to their Lord who goes before. They place
more stock in progress than in ritual. They value the contribution of each member of the caravan. The latter, on the other hand, sees itself primarily as an institution that dispenses goods, services and benefits to a particular constituency. Emphasis is therefore placed on the position of the one who does the dispensing (the minister or priest), as well as the importance of following correct procedures in doing so. It is our conviction that the analogies of the caravan in motion, the people in pilgrimage and the army on duty best describe the New Testament understanding of the Church as in the world but not of it. Those who are overly invested in the world and consequently tied down to its order find it difficult to pull up stakes and discover the freedom to move beyond their culturally conditioned understanding of life and living. Those, on the other hand, who are travelers with God have an unlimited horizon, a rewarding journey and untold excitement before them.

Jesus himself gave ample warning of over-investment in the world. For example, he pointed out the great difficulty which a rich person would have in entering the Kingdom (Mark 10:25; and parallels, Matthew 19:24; Luke 18:25). He told a parable which derided the rich man who invested in bigger and better barns in order to build his personal security and indulge in his wealth (Luke 12:16-21). His answer to the query of the Jewish leader who wanted to know how to receive eternal life and who had kept all the commandments, was that the man needed to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor (Luke 18:18-22).

Jesus was not, of course, glorifying poverty and condemning wealth wholesale. There is nothing inherently blessed about the sordidness and squalor of most poverty; nor does wealth necessarily corrupt. What is the case is that worldly entanglements of any kind impede one’s pilgrimage—even family obligations, for example, can stand in the way of discipleship (see Luke 9:59-62)—and personal wealth easily becomes an entanglement.

We should point out, however, that the poor also can become entangled in consuming hope for a reversal of the economic order, or they can become entangled in their fear and despair. One’s social or economic condition in life does not automatically determine one’s re-
relationships to the Kingdom. What is important is commitment to a life which does not consist in what a person possesses—or does not possess (see Luke 12:15).

The pilgrim lifestyle

We have come, then, to a further development of our ecclesiology. We have come to see the Church as God's pilgrim people who are able to fulfill God's purpose for them in the world because they are not paralyzed by investments in the oppressive patterns and entanglements of the present world order. They are a people who are free to move as the Spirit leads.

Now, how do we see this reality at work in the life of the Church? What characteristics of its faith and practice embody its calling as a pilgrim people?

Let us look, first, at the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification, as we have seen, is the gracious act of God by which the sacramental life (holiness) becomes possible. It infuses all of life with a vision of divine possibilities; the sanctified Church looks for God at all times and aims to live in continual response to his presence. This ever-present search for the revelation of God in every situation and this bias toward patterning life accordingly, are characteristic of a pilgrim people. As those who are on a lifelong journey, the Church is a people who possess nothing, and therefore have everything. As the company of those who have left security behind to follow their leader-lord, they receive a hundredfold in this life, and in the life to come (Mark 10:28-30). As those who seek first his Kingdom and righteousness, they find that other gifts of life are theirs as well (Matthew 6:33).

Those, on the other hand, who are bent on possessing this world, or a part of it, fight a futile battle. The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof... (Psalm 24:1, AV). It is the setting for pilgrimage, not self-aggrandizement. It is a place for temporary tents, not towering temples. The world belongs to those who know to whom it belongs. It belongs to those who have been adopted into the family of the Owner: those for
whom the “world” is now seen as the always unfolding terrain of God’s self-revelation. It belongs to those who have no interest in possessing it and are therefore the only ones who have it. It belongs to the meek (Matthew 5:5).

The meek are those without presumption. Consequently, they are suited for pilgrimage. Seeing little for which to commend themselves in their present estate, they live in readiness to keep moving on to something better. They are the travelling Church which is open to God’s leading and influence. They are the sanctified.

We see, therefore, that the life of holiness is the appropriate description of the character of life of God’s pilgrim people, the Church. How, then, can we describe the lifestyle? It has two key characteristics. The first is a willingness to risk, and the second is discipline.

Pilgrims are people who take risks. Any journey involves an element of risk. The traveler accepts this reality, not because he finds danger to be pleasurable, but because his destination, or the purpose of the trip, is worth the risk. God’s people are those who risk pilgrimage because it is the only way for them to see what God wants them to see and become what God wants them to become.

More than once in the Old Testament, the Israelites had to be reminded that they were a pilgrim people who could follow their Lord’s leading only through a willingness to risk. When Moses was ready to lead them into Canaan, he sent out spies, one from each of the twelve tribes, to gather intelligence. When they returned only two of them, Caleb and Joshua, recommended entry; the rest cautioned against going against a foe that was “stronger than we” (Numbers 13:30ff; 14:1ff). Clearly the majority were not ready for entry, and entry was not made at that time. Instead, there was delay and further defeat.

This “grasshopper mentality” (see Numbers 13:33) is a disease that attacks the Church’s calling as God’s pilgrim people. The apostle Paul reminds his more timid spiritual son, Timothy, that the fear to carry out his calling does not come from God. Rather, from God comes a spirit of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7). As those who follow the leading of their Lord, the Church is the company of those who must
journey and must consequently accept the risk of facing the unknown and undergoing personal change. Religions of safety have no place here.

The second characteristic of the pilgrim lifestyle is discipline. We are not referring to repressive discipline, nor to discipline for discipline’s sake. These are the tools of a society that seeks conformity rather than change. What we have in mind is the kind of discipline without which there can be no real progress, the discipline of one who keeps himself in condition for spiritual travel, the discipline which steels God’s people for the challenges. It is the laying aside of every impediment to pilgrimage and of the clinging sin which ties us to the oppressions of the present world order (Hebrews 12:1) so that the spiritual journey can be made.

Without such discipline worthwhile risks will never be taken; the fear of new spiritual ventures will never be overcome. It is no coincidence that Paul names “self-control” as one of the antidotes to Timothy’s spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7). Only the disciplined can direct their efforts and maximize their strength sufficiently to overcome obstacles, endure hardship and do the risky things that pilgrims must. The undisciplined, on the other hand, are forever open to attack; they are easily defeated; and so they live in constant fear. Theirs is not the lifestyle of pilgrims. God’s pilgrim people are people of courage who have been nurtured by discipline.

Ministry and tradition in the pilgrim Church

Let us move on from here to an understanding of ministry which the interpretation of the Church as a pilgrim people requires. If holiness describes the life, and courage and discipline the lifestyle, how can we best describe the ministry?

The pilgrim calling of the Church implies an understanding of ministry which is both dynamic and democratic—dynamic because the pilgrim Church is always on the move, and democratic because each pilgrim has something important to contribute to the forward movement of the caravan.

A dynamic understanding of ministry emphasizes the prophetic over the priestly, function over status, mission over maintenance. A Church
on the move has more need for leaders who will discern and speak the word of God than for those who will maintain the traditions. It has no time to create an ecclesiastical hierarchy; ministry must be seen in a functional way as the exercise of Spirit-given gifts for building up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:4ff)—that is, for enabling the Church to move forward in its pilgrimage. It has a strong bias toward carrying out its divinely mandated mission in the world (1 Peter 2:9), and this missional disposition overrides the ever-present pressure to put down roots and opt for a settled existence. If the pilgrim Church lives in a terrain which is constantly changing, and if it is always in the process of becoming, then all its ministry is dynamic service toward the destination of its spiritual pilgrimage.

A democratic understanding of ministry centers on the calling and contribution of each pilgrim. Not only is the New Testament clear that all Christians have a calling and election (see 1 Peter 2:9 again), it is also clear that all callings are equally important (Romans 12:3ff; 1 Corinthians 12:20ff) and that Christians in secular occupations are to pursue these as callings of Christ (Ephesians, chapters 5 and 6). The Church in pilgrimage needs the service of all who travel, and the mission of the Church in the world can be carried out effectively only through the exercise of the various gifts given to the fellowship of believers.

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, therefore, has a profound affinity to the view of the Church as God’s pilgrim people. Privileged priests tend to be a function of static, hierarchical religious institutions. Ministry shared by all and apportioned according to recognized gifts bestowed by the Spirit, tends to be a function of a dynamic community of faith which is ever on the move.

From this perspective of a pilgrim Church engaged in a dynamic shared ministry, how are ecclesiastical traditions to be viewed? It could be said that the Church exists in the tension between inheritance and pilgrimage, between what the people of God take with them on their pilgrimage and what they leave behind, between the practices of yesterday and the challenges of the new situation to which these forms may no longer be relevant.
Since the true Church is always on pilgrimage, the problem arises in distinguishing between that part of its tradition which is essential to its integrity as the people of God and that part which is temporal and needs to be altered or replaced in the face of the requirements of a new phase of the pilgrimage. One tradition is discarded at the peril of the Church losing its gospel, the other is discarded for the advantage of paving the way for the development of ways suitable for the new phase of the Church’s pilgrimage. A tension is created because it is often difficult to distinguish clearly between the two and because outmoded traditions often survive past their time by becoming sacralized and institutionalized.

One helpful way to see the tension is to use the analogy of a plant. If we compare Church tradition to a plant, then we can say that the roots are more important than the branches. Without the roots there is no plant. Not only do the roots stabilize the plant, they are also the primary means of nourishment. The branches can be pruned—and doing so often makes for a healthier plant—but the roots must remain basically intact. We must seek to understand what are roots and what are branches in Church tradition. We must know what can be discarded (pruned) and what must remain. We must also understand the conditions under which pruning is appropriate.

One condition is when the branches become too overgrown and cumbersome. Tradition can become a proliferation of life-sapping branches weighing down the plant and preventing purposeful growth. Christians can become so bogged down in proliferated church activity and ritual that they lose sight of and fail to receive adequate nourishment from their spiritual roots. When this happens, the only healthy course of action is the pruning of tradition—that is, the elimination of extraneous practices that no longer serve the essential purposes of the Church—so that new, and more purposeful, growth becomes possible. A particular practice, for example, which developed under certain conditions as the most appropriate way to achieve an essential objective of the Church in a given situation, may or may not still be the best means to the desired end. In some cases it may have become so irrelevant in
the present situation as to stand in the way of achieving that objective! Sometimes the mere continuation of the practice gives the illusion of progress toward the goal, when in fact regress is the reality.

Hence, when it comes to Church tradition we can see where two dissimilar analogies correspond: a people on the move must shed extraneous baggage and a healthy plant must shed useless branches. Pilgrims must continually decide what to take and what to leave behind, and those decisions must be based upon the destination of the pilgrimage and the nature of the terrain. In the same manner, the Church as God's pilgrim people is always in the process of reshaping its life so as to be prepared for each phase of the journey and responsive to the leading of its Lord. For them, faithfulness to tradition is not adherence to traditions; it is adherence to the gospel, allegiance to Christ, openness to the Spirit's leading—and letting the chips of tradition fall where they will. Sometimes the chips will fall right into place; there are traditions worth continuing, at least for the time being. Other times the chips will fall by the wayside; most traditions eventually outlive their evangelistic usefulness. In order to fulfill its calling as God's pilgrim people, the Church must courageously maintain flexibility in matters traditional. While never belittling the forms inherited from the past, it must not hold them fast at the risk of leaving the commandment of God (Mark 7:8). At all costs and with every necessary adjustment, the journey must be made.

Celebrating and nurturing the pilgrim calling

Having described the key characteristics of the faith and practice of the pilgrim Church, let us now consider the ways in which the Church celebrates and nurtures those characteristics.

First, let us consider the celebration of the pilgrimage begun. Traditionally this celebration has been marked in the rite of baptism. Baptism in the Church has its roots in the baptism of converts to Judaism, a practice which came into being after the close of the Old Testament period. The rite signified the transition from pagan life to membership in
the community of Israel. It was not only a religious rite of passage but also the symbolic representation of the beginning of a new journey. As a sign of repentance and turning one’s life in a new direction, Christian baptism marked the beginning of the pilgrim way. In its early form, carried out in the open wherever there was a body of water, would-be pilgrims were initiated for journey in the very settings in which they lived their lives. Later on, when the Church and its worship had become institutionalized and baptism was moved into the sanctuary, it began to lose its emphasis upon the initiation of a pilgrimage and moved instead toward the conferring of a status. Furthermore, the increasing practice of infant baptism reinforced the endowment character of the rite.

While recognizing that saving grace is a gift of God through Jesus Christ and that any adequate celebration of conversion to Christ must convey the reality of this undeserved endowment, a Salvationist ecclesiology also insists that celebration must adequately represent the truth that saving grace makes pilgrimage possible. To stop short of conveying that a journey has now begun is to miss the very purpose of Christ’s saving work. He came to make us disciples who grow like him by travelling with him. Whatever the rite by which conversion is celebrated, it must represent this new beginning.

In chapter 1 we spoke of two public acts in Salvationist practice that give witness to a response to the call to discipleship. One is kneeling at the mercy seat and the other is enrollment as a soldier. Actually, the two are of a piece with one another: the enrollment represents the outcome of conversion. What begins with the penitent on his knees concludes with the new disciple on his feet, standing under the flag that represents his new life in Christ. Here the new soldier reaffirms his vow to follow Christ and joins the company of pilgrims. Those who are present for this occasion are invited to renew vows, and together they may sing this verse of Salvationist songwriter Doris N. Rendell:

Saints of old obeyed the call;
At thy word they gave up all;
Where they trod so valiantly,
May we follow fearlessly.
Mighty Captain of the host,
Fill us with the Holy Ghost;
Suffer not our feet to stray
From this new and living way.  

Much of Salvationist hymnody is journey-oriented. It borrows the pilgrim music of an amended John Bunyan hymn:

He who would valiant be
'Gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy
Follow the Master!
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim.  

But it also contains numerous songs by Salvationist writers which capture the intense joy of those who travel the pilgrim pathway. These words of Charles Coller are almost euphoric:

Make the world with music ring,
While with heart and voice we sing
Praises to our God and King,
Hallelujah!
Tell with no uncertain sound,
To the nations all around,
Of the Savior we have found,
Hallelujah!  

Unable to understand the rapturous celebrations of early Salvationists, Thomas Huxley sought to dismiss the phenomenon with his coined phrase “corybantic Christianity.” But what he was seeing—
without perceiving—was the sheer joy of people who had been going nowhere, and now were travelling to a God-given destination. Salvationist singing, clapping and witnessing are spontaneous expressions of a Church in pilgrimage.

Let us now move to a consideration of celebrating the pilgrimage sustained. Many congregations celebrate the Lord’s supper in such a way as to call attention not only to Christ’s sacrifice and his redemptive presence through the Holy Spirit, but also to his leadership and Lordship in the Church’s ongoing pilgrimage in the world. In this context the bread and wine are also understood as representations of the nurture for pilgrimage which is given through the Christ who is present and the congregation which is his Body.

A Salvationist ecclesiology, however, sees the love feast as a more apt celebration of the pilgrim life of God’s people. As a more spontaneous and less institutionalized rite, it is better suited to the journey. Salvationists committed to the sacramental life seek God’s presence in every situation, and especially where life is shared at the deepest levels. No place more fittingly symbolizes this sharing than the meal table. For those who are in Christ, any meal can become a love feast when his presence is shared. It was in the breaking of bread and the sharing of fellowship at a common meal that two despondent men travelling to Emmaus recognized the presence of their resurrected Lord—and not before (Luke 24:13-32). This was a love feast because the presence of the Lord of love was recognized. And any meal is a love feast where he is present in fellowship. The pilgrim of God needs no priest to present the elements and mediate the Presence; the elements are at every meal, and the Presence is God’s gift made available at every occasion of shared fellowship.

The love feast, then, is a celebration of Christ’s presence with and leadership of his pilgrim Church in every part of the journey. In it he reminds his people that they are called to a pilgrimage which requires sacramental living and mutual caring. The sacrifice of Christ for the world becomes the model for Christian sacrifice, and Christ’s ministry of nurture and support becomes the model for a like ministry inside
and outside the Christian fellowship. This meaning of love feast is perhaps best summed up in these words of Albert Orsborn:

My life must be Christ’s broken bread,
   My love his outpoured wine,
A cup o’er filled, a table spread
   Beneath his name and sign,
That other souls, refreshed and fed,
   May share his life through mine.47

If the love feast, then, is a poignant reminder of Christ’s redemptive presence with his Church and the shared life of the fellowship as the realities that sustain the Church in its pilgrimage, by what means do the people of God nurture and celebrate the pilgrimage equipped? Our understanding of ministry as dynamic and democratic derives from a pilgrim understanding of the Church in which gifts for ministry are given for the facilitating of the Church’s pilgrimage and its mission in the world. The Church requires a view of ministry which is dynamic because it is carried out in a changing terrain, and democratic because every pilgrim on the journey has a vital role to play in nurturing the Church’s forward movement.

These key characteristics of ministry in the pilgrim Church are celebrated primarily through ordination. We see disparity between New Testament accounts of initiation for specific ministries—Jesus sending out the Twelve (Matthew 10:1-5), the appointment of the seven for clear-cut tasks of service (Acts 6:1-6), the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-3), for example—and the subsequent development and domination of an understanding of ordination which focused on a status conferred in the initiation rite. By the Middle Ages, there were three major orders (bishop, priest and deacon) and four minor (acolyte, exorcist, lector and doorkeeper). Outside these orders there was no ordination to ministry. The Protestant Reformation recovered the democratic understanding of ministry in its doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. However, its practice, as well as its theology, has not always kept faith with the doc-
trine. Protestants have also succumbed, from time to time, to the unbib-
lical view that ministry is for a spiritually privileged class only.

The understanding of ordination which arises out of a Salvationist
ecclesiology can be described in the word commissions. It suggests
that someone is being formally assigned to carry out a specific respon-
sibility or go on a special mission. This emphasis on function or mis-
sion, rather than ecclesiastical status, broadens the concept of ministry
to include everyone in the fellowship. All pilgrims have a role to play
in the travelling Church. Each is commissioned for ministry accord-
ing to his spiritual gifts, talents, resources and personal readiness. It
is important to note that the term “commissioning” also connotes a
communal dimension to what is taking place. A Latin word from which
it is derived refers to an act of bringing together. Commissioning for
ministry, therefore, implies—and even requires—that there is a coming
together in community, a common mind and heart about what is being
undertaken, a sharing of resources, the inclusion of all members of the
fellowship in support. There is no ministry in isolation.

In Salvation Army practice, soldiers are commissioned to specific re-
sponsibilities. This is true of both laymen and ministers. Officers are
ministers who have undergone vocational training for the ministry,
culminating in two intensive years of study at an officers’ training col-
lege. Local officers are laymen who pursue other vocations as well as
serve in specific capacities in the corps (local congregation). Both are
commissioned to a ministry.

Clearly, there are “status” overtones to the Army’s military form of
ecclesiastical government, and there have been those who mistakenly
viewed the officership calling as spiritually superior to that of the local
officer. Furthermore, the Army has its share of dormant laymen and is
sometimes myopic in its view of spiritual gifts which do not “fit” tradi-
tional understandings of the organization’s character and mission. As
true as all this is, however, there are principles behind the commission-
ing concept which are attuned to the New Testament understanding of
calling to ministry: that all God’s people are called to specific ministries,
that the Church is charged to give spiritual direction in discerning and
developing individual gifts for ministry, and that each member is to be commissioned to carry out responsibilities which best utilize his gifts.

No Salvationist ecclesiology is adequate which does not affirm this inclusive calling to ministry because it is based on both scriptural imperative and Salvationist heritage. It was a part of the genius of the early Salvationist movement that it invited one and all to join the caravan of pilgrims and to play a needed role. Common working men were given the dignity of rank and responsibility. Women, to whom most avenues of leadership and service were closed in the 19th century, were challenged to match their gifts with their calling, and large numbers became officers and local officers—much to the chagrin of most Church leaders of the day. Hence, the rite of commissioning is an intentional celebration of the call to ministry addressed to all pilgrims in a Church which is on the move and in need of the exercise of all gifts.

It also embodies the dynamic understanding of ministry because of its emphasis on mission rather than maintenance. Commissioning for ministry implies that there is a task to be done, progress to be made, a battle to be fought. It suits the pilgrim Church, which places little stock in the status quo and great stock in forward movement under its Lord’s leadership. It is a celebration of God equipping his pilgrim Church for the journey.

We conclude with the question of Church structure and government. If God equips his Church for a ministry which is both dynamic and democratic, how is that ministry to be structured? What is the form of government for a pilgrim Church? How does the Church pattern its life in a way that expresses and facilitates its pilgrim calling?

We agree with the view that the New Testament sanctions no particular form of ecclesiastical government—Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational. Rather, in each setting the Church seems to have ordered itself in accord with principles of government which correspond to the social and cultural setting and to the requirements of its mission. As the creation of the Holy Spirit and as the pilgrim people of God, the true Church orders its life in ways that encourage redemptive living and foster forward movement under its Lord’s leadership. Authentic Church government allows both space and direction for spir-
itual development, encourages the growth of fellowship in the Spirit, adapts itself to meet the practical requirements of new phases of the Church’s pilgrimage, and (as we shall see in chapter 4) facilitates the Church’s mission in the world.

No one form of ecclesiastical organization insures these benefits. Furthermore, we recognize that each particular form tends to be biased toward certain strengths and susceptible to particular abuses. After a democratic approach failed to provide the avenues for needed charismatic leadership and daily decision making in a rapidly expanding movement, The Salvation Army opted for an episcopal form of government expressed in the language of the military. (Since the Army was involved in missional work which brought open attack and required mobility, the military metaphor suggested itself quite naturally.) This form of government has served the peculiar calling of the Army well. It has fostered decisive leadership, courage in times of trial, mobility, adaptability, focus of action and clear-cut goals. It has also encouraged lay participation: membership meant being a part of an Army at war; there was a role for every soldier to play.

But there are inherent weaknesses in this, as well as in every form of ecclesiastical government. When the battle wanes, or becomes more diversified, it is much more difficult effectively to involve all soldiers. Gradually, leadership tends to be monopolized by a hierarchy of professional officers. Institutionalization brings greater preoccupation with the army itself and often diminishes the priority of the battlefield.

How can The Salvation Army, as well as any other denomination, withstand the insidious pull toward rigid hierarchy and immobile bureaucracy? The final three chapters of this book will address this concern in various ways. But at this point we can return to the focus of the present chapter and assert that one of the important keys is for the Army to live and govern itself as a pilgrim people. A Church in pilgrimage will have shared ministry and responsive leadership. Regardless of the form of government, decision making and structure will be suited to the journey.

A Salvationist ecclesiology, therefore, does not posit one form of church government as superior to others. Any form is useful that fur-
thers the pilgrimage. In practice such a form actually becomes a tangible celebration of the pilgrimage actuated. It celebrates the pilgrimage because it facilitates the journey. It helps the Church to separate itself from the oppressive patterns of the present world order and to keep moving toward the possibilities which the new Kingdom in Christ offers.

In conclusion let us point out that the nature of the Church as a pilgrim people corresponds to the nature of the Christian life. The Christian is a pilgrim who is called to move from death to life, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from sin to forgiveness, from enmity to peace, from hatred to love. But this journey, while personal in the deepest sense, was never meant to be a private undertaking. Whether he knows it or not, every Christian is part both of the one host of God’s pilgrims through all ages and of a particular band which nurtures him in his contemporary journey. The writer of Hebrews is addressing a band of pilgrims when he writes:

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [the host of pilgrims through all ages], let us [our present band] also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith** (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

The Church is comprised, then, of bands of pilgrims who are called to move together from life which is captive to sin, to life which is captained by Christ and liberated by the Spirit; to move together from meaningless patterns of living, to spiritual vitality; to move together from the kingdoms of this world to the Kingdom of their Lord and of his Christ.

What is so important is that the Church keeps moving. From first to last, the Church is in pilgrimage. Its calling is in danger when it stops. But when it moves, there is hope that the way will be found.
Called to a Journey—The pilgrim people

Missional Moments (in conversation):

BIRKS: In this chapter you speak of the church as “a people on the move” who have a tentative relationship to the “social structures and behavioral patterns of contemporary society” (p. 49). This idea of a “mobile” existence may seem contradictory to the grounded life implied in the previous chapter when describing “the sacramental life of the church lived every day and everywhere.” How can we be both a people who honor the sacramental character of our everyday lives in a very specific setting and a people whose relationship to that very world in which they live has a tentative character?

NEEDHAM: This is an extremely important question. How can we be fully in the world and yet not of it? How do we combine holiness and world-ness? If we follow the example of Jesus, our Savior-Rabbi, we cannot isolate ourselves from worldly engagement. He spent most of his time among sinners. So must we. He embodied holiness in everyday life. So must we. The Salvation Army came into existence to do just that! This means that corps must train soldiers in worldly holiness. They must teach and preach a holy way of life in the world. They must help Salvationists, not with airy spiritualizations, but with guidance on dealing with specific, concrete life situations corps people will be facing the 95% of their week when they are not at the corps. Salvationists need help in discovering the sacramental in the ordinariness of their lives. As a pilgrim people they cannot settle into a stifling status quo; as a sacramental people they must be able to see the holy in the common experiences of their daily lives.
BIRKS: “A church out of touch with the world is a church out of touch with God, for the call of God to go into the world is unmistakable” (p. 50). How is our movement doing in being in touch with God and the world he created?

NEEDHAM: We Salvationists have multiple opportunities to live out worldly holiness through the community services provided by our corps. The tragedy is that this opportunity is not taken advantage of by soldiers in many corps. Our community services are frequently relegated to paid employees. This creates a missional divide between professional services (employees) and volunteer services (soldiers). A corps mission team that adopts, for example, the emergency lodge as their mission field, however, can be a transformative force. Beyond such endeavors at or through corps community services is the even more important mission of each individual Salvationist when they are not at the corps. I dare say this has far more missional potential than corps-based services. Corps need to teach and train members how to be in mission in the world in which they live, move, and have their being!
BIRKS: Can you elaborate on some 21st century status quos that a missional pilgrim people should avoid or seek to change?

NEEDHAM: Here are a few. (There are others.):
- Rampant materialism, which not only pervades the Western world in particular, but also much of “the evangelical church.” The Army is not immune. What does Salvationist simplicity mean and how can it be lived today?
- Addiction to upward mobility (even within our Army ranks). How can we convincingly follow a Lord who made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (Philippians 2:7, NIV)?
- The dualism of religious life and secular life: “During the week I realistically have to live by the values of the culture around me.” How can we actually and consistently live by the values of the Kingdom of God during the week?
- In the political realm, the temptation to abandon Christian compassion by voting for the candidate whom we think will best advantage our personal prosperity and protection rather than that of the poor and marginalized.
- Also in the political realm, the failure to consider all the issues from a deeply Christian position. This is especially the case when we allow one particular party and its agenda to co-opt our positions without our considering every part of its platform in light of our Christian convictions and values.
BIRKS: You envision a non-status quo church of risk and discipline, where “religions of safety have no place” (p. 56). What is actually at stake if we pursue safety over sanctification?

NEEDHAM: To put it simply, life or death. Where the desire for safety rules, compassion (literally, “to suffer with someone”) is not possible. Sanctification releases compassion and compassion must accept a suffering for others. Sanctification without the willingness to risk love shrivels us into a dead spirituality.

BIRKS: You conclude this chapter speaking of church governance. What are your current views on the matter, considering your own experience over these years as well as societal changes since Community in Mission was published?

NEEDHAM: I think the key will be for Army administration (territorial and divisional headquarters staff) to encourage and bless the sanctified new initiatives of field officers and local corps leaders, so long as they are consistent with the Army’s mission. Along this line, I strongly suggest that each territory develop a true mission statement, one that doesn’t define us in terms of our specific governance and programs, but in terms of our bottom line, the life-changing outcomes we seek. Then be guided by that mission, so that the primary concern of reviews and evaluations would not be whether or not we are doing this or that particular program, but how successfully we are accomplishing our mission by it or by more effective means.
Missional Movement (in community):

1. Would you describe your life and/or your corps as being on a journey or as having arrived? If the latter, what steps can you take to move toward more missional movement?

2. What did you think of Commissioner Needham’s description of sanctification/holiness, as it relates to the Army’s mission? Consider this quote: “It infuses all of life with a vision of divine possibilities; the sanctified Church looks for God at all times and aims to live in continual response to his presence. This ever-present search for the revelation of God in every situation and this bias toward patterning life accordingly, are characteristic of a pilgrim people” (p. 54). If you are in agreement, how are you personally and your corps corporately aiming to live in continual response to the presence of God? List some risks you/your corps might need to take in your pilgrim pursuit?
3. Which traditions in your life/the life of your corps are “essential” and which traditions are “temporal” and need to be “pruned”—“altered or replaced in the face of the requirements of a new phase of the pilgrimage.” (NOTE: This is not a hypothetical question. List some below.)

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4. Near the conclusion of this chapter, Needham asks: “How can The Salvation Army... withstand the insidious pull toward rigid hierarchy and immobile bureaucracy?” The short answer he offers is: “A Church in pilgrimage will have shared ministry and responsive leadership. Regardless of the form of government, decision making and structure will be suited to the journey” (p. 66). How is The Salvation Army doing where you worship and serve? What improvements can be made in this regard? What will your role be?

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COMMUNITY IN MISSION 73
COMMISSIONED FOR BATTLE

The army of salvation

The Church is an army which exists for the purpose of fighting every enslavement to sin, disarming the causes of human oppression, and overcoming obstacles to pilgrimage.

AS we have seen (chapter 3), the concept of the soldier at war can be effectively related to the view of Christian living as pilgrimage. Likewise, the Church as an army to the Church as a pilgrim people. A Church on the move is a Church at war. As we shall see, the two descriptions are inseparable. In order to understand the military application, we must state the purpose of the Church. In other words, the characterization of the Church as an army derives from the reason for which it exists in the world. What is that reason?

The purpose of the Church

The reason is mission. The Church exists primarily for the sake of its mission in the world. Because of this essentially missional nature and calling, the focus of its life and structure is the world for whom Christ
died. This purpose is carried out, not by allying with the present world order, but by proclaiming and demonstrating the life of the Kingdom that has come in Jesus and by calling the world to this radically new order. In doing so, the Church becomes a pilgrim people who beckon the world to free itself from despair and make pilgrimage toward God’s hopeful future. But in doing so it faces the opposition of those forces which impede the progress of the Kingdom in human life. There is no way to avoid this opposition without compromising the Church’s mission. The battle must be joined. The Church is an army.

But how can this be? Are we abandoning our previous assertion that the Church is a fellowship of believers-in-the-peace who know peace with God, themselves and their neighbors (chapter 2)? If reconciliation has taken place in Christ, if the decisive battle is over, why is the Church an army?

We must understand, first of all, that living by the peace treaty does not bring avoidance of strife. Rather, by freeing itself from commitments to those behaviors and processes that oppose the treaty, the Church places itself outside of and over against the world order. The world order operates out of the assumption that the world is at war with itself and peace is merely an alliance which is temporarily advantageous or a stand-off which is temporarily needed. To repudiate this assumption is to bring opposition from the world which embraces it.

The champion of Christ’s peace consequently finds himself at the center of conflict. Only now the conflict takes a different form. Having prophetically witnessed to the peace of Christ and exposed the unreality of the state of war, he himself becomes the focus of antagonism from those who cling to the myth of a fragmented world. In this process the conflict is transformed: instead of being a conflict between parties who accept the same view of reality, it becomes a conflict between contradictory views, and those who pursue war now find that they must deal with those who are at peace. Since the reality by which the Christian lives exposes the unreality (i.e., the ultimate meaninglessness and futility) of the pursuit of war and challenges persons to undergo profound change and abandon the ways of enmity, conflict often becomes focused on those who represent the peace.
The conflict is thereby transformed. It becomes redemptive. The prototype is Christ on the cross. The cross is the place where refusals to accept the peace which Christ offered were directed with deadly force. But at the same time, the cross is also the place of victory—the place of defeat for the principalities and powers of a warring world and the place of triumph for the reconciling Christ (see Colossians 2:15). In facing cruel death brought on by enmity and by his refusal to adopt the ways of enmity, he fully exposed enmity’s ultimate powerlessness. His death, then, became the beginning of life, the way to resurrection, and as such signaled the end of death-dealing enmity. The Church in mission takes this reality seriously by challenging the validity of situations created by enmity, by helping to reshape them in the light of Christ’s peace, and by suffering the consequences from those who refuse the peace.

To accept the peace of Christ, therefore, is not to turn one’s back on a strife-filled world. Rather, it is to be empowered to reach out to the world with a caring heart and a willingness to pay a price for the peace. It is to be at peace and in love at the same time. It is to live by the peace and to invite others to live by it.

The Church, therefore, is a peace-keeping force in the world. But it is more. It keeps the peace in the sense that it seeks to live by the peace. But its position in the world is not neutral. It is not trying to maintain a cease-fire between other warring parties. Rather, it is a peace-keeping force in a world that opposes the peace and that consequently attacks the keepers of the peace; and it is a movement dedicated to inviting enemies to abandon enmity and accept peace. It is an army of the gospel of salvation-through-reconciling-love. It is a salvation army.

The Church in the New Testament, in fact, is militant in its posture. Never in a position of rest or final triumph, it is always either doing battle or preparing for battle. Harvey Cox has pointed out that the figure of the soldier was used more frequently than any other to describe the life of the Christian in the world. According to Hans-Ruedi Weber, in New Testament times the decisive act of becoming a soldier in the Roman armies was called the *sacramentum*, or the military oath. The Church later adopted this same word to signify the decisive act
of becoming a soldier of Christ. Baptism, and especially the vows taken at baptism, came to be called the sacramentum. The Christian, in contrast to the “pagan,” saw himself as having vowed absolute obedience to Jesus Christ and as having committed himself to participation in Christ’s battle for the world. The early Church, therefore, was something like an army, and its activities alternated between making camp in preparation for battle and breaking camp to do battle. Committed both to the reality of the Kingdom in Christ and to the battle for its realization, Christians at peace fought battles for reconciliation.

Implications of the commission

This understanding of the Church as a missional army carries important implications.

First, it means that the Church cannot automatically identify itself with the world or with any particular culture or society. For the sake of the integrity of its mission, it must maintain a critical distance. It must, as we have seen, be in the world but not of it. It must live a simple life so as to be free to focus on the essential issues and fight the worthwhile battles. It must live a disciplined life so as to maintain obedience to the Commander-in-Chief (Jesus Christ) and not allow itself to become entangled in civilian affairs that would jeopardize that obedience.

Second, the description of membership as soldiership means that there is no room for passive membership. In this sense, “soldier” is a better word than “member.” Members can be passive or active; they may do no more than belong on the rolls. Soldiers cannot only belong; they are either fighting or maintaining readiness for battle—otherwise, they are not really soldiers. To put it differently, the objectives of a society or club are usually primarily internal; the objectives of an army are primarily external. Hence, the Church’s use of the military metaphor is symbolic of its external purpose: mission in the world.

Third, the view that the Church is in the world to do battle implies that it must be both mobile and flexible. The New Testament Church stood in readiness to follow the leading of its Lord. Following his
leading often required new departures, different methods, structural changes, radical personal adjustments, shifts of emphasis, readiness to move on. No two battles are the same nor are they fought on the same battlefields. A Church which is called to do battle must be ready to move out to the new battlefield, to survey the new terrain and to adapt its fighting methods accordingly. A Church, on the other hand, which is committed to ritual battles on outdated battlefields and to the preservation of its own historical structures and methods for the sake of institutional survival, is a Church that has lost its capacity to do battle—and hence its missional purpose. An inflexible and immobile Church is no Church at all; it is a religious relic.

Fourth, if missional warfare is the focus of the Church’s activity, preparation for battle is the main concern of its internal life. The military training camp, where soldiers receive support and are challenged to prepare for carrying on the battle, is a good model for the Church’s internal life. It implies that mission is the dominant and controlling passion of the Church and that every aspect of the Church’s life ought therefore to be seen as contributory to mission in one way or another. Activities such as worship, group Bible study, Sunday-school classes and membership (soldiership) training classes can be planned and implemented with a focus on mission. Even such activities as therapeutic groups, parent groups, sharing groups, problem-centered groups and the like can be seen as missional in that they foster the health, well-being and personal growth of both persons being equipped for mission and persons reached in mission. In other words, they focus on aspects of human life which the new Kingdom in Christ transforms and thereby give witness before the world to the redemptive living which the Holy Spirit makes possible. Small groups in the Church are at the same time both battlefields and training camps: they are the settings in which persons struggle most decisively for healing, wholeness and community, and as such they stimulate the personal growth and renewal by which participants are prepared for carrying out the Church’s mission in the world.51

Fifth, and lastly, since the Church is an army involved in war, each member (soldier) must be prepared to lay his life on the line: Share in suf-
A good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3). There is no war without sacrifice, and where there is no sacrifice, no real war is being fought. A good soldier is obedient to his commander-in-chief. All other loyalties take second place to this one overriding allegiance; the sacramentum is absolute. The decisive test of the Church’s seriousness about mission is the readiness to remain loyal to Jesus Christ when loyalty demands risk, loss, radical change and even death.

A Salvationist ecclesiology takes these implications of the Church’s missional calling seriously. It sees the Church as an army of salvation which has sworn allegiance to Jesus Christ as Commander-in-Chief and has been commissioned to do battle. Let us now address the matter of how this reality is at work in the life of the Church. How does the Church realize its missional calling?

The answers to this question come under two broad areas. The first area is how the missional Church organizes for battle. The second is how it fights its battles.

**How the missional Church organizes for battle: a structure that serves the mission**

Since the Church exists for the sake of its mission in the world, its life must be so ordered as to implement this priority. George Webber states that on every level and at every stage, order has a single purpose: to enable the church to deploy its forces most effectively in its assigned mission in and for the world.52

We have seen that ecclesiastical tradition exists in order to facilitate the Church’s pilgrimage. When it impedes pilgrimage, then it must be altered or discarded. In the same way, its purpose is also to further the mission of the Church in the world, and it must be judged both by its faithfulness to the gospel and by its effectiveness in advancing mission.

Robert Paul proposes an ecclesiology based upon the principle of
“evangelical pragmatism,” which insists that the Church must be free to meet the spiritual needs of every age. This ecclesiology:

recognizes the claim that in the light of the Church’s essential task all ecclesiastical institutions are secondary, if not irrelevant, and that if institutional structures are to be used from time to time, they should be set up to meet the needs of the moment and should be modified or discarded as soon as the immediate task of the Church has been fulfilled. When that task is clearly understood as the proclamation of the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), we are speaking about a kind of “evangelical pragmatism”—a pragmatism that is brought into the service of the gospel.53

Paul discusses John Wesley as a classic proponent of this ecclesiology. At first Wesley was very suspicious when George Whitefield introduced him to open-air preaching, for he was concerned about decency and order in the Church. But a few days later, he “submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation.”54 The furtherance of the Church’s mission required new methods. Hence, for Wesley:

the nature of the Church was ultimately to be governed by the nature of the evangelical task given to God’s people: this was its first and basic characteristic.55

Historically rooted in the soil of the Wesleyan revival, the Salvationist movement shared this same ecclesiological principle. A Salvationist ecclesiology, therefore, holds that everything connected with the ordering of the Church’s life and work must serve its missional calling.56

One important way to build structures that serve the Church’s mission is to emphasize process rather than form. It is far more crucial to preserve the process that has shaped a missional tradition than the forms which that process has created. At best, certain traditions came into existence
as appropriate ways to facilitate the Church’s mission in a particular context. They may, or may not, still serve that purpose effectively. If not, they should be altered or replaced by new forms when they no longer facilitate mission in the present context. The spiritual truth that death must come before life applies to institutions as well as to persons.

The ever-present danger to the integrity of the Church’s missional calling is the security—if we can think of security as a danger—of hiding behind practices and structures that no longer serve that calling. It comes when Christians are lulled into believing that the continuation of a tradition or method is synonymous with the implementation of missional goals. The early Salvationist movement was positively brilliant and courageous at discarding forms which were irrelevant and adopting new ones that served the contemporary mission field well. But along with other denominations, it must today be willing to depart from many of the practices of its forebears in order to be faithful to what those forebears were doing in mission in their day—and most importantly, in order to be faithful to the God who still leads his Church in mission.

Another important way to insure that structure serves mission is for the Church to organize its whole life and work around its missional purpose. We shall call this *missional unity*. Here again we see the relevance of the military metaphor: an army tends to be united in a common purpose. 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. We are carrying the war into the devil’s own quarters, who therefore summons all his hosts to war.

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 missional society” in which all Christians
were committed to the scriptural prophecy of “the time when the devil is to be vanquished, evil to be driven out of the world, war is to be at an end, and peace and righteousness are to overspread the earth.” All Christians, in other words, would be united in this common cause. Early Salvationists, therefore, were urged not to become provincial in their thinking and not to become too absorbed in their local corps congregations. Rather, they were to keep in mind that they were part of a universal mission committed to the gospel for the whosoever. Sectarianism, therefore, was seen as a scourge on the missional 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.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the Army distilled its doctrinal statements to what its early leaders considered as the missional essentials: eleven doctrines over which there was general agreement among Wesleyan evangelicals. Eliminated were minor and divisive points of doctrine which were the basis of much sectarian bickering and denominational polarizing. In doctrine as well as in organization, missional unity was the object.

There is yet another key task in building structures that serve mission. It is described in the word adaptation. The missional Church maintains sufficient flexibility to adapt to the terrain in which it serves. In chapter 3 we described the Church as a pilgrim people on the move. This tentativeness in relation to the world encourages a flexibility which enables the Church to readjust itself for each new challenge in the changing terrain.

The process of adaptation assumes that God is at work in the constantly changing world and that much of that change is a manifestation of his activity, or at least of the possibilities for change which he is
creating. If the Church’s mission is to be responsive to God’s activity in
the world, then it must maintain an ability to take advantage of the op-
portunities which this activity offers. Such missional flexibility focuses
on the manifestation of God’s presence and work rather than the sur-
vival of pre-existing missional structures and assumptions. It thereby
provides an openness to the world which facilitates creative mission in
changing communities.

Hence, the missional Church is flexible enough to follow its Lord
into the new territories which he is opening up for mission. The “new
territory” may be in the form of: fresh opportunities for evangelism; a
new socio-economic situation in which previous ways of ministering
are no longer meaningful; a change in the racial or cultural character of
the community calling for an adaptation of the ministry of the gospel
to the new constituency; the opportunity and need for a specialized
kind of ministry; the emerging struggle of a neighborhood communi-
ty to survive internal and external threats and develop its potential as
an affirmative living environment; or any new situation through which
God calls his people to pull up stakes, enter new missional territory
and fight new missional battles. Response to this call will always entail
breaking out of and moving beyond previous mission structures. It will
also require a willingness to risk leaving familiar territory and entering
new terrain. Every missional Christian must learn to abandon what is
no longer promising.

William Booth preached the principle of adaptation, and his Army was
a demonstration of the principle in action. Insisting on the abandonment
of any evangelistic method that was no longer effective, he called upon
his soldiers to invent new methods; and these new methods became the
distinctive features of a movement which risked the ridicule which depar-
tures from the *status quo* always bring. He hated the thought that this Sal-
vation Army might one day become “respectable.”

One of the most effective means of cultivating adaptability in the
missional Church is the small group. We shall describe small groups in-
volved in mission as *mission teams*. Utilizing teams in mission provides
clear-cut advantages.
First, the mission team can be effectively used to *strengthen commitment to the universal gospel*. Small groups in a congregation can offer differing styles, focus on differing concerns, informality as compared to the greater formality of larger gatherings, greater allowance for addressing individual needs, and the choice of a smaller social setting within the congregation which more closely approximates the cultural setting from which a new person comes. This breadth of appeal through small groups geared to particular needs is a powerful weapon for use against social barriers which the Church has often allowed to impede its mission.

In addition to small groups designed to attract persons with specific needs, there are task-oriented missional groups formed by members of the congregation to develop a community ministry. Such groups have definite capabilities for implementing an inclusive mission. In the first place, because of the typical informality and person-to-person character of small group relationships, the mission team is better able to move beyond the kinds of tacit assumptions and prejudices which often control congregational policy and action. Their missional consciousness having been raised, they will be likely to become active in mission. In the second place, the team can pursue Bible study and prayer at a high level of intensity and in an atmosphere encouraging personal application. When such study and meditation focus on the Church’s missional calling, the cause of the universal gospel is bound to be strengthened. And in the third place, the mission team, because its primary purpose is mission, is likely to be more flexible and better able to meet new missional challenges than a large congregation with diverse commitments.

Second, the mission team can effectively *implement the ministry of evangelism*. In the early Salvationist movement, soldiers were organized into “brigades” for specific missional tasks, and these groups became important vehicles for evangelism. There are four reasons why small groups can be so effective in evangelizing. In the first place, they are highly adaptable. They can meet in a variety of settings outside the institutional church, at the convenience of the persons who are being reached. In the second place, they can organize themselves around spe-
specific tasks and determine their own format. For example, the task may be an ongoing informal discussion of the meaning of commitment to Jesus Christ. Two of the goals could be: (1) to empower Christians to witness and (2) to present the gospel to others who are attracted to the group. In the third place, small groups can provide a setting for honest searching. They can offer understanding and support for those who are struggling with faith, guidance for those who are asking questions and hope for those in despair. In doing so, they will lead some to faith. And in the fourth place, they can function as vehicles for training Christians to witness.\(^6\)

Third, the mission team can organize for battle. Because modern Christian warfare must take place in a shifting, pluralistic terrain, it requires a “guerilla style” which relies on the strategies of smaller commando units which are adaptable to the exigencies of the war. It also requires disciplined units which understand their military objectives and maintain combat readiness. The mission team is ideally suited for this disciplined pursuit of objectives and the adaptation of structure and method to the needs of the battlefield.

In structuring for mission, therefore, the Church organizes its life in ways that facilitate the flexibility and mobility required for combat readiness. In order for such an organization to fulfill its purpose, it must be comprised of mission teams, or other manageable units, which implement clear missional objectives. We now turn to the question of how missional warfare is conducted.

**How the missional Church fights its battles: evangelism and social action**

The mission of the Church is based on the gospel. The gospel is the good news announcement of the new situation in Jesus Christ, the Kingdom which is now reality because of his life, death and resurrection. The mission of the Church, therefore, is to participate in that reality and give witness to it. What the Church does in mission is based
on the potential for pointing to the saving presence of Christ in the
world, to the reality of the Kingdom of God's love, to the reconciliation
which has taken place through the healing power of Christ's death and
resurrection.

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 which the reality of the Kingdom
makes possible. Evangelism is concerned with transformation on the
personal level, and social action on the socio-economic level. Evange-
lism 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 with-
out social action is flight from the world and refusal to accept the real-
ity of the Kingdom's transforming presence in the midst of this world
which God loves. Social action without evangelism is flight from the
personal depth of the gospel and refusal to take seriously Jesus' unmis-
takable command to his followers to become “fishers of men” (Mark
1:17; Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:10).

People used to suggest to William Booth, “You know, General, we
can do with your social operations, but we can't do with your religion;
we don't want it.” The General would reply, “If you want my social
work, you have got to have my religion; they are joined together like
the Siamese twins, to divide them is to slay them.” For the Church in
mission, evangelism and social action go hand in hand. Otherwise, the
gospel is perverted. In reality, one cannot hear the message of the King-
dom without personally confronting the one in whom it is present, and
one cannot receive the Kingdom without confronting its implications
for the world into which it has come and still comes.

If, then, evangelism and social action describe the two ways in which
the Church fights its missional battles—the two kinds of Christian war-
fare, if we please—and if the war, in order to be engaged, requires both,
then what is the weapon with which it fights? The answer is given by Je-
sus: “Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27). The statement itself is an intentional contradiction. By definition, enemies are hated. Christians, however, are those who live by the peace that has come in Christ and therefore have no enemies. But those who would be enemies do not know this; they do not know, or are afraid to know, that they are not enemies. The only way to show them the reality of reconciliation in Christ is to love them, to treat them as friends and to do so at a cost. Missional warfare is really love-fare, and the weapon is love because love is the un-weapon. 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 which contradict the Kingdom.

It should be clearly understood, however, that evangelism and social action are more than the ways in which the Church carries out its mission in the world. They are also expressions of what is taking place within the fellowship of believers-in-the-peace. They are not merely charitable acts toward those who are outside the fellowship. Rather, they are the “overflow” of Christian caring within that fellowship. Members of the Christian family need to hear the gospel again and again, and in all its implications, and be given the opportunity continually to be renewed and transformed by it. They must be given the space to repent and grow. They must be freed to minister to one another. They must be empowered to change ecclesiastical processes and structures that alienate persons and stifle missional vitality. When this nurturing and growth take place within the fellowship, there is an overflow which occurs, and the overflow is the mission of the Church. The mission is the external expression and sharing of what is happening internally. Otherwise it is merely charitable works on behalf of outsiders. Evangelism and social action are the refreshing and renewing overflow of the life of the Church. In carrying out its mission, the Church is actually embodying not so much what it thinks it should do, but what it is.

The missional Church, then, is nothing other than the Church following its Lord, leading its sacramental life, traveling on its pilgrim way—and inviting others to do the same. Only as such is it an army of
salvation commissioned for battle. Only as such is it engaged in warfare. For the Church at war, there is no human enemy. In fact, persons are seen only as potential recruits. The enemy is sin in all its personal and social forms—all of which seek to destroy the God-given integrity of human life. As long as this battle for the human soul rages, the Church will be commissioned for battle.

How the Church celebrates its missional purpose and nurtures its missional preparedness

A Salvationist ecclesiology places major emphasis upon the means by which the Church cultivates its missional character and strengthens battle preparedness. Let us consider these means under three major headings: battle commissions, battle support and training, and battle organization.

There are specific rites in the Church which rightfully ought to stress the Church’s missional calling and charge the Christian undergoing that rite with his/her missional responsibility. We hold that such rites ought to have the character of, or culminate in, the issuance of a battle commission.

We have already described the relationship between the sacramentum, or military oath, and the rite of baptism in the early Church. In adult baptism the believer was not only immersed for the remission of sins, but he vowed absolute obedience to Jesus Christ as his Commander-in-Chief. Whatever ordered to do, he would do; wherever sent, he would go. Baptism meant that he was commissioned for battle. We hold that all adult baptisms practiced today are authentic expressions of New Testament faith only if they charge the new believer to become involved in the Church’s mission in the world as an integral part of his Christian discipleship.

When enrolled as a soldier, the new Salvationist not only affirms his salvation in Christ, his responsibility as a member of the body of Christ,
and his embarkment on a new pilgrimage, but he also vows to be a missional soldier:

I do hereby declare my full determination, by God’s help, to be a true soldier of the Army till I die.... I do here and now, and forever, renounce the world with all its sinful pleasures, companionships, treasures and objects, and declare my full determination boldly to show myself a soldier of Jesus Christ in all places and companies, no matter what I may have to suffer, do, or lose, by so doing.

... I do here declare that I will spend all the time, strength, money and influence I can in supporting and carrying on this war....

And I do here and now call upon all present to witness that I enter into this undertaking, and sign these articles of war of my own free will, feeling that the love of Christ, who died to save me, requires of me this devotion of my life to his service for the salvation of the whole world, and therefore wish now to be enrolled as a soldier of The Salvation Army. 65

These words from the articles of war, which are signed by all Salvationists who are enrolled as soldiers, leave no doubt about a battle commission. Neither does the ceremonial commissioning of local officers (lay leaders). Even the Salvationist marriage ceremony includes the furtherance of the Salvationist mission as an important goal of the marriage!

We hold that ordination to the (full-time) ministry ought also to emphasize a commissioning for battle. We have raised serious questions about interpretations of ordination that stress the conferring of a unique spiritual status. Rather, we hold that all Christians are called to ministry and mission and that full-time ministry, while exceptional in some ways, is not essentially different from lay ministries. The difference is in the combination of gifts required, the extensive development of professional skills for ministry undertak-
en, and the time for formal ministry committed. Ordination, then, is commissioning to specific ministries within the context of the Church’s mission—ministries that require theological training, specialized skills, pastoral leadership and a full-time vocation. Placed within this missional context, the ordained ministry can only be understood as functional—that is, through the exercise of gifts for ministry, as serving the purposes of the Church’s mission. The rite of ordination ought to convey that function and celebrate the missional purposes which are served by it.

We have seen, then, that the missional Church commissions all its members for battle. Now let us ask how it provides battle support and training. Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the importance of the Church’s unity in mission. If, in fact, the Church exists for the sake of its mission in the world, then every program should contribute toward the implementation of that mission. Early on in his ministry, William Booth became deeply concerned about both the short-lived effect of many independent evangelistic campaigns and the churches’ lack of missional focus and commitment. Consequently, his Salvation Army came into being as a movement united in its missional objective and organized to carry out its mission. He formulated a “doctrine of combination” which stressed the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting believers to carry out this mission. In his view, every program of the Church ought to be a part of the total support system for mission.

Many of the Army’s departures from traditional Church practices and rituals are best understood as missional enhancement by addition, subtraction and alteration. Military terminology was adopted as an effective way to underscore and foster the missional purpose of the movement. It helped to maintain the atmosphere of battle and the commitment to mission. Salvationist songwriters wrote of the spiritual warfare in which the Army was engaged and urged their comrades to remain faithful on the field, confident that their Lord would be victorious. Even as recently as 1946, Will Brand would write:
Earthly kingdoms rise and fall,
Kings and nations come and go,
Thou, O God, art over all,
None thine empire shall o’erthrow.
Of thy grace are we enrolled
In the train of thy dear Son,
Pledged our faith undimmed to hold
Until victory is won.

High o’er rampart, tower and wall,
Faith her standard proudly flies;
Youth obeys her trumpet call,
Marching forth to grand emprise.
In each hand uplifted high
Gleams a consecrated sword;
Hark! they shout their battle cry:
Rise and fight for Christ, our Lord.

This kind of enterprise required numerous changes for the support of missional warfare among the working-classes. Static ecclesiastical symbols, for example, were replaced by mobile symbols; symbols of mediation were replaced by symbols of mission. The Army adopted language, practices and customs which represented departures from the established churches and made the Christian faith more available to the working man. The clear intent was to remove the gospel from the prejudice and confinement of sanctuaries which were foreign to his culture. It was to reject the assumption that the experience of God was confined within the walls of churches for the privileged. It was to bring an awareness of God redemptively at work in the world and outside the institutional Church. It was to move Christianity to a new missional front.

Hence, in the place of the Lord’s supper administered in sanctuaries was the practice of every common meal as sacramental. In place of the high altar was the freedom to kneel and pray anywhere. In place of the procession to the altar was the march in the streets. In place of the
stationary symbolisms adorning sanctuaries and worship services were the mobile color symbols of blood (redemption) and fire (sanctification) on uniforms and flags.

Further support for missional warfare was provided by the expectation of a simple and disciplined lifestyle. It did not take William Booth long to see that the Salvationist mission would require this kind of lifestyle on the part of its soldiers and officers. By the time the movement formally adopted the name The Salvation Army in 1878, it had evolved by natural process into a disciplined “army.” Soldiers were expected to commit their talents, time, effort and money to the mission war and to shun involvements that would detract from this commitment. They were to avoid certain harmful indulgences (e.g., alcohol and other drugs) and maintain high ethical standards. Their lifestyle was to support the integrity and effectiveness of the mission.

Another support for missional battle is the love feast. This statement may at first sound strange, but not when we remember that mission warfare is love-fare. In this context the love feast is a celebration of the love of God in Christ Jesus as the power that both binds the fellowship together in the Spirit and unravels it for mission. In fact, the love feast reaches its full meaning only in fellowships committed to mission. The gospel does not allow for celebrants to affirm only the unity of the fellowship; it requires the support of mission as the overflow and outreach of Christian caring. The missional love feast is a celebration of the love of God in Christ in its dual manifestation of the holy communion and missional commission of the saints.

The Church takes seriously its commission to mission not only through celebration, language and other forms of communication and nurture, but also in developing concrete plans for training members for mission. It is a mission training center. We have discussed the suitability of small groups for missional training and action (the mission team). Small groups formed to implement specific missional objectives are also learning and training centers. In addition to such groups, congregations may also offer other opportunities for mission training. Mission seminars may be conducted by the congregation, or interested
members sent to other seminars or training workshops. Regular events can be scheduled that allow for such training. For example, the traditional “soldiers’ meeting” of Salvation Army corps can be effectively utilized in this way. The important point is that the congregation intentionally plan and implement a mission training program. Without such a program, there is no missional credibility.

Finally, let us consider the Church’s battle organization. How can the Church and her local congregations so organize themselves as to maximize missional preparedness and effectiveness? In chapter 3 we saw that a Salvationist ecclesiology does not posit one form of church government as superior to others. Rather, each form of government is to be judged in relation to its effectiveness in facilitating the Church’s pilgrimage in that particular setting. Now we must add to this requirement: not only must church government facilitate pilgrimage, it must also further mission. The Church must be organized for battle.

Let us now evaluate the government of The Salvation Army in relation to its effectiveness in furthering mission. We do this as a case study in mission government, not in order to claim any superiority of Salvationist government.

Whereas Salvationist government is episcopal in substance—that is, authority resides in a “bishop” rather than in the local congregation or a judicatory—William Booth said that he had found more practical help from the regulations of the British Army than from the disciplines and methods of the churches. It is our view that the primary reason for the evolution of the military modus operandi was the missional focus of the movement. Militancy signified universal mission. During the time when the change in name from The Christian Mission to The Salvation Army was being finalized, Booth announced: “The Christian Mission... has organized a salvation army to carry the blood of Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit into every corner of the world.” The change to a military form of government did not take place overnight but rather evolved naturally as an effective form of mission government in the milieu of the late 19th century. What were the reasons for this effectiveness?
First, a military approach to its mission and its methods enabled the movement continually to be reminded that because the Kingdom had not yet come in its fullness, there were still many battles to be fought. The Salvationist had to live in a state of readiness and preparation for battle. All the numerous spiritual, social and political battles in which the Army was involved were seen as part of God’s ongoing warfare of love in the world. Salvationists were committed to fight until the Kingdom dawned in its full splendor. There was no resting until that day. The Church was called to be the missional army of God.

Second, the military form of government encouraged the simple and disciplined lifestyle necessary for mission. In chapter 2 we discussed simplicity of life as characteristic of the redemptive fellowship. It is also characteristic of the Church at war, the Church disciplined for battle. As is the pilgrim, the fighting soldier is also a stranger in the land, and if he becomes too settled, he loses his ability effectively to do battle in that terrain. He must maintain missional discipline and singular commitment to missional purpose. The military lifestyle seemed to William Booth to be the best mode for this discipline and commitment, and in fact the Salvationist movement had already evolved by natural process into a disciplined “army” by the time the name The Salvation Army was adopted. The military pattern provided a very useful *modus operandi* for the discipline required of a missional movement.

Third, the military organization created an environment and a system that encouraged lay participation. Studies have shown that, on the whole, the only kind of church membership available to the poorer classes of Victorian England was membership in name only. Booth knew that a missional movement designed to reach the poor would succeed only if it offered them full participation in its life and mission. Hence, by design, his movement took on the character of a volunteer army which all were invited to join and in which every participant was given an assignment. One of the early songs began with “Come, join our Army, to battle we go.” “There’s a place for every warrior” went the line of a popular chorus. As the army at war engages its soldiers, so the Church in mission employs its members.
Fourth, the movement’s military organization provided a capacity for mobility which its missional purpose and the international scope of that purpose required. As an army the movement was able to spread around the world like wildfire. During the 1880s it grew from an organization confined to the British Isles to an international army fighting in most of the major areas of the globe. The major contribution to this phenomenal missional expansion made by the military form of government cannot be gainsaid.

The Army’s autocratic government was itself a very significant factor in increasing mobility. The correlation of autocracy and mobility may at first seem strange, but not when the subject is an army at war. Many situations on the missional battlefield require a powerful leader who can act decisively. The early Army was a rapidly expanding international movement which required effective continuity of purpose and method and an efficient, expeditious decision-making process. Government by committee proved woefully inadequate. The constant need to respond to missional challenges required leadership which could effectively mobilize the movement. By popular choice William Booth emerged as that leader. The decade following this governmental change was marked by extraordinary growth, rapid international expansion and the beginning of serious involvement in social reform. It culminated in the publication of Booth’s comprehensive social scheme for dealing with poverty and economic depression in Great Britain, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. The student of Salvation Army history could hardly fail to acknowledge that these missional advances would not have been possible without a strong central government.71

Fifth, the movement’s military organization fostered adaptability to the missional terrain. An important key to the Army’s ability to make inroads among the working classes in industrialized countries and indigenous cultures in non-industrialized countries was its understanding of itself as an army fighting the forces of Satan wherever he tried to claim territory in God’s world. In order to do so, it had to live off the land, understand its inhabitants and adapt to the terrain; and by doing so, it became a truly international mission.72
Examples of the principle of missional adaptation in the early Army are numerous. We will cite only a few. At the beginning we should point out that the entire movement evolved as a church for the poor and working classes, first in England and then in other countries as well, and that it consequently adapted its language, rituals and methods to the understanding and character of that culture.

One of the most important strategies for adaptation was the movement from chapel to street. William Booth discovered that most of the poor would not enter chapels, but would listen on the street corners, where they frequently congregated. He therefore re-emphasized the open-air service which John Wesley had utilized in the previous century. This strategy carried certain risks. Ruffians frequently attacked the street corner evangelists, and early on the municipal police often tried to deal with these disturbances by putting the Salvationists in jail. But persecution usually strengthens a movement and attracts new followers. The Salvationists endured the jeers, egg throwing, physical violence and incarcerations. It won them the support of the poor.

Another important strategy for adaptation was the adoption of language and means of expression which were native to the working class culture. Since the formal hymns of the Church had little appeal to the tastes of the unchurched poor, Booth encouraged the use of popular tunes, even those associated with drinking songs, as settings to religious words:

> You must sing good tunes. Let it be a good tune to begin with.
> I don’t care whether you call it secular or sacred. I rather enjoy robbing the devil of his good tunes....

He also adapted the religious language of the Church to the understanding of the common man. In his first systematic book of doctrinal and organizational instruction for The Salvation Army he wrote:

> When talking about the forgiveness of sins is it wise to avoid such terms as regeneration, justification, and the like?
Yes. Because the common people, indeed, people generally, do not understand what is meant by them. Use the plain words, pardon and conversion. Everybody will then know what you mean.74

As the movement spread around the world, it attempted to adapt to the culture of the poorer classes everywhere. Babu Keshab Chandar Sen, leader of the Brahmo Samaj in India, had said that India would accept Christ when he took off his hat and trousers and boots. Not long after the Army commenced its work in India, The Indian Mirror of Calcutta declared:

If The Salvation Army can prove that Christianity is really the religion of the poor; that it can doff lavender-colored breeches and... patent helmets to put on the mendicant’s ochre garb; that it can dance, shout and march with the ordinary proletarian poor human nature from the mill, the mine and the workshop; if The Salvation Army can prove that, it will have done enough service towards the future evangelization of India.75

Records of the Army’s early work in India substantiate that significant inroads were made in successfully adapting to the culture of poorer castes. Progress was concrete enough to cause the Governor of Bombay, Sir James Ferguson, to fear in 1882 that the newly arrived Salvationists “might break down the barriers between Europeans and Indians and lower the prestige of the white man.”76

Salvationist adaptation to the cultural and socio-economic condition of the particular classes it sought to reach in mission was not the only form of adaptation it practiced. It also adapted itself to the exigencies of the war. For example, excess baggage which did not serve mission goals was often left off. This was particularly true in matters of theological formulation. Complex doctrines were simplified, and many of the doctrines that were the foci of acrid theological disputes were eliminated. The battlefield was no place to squabble over differences
in theology. Booth reduced the articles of confession to what he considered to be the basic essentials. As far back as the early days of The Christian Mission—the name by which the movement was known before it became The Salvation Army—it had been decided that no one would be disqualified from membership because of “minor questions of doctrine” so long as such differences did not detract from the prime function of the Mission.77

The essential doctrines, therefore, were those that were directly supportive of mission. Wesley had simplified the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church to twenty-five for the American Methodist societies. Booth simplified to a bare eleven doctrines. Ignoring the metaphysics of doctrine, he retained only those he considered necessary for faith, and therefore for mission. As far as the eleven doctrines themselves were concerned, he usually refused to be drawn into disputes over differing interpretation. For example, while asserting the necessity of belief in the inspiration of Scriptures, he made no detailed argument for any particular theory of inspiration. In the missional Church, doctrine gives focus and unity, not diversion and division.

We have tried to show that the Army’s military form of government fostered missional effectiveness. It nurtured a state of readiness and preparation for battle, a simple and disciplined lifestyle, lay participation, mobility and flexibility, and adaptability to the missional terrain. But we must also raise some critical questions. The Army’s use of the military pattern has facilitated its missional faithfulness in the past, but at the same time it has created certain limitations and even dangers which need to be recognized and addressed.

First, it should be recognized that the use of a military pattern and form of organization, and the symbolic use of military language, do not necessarily mean that worthwhile missional battles are being joined. They may mean only that the rituals of a tradition are being perpetuated. Furthermore, the military pattern does not ensure any capacity to adapt or mobilize for new battles on new terrain. An army can easily become immobile and inflexible, and incapable of meeting new battle challenges.
Second, the autocratic form of government needs to be evaluated in relation to the contemporary mission field. In the early days of the movement, an autocratic government provided efficient decision-making, responsiveness to the field and international cohesion. Today, a complex and top-heavy bureaucracy encourages autocratic decision-making which is slow, cumbersome and insufficiently responsive to the needs of the field. Autocracy needs to be mediated by grassroots participation in planning so that it retains its relevance to the mission field.

Third, uniformity of procedure and method needs to be evaluated in the light of an increasingly pluralistic milieu. Even the Army itself has become much less monolithic and more diversified in character. What needs to be recognized is that greater social and cultural pluralism within the Army expands the movement’s capacity to minister in a highly pluralistic terrain. Organizational pluralism can increase missional effectiveness by offering more options in method and providing appeal to a wider range of social groups.

Fourth, the Army’s predilection for action as opposed to reflection needs reassessment. Armies, of course, are by nature action-oriented. Theirs is not to ask why, only to find the most effective means of achieving the received objective. Historically, The Salvation Army’s strength has been the ability to respond quickly to missional challenges. It has been scarce on theological tools with which critically to evaluate its responses. We have seen that in the early days doctrinal simplification served to reduce theological considerations to the basic essentials. One hundred years later, however, the Army is seriously in need of developing theological tools with which to be discriminating and responsible in its warfare. This is not a plea for spending more time on fine points of theology. It is a plea for the development of an ongoing theology of mission informed both by Scriptures and tradition and by the contemporary situation.

Fifth, care needs to be taken to avoid an idolatrous pitfall: the spiritualization of the Army’s regimented structure. Such spiritualization would obscure the sociological realities which underlie its life and structure and consequently cause organizational blindness. A poor grasp of these re-
alties within the fellowship produces a parallel ignorance of important social dimensions in the missional terrain. Army structure needs to be looked at objectively in relation to the movement’s stated missional purpose, with a view to maximizing the achievement of that purpose.

The above critique is given in the interest of a battle organization which serves mission readiness and effectiveness. As an army of salvation, the Church exists for the purpose of overthrowing the enemies of God and freeing persons for pilgrimage. In order to serve this purpose, it must put mission over maintenance, it must give witness to the gospel through both evangelism and social action, and it must nurture its preparedness for mission by issuing battle commissions, providing training for mission, and organizing its life in ways that enhance mission. It must never cease evaluating itself in the light of its mandate for mission.
Commissioned for Battle—The army of salvation

Missional Moments (in conversation):

COURT: Many keen Salvationists have expended much energy in arguing that the Army is a church and is part of the one universal Church. In this chapter you argue that the whole Church is called to be an army. How would the state of war change if everyone adopted this perspective?

NEEDHAM: There are a number of different words used in the New Testament to describe the community of believers. All of them are important, and there is no biblical expression of the Church that Christians are free to ignore. Some of them are literal: disciples of Jesus, Church, a royal priesthood, God’s own possession. Others are metaphorical: the Way, the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, a holy nation, soldiers at war. Those that are metaphorical are no less powerful or important than those that are literal. This is certainly true of the military metaphor. The Church—the whole Church—is indeed called to wage warfare against all forces and powers opposed to God’s Kingdom. It is a strange warfare, powered by the compassion of Christ to win the peace of Christ. Each church is uniquely positioned to wage warfare in a particular way. It may not use military terms in the way Salvationists do, but it may well be making a significant contribution to the salvation war by mobilizing its congregation to oppose and defeat a particular insidious form of evil. If all church congregations took seriously their call to Christian warfare, the outcome would be astounding, and perhaps churches would even work together better as they face a common enemy.
COURT: You suggest that the Army is metaphor. 

a) What is less “real”: the term “army” as you argue for it, or “church” as current Western society understands it? 
b) What are the strategic reasons for and against emphasizing “army” at the expense of “church”? 
c) What is more helpful language: “military modus operandi” or “military metaphor”?

NEEDHAM: a) The answer to the question, as stated (i.e., qualifying “church” with “as current Western society understands it”), is “army.” Take away the qualifier to “church,” and there is no question: both are biblically based and extremely definitive. Both terms, when corrupted by warped or incorrect cultural understandings, lose their biblical integrity.

b) One should not be emphasized at the expense of the other. When we understand the way both terms are used in Scripture, we would do an injustice by emphasizing one over the other. Both the Christian “church” and the Christian “army” are the gathered people of God called out to mission in the world. When describing one or another aspect of that mission, we might choose a military term over an ecclesial one, or vice versa, but that is not to say that one or the other term would be inappropriate to the task.

c) That depends. If we’re talking about the overall missional task of the Church, I’d say “military metaphor.” If we’re talking about a specific missional effort requiring strategic planning, I’d say “military modus operandi.”
Court: You say, "There is no war without sacrifice" (p. 80). What kinds of sacrifice can soldiers anticipate in coming days? What is the best means of preparation?

Needham: It depends on whether or not this or that soldier decides actually to accept the radical call of Jesus to worldly holiness and barrier-breaking compassion. If the soldier does, he or she may first experience marginalization by those in the Army who are settled and satisfied with a militancy that only parades, a holiness that lives in privacy, and community service a mile wide and an inch deep. Second, an Army that stays true to the radical call of Jesus will find itself rejected and de-funded by those previous supporters who had us comfortably niched as a band-aid brigade, relatively harmless do-gooders, requiring nothing from them outside a painless donation. And then there are always those who trade in degradation and exploitation of the vulnerable; they will do more than dismiss us, they will attack us.

The best preparation is true worship (both personal and corporate, of which mission is the overflow); relentless, pleading prayer for humility and courage; and the support, love, and accountability of a group of like-hearted Christians.

Court: William Booth “hated the thought that this Salvation Army might one day become ‘respectable’” (p. 84). What now?

Needham: Avoid “respectability” like the plague. Gain real respect, no matter how grudging, from those who disagree with us or oppose us, but cannot deny our commitment to Jesus, our courageous compassion, our willingness to make sacrifices for what we believe, and our stubborn integrity.
Missional Movement (in community):

1. “One of the most effective means of cultivating adaptability in the missional Church is the small group. We shall describe small groups involved in mission as *mission teams*. Utilizing teams in mission provides clear-cut advantages” (p. 84). How can you multiply such small groups on your local front?

2. “Because modern Christian warfare must take place in a shifting, pluralistic terrain, it requires a ‘guerrilla style’ which relies on the strategies of smaller commando units which are adaptable to the exigencies of the war” (p. 86). How might a guerrilla warfare worldview affect your success on your local front?
3. “It also requires disciplined units which understand their military objectives and maintain combat readiness” (p. 86). Does this describe the small group(s) in which you fight? If not, how can you get from here to there?

4. “Missional warfare is really love-fare, and the weapon is love because love is the un-weapon” (p. 88). How does that look in your own warfighting (not the programs your corps operates, but you, yourself)?
ENCAMPED FOR RENEWAL

The nurturing community

The Church is a gathered community in which the missional people of God encourage one another’s spiritual growth and equip one another for mission.

To say that the Church exists primarily for the sake of its mission in the world is in no way to question the importance of what takes place when the fellowship of believers gathers together. We have already said that the mission of the Church in the world is nothing other than the overflow of Christian caring within the Body of Christ (chapter 4). The gospel that is preached in word and deed in the world is the gospel that is formation of life. As the Church receives the gospel and is transformed by it, it becomes the missional people of God: the mission of the Church is inextricably tied to the life of the fellowship. It is the natural expression of that life. Only as the Church is gathered for nurture can it be scattered for mission. Only as it worships can it serve. Only as it understands its relationship with God can it understand its relationship with the world. Only as it realizes the reconciliation of life within itself can it preach reconciliation to the world. Only as it lives as a re-
demptive community can it speak of redemption for the human race.

The fellowship and the mission of the Church are two parts of one whole. Each needs the other in order for a congregation to fulfill its calling. Fellowship without mission dies of spiritual suffocation. Mission without fellowship dies of spiritual starvation. The fellowship of believers must live its life in and for the world, or it will die the natural death of the ingrown. The mission of the congregation must be strengthened, supported and resourced by the fellowship of believers, or it will be reduced to flurries of good works which fade because it has not been nurtured and reinforced from the home base.

Herein lies one of the key challenges of ecclesiastical leadership. Examples abound of congregations which die from the disease of insularity, as do examples of those who die because an ambitious service outreach in the larger community is carried out to the serious neglect of the nurturing and sustaining of the congregational fellowship itself. Often congregational leadership is polarized by those who, on the one hand, place primary importance on the internal life of the congregation and those, on the other hand, who place it on service to the community. The effective missional leader will be able to integrate missional and pastoral goals.38

This integration takes place when the reciprocal relationship between fellowship and mission becomes reality for the congregation. In chapter 2 we described the Church as a redemptive fellowship created by the Holy Spirit, and our focus was primarily on the life of the fellowship itself. But we also asserted that the redemptive life of the fellowship overflowed as a redemptive mission in the world. In this chapter we shall be concerned about developing an understanding of the Church which defines the specific relationship between fellowship and mission. We shall be seeing the Church as a company of pilgrims and an army at war who alternate between advancement on the field and encampment for rest, replenishment, renewal and revitalization. As we have seen how the Church lives by accepting the reality of the Kingdom of God in its midst, so we shall now see how the life of the Church nurtures its proclamation of the Kingdom in the world. The nurture is
provided through two basic ministries within the Church: the ministry of *encouragement* and the ministry of *equipping*.

**The ministry of encouragement**

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up* (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Just as in Christ the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Colossians 1:19; 2:9), even so in the Church the fullness of Christ is pleased to dwell (Ephesians 1:23). As the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), or as members of Christ’s body (Ephesians 5:30), or as the body of which Christ is Savior (5:23) and head (Colossians 1:18), the Church is comprised of those who are at peace with God and man and therefore:

> are no longer strangers and sojourners, but... fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom [they] also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2: 19-22).

Here the risen Christ gives gifts for building up his body and equipping his saints (Ephesians 4:11, 12). So that he might fill all things (4:10) and unite all things in himself as God has purposed (1:9, 10), he has filled the Church with himself and his gifts. As such, the Church is the believer’s natural support system.

**(a) The Church as support system**

Sociologists have amply demonstrated that human life and personality can be understood only in relation to the communities with which persons are associated during the course of their lives. Human development takes place in community, and personality is formed in part by the ways in which the individual interacts with and within the significant communities in his life.

James M. Gustafson has written a most helpful discussion on com-
munities as the settings within which meaning, value and purpose become possible in human life. According to him, meaning is related to the past: “memory images come into consciousness according to the meaning they have for us.” Value is the category of the present: “the unity of the dynamic present exists because it has meaning with reference to some value.” The future is understood in relation to the category of purpose: “purpose is realized in the life of the future that possibly can emerge out of the present actuality.” Gustafson speaks of the “integrating center of meaning” as the means by which past, present and future are brought together and interpreted in communities.

The Church is that community in which the meaning, value and purpose of Christian faith are interpreted in teaching, integrated in practice and celebrated in worship. It is where the faithful find encouragement by remembering God’s gracious action in the past, by giving and receiving ministry and by sharing hopes for the future.

Communities have common experiences and memories which are essential to their continuity in time. These experiences and memories are the means by which shared meanings come into being. A community interprets its past, ascribing special significance to certain events, periods, struggles or accomplishments; remembers these by the preservation of tradition in the form of signs, formulations or histories; and celebrates them through rituals. This shared interpretation of the past is the process by which a community affirms and confirms what is meaningful to each individual, to the extent that he is a member of that community.

As a community of meaning, the Church is the place where Christians are encouraged by remembrance. Since the key to Christian remembering is the inspired Scriptures, the Scriptures are the primary source of encouragement (Romans 15:4). The preaching of the early Church began with remembrance of the Jewish past (Acts 7:2ff, etc.), focused on remembrance of Jesus (2:22ff), and interpreted the life of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish messianic promise (2:36, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). The four gospels are reliable remembrances of Jesus as Messiah. Often it is only in memory that we come to understand the true significance of persons and events. Jesus understood that his disciples did not grasp the deepest
meaning of his life, teaching and death, but he trusted the Holy Spirit to work through their memory to bring understanding (John 14:26; 16:4-13). Writing to a persecuted Church, the author of the letter to the Hebrews brings to remembrance the enduring faith of their spiritual ancestors (Hebrews, chapter 11) as an encouragement to remain steadfast (12:1-3).

But the remembrance of events and persons that nurture our faith does not alone provide enough encouragement. Encouragement must also arise out of present circumstance and experience. As significant values are shaped and affirmed through interaction with significant people, they become the structure within which the present situation is perceived and interpreted by that community. As these values are shared and validated in interaction, persons find strength and support. It is in this sense that Christian values are upheld and reinforced in the shared life of the fellowship of believers. The Church, therefore, is a community of value where Christians are encouraged by one another.

The encouragement takes many forms. The community is encouraged by the faith of each member (Romans 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 3:7) and by the love of each for the other (Philemon 7). When support is needed, the fellowship responds (Galatians 6:1, 2; Colossians 4:11). When affliction strikes, the comfort of God is often mediated through the comfort of the community (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). Believers are admonished to encourage one another, to be on guard, and not be tempted to sin (Hebrews 3:13), and when one does fall, to forgive and encourage him (2 Corinthians 2:7). They are to help and uphold the weak (1 Thessalonians 5:14). The Church is a community of encouragement in which each member stands by the other and in so doing defines the value of Christian faith and fellowship.

But we must always remember that the Church is also on a pilgrimage; it is a community of purpose. As such, it is the place where Christians are encouraged by the promise of a future. This promised future is both temporal and eternal. The Church moves courageously forward in its mission because it comes under the order of the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). There is to be no shirking this command; the Church is called to carry out Christ’s mission. It is therefore the place of
encouragement for Christian missioners (Acts 18:27). But the promised future is also eternal, and so the Church is also the place where believers are encouraged by the revelation of God’s eternal purpose in human history through Christ (Ephesians 1:9, 10; Colossians 2:2, 3; 3:1-4).

As support system, then, the Church is where the fellowship of believers finds encouragement by remembering God’s faithfulness, by giving and receiving ministry and by claiming the future which God has in store. It is where past, present and future come together and where the believer integrates them in terms of God’s continuing purpose for human life. It is where the believer experiences the Kingdom, aligns himself with its agenda, and is emboldened to live and minister in the light of its bright reality. It is the place of encouragement.

(b) How the Church encourages

What are the means by which this encouragement takes place? There are four: worship, preaching, small group support and shepherding.

Worship begins with God. In both etymology and meaning, the word signifies “worth-ship.” Worship therefore originates with the joyful recognition that God is worthy of our adoration and that all other worth derives from him. It is not surprising that Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness reached its climax with Satan offering him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them... “if you will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8, 9). Jesus’ ringing response, an allusion to Deuteronomy 6:13, is uncompromising: “Be gone, Satan! for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (Matthew 4:10).

And so it is for Christ’s body, the Church: for the Church integrity of worship is preserved by complete devotion to God’s worth-ship. But God’s worth-ship is not a mere abstraction for the Church. It is a reality that has been revealed in Jesus the Christ. The worth-ship of God is embodied in the Lordship of Jesus. Hence, John’s beatific vision of heavenly worship shows God on the throne surrounded by adoring worshippers (Revelation, chapter 4), and then moves to adoration of the One who alone is qualified to open the scroll and break the seven seals—i.e., carry out the plan of God in history (chapter 5).
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (5:12).

Worship centered on God revealed in Christ brings encouragement. In worship Christ becomes the High Priest through whom we
draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).

Here we find our confidence in God through Christ, here our sufficiency. Here also our qualification for ministry (2 Corinthians 3:4-6). In worship, therefore—in the presence of him who is worthy, through the mediation of Christ the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit—the Church is encouraged (given courage) to receive the Kingdom anew and pursue its missional calling.

Preaching is another important means of encouragement. The apostle Paul reminded the Thessalonian Christians that the apostles had encouraged them by exhortation (1 Thessalonians 2:11), and explained to the Corinthian Church that the gift of prophecy, rightly used, brought up building and encouragement and consolation (1 Corinthians 14:3). Preaching is a part of worship and as such gives encouragement through interpretation of specific scriptural exhortation in dialogue with the congregation.

All true biblical preaching brings encouragement. As Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God (Mark 1:14), so every Christian preacher is called by God to announce only that message which brings joy or carries the promise of fulfillment. Even the most prophetic sermons, even the sermons that announce God’s judgment and bring uneasiness, even the sermons that invite hearers to face unpleasant realities in their lives, take their stand on the assurance of God’s grace, and through that grace, on the promise that redemptive change and spiritual victory are real possibilities.

It is said that Karl Barth was once asked what his thick tomes of theology all boiled down to. With a teasing twinkle in his eyes, no doubt,
but also with seriousness, he replied, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” If this message is in fact true, if it is the central truth of the Scriptures, and if it lies at the heart of all true Christian theology, then encouragement is an important part of every sermon. No Christian sermon is without the liberating assurance of God’s love in Christ and the power of this love to bring positive change.

Small groups are another important means of encouragement in the Church. In chapter 4 we described small groups as the settings in which persons struggle most decisively for healing, wholeness and community, and through personal growth and renewal are prepared for carrying out the Church’s mission in the world. They have played a significant role in the Church throughout its history. Jesus gathered around him a group of twelve men. He promised his disciples that “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). First-century Christians gathered in house churches (small groups that met in homes) to search the Scriptures, study the apostles’ teachings, share the common meal, support one another and pray together. Martin Luther conducted intimate “table talks” with Christian friends. John Wesley’s class meetings were, in the opinion of many, the most significant vehicle for spiritual revival and vitality in the 18th-century evangelical movement. And the “brigades” of the early Salvationist movement were effective means not only for missional outreach but also for nurture and fellowship.

In what ways can the small group become a means of encouragement? First, it can allow for a level of sharing which is impossible in the context of a larger congregation. Christ calls his Church neither to unchecked individualism nor to total conformism; he calls it to unity through diversity. This unity is achieved where members are affirmed in the richness of their differences and given the opportunity to exercise their respective gifts. It is best realized where small groups are a vital part of congregational life. The larger congregational setting does not allow for significant sharing and appreciation of differences; the smaller setting does. Members of small groups find encouragement as they become known and as they come to know others.
Second, the small group can become a means of encouragement through the acceptance of persons and the achievement of a high level of participation from members. Attitudes of prejudice and policies of discrimination tend to thrive where social distance is reinforced. They remain strong in the larger social context (including a large church) in which it is convenient to avoid the person who is different. But they are threatened in the small group setting where face-to-face confrontation is almost unavoidable and the opportunity for mutual appreciation greatly enhanced. Also, persons who have not yet discovered or developed their gifts have far greater stimulus for doing so in the small group, where dormancy is more difficult to maintain and participation more strongly elicited.

Third, the small group can be a means of encouragement by developing patterns of Christian living and witness. Small groups tend to establish covenants and disciplines for themselves. A member’s participation in the group tends to become untenable when he does not carry out the agreed-upon disciplines. Hence, in the Church the group functions as a community of accountability which encourages the member to commit himself to a lifestyle and discipline which will nurture spiritual growth, as well as equip for ministry. This kind of disciplining, this sustained commitment to a process of spiritual formation, cannot be effectively realized in the larger congregational setting. It must take place in small groups where encouragement comes through the strength and single-mindedness that purposeful discipline brings.

The fourth way in which the small group can be a means of encouragement is by fostering a climate for mutual burden bearing. The more intense interpersonal interaction level of the small group builds trust, heightens mutual concern, encourages unburdening, and increases readiness to assume a supportive role with others in the group. Group members often feel that they are pilgrimaging together and are happy to be able to rely on one another during this and other phases of the journey.

Fifth, the small group setting usually facilitates truthfulness grounded in love. It is difficult, and often inadvisable, to be truthful about
personal struggles and failures before a larger group of people. Many will misunderstand, some will distort, and the response will often be superficial. The small group, on the other hand, has the capacity to nurture love, which in turn encourages honesty between members. When members feel accepted and supported, they risk truthfulness, and out of such truthfulness can come forgiveness and healing—and the encouragement to move ahead.

Let us summarize these five ways in which the small group can become a vehicle of encouragement by saying that it can serve as a kind of extended family within the congregation: a place of personal belonging where certain needs are met, personal growth is nurtured, members are respected and loved and empathy is felt. Members of the Church are brothers and sisters who have been adopted into the family through the redemption that is in Christ. They have passed from slavery under the law to sonship (family membership) in the household of faith. They are now full heirs of the promise and stand on the threshold of new possibilities (see Galatians 4:1-7). Through Christ they now value relationships—their relationship with God as Father, their relationship with fellow Christians as brothers and sisters—and they yearn and work for the extension of this family within the community of man (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

It is our view that the Christian family can only be truly experienced in the smaller group setting. Confessing a familial oneness in Christ is one thing; living it out is another. The logistical impossibility of nurturing close relationships with every member of a medium- or large-size congregation is obvious. Small group settings within the congregation, however, afford the opportunity to experience the family of God in authentic ways. As such, their potential as a source of Christian encouragement is vast.

The final important means of encouragement in the Church is shepherding. The Scriptures refer to the Lord of the Church as that great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20, AV) and the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls (1 Peter 2:25, AV). Jesus himself used the shepherd and his sacrificial actions on behalf of the sheep as an analogy to interpret his own mission (John 10:1-16). The charge which he gave his disciples prior to sending
them out on their mission included, along with preaching the Kingdom, meeting specific human needs: healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers and casting out demons (Matthew 9:35 to 10:16).

The shepherding ministry of the Church, passed on from the first century to the present, can be summarily described by four functions: healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling. The healing function helps in the restoration to physical or emotional wholeness in such a way that spiritual development also results (see James 5:14-16). The sustaining function is the support of a person who is experiencing loss in some form, and its attendant pain, with a view toward personal and spiritual growth (see 1 Peter 1:3-9; 4:12-14; 5:10-11). The guiding function consists in assisting perplexed persons to make choices that promote spiritual health and integrity (see Acts 20:28-31). The reconciling function aims at the re-establishment of broken relationships between both God and man and man and man, with the understanding that each of these two basic relationships is always integrally related to the other (see Ephesians 2:11-22).

It can readily be seen that each of these functions of shepherding comes into play in ministering to persons who are experiencing some form of crisis—illness, loss, perplexity or enmity. In each of these cases, the ministry of the shepherd is a source of encouragement. This is not to say that his role is to cheer people up; it is far more difficult. It is to stand by the person in crisis, in some way to experience the crisis with him, to challenge him to spiritual growth and, in this way, to help mediate God’s redemptive presence. This kind of ministry does not deal in merely trying to brighten up someone’s day; it deals in brightening up his future by facilitating positive personal change in the present. It brings real encouragement because it builds courage.

Who is it that carries out this ministry? Those who have been given the gifts and are willing to exercise them in responsible ways. They are ordained ministers and trained lay persons who take the priesthood of all believers seriously (see chapter 3) and have answered their call to shepherding others on behalf of the one “great Shepherd of the sheep.” By virtue of training and experience, the pastor or priest of the con-
Aggregation is usually more skilled in shepherding; but the lay person may have spiritual endowments and maturity that can be used to bring courage to brothers and sisters in crisis. Any congregation in which the shepherding is done only by the ordained minister is not receiving enough encouragement. Conversely, where the people who are gifted with caring are putting their gift to use in ministry, the congregation is not only supported but also challenged to claim the future.

(c) Keeping encouragement alive

How does the Church promote the ministry of encouragement and challenge members to cultivate the gift? How can it celebrate this ministry in such a way as to affirm it and stimulate its multiplication?

First, in its public gatherings the local congregation can not only celebrate the encouragement of the gospel but also promote the ministry of encouragement among members and in the world. Sermons, for example, can challenge believers both to encourage one another’s spiritual growth and to bring the message of hope to those people who live in despair. Public prayer, by inviting the people of God to perceive and claim his saving involvement in their lives, can give them courage and strengthen their resolve to be encouragers. Celebrations of unity in Christ—like the love feast—can reveal the reality of Christ’s body for the Church as a basis for support and can motivate mutual encouragement. Celebrations of the Church’s servant calling—like foot washing, the sacrament of servant-hood—can, by stimulating loving service, nourish the attitudes and actions of encouragement.

Second, there can be structured ways of promoting the ministry of encouragement. Some congregations have pastoral care or shepherding groups which recruit, train and mobilize members with the gift of encouragement. These groups usually work very closely with the pastor so that the shepherding ministry is one ministry of the congregation and a continuing expression of the encouragement of the gospel in the life of that fellowship.

Whatever the ways and means of promoting it, the Church must
keep alive the ministry of encouragement or it will have no basis for its mission. Encouragement produces courage, and courage produces action; discouragement produces timidity, and timidity produces inertia. The mission of the Church is actually built on encouragement.

Let us now turn our attention to how the Church nurtures its proclamation of the gospel in the world through the ministry of equipping.

*The ministry of equipping*

*And he gave [gifts]... for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ* (Ephesians 4:11-12, NAS). The ministry of equipping is the means by which the body of Christ prepares itself for service within and outside the fellowship. Some gifts of the Spirit are more suited to ministry within the congregation (e.g., teaching), some to outreach (e.g., evangelism) and some to both (e.g., practical service). All of them, when exercised, contribute to the mission of the congregation by building up the body and providing resources for outreach.

The congregation is *an equipping center*. It is the place where members are helped to discover, develop and deploy their gifts for ministry. Discovery requires the recognition that every Christian has one or more gifts for ministry and that there can be no discrimination—by sex, social status or race—in providing opportunities for each one to develop his gift and deploy it effectively (see 1 Corinthians 7:7; 12:4ff). Development requires the recognition that gifts must be nurtured if they are to reach their promise, and the willingness to be committed to the discipline of training (see 1 Timothy 4:14-15; 2 Timothy 1:6). Deployment requires the recognition that all gifts for ministry are given for the purpose of enabling the Church to realize its calling, and the courage actually to risk offering one’s gift in acts of ministry (see Romans 12:6ff; 1 Peter 4:10, 11).

(a) *How the Church equips*

There are a number of ways in which the local congregation prepares and trains its members for ministry. Some of them can be effective in
challenging members to discover their gifts and seek to understand their application in the life and mission of the congregation. Study of the Scriptures, for example, can bring not only encouragement but also guidance in the recognition and utilization of spiritual gifts. Worship can be planned and conducted in such a way as to deal with the affirmation and the employment of gifts as an essential aspect of response to God’s action and call in Christ. Instruction about the utilization of gifts for ministry can be given in sermons, special Christian education classes, regular congregational meetings (soldiers’ meetings), and recruits’ or information classes for those who are interested in the implications of membership of the Body of Christ.

But the Church is charged by its Lord not only to help members discover their gifts for ministry but also to stimulate and guide in the development of those gifts. The local congregation is, indeed, a center for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, and as such responds to the challenge to provide the structure for training. The means of gift development may take different forms, including special training classes/workshops for specific lay ministries, leadership seminars, apprenticeships with more experienced lay persons or even the pastor, and structured opportunities to reflect on and learn from events from one’s actual ministry. It should also be remembered that gift development is a continuing process. Ministry stagnation can easily set in not only when gifts once utilized become dormant but also when skills are used but not continually honed. The congregation that is effectively equipping for ministry is the congregation that is always in the process of training.

The small group can serve very effectively as a setting for ministry equipping. In chapter 4 we described the strengths of the small group as a vehicle for implementing the Church’s mission (mission team), and earlier in the present chapter its value as a place of encouragement. We now assert that the mission team model is also well suited as a vehicle for gift development. By definition, the mission team will have a clear purpose and specific goals and will therefore tend more readily to identify the gifts needed to reach the goals. Because it is difficult to hide in a small group and because the tasks of small groups usually
require unanimous involvement if they are to be carried out effectively, members of mission teams are likely to be challenged to claim their ministry gifts and develop them for those tasks. There is also a built-in accountability factor in the small group: face-to-face meetings, periodic reporting to colleagues, group pressure. More importantly, the group is a powerful support system for encouraging members to realize their potential in both developing and deploying gifts for ministry.  

(b) Blessing and supporting the equipped

In what way does the Church reinforce the ministry of equipping the saints, as well as celebrate milestones of training for those who have reached an important level of preparedness and are ready to assume specific responsibilities? The answer is through some act of commissioning those who have prepared themselves for specific responsibilities in the life or mission of the Church. We have already seen (chapter 3) that in The Salvation Army both officers (full-time ministers) and local officers (lay leaders) are commissioned to the ministry to which they have been called. The commissioning is a public recognition by the denomination and its local congregation—as concrete, historical expressions of the Church—of specific callings and the completion of adequate preparation. It is also an opportunity to reinforce the calling of all Christians to utilize their gifts for ministry and the responsibility of the Church to recognize gifts and open all ministries, without artificial discriminations, to all qualified persons in the denomination or congregation.

When the resurrected Jesus was about to ascend, he charged his disciples with their mission to preach his name to all nations as faithful witnesses. Then he led them out to Bethany and, lifting his hands, blessed them (Luke 24:44-51). Their equipping for ministry was not yet complete, but they had been with Jesus for many months and Jesus was now ready to entrust his mission to them. He knew that the Holy Spirit would come and continue the teaching process (John 14:25-26). He knew that the disciples would edify and train one another. So he gave his blessing.

In a similar way, as the Body of Christ, as the continuation of Christ’s visible presence in the world, the Church recognizes the blessing of its
Encouraging and equipping

the missional Church

At the beginning of this chapter we pointed out that the mission of the Church was inextricably tied to the life of the fellowship and was, in fact, dependent upon it. Now, at the close of the chapter, we must come back to this truth. The missional Church needs to hear it again and again. Salvationists need to hear it. The denomination or local congregation which gives priority to mission must take special care to nurture itself and build the fellowship. Otherwise, missional vitality will be lost.

Let us now summarize the ways in which this loss can occur. First, obsession with the missional battle can so monopolize the thinking and doing of a congregation that insufficient investment is made in nurturing the personal spiritual life of members and the corporate life of the fellowship. The importance of one's personal pilgrimage and the communion of saints is lost. So much is invested in serving the world's needy that too little is left over for responding to the growth needs and the hurts of those within the fellowship. Eventually, mission practitioners become spiritual dwarfs through lack of proper sustenance, and the congregation’s witness and service in the world shrivel to perfunctory action.

Second, the functional, task-oriented mind-set which is characteristic of many congregations oriented primarily to mission can clearly work to the detriment of personal relationships. It is possible for “encouragement” to be seen primarily as pep talks and praise sessions
for motivating members to work harder; and for “equipping” to be devoted almost exclusively to cultivating talents and skills to enable the congregation to perform its services for the community. The role of the small group can diminish as congregations become obsessed with tasks and ignore interaction and process. Small groups that do exist can become mere task forces with little attention to the growth needs of participants. Authentic shepherding—shepherding that goes beyond obligatory hospital visits—can become a lost art. A congregation can become starved for community—and die from a lack of it.

Third, the task-oriented congregation can become so obsessed with achievement that it gives solid support only to the achievers. Encouragement becomes a function of success and is given only when success is achieved or clearly in sight. It is not seen as an ongoing ministry in which God is trusted for the outcome, but rather as a means to the organizational end. It is unable to provide support at the deeper levels of spiritual pilgrimage, where respite from the battle is sometimes needed; rather, it only supports “productivity.” Short-range goals, which promise quick gratification, replace commitment to long-range purposes, whose pursuits can lead to real fruit bearing. Productivity, then, replaces fruitfulness; achievers replace fruit-bearers. The future is sacrificed for the present.

Fourth and lastly, the mission obsessed congregation can lose its joy and spontaneity. The mission of the Church is not primarily a task to be performed, although it is demanding work. It is the overflow of congregational caring. It is the good news of Jesus Christ bursting the Church’s seams and pouring out into the world. It is no accident that in the days of the Army’s greatest missional vitality, the movement was known by all as a joyous group with infectious enthusiasm.

By this reputation is the missional Church always known. As the congregation gathers together and receives afresh the new Kingdom in Christ, members are ignited with missional fire. The joy of the Kingdom is contagious. The missional Church is the gathered Church infecting the world with joy.
Encamped for Renewal—The nurturing community

Missional Moments (in conversation):

BIRKS: At the start of chapter 5 you introduce the importance of a nurturing community. You say, “the mission of the church is inextricably tied to the life of the fellowship” (p. 107). Understanding the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), the mission of the church, and the expression of that mission in The Salvation Army, will you give a specific example of what a mission nurtured by the faith community of the corps actually looks like today, and what it can look like in the future?

NEEDHAM: In response to question 4 under chapter 2, I described a corps that moved from spiritual renewal within the fellowship to an exciting mission fully owned, supported, and implemented by members. I believe that those corps that are most effective missionally are those where the mission is the overflow of worship, prayer, biblical teaching, spiritual intimacy, honest conversation, and openness to God within the congregation. I have seen examples of corps that were heavily involved in outreach through character-building programs, evangelism, and community service, but the internal corps life I just described was weak. What we’ve observed over time is that many of those corps become spiritually starved and missional leaders burn out. Fortunately, we have seen instances, as well, where the congregation comes to recognize that mission without a healthy corps community is unworkable, and in fact impossible over time. At that point the corps can actually begin its journey to becoming a kingdom-of-God community with a mission that has depth and credibility.
BIRKS: In this chapter you write, “Often congregational leadership is polarized by those who, on the one hand, place primary importance on the internal life of the congregation and those who, on the other hand, place it on service to the community” (p. 108). Once a leader recognizes this issue and decides to act to resolve it, what is the way forward?

NEEDHAM: I’ll offer one possible (not the only) way forward. First, teach and preach why and how the church is not complete without both a vital congregational life and a vital mission in the world. Without both, the church is not the church. Give examples or stories that illustrate this. Second, either in a soldiers’ meeting or in a group of representatives from both “sides,” have spokespersons from both sides express their convictions and passions for their views. Help the group find the common ground on which their respective views can live together. Move toward helping them see how either emphasis fails without the other. Third, incorporate this understanding in something like a corps mission statement that articulates this integration clearly. Then use the statement as the guide for corps planning and as an ongoing reminder that their corps is a nurturing community with a redemptive mission—a community in mission.

BIRKS: Please share some helpful steps the corps community can take to strengthen and support another member in the fellowship who is not outgoing and may be shy or socially awkward.

NEEDHAM: I think the place to begin is to show interest in the person’s story. This may take some time, as the person may have reason to be reticent based on past experience. The story may shed light on the shyness or the awkwardness. Behind reticence may be pain. The person may not be willing to share his story, and this choice must be honored. I would also say that the lack of outgoingness may simply be the expression of an introverted personality. The introvert has less capacity to interact socially, not because introverts don’t love people as much as extroverts do—introversion and extroversion have nothing to do with how much one loves people. It has to do with energy: the extrovert is energized by social interaction, the introvert is drained by it and needs to be apart to charge his social batteries. Introverts can be helped to be more comfortable and competent in social interactions by having an extrovert mentor. I am an introvert by personality, but I’ve become pretty good at social interaction by having an extremely extroverted father as a role model!
BIRKS: There are many people who have been injured by church leaders or others in the church community. Since the church is called to be a place where believers find encouragement, what are ways in which healing and restoration can take place following such injury?

NEEDHAM: First, I think (as in the previous question) it's important to hear the injured person's story. For some hurting people this may be difficult because there may be a number of incidents behind the hurt, or the origin of the hurt is overlaid with other incidents which the person experiences as extensions of the unhealed injury, even obliterating memory of the origin of it all. Patience is required of the helper, as well as a good measure of success in helping the hurting person own the pain but stop the blame. Second, there needs to be reconciliation between the hurting person and the person or persons whose words or actions resulted in the injured person's pain. The parties are brought together, with the helper present if there is any uncertainty about the ability of the parties to work through the process of reconciliation themselves (which is more often the case). The helper's role is to create and insist on an environment of honesty without blame. Except in more extreme circumstances (e.g., when a person has been intentionally abused), the goal of the process is not to insist on someone taking blame for a sin committed, but a deeper understanding of how certain words or behaviors can be experienced as hurtful or damaging, the extension of a sincere apology, and a prayer of confession and reconciliation.
Missional Movement (in community):

1. Are you, or is your corps, obsessed with the missional battle and so not nurturing the congregation’s spiritual life? How can you have more of a balance building the fellowship and keep the missional vitality?

2. When you read in the chapter about being obsessed with achievement and not encouraging respite, were you convicted? If so, pray about having a balance in these areas in your life and in your corps.
3. We read in this chapter that “the joy of the Kingdom is contagious” (p. 123). If you have lost your joy and spontaneity, pray right now for an infectious enthusiasm. List some steps toward joy and spontaneity you are willing to, and will, take.

4. Congregations and denominations celebrate their unity as the Body of Christ in similar and different ways. They do this to encourage and confirm the miracle that though they are different and don’t agree on everything, Christ frees them to be one, to share love and to support one another.

   Many churches use the observance of the Lord’s Supper to remember and nurture their unity through the life-giving death of Jesus. Salvationists are invited to do so through love feasts, whether those love feasts are part of worship or are actual meals where the reconciling presence of Christ is acknowledged and experienced.

   How does your corps celebrate their oneness in Christ and explicitly nurture their love, one member toward another? Are there any specific further steps you would like your corps to take to help it become the kind of community of compassion that will better demonstrate to a divided world the power of Christ’s reconciling work in a community of disciples? (See John 17:20, 21.)
5. At the next corps council or leadership team meeting, read the following quote from the book as a group: “The denomination or the local congregation which gives priority to mission must take special care to nurture itself and build the fellowship” (p. 122). Make a list of ways you together can nurture the corps and build fellowship.
CHAPTER SIX

COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE

The colony of hope

The Church is the eschatological community that prays for the coming Kingdom and lives in the light of its dawning.

THE missional Church is the Church of the future; the traditionalist Church is the Church of the past. The congregation that has lost its mission is the congregation that has found maintenance, and preoccupation with the maintenance of traditions undermines the real value of ecclesiastical tradition, which is the preservation of the purpose and calling of the Church. The Church’s enduring tradition is mission; it is a dynamic tradition that challenges the Church courageously to open itself to God’s future, as did the “cloud of witnesses” who went before. The missional Church looks backward so that it can confidently step forward.

As the new humanity which has been chartered by Christ, the Church has entered the Kingdom of God which will be consummated in the future. As the redemptive fellowship which has been created by the Holy Spirit, it strains toward the time when all things will be recon-
iled in Christ. As the pilgrim people who have been called to a journey, it is always moving into the future. As the army of salvation which has been commissioned for battle, it is never at rest, always preparing for a future battle, so long as humanity is oppressed by sin. And as the nurturing community which is encamped for renewal, it encourages and equips itself for the future. The missional Church keeps its eye on the breaking dawn of the Kingdom’s consummation.

The Bible is a book of the future. The Old Testament is saturated with the promise of the future (see Jeremiah chapter 31). It strains toward the day when the brokenness of nations and the sin of the human heart will be healed (see Isaiah chapters 55, 56). The prophet Jeremiah is a good example of this confidence in the future. With the enemy about to take Jerusalem, he went out and purchased a field! The Israelite nation was about to fall apart, and he made an investment in it. By any practical standard, it was a foolish act, a crazy scheme. But Jeremiah believed that God would once again bring blessing and prosperity, and he was willing at personal cost to lay that hope on the line (Jeremiah chapter 32). The prophets promised a new Kingdom.

The New Testament witnesses to Jesus as the Messiah in whom the promised Kingdom is realized. “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you,” said Jesus (Luke 11:20). The apostle Paul held that in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). But even though the Kingdom had come, it had not been consummated. Hence, the disciples are commanded by their resurrected Lord to “go... and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). The mission of the Church is based upon the future of the Kingdom, the vision of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1), the coming together of those from the east and the west to sit down at the Kingdom table (Matthew 8:11). Like growing things the Kingdom will develop from a small kernel into a full plant. The purpose of the Church’s mission is to nurture that future.

The starting point, of course, is the Church itself. In its own life and work, the Church must be open to God’s future. It must demonstrate the future so that it can point the world to the future. For this reason it
is the eschatological \textsuperscript{89} community that not only \textit{prays} for the Kingdom to come but also \textit{lives} in the light of its dawning. In prayer the Church looks to God’s future in Christ and longs for its fulfillment. In its living the Church opens the present to the transforming invasion of God’s future. The Church prays and lives as a colony of hope that is committed to the coming future in Christ.

**The future of the Church**

In order to speak of the Church of the future, we must first speak of the future of the Church. What is the future toward which the Church is moving? What is the promise for the world which it has claimed? Where is the Church heading? For what is it praying? The answer to this question, the question of the future of the Church, leads to the answer to the question of how the Church is to live its life in the world today: it lives its life in active anticipation of God’s future, it seizes the hope in the present, it is the Church of the future. What, then, is the future which the Church claims and which thereby becomes the basis for its own life and mission?

It is the consummation of all history in the triumph of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is the historical realization of the work of the atonement, bringing history as we know it to an end. While it is not an irresistible consequence for each individual, so that freedom is not forfeited, it is the completion of God’s saving act for the world in which all of fallen creation participates (Romans 8:19ff). It is the climax of salvation history described by John the Divine:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.... And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself*
The Church is passionately committed to this hope as the decisive reality that was promised in the cross (Colossians 1:20) and will be consummated in the fullness of time (Ephesians 1:9, 10). It is a hope that creates a distinctive ecclesiastical character. We shall now develop that character as freedom from the oppressive past, courage for the promised future and hope for the whosoever.

(a) Freedom from the oppressive past

We have spoken of the Church as a pilgrim people on the move to God’s future and in the process of freeing themselves from the oppression of the status quo (chapter 3). We now want to establish the objective ground of its willingness to leave behind the stifling entanglements of the past, and then briefly to describe the character of this freedom.

The Church finds its objective ground in the gospel of Jesus as the Christ. What the gospel proclaims as the new reality in Jesus Christ, the Church, which is comprised of those who respond to this reality in faith, claims as the basis for its being and doing. Jesus preached an ethic that is intelligible only in the context of the presence of a radically new and different Kingdom (see Matthew chapters 5-7). He recognized that even though the redemptive life that he had come to bring was actually the fulfillment of the Old Testament law’s deepest intention for human life (5:17), it would not be able to stay in the molds of the old order (9:16, 17). In the light of the Kingdom’s dawning, the molds are, in fact, exposed as inadequate for holding the new future. They must be left behind.

The old molds are many things that are waiting to be superseded. They are attitudes and actions that are rendered insufficient in the gospel of Jesus. One example is found in this statement of Jesus:
“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (5:43-44).

The old molds are also institutions and structures that are not capable of containing the liberating spirit of the new gospel, like the Jerusalem Temple of Jesus’ day whose end he foresaw (24:1-2). And there are also prejudices that contradict the new social relationships that are in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

Founded on the proclamation of this new order which the old order cannot contain, the true Church accepts the challenge of breaking out of old confining molds which do not allow the gospel to do its work. It claims its freedom from the oppressive past. The future belongs to the new order.

The apostle Paul saw the future of the gospel and recognized that the mold of Jewish provincialism and legalism could not contain it. The Protestant Reformers saw in that future the triumph of saving grace and recognized that medieval schemes of meritorious salvation contradicted it. Wesley saw in it a Church of spiritual integrity and vitality and knew full well that parochial establishmentarianism stifled it. Booth saw in it the realization of God’s universal redemptive plan in Christ and realized that ecclesiastical provincialism hindered it.

Taking its stand in the future of the gospel, the Church finds liberation from traditions that oppress and from oppressions that have become traditionalized. As a people on the move and as an army at war, it shakes off impediments and weights that immobilize. It cuts the cords of fear and finds courage for the promised future.

(b) Courage for the promised future

The Bible is not only a book of the future, it is also a book of victory. It reveals God’s future as the triumph of his saving plan in Christ. The prophets foresaw victory. Isaiah, for example, deriding the Babylonian gods for their anemic failure to deliver the future, proclaims a God who, having spoken, would bring his words to pass, who,
having purposed, would do it (Isaiah 46). Here is what he will do:

“I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off, and my salvation will not tarry; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory” (46:13).

The Church sees in the person and work of Christ the triumph of God’s purpose in history. In Christ it sees this triumph not as the ascendency of the Jewish nation but as the disarmament of all of sin’s oppressive forces in the cross (Colossians 2:15) and the subsequent movement of history toward the fullness of time when that victory would be consummated in the union of all things in him (Ephesians 1:10). This is God’s purpose, and it can be relied upon. Writing to a discouraged and persecuted church, the author of the letter to the Hebrews urges his readers, with him, to seize the hope set before us (Hebrews 6:18).

Hence, the Church is the eschatological community that has thrown in its future lot with the hope that is in Christ. It seeks, sees and seizes the future. It sometimes acts outlandishly because God’s future is discontinuous with many structures and policies of the present world order—including some that are ecclesiastical—and the Church must give witness to where God is leading. It does so at some risk: the present world order fears and attempts to forestall the future, thus placing in jeopardy those who will fight for it. There is no way the Church of the future can be timid. The future calls for courage.

The early Salvationist mission was the product of courageous hearts committed to the promised future. If some of its outlandishness was the expression of misguided enthusiasm, most of it was undoubtedly action parables of the future and crusades to allow the future to shape the present. The campaigns to end the entrapment of minors for prostitution in London, to wipe out the heinous French penal colony on Devil’s Island, to cross cultural and caste boundaries in India, to proclaim the gospel in public places at the frequent risk of arrest and abuse, to assist poor people in building the foundation for a hopeful tomorrow, to challenge the wrecks of humanity to become new creatures in Christ—all of this, and more, was done with an eye to the future.
All, at personal risk. The Church that commits itself to God's future is characterized by courage in the present, courage to take the less-traveled road, to invest time and energy in what is of eternal significance, to seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, to live by hope, to share the hope. It is the courage to stand where Commissioner Frederick Booth-Tucker, early Salvationist leader, stood when he wrote:

> as we contemplate the future, how glorious, how far-reaching, how world-embracing, how Niagara-like in their proportions are the prospects that God's own hand has spread before us. Like Moses, we view a very Canaan of hope and help, of holy warfare and happy victory stretching out before us. Oh, that we may keep our eyes and hearts fixed upon the fight! Oh, that we may be enabled to turn a deaf ear to the world's clamors which would call us in one way or another to sacrifice our privileges for some will-o'-the-wisp phantom, in chasing which we should lose the substantial realities God has placed within our reach!90

(c) Hope for the whosoever

The future to which the Church is committed is a Kingdom that includes all nations, races, classes and cultures. Like that of the Jewish nation (Isaiah 49:6), the destiny of the Church is wrapped up in the future of universal salvation in Christ, and this future marks the character of the Church and its mission. When the world sees the Church, it should see hope for the whosoever.

The inclusive gospel has been a watchword of the Salvationist movement. In focusing on the poor and dispossessed, the Army was including those who were usually the first to be excluded. That is why mission based upon the gospel invalidates itself if it does not include them; that is why every local congregation which bases its existence and purpose on this gospel should in some crucial way tie itself to mission among them. The future of the inclusive gospel demands it.

The poor, more than any other group of people, are those without
hope. They live from day to day and are uncertain about tomorrow. The New Testament gospel was preached especially to them, and it sounded the note of hope (Luke 4:18). They were told of the Christ who had come to set them free, the Christ who would come again to establish his righteous Kingdom (Revelation 11:15), the Christ in whom all things in heaven and earth would be united (Ephesians 1:10). The image of the coming Christ became a powerful symbol in the early Church.

But it was not a symbol of postponement. The Christ who was to come in fullness at the end of time was also the Christ who came now. The hope given in Christ was a hope that was already at work transforming people’s lives. The Church was therefore given the task of searching for, and working towards, the reconciled life and the reconciliation of life characteristic of the Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11); and those who responded to the gospel received hope not only for the future but also for the transformation of the present. Only in this way could the gospel really be for the whosoever. Only in this way could everyone be included. To consign the poor to a hopeless existence in the present world order, to be exchanged for bliss at the end of time, is to use eschatology to rationalize the inequities of the social order and to opt for an unbiblical gnostic type of salvation.91

The Salvation Army gave the Victorian working man a hope that centered both on a heavenly and on an earthly Kingdom. The Kingdom hereafter was promised to the convert, but the Kingdom of Christ here also became a consuming passion for William Booth. He was profoundly moved by the hopeless condition of the abject poor. He set his movement to the task of offering them the opportunity to improve their earthly lot. Hence the comprehensive social scheme of 1890.92

As the eschatological community that prays for the coming Kingdom, the Church is given the vision to see redemptive possibilities everywhere. It is not a futuristic community that has opted out of the present for the sake of a postponed, peremptory second coming. Rather, it sees the second coming as the consummation of the ongoing transformations of Christ in the world. At prayer, the Church is given
the vision to see Christ at work for the whosoever. At work, it responds to the vision. In the words of Catherine Booth:

> there are thousands talking about his (Christ’s) “second coming” who will neither see nor receive him in the person of his humble and persecuted followers. Christ manifested in the flesh, vulgar flesh, they cannot receive. No: they are looking for him in the clouds! What a sensation there would be if he were to come again in a carpenter’s coat! How many would recognize him then, I wonder? I am afraid it would be the old story, “Crucify him!” “Away with him!” “Whoever denieth that Jesus is come (not did come) in the flesh is antichrist.” Oh, for grace always to see him where he is to be seen, for, verily, flesh and blood doth not reveal this unto us! Well, bless the Lord, I keep seeing him risen again in the forms of drunkards and ruffians of all description” (last italics mine).

In seeing and responding to the vision of Christ as the hope for the whosoever, the Church is allowing itself to be molded by God’s future.

**The Church of the future**

As the community of believers who are committed to and molded by God’s future, the Church is a colony of hope in a world of despair. It is the Kingdom colonizing itself throughout the land in the form of specific settlements (local congregations) that live their life in accord with homeland citizenship and invite others to join the colony. It is the fellowship of those who courageously live in the light of the Kingdom’s dawning and urge those who live in darkness to see the light. It is the Church of the future that points the world to the future.

The future, therefore, dominates the life of the Church. What the Church is can only be understood in relation to the future of its becoming; what it does is rightfully done only with an eye to the future of
its mission. God's future in Christ dominates the lifestyle, fellowship, mission and structure of the Church. In this way the Church is a colony of hope in the world that gives witness to what the future has in store.

(a) The future in lifestyle

The Church is not called to live in the future but rather to let the future live in the present. It is not called to cut all ties with the past and rush willy-nilly into the future but rather to claim the future as the fulfillment of what God has promised and made possible in the past. To claim God's future in this way results in a style and structure of life which takes that future seriously and allows it to shape the way life is lived.

What, then, is the lifestyle of the Church of the future? The answer is stewardship.

Stewardship is the faithful management of life in accord with God's future. God reveals his own stewardship in Christ as a plan [oikonomia = stewardship] for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:10). As a community committed to this universal stewardship plan, the Church has a corresponding plan. It consists in the management of its life in response to God's future in Christ. Focusing on this future, it draws all decisions and actions into the eschatological image that the Christian hope upholds. The Church's stewardship, therefore, is the conformity of its planning and living to the destiny of all creation.

What this means is that stewardship, in the final analysis, is not merely the wise management of resources, as in good business practice. Rather, it is the discovery of the promise of the future in everyday living and response to that promise in lifestyle. The lifestyle of the Church courageously reflects the future. It is stewardship in the present that has its eye on the realization of God's stewardship plan for the future.

Hence, in redeeming the time (Colossians 4:5, AV), the Church is not merely practicing wise time management; it is using its time as a gift from God to be employed redemptively for the transformation of the present in the light of God's future (3:1-4). In employing gifts for one another (1 Peter 4:10), it is neither putting its endowments on display
nor strengthening its worldly appeal; it is seeing the completion of God’s plan (4:7) and building up the life and mission of the body so that Jesus may be glorified and his eternal dominion affirmed (4:11). And in responsibly managing its material resources, it is not building its own kingdom of institutional security and political strength; it is risking what God has entrusted by investing it by faith in what God will do (Matthew 25:14-30).

In this sense stewardship is the Church’s lifestyle. It is a lifestyle that is based upon, and is the expression of, the good news of “your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). In this Kingdom the Church finds its hope, and therefore its security. In this Kingdom it invests all its resources. In this Kingdom it finds the worthwhile treasures of the heart and the strength to divest itself of the corruptible (12:33-34). Stewardship is the lifestyle of those who seek first the Kingdom and are content to let everything else be addition (12:31).

Stewardship becomes reality when the freedom of the gospel finds expression in the discipline of the Church. If it was for freedom that Christ set the Church free, then the Church must be willing to live its life in a way that rejects any return to law’s enslavement (Galatians 5:1). What this requires is a lifestyle that is focused on the new future and is free from the old futilities. It requires discipline. As an important characteristic of the pilgrim lifestyle (chapter 3), discipline is the means by which disciples are able to focus their lives on the Kingdom. It is the means by which the unimportant is put aside for the sake of the important and the good is put aside for the sake of the better. Without it, the Church can never really receive the Kingdom; lesser realities will be substituted, counterfeits will be embraced. As a steward of freedom, the Church lives a disciplined life.⁹⁴

(b) The future in fellowship

In chapter 2 we described the Church as a fellowship created by the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Spirit for redemptive living, and in chapter 3 as a pilgrim people on the move. In chapter 4 we saw how
this mobile, transformed community is a missional army that adapts itself to the battle terrain and to the culture of the people it is seeking to reach in mission. We shall now see how the future toward which the Church is moving actually shapes the character and culture of the fellowship itself. We shall do so by focusing on three important ways in which this future becomes a norm for the contemporary Church as it overcomes cultural, social and economic barriers to fellowship in Christ.

The first important way in which the Church overcomes barriers to fellowship is by opening itself to the poor. Jesus announced that with his coming the poor now had the gospel preached to them (Luke 7:22). He once suggested that he was especially incarnate in the persons of the poor and oppressed and that the ministry of his true followers therefore related to them in a decisive way (Matthew 25:31ff). The Christian Church was originally comprised mainly of the less privileged, the outcasts and the disinherited. They, it seems, were the most receptive to the gospel.

If the gospel, then, is to be preached to the poor in particular, the congregation that ignores them is violating this gospel. If the Christ beckons his followers to discover his presence in the form of the outcast, then the congregation which excludes the outcast, whether overtly or subtly, is weaving a social fabric that effectively obscures the gospel. Every congregation which bases its existence and purpose on the inclusive gospel must in some crucial way tie itself to mission among the poor and to a hospitable fellowship within which the poor find community in Christ.

What are some of the ways in which the Church opens itself to the poor? It does so, first of all, by offering hope. As we have seen, this hope is for both the hereafter and the here. The Church of the future risks opening itself to God’s promises, proclaiming the future in Christ and building hope for the despairing. Booth’s great social scheme was an attempt to create a massive plan for making a new beginning possible for the abject poor. He sincerely believed it would work, were adequate financial backing to be given. Support was received, but it was insufficient to fund the entire plan. Hence, the plan failed as a comprehensive
scheme. But the hope has remained, and the missional Church continues to ignore the counsel of despair and the risk of optimistic involvement.

Another way in which the Church opens itself to the poor is to adapt itself to their culture. The apostle Paul spoke of the necessity of becoming *all things to all men* in order that he might *by all means save some* (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-23). In order to win Jews he became as a Jew, and in order to win Gentiles he became as a Gentile. He proved that the gospel was culturally adaptable. The gospel could not really be preached to the Gentiles until there could be a Gentile Church.

Similarly, the early Church could not authentically preach to the poor unless it was willing to be the Church in which the poor could find full membership and participation. Its success in this endeavor can be attested by the objection frequently leveled against it by its cultured pagan critics to the effect that it was comprised mainly of insignificant people. Paul reminded his Corinthian readers:

> consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth (1 Corinthians 1:26).

The majority of early Salvationists were also socially insignificant people. It was intended that they should be. The movement was for the poor. But this intention could be carried out only if drastic measures were taken to identify with the poor, to reach them where they were and on their own terms. The established Victorian churches were ill-equipped to do so; they were too deeply rooted in the respectable *status quo*.

Hence, the Salvationist movement developed a strategy for adapting to the working class culture. It began with the willingness to abandon respectability. Because the Victorian Church was generally perceived as a respectable social institution which was attended by and seemingly designed for the middle and upper classes, the working man considered himself excluded. There was really no place for him in church. It was therefore a missional imperative that
the Salvationist movement break with “respectable religion” and establish a bond with proletarian culture. In a letter to James Jeremy in Cleveland, William Booth wrote that the great curse of the contemporary churches was respectability and that he had decided to throw it overboard.\(^9\) That the strategy worked is well attested by the evidence. In a public meeting in March of 1880, the rector of Falmouth said:

> There ought to be a section of The Salvation Army in every town in the kingdom where there were over 5,000 persons, because they reached men and women whom church and chapel people... could not get at.\(^100\)

Specific aspects of the Army’s strategy of adaptation to the culture and terrain of the poor have been described in chapter 4. We view these as one expression of the missional Church’s intention to overcome barriers to fellowship by opening itself to the poor and by accepting the consequences of this departure from respectable religion.

A third way in which the Church opens itself to the poor is by eliminating the climate and practice of socio-economic discrimination. When Bramwell Booth sought to arrange a worship service for Salvationists at St Paul’s Cathedral, Dean Church became anxious and inquired if most Salvationists wore the hob-nailed boots that were the usual footwear of working people. When an affirmative answer was given, the Dean announced that the service could not be held; St Paul’s had just been repaired at considerable cost, and the marble might be scratched.\(^101\) Denied a place in the established community of God’s people and at the Lord’s table, the poor who sought faith usually went elsewhere. Many of them came to The Salvation Army, where they sang:

> I’m at home in the Army
> More than I am anywhere.
> You can dress as you like,
> You can sit where you like,
> You’re all quite equal there.
A fourth way in which the Church opens itself to the poor is by providing specific communities to which they can belong and in which they can actively participate. In general, the Victorian churches offered only low profile and passive membership to the working man. There were few groups of people to which the poor could comfortably belong. The Army, on the other hand, formed “brigades,” groups which had assigned tasks to perform but which also became more intimate communities in which members shared their lives and lent support to one another. These brigades or work forces became the means by which the working class convert was incorporated into the body and often became a lay leader.

The missional Church has always found ways to open itself to the poor.

A second important way in which the Church overcomes barriers to fellowship is by opening ministry and leadership to women. The relatively prominent place of women in the New Testament Church and the assertion by the apostle Paul that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28) are nothing short of revolutionary in the light of the first-century view of the status of women in society and religion. But since that time, it has taken many centuries for the Church to take seriously again the equal birthright of women in the gospel by opening itself to female leadership and ordination.

The Salvationist movement has played its part in this revolution. Officership (full-time ministry) was open to women early on, thanks especially to the unmistakable leadership gifts and sanctified courage of Catherine Booth. In a pamphlet on women’s ministry published in 1859, Mrs. Booth wrote:

Whether the Church will allow women to speak in her assemblies can only be a question of time; common sense, public opinion, and the blessed results of female agency will force her to give an honest and impartial rendering of the solitary text on which she grounds her prohibitions. Then, when the true light shines, and God’s words take the place of man’s traditions, the Doctor of Divinity who shall teach that Paul commands
woman to be silent when God’s Spirit urges her to speak, will be regarded much the same as we should regard an astronomer who should teach that the sun is the earth’s satellite.\textsuperscript{103}

In 1890, on her deathbed, she penned what were probably her last words on behalf of eliminating sexism in ministry and Church leadership. The letter was to the Army’s first woman divisional commander (district superintendent), Captain Polly Ashton, newly appointed. In it are found these words of encouragement:

I wish... that (your promotion) may help forward that honorable and useful employment of my own sex in the Master’s service, which I have so strongly desired and labored for, and of which I have been enabled in some measure, by the mercy of God, to be an example.\textsuperscript{104}

As the fellowship that opens itself to the future, the missional Church understands that the duality of sex is not a duality of ministry or leadership and it sees clearly that God’s future has no place for the oppressions of sexist culture. As a branch of the Church that came to this understanding and vision over a hundred years ago, the Army must be careful not to regress through the infiltration of cultural prejudice. The Church as a whole must be willing to be courageous and prophetic in this matter. Sexism has no future in Christ, and the extent to which the Church allows it is the extent to which, in this regard, it resists God’s future.

The third important way in which the Church overcomes barriers to fellowship is by \textit{opening itself to children}. Cultural religion is typically an adult affair in which children are given insignificant roles and are looked upon as passive learners who, when they have learned the dogma from adults and have reached the predetermined threshold to adulthood, are admitted into the religious fellowship. The missional Church, on the other hand, sees that God’s future in Christ involves a radical transformation in how children are viewed and appreciated.
First, they are looked upon as models of openness and responsiveness (see Mark 10:13-16). Adult culture values realism and pragmatism. It accepts the givenness of the present world order and dreams for no more than to improve upon it. It conditions us to respond in programmed ways. Within this mindset there is no opening for spontaneous intrusion; life is a closed book, or a well-rehearsed play.

Enter the child. His mind has not yet been closed to the unexpected, his vision of hope not yet obstructed by the pessimistic dogmas of cultural realism. He has the courage to see—and believe—at least until the forms of repression become dominant. He is the trusting person and is therefore open to receive Jesus and the Kingdom:

“Let the children come to me... for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (Mark 10:14, 15).

Second, children are models of humility. The adult world is preoccupied with status, some types of which are “earned” and others types of which are inherited. Status is the measurement of self-worth in terms of comparisons with those whom the social system deems above or below us. Jesus introduced a Kingdom of only one status: child of God. That is why we must all “turn and become like children” if we are to enter it. That is why there are no status claims to be made. That is why membership demands humility (see Matthew 18:1-4).

Humility is the gift of honesty about oneself. Adult culture conditions us to mold ourselves into images that conform to the present world order. The Kingdom eliminates artificial image and presumptuous status, and invites the faithful to become children and accept themselves. Except we become as children, we cannot know who we are.

Third, children are models for helping us to understand God and his ways. The adult “realist” accepts the world as it is and accommodates himself to it. He understands as he has been taught to understand; what he knows is what he needs to know in order to function in the social system. Imagination is dysfunctional. The child, on the other hand,
has not been sufficiently socialized to impose thought structures and
dogmatisms upon his perception of the world. Rather, he is open to
ideas and possibilities which simply seem to be right or beautiful. He is
open to revelation from outside cultural imposition.

The Christian faith is based upon revelation. It says that God speaks for
himself through means that he chooses and that his word comes to those
who are willing to see, hear and touch that which transcends the perspec-
tives, dogmas and “realities” of the present world order. The word of God
comes to those who are ready to shed the securities of personal and cul-
tural idolatry, in this sense to become unlearned again, and to open them-
selves to divine invasion. To become impressionable before God: children.

At that time Jesus declared, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and
earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding
and revealed them to babes” (Matthew 11:25).

Clearly, children have important things to teach the Church and
through their more untarnished sight may give it a clearer and more
courageous vision of God’s future. Hence, churches that treat children
condescendingly as empty vessels of humanity which are to be filled
with adult “reality” are missing the mark. They are rejecting gifts of
God and closing their fellowship to important spokespersons. The
Church of the future loves children and learns from them.

It is worth noting here that the early Salvationist movement em-
phasized the ability of children to respond to the gospel and organized
young converts and the children of senior soldiers into youth corps.
The child, in other words, could become a participant in the life and
ministry of the corps fellowship; he could become a junior soldier. To
be sure, the education of junior soldiers reflected mostly the views of
adults about Christian life, but there was strong conviction about the
ability of children to experience God and receive the Kingdom.

In a rather amazing book published in 1884, William Booth ex-
ounded his views on raising children. Many of the views are thor-
oughly Victorian, but there are nevertheless some radical statements
having to do with the divine potentiality of children. For example,
Booth cautions parents against the danger of presenting the faith
to their children as a matter of the understanding (adult theology) and of using their own experiences of God as the standard for the young. To objections to his allowing children to speak and pray publicly, he answers that he is not too concerned about the theological “errors” they may make since true Christianity is more a matter of the heart and conscience than of the intellect. All this points to an understanding of Christian experience as primarily a matter of God at work in the heart and through spiritual intuition, and therefore at work in the lives of all who are open to his influence—whether adults or children. It points to a fellowship in which the place and participation of children are treasured. The children, no less than the adults, can lead the Church into the future.

We have described three important ways in which the future toward which the Church is moving molds the character of the fellowship of believers and overcomes barriers to its shared life. Other ways could also have been identified and developed, but the three we have treated are among the most crucial and can serve as models.

(c) The future in mission

In chapter 4 we developed the concept of the Church as a missional army. We shall now consider how the future toward which the Church is moving determines how the Church’s mission is carried out and the battles fought. As a colony of hope in a despairing world, the Church moves forward in mission with urgency, patience and optimism.

The proclamation of the gospel in the New Testament always carries a note of urgency. The Church lives between the two advents of its Lord and must therefore live in anticipation and evangelize with compulsion. Our Lord makes clear that the time before the second advent cannot be presumed upon:

But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come (Mark 13:32-33).
The apostle Paul urges his Corinthian readers not to take their salvation lightly, but rather to accept the full implications of it now: Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

In his letter to the Romans, he says it is time to wake from sleep and be aware that (final) salvation is getting nearer and nearer, and he admonishes his readers to cast off the works of darkness and live in the daylight of the Kingdom—that is, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:11-14).

The Church of the future therefore implements its mission with an awareness of the nearness of the Kingdom’s consummation. This is not to say that its evangelism uses the “panic” method, urging people to be saved today because terrible wrath is just around the corner. The urgency of the gospel is not a manipulative tool; it is the announcement of the fact that the Kingdom that came in Jesus is moving toward realization in the plan of God, and that this reality invites response. Nor does this awareness result in social involvement that is superficial, shallow or nonexistent. The urgency of the gospel is not an excuse from social action for the reason of obsessive evangelism. Rather, social action is the necessary complement to evangelism, demonstrates the emerging power of the gospel in the world, and thereby reinforces the reality of the coming Kingdom. The urgency of the Church’s mission is expressed in the seriousness and depth of both its evangelism and its social action.

Hence, the Church also moves forward with patience. There is no call for it to proceed with “quick fixes,” nor is there reason to hurry results. Urgency is not impatience. The call to battle is urgent, but the battles must be carefully planned and prepared for. The timing must be right, or the victory will not be sure. The missional Church moves decisively, but also patiently.

The New Testament provides two analogies that reveal the importance of waiting in mission. One is a tree or plant bearing fruit, the other is salt being applied to food.

Jesus once told this parable:
“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come” (Mark 4:26-29).

There is an unfolding, a natural timing in the Kingdom’s manifestation in human life. The Kingdom is a seed that grows gradually into maturity (Matthew 13:31-32), a lump of leaven that slowly brings its influence to bear in the chosen loaf (13:13), the fruit that ripens in time on a healthy tree (7:17). As a sign of the unfolding Kingdom, fruitfulness is a mark of Christ’s abiding presence in the Church and of the Church abiding in him (John 15:1-8).

Fruitfulness is not productivity. It is the natural outcome of the Christ life. It is not forcing results. It is allowing the seeds of mission to sprout, grow and bear fruit. Productivity distrusts the future, and therefore attempts to force it. Fruitfulness trusts the future, invests in it, lives by it and waits patiently for it. It is the only means by which the Church moves forward in mission.

The other analogy of the Church’s patience in mission is that of salt being scattered on food. Jesus called his followers “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). They were to preserve and they were to season. Both functions emphasized process rather than productivity. As a preservative, salt kept food from spoiling; in a similar way, the Church is present in the world to keep it from spoiling, from losing the Kingdom and failing to move toward God’s future. As a seasoning, salt was used to enhance the food’s flavor and stimulate the appetite; and in like manner, the Church sprinkles itself into the world, giving a flavor of the Kingdom and an invitation to the future.

It is the mission of the Church to plant the Kingdom like seeds and to be scattered like salt. The wise farmer allows the needed time for proper cultivation and fruition; the experienced cook uses only the right amount of salt. There is a timing and even a certain restraint in the
Kingdom’s unfolding. The mission of the Church is not an independent venture; it is a witness, in word and deed, to the Kingdom implanted by Jesus Christ, and it is a sensitive cultivation of its growth in fertile soil. The missional Church sows urgently, and waits patiently.

The missional Church also moves forward with optimism. Warning his disciples that they would be scarred and scattered by tribulation, Jesus follows with: “but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Here is Jesus claiming victory even before the victory! Unrestrained by time’s blocked vision of tomorrow, victory was secure in the mind of God and in the heart of his Christ. It is with firm confidence that Jesus says, “Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). It is with equal confidence that he acknowledges in prayer that the Father “hast given [the Son] power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom [the Father] has given him” (John 17:2). The cross is to complete, and the resurrection seal, the victory already given.

This is the best possible news for the world. It is the evangelical basis for optimism, which is belief in the best. The question for the Church, as it moves forward in mission, is: do you believe? Our Lord’s victory is shared with those who believe in it and are willing to take the risks to which this confidence always leads. It is not surprising, then, that John links the believer’s faith in Jesus as the Son of God with the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4, 5). The missional Church moves forward in the confidence of Jesus’ victory, and only in this confidence can it effectively give witness to and facilitate the Kingdom’s triumph.

The Church is therefore to be understood as an eschatological community that engages in mission in response to God’s future. In Jesus Christ God gives the possibility of the future (the consummation of the Kingdom) to those who are open. The mission of the Church is to urge persons to be receptive to this reality, to be patient with the processes by which the Kingdom comes to fruition in the lives of persons and communities, and to believe fervently and actively in the victorious outcome of God’s action in the world. Only in this way is the Church truly God’s eschatological community.
(d) The future in structure

In dominating the structure of the Church, God’s future calls for a missional pragmatism that continually reshapes that structure in preparation for the Kingdom’s coming. In fact, ecclesiastical structures are truly evangelical when, and to the extent that, they open fellowship and ministry to the future. When structures obstruct movement toward God’s future in Christ, when they constrict openness to the coming, transforming Kingdom, they are ready to be changed for the sake of the gospel. A missional ecclesiology sees such change as a natural, healthy process in the Church’s movement toward the future. Sometimes the change must be radical. Whatever steps need to be taken must be taken. The eschatological community is willing, if necessary, to be institutionally abolished.

Consider the attitude of Jesus toward ecclesiastical structures. He was not an iconoclast who gloated over the demise of people’s traditions and institutions. As a devout Jew, he came to uphold and fulfill the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17-20). He affirmed the reason for which they came into being: to point to and prepare for the Kingdom (Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 6:27-36; cf Galatians 5:14; Romans 13:8-10). But he also understood that traditions could outlive their usefulness in God’s purposes and that structures that once served those purposes well could actually become hindrances to the emerging Kingdom. After his heart-rending lament over apostate Jerusalem, his disciples gestured toward the buildings of the Temple. No doubt they feared what he might say about the future of this focal point of their Jewish faith. They had good reason. He said:

“Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2).

The Kingdom had come in Jesus. The Temple could no longer be a spiritual focal point. Worship could no longer focus on this place; it must now focus on his Person. The Temple would crumble; they were to let it crumble for themselves. What had become obsolete must now be abandoned.
As the eschatological community that is committed to the future, the Church is a people who are free to abandon structures that no longer hold promise for helping them to move decisively toward that future. When a decision-making process is so cumbersome as to create missional inertia and so ingrown as to create self-serving goals, it should be abandoned. When the processes and procedures of ecclesiastical government block forward movement, they should be abandoned. When traditional programs that were once effective for the cause of Christ become stale and lifeless, they should be abandoned. When rituals lose their ability to evoke the meaning of the gospel and to challenge participants to respond to God's call, they should be abandoned.

What then? How are new structures found that will better nurture the spiritual growth and further the Church’s mission in the world? The answer is given to God’s people when they prayerfully seek the wisdom and courage to structure their ecclesiastical building so as to make a home for the future in Christ. The answer is given to a Luther, a Wesley, a Booth or any disciple of Christ who is interested only in structures that are open to the future, that invite the Kingdom into the fellowship, that facilitate the pilgrimage, that serve the mission. The answer is given to those who allow the future to dominate structure. It will sometimes mean the abandonment of a structure that cannot nurture the future, and replacement with a new one. Other times it will mean the renewal and revision of structures that have become too inert. Still other times it will mean the affirmation and strengthening of existing structures that effectively move the Church towards the future in Christ. In each case the process is the same: building the structure that for now and in this setting best opens up the possibilities for persons to receive the Kingdom and to become fellow citizens with the saints and members of

the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-21).
Eschatological celebration and renewal: feasting on the future

We have defined the Church eschatologically as the colony of hope that prays for the coming Kingdom and lives in the light of its dawning. We have developed this character in terms of how the Church lives its life and carries out its mission. In concluding this chapter we must now speak of the ways in which the Church enhances this understanding through celebrations and rituals, how it drives the point home and keeps awareness keen. We must now speak of the feasts of the future. All worship is a feast of the future.

The music of worship lifts the congregation not out of the world but into the future of the world; as the language of the sublime, it opens worshippers to a future that is beyond the vision of the present world order. The words of hymns bring the vision into focus. Corporate prayer unites worshippers in gratitude for the future which the saving work of Jesus Christ makes possible and in petition for the coming of the Kingdom in fullness. The reading and preaching of the Scriptures are both an exposition of what God has done for mankind and an expectation of its consummation in the world, in the Church and in the life of each hearer. Special celebrations in worship services are opportunities to mark the ways in which the Church, and specifically the local congregation, are receiving the Kingdom and moving forward toward the future of its realisation. Acts of response—including the giving of tithes and offerings, affirmations or confessions of faith, moving forward to a place of prayer, and in some traditions confessions of sin, are specific expressions of how the people of God can free themselves from enslavement and open themselves to the future which God has given in Christ. Christian worship is a feast of the future.

But there are specific celebrations that especially evoke the eschatological reality of the Church. These are: baptism, soldier enrollment, the Lord’s supper, the love feast and foot washing.

As we have seen (chapters 3 and 4), baptism in the early Church
was more a celebration of the commencement of Christian pilgrimage, of the joining of the pilgrim band, of the enlistment in battle as a soldier of Jesus Christ, than it was a conferring of spiritual status. Understood in this way, baptism can be an eschatological celebration that evokes the reality not only of the new birth in Christ but also of the new future in Christ. In baptism the believer catches a vision of what he will become, what the Church will become, and what the world will become. Properly understood, baptism is initiation into the future.

Soldier enrollment in Salvationist tradition is also an initiation into the future. Here the oath is taken to obey Jesus Christ as Commander-in-Chief and to devote one’s life “to his service for the salvation of the world.” The focus is the future, and the commitment being made is to the inevitable triumph of God’s redemptive plan for the world. The soldier being enrolled is not receiving privileges; he is being commissioned to fight battles. The character of those battles is determined by the future because the eschatological Church claims that the future is the Kingdom’s realization and then bases its life and mission on that claim. This posture brings it into conflict with a world that sees a different future, or none at all. Soldier enrollment is a baptism for battle carried out against the background of the Kingdom’s inevitable triumph.

The Lord’s supper is also celebrated against the background of the Kingdom’s anticipated realization. It is a feast partaken of both in remembrance of the Lord and in expectation of his return (1 Corinthians 11:24, 26). The love feast emphasizes the fellowship dimension of this eschatological character. The community of faith anticipates the coming Kingdom by claiming Christ’s reconciliation in their life together. The love feast is a celebration of this reconciliation, whether the feast be a ritual meal or an actual meal together in which the unifying presence of the Lord is recognized. As such, it, along with the Lord’s supper, evokes the future and provokes the Church to risk receiving it.

Foot washing is an example of a ritual that provokes awareness of how the future is to be received. It is a celebration of servanthood as the form of Christ’s reconciling mission to the world and as the
way in which the Kingdom becomes concrete reality in the fellowship of believers. As our Lord was among us as one who served, so are we with one another as servants (Luke 22:24-27). As servants we anticipate the future in which Christ’s lordship is realized in service to him and to those whom he loves. In service (servanthood in action), therefore, the Church moves decisively toward the future. Foot washing is an affirmation of this future and a denial of the self-aggrandizement of the past.

But the Church is called not only to the service of members toward one another, but also to service in and for the world. The mission of the Church in the world is the servant people of God actively moving forward to the future of the world by giving themselves. They give themselves wherever their service can bring liberation and wholeness and thus witness to the coming Kingdom. In doing so they perform what has been called the sacrament of the good Samaritan. This is the sacrament of the Church in mission, the sacrament in which the healing, reconciling grace of God becomes incarnate as a servant dresses the wounds of one who is otherwise looked upon as an enemy. It is an open sign of the radical transformation of personal and social relationships in the light of the Kingdom’s future. It is both a feat and a feast: it calls for courageous, self-sacrificing action, and it actually imbibes the new life in Christ. It is a living invitation to the world to partake of the Kingdom feast and discover the joys of servanthood. It is an opening to the future.

But nowhere is the Church more open to the future than in prayer. In prayer the Church bows its head before God so that it can lift its vision to the future which he graciously gives. Prayer is the Church then asking God:

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Prayer is the Church hearing its Lord promise, “Surely I am coming soon,” and answering, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20). Prayer is the Church preparing itself to receive the Kingdom and to live in the light of its dawning. Prayer is the Church opening itself to the future.
Committed to the Future—The colony of hope

Missional Moments (in conversation):

STRICKLAND: How has your perspective on the future of mission changed since you wrote this a generation ago and have seen an imagined future actually lived out?

NEEDHAM: Generally speaking, my perspective on the future as described in chapter 6 has not changed very much. It is grounded in the message of hope embedded in Scripture, which points toward the full realization of the Kingdom of God in the future. I am suspicious of self-appointed prophets who claim to have some special revelation of when and exactly how that full realization will happen. Such diversions tend to obstruct the radical possibilities of the day I am living now. As a colony of hope, the church is called to live every day as if God’s future was breaking in that very day, living not in some obsessively compulsive, perfectionist sense, but by simply looking for opportunities to claim and embody the radical, countercultural way of life of God’s Kingdom, in some concrete way living in the reality of what is to come.

I have been encouraged by a number of initiatives where Salvationists have risked new departures to face changing missional challenges. I have also observed that fear and insecurity seem to be the biggest obstacle to our confidence in the Kingdom’s emerging reality. We are sometimes driven by a too rigid attachment, not to our radical Salvationist tradition, but to the specific programs and procedures which that radical tradition created for a particular time and place. Changing times and places call for new missional expressions. It is a process that must continue if we are still to be a vital missional force. Today’s missional methods cannot be allowed to become so institutionalized as to become tomorrow’s dead rituals.
STRIKLAND: The Church is a means to an end. You talk of the coming of the Kingdom of God and the Church’s calling to embody this Kingdom. How can we reverse the trend of the institutional Church displacing the Kingdom of God?

NEEDHAM: From time to time we see hints of a heretical ecclesiology in The Salvation Army. I’m referring to a reverence toward the institution itself (its procedures, policies, programs, the decisions made by its leaders), as if The Salvation Army were the perfect expression of the Kingdom of God on earth. More frequently, we see a skepticism, even cynicism, toward the institution, where Salvationists may complain privately but do not have the courage to hold leaders accountable for bad or questionable decisions, nor do they challenge irrelevant programs and ineffective procedures. They simply play along and talk quietly among themselves. No honest person can claim that The Salvation Army, or any church, is the Kingdom of God, or is a perfect expression of the Kingdom of God. But every church is called to embody the Kingdom in the way it lives its life before the world and carries out its mission in the world. It will always do this imperfectly, but it can sometimes or often do it convincingly. Doing this well is helped neither by a Salvationist’s blind reverence toward The Salvation Army, nor by cynical Salvationists with low expectations failing to step forward to risk a conviction and challenge a leader.
STRIKKLAND: You say, “If some of [the Army’s] outlandishness was the expression of misguided enthusiasm, most of it was undoubtedly action parables of the future and crusades to allow the future to shape the present” (p. 136). What can we do today to help facilitate the future shaping the present?

NEEDHAM: One of the things I see happening in almost all corps that seem to have spiritual vitality is that there are groups gathering around the Word on a regular basis, helping one another to see and understand, relating biblical stories to their own individual stories, and praying for one another, their corps, and the world (the place of mission). Where this is done, bold things start happening as Salvationists begin taking the Kingdom of God seriously and joyfully. People who were previously uncertain, even suspicious, of each other start opening up. Christian intimacy becomes possible, vulnerability is less a threat. This carries over into their life in the world where mission begins to become a natural expression of who they are, thanks to Christ and his Body, the corps. When this is happening, the future seems to be breaking in.
STRICKLAND: You allude to some of the Army’s great historic justice victories. And some like to say today that justice is the new evangelism—in that it seems easier to invite people to join us in our social action and come to meet Jesus in the process than to invite them to various meetings. How can we leverage our justice expertise for overtly spiritual outcomes?

NEEDHAM: The Scriptures witness to a God who is both just and gracious. On the face of it, the two terms are mutually exclusive. To be just is to give someone what he deserves or has rightfully earned. To be gracious is to give someone more than he deserves or has a right to. The social justice community is committed to giving marginalized people what they rightfully deserve as humans. The Church is committed to the same goal, but their commitment goes further. They are also committed to giving people far more than they deserve: the forgiving, saving, enabling grace of God. Another way of saying it is that the end game of the social justice community is to free people from the shackles of social injustice, usually in the form of changing laws and/or reforming social structures and institutions. Then their work is done. The Church’s end game goes beyond structural change. “She” (the Church is the Bride of Christ, isn’t she?) is never finished with the community for which she has fought for human rights. Her calling then is to be a leavening within the community by giving credible witness to the community that Jesus came to introduce and install: the Kingdom of God. The Church is in the business not only of changing society, but especially of introducing a new society and inviting people to enter it. This society is both just and gracious. It seeks both fairness and forgiveness for all. It invites people to discover the joy of being gracious and forgiving. Some people are prepared to come to faith in an evangelistic meeting. An increasing number of people come to faith through a community that cares not only about their rights as members of the human race, but even more about their souls, their relationships, their future in Christ. Salvationists must be willing to be in community with outsiders, who will best learn and be drawn to the gospel by those who embody it with compassion and grace.
Missional Movement (in community):

1. How should Needham’s call to stewardship as the lifestyle of the Church of the future impact our decisions, both “big” ones (like city, corps, career, home, marriage, etc.), and smaller ones (fill in the blanks)?

2. Needham calls us to fellowship first by opening ourselves to the poor. How might our social interactions and groups and schedules change in response to this?
3. “William Booth wrote that the great curse of the contemporary churches was respectability and that he had decided to throw it overboard” (p. 144). Is that still the curse? If so, what do we need to throw overboard?

4. Needham anticipates a future organizational transformation (even “abolishment”). Nearly four decades later, how might this look?
This work now draws to a close. It will have failed to achieve its purpose, however, if the reader goes no further in attempting to formulate and re-formulate his understanding of the Church. We hope that the non-Salvationist reader has been given a better view of Salvationist ecclesiology and possibly helped in the development of his own. We hope that the Salvationist reader has been stimulated to rethink his own conceptions of the Army’s place in the Church and its mission in the world.

The Army began as an evangelistic agency with no intention of becoming a church. Hence, its eleven doctrinal articles included no ecclesiological statements. The omission has not been felt keenly until recent years. Now, many within the movement feel the need to develop an ecclesiological understanding that will enable Salvationists better to understand the nature and calling of the Church, the peculiar calling of the Army as a branch of the Church, and the contribution of the Army to the Church. This work is only one step in that direction.

No Salvationist need consider himself a stepchild of the Church; nor are there grounds for claiming Salvationist superiority. The Salvation Army is a legitimate part of the Church, neither above it nor below it. What it is and does has no validity outside the gospel that calls the Church into being. Its mandate for mission is the Church’s mandate. The Church’s calling is the Army’s calling. Bramwell Booth put it this way, and with this we conclude:

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ has called us into his Church of the redeemed, that our call has not been by man or the will of man, but by the Holy Spirit of God; that our salvation is from him, not by ceremonies or sacraments or ordinances of this period or that, but by the pardoning life-giving work of our divine Savior. We believe also that our system for extending the knowledge and power of his gospel, and of nurturing and governing the believing people gathered into our ranks, is as truly and fully in harmony with the spirit set forth and the principles laid down by Jesus Christ and his apostles as those which have been adopted by our brethren of other times or of other folds.

Amen.
INTRODUCTION

1 In this study the term “ecclesiology” is used to refer to a theology of the Church, or doctrines of the nature, purpose and mission of the Church that together constitute a comprehensive theology of the Church.

2 “Essential” here means that each of the six realities is necessary to the whole. Without any one of them, the Church cannot be the Church.

CHAPTER ONE—CHARTERED BY CHRIST

3 The word “obedience” here is used not in the sense of slavish adherence to rules or abdication of personal initiative and responsibility, but rather as the action corollary of faith in Jesus as Lord. Such faith leads to obedience. The paradox of this obedience is that it is the way to freedom.

4 We shall not here focus on the issue of infant versus believers’ baptism. From a Salvationist perspective, the major issues are twofold: first, the nature of “sacraments” in Christian faith and practice and, second, the extent to which a sacrament like baptism is considered important or even necessary in the life of the believer.


6 Adopting a prevailing custom because of its symbolic potential in that cultural situation is one thing. Elevating that choice to the claim of initiating a rite which must be observed in every era and cultural context is quite another. Furthermore, insisting as some fellowships do that the rite of water baptism, properly administered, conveys saving grace of itself does violence to the New Testament meaning of conversion as a life changing event between a person and God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit without any requirement of ecclesiastical or institutional administration. Such insistence leads naturally to the practice of infant baptism: if saving grace can be received automatically as the result of a properly administered rite, then infants can somehow undergo a spiritual rebirth through water baptism. Such a view, while usually focusing on the faith of the one administering the rite, the parents and the fellowship as effectual on behalf of the infant, ignores any necessity of faith on the part of the recipient and thereby undermines the New Testament understanding of faith as a personal response to Jesus Christ, a response that cannot be made on behalf of someone else. It is our view that the integrity of the Church is undermined when incorporation of members into the Body—in the true spiritual meaning of that phrase—is not a conscious act of faith on the part of each person.

John the Baptist adopted a customary mode of initiation but also stated that water baptism would be superseded by baptism with the Holy Spirit in the messianic ministry (Mark 1:8). John the Evangelist pointed out that while our Lord’s disciples baptized, Jesus himself did not (John 4:2). The resurrected Jesus announced to his disciples that whereas John had baptized with water, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). The apostle Paul disparaged the place and necessity of water baptism in his own ministry (1 Corinthians 1:14-17). None of this evidence undermines the practice of water baptism as a potentially helpful and poignant symbolic rite testifying to true conversion. It does, however, call into question the claims both of a necessary connection between water and Spirit baptism and of the elevation of the rite itself to spiritual efficaciousness.
Traditionally, the new soldier dons his Salvation Army uniform for the first time when enrolled. Although the uniform is not worn by all soldiers today, it is a strong symbol of the transformation which conversion effects and the disciplined life to which all Christians are called. It represents the change wrought, the reclothing in Christ, and the call to battle against principalities and powers.

We wish to note here that none of the doctrinal statements which follow is unique to Salvationist theology. We contend that they are scripturally based and indispensable for an adequate ecclesiology.

John Coutts argues convincingly that the real significance of the Army’s nonsacramental position, the real issue being fought over, is “the immediacy of grace.” (“The Army’s Contribution to the Churches,” The Officer, September 1965, Volume XVI, No 9, pp 601, 602.)

This unity does not, of course, exclude diversity. The diversity of God’s people can be mutually enriching and productive precisely because of the unity in faith and obedience.

Some early Salvationists were so intent upon disparaging the efficacy of sacraments alone that they argued themselves almost to the brink of a Gnostic anti-materialism. Both Catherine Booth and George Scott Railton wanted the elimination of rituals as dangerous temptations to reliance upon the physical and avoidance of authentic divine experience. Bramwell Booth remembered that Railton argued in favor of abandoning all ceremonials which were prominently associated with the rest of the religious life of the world... he claimed that the freedom which was purchased by Jesus Christ was a freedom from all that belonged to the old dispensation, including the whole ceremonial principle (Bramwell Booth, “Sacraments,” The Staff Review, January 1923, No 5, p 54).

The Salvation Army, of course, did not eliminate the ritual element. It developed new rituals in keeping with its unique character and mission. These rituals can be as much abused and trivialized as any other. The only way to keep this from happening is to celebrate them as signs of and witnesses to the independent gracious work of God in the life of the world of the believer. Herein lies the true Salvationist understanding of ritual.

CHAPTER TWO—CREATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are a remarkable number of words in the New Testament having the prefix syn- (“with”), which describe how Christians participate with one another and stand alongside one another in varying circumstances of life and Christian endeavor: prisoner-with, servant-with, worker-with, citizen-with, soldier-with, passionate-with, suffering-with, rejoicing-with, labor-with, fighting shoulder to shoulder-with, finding rest together-with, building-with, comforting-with, heir-with, members of the body-with, partakers-with, etc.

Even the later council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) did not seem to be highly formalized in structure, and the decisions that were made were what seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church (15:22).

This aspect of the Church’s calling is dealt with in chapter 4.

Sociologist Robert Nesbit has asserted that in the 20th century “alienated man” is the key figure of thought and the quest for community is the most impressive fact (The Quest for Community, London: Oxford University Press, 1953, pp vii, 10).


19 If the reader requires proof of this statement, there are numerous writings which convincingly show that there is insufficient evidence to support the claim that Jesus actually intended to institute the supper as a sacrament. Emil Brunner (The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation, Dogmatics: vol III, trans David Cairns, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962, pp 60ff) shows that the development of the Lord’s supper as a sacrament was an outcome of the growing influence of the sacramental view of salvation and the progressive institutionalization of the Church in its early centuries. Vernard Eller says bluntly: 

“Sacraments” do not fit the historical context of original Christianity; neither do they fit the theological context. Sacraments constitute about as “religious” a technique as can be devised; and original Christianity was religionless (In Place of Sacraments: A study of baptism and the Lord’s supper, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub Co, 1972, p 12).

Salvationist writers have written able defenses of The Salvation Army’s nonsacramental position and in doing so have demonstrated the lack of a scholarly basis for asserting that Jesus instituted the supper as a sacrament. Here are some of their works:


Commissioner Francis W. Pearce, “The Lord’s Supper,” The Officer, March 1923, pp 213-217.

“The Attitude of The Salvation Army toward the Sacraments,” manuscript anonymous, the Salvation Army’s New York Archives, circa 1910, pp 27.

20 The presumed “words of institution” of Jesus which the apostle Paul records (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) emphasize Jesus’ desire that his followers remember this event but do not require that this be done through sacramental ritual. On the contrary, it seems that the Corinthian church met regularly for fellowship meals but that these frequently degenerated into selfish indulgences and factional disputes. Paul quotes Jesus’ words in order to remind them that these meals together were a communion with their Lord and through him with one another. They had forgotten. Hence, the significance of Jesus’ words that whenever his followers share a meal together, they are to remember him and worthily celebrate the new community of love which his sacrifice made possible.

21 Brunner, p 63.

22 It is worth noting that in an article written after the decision to discontinue observance of the sacraments, William Booth asks this rhetorical question: “Is it not wise for us to postpone any settlement of the question, to leave it over to some future day, when we shall have more light, and see more clearly our way before us?” (The War Cry, London, 17 January 1883). The door was not completely closed; the Army was not opposed to the sacraments.

23 Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories (New York: George H. Doran, 1925).

24 See footnote 11.

25 Let it be noted that the issue of observance or non-observance of the sacraments in the Army today must be engaged on the basis of theological concerns and scriptural interpretation, not the practical problems of the early years, almost all of which no longer exist.


27 Eller, p 39.

28 Ibid, p 86.

30 It should be pointed out that most corps officers are married couples. Hence, in the “serving” of the meal, a meal setting more akin to the home setting is evoked. Furthermore, since single women officers comprise another smaller but sizeable percentage of corps officers, the female participation is considerable, a fact which closely corresponds to the mother’s role at meal times in two-parent and most single-parent (female-headed) families.

31 This writer has never participated in a love feast in which he has not perceived the Kingdom in a way that brought exhilaration, experienced the oneness of the fellowship as an indisputable reality, sensed that healing was taking place at the time, and departed with greater resolve and empowerment to be an agent of reconciliation. It is to be hoped that the Army of the future will claim this worthy celebration of its early years as an observance which has the potential for nurturing love and mutual support within the body.


33 Bramwell Booth, Echoes, p 155.

34 Ibid, p 69.

35 Augustine (ca 400) first attested the ceremonial washing of the feet in church liturgy in connection with the Easter baptisms in certain churches, a foot-washing ceremony on Maundy Thursday is in the seventh-century liturgy of the church in Spain, and the custom has continued in some churches to the present day. Shepherd, “Foot Washing,” The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (NY: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol. II, p 308.

36 Ibid.

37 As of the date of this writing, the author has been a participant in two foot washings, one led by an Episcopal priest, the other led by a Salvation Army officer. On both occasions the feelings and perceptions described in the text were present in a quiet but exhilarating way.

CHAPTER THREE—CALLED TO A JOURNEY

38 We are not saying that social rootlessness guarantees openness to spiritual change, nor are we suggesting that persons who have strong social roots and are well integrated into a stable social environment are not open to such change. Rather, we are pointing out that, on the whole, spiritual revolutions and reformations seem to have most frequently occurred among those groups who have a minimal or decreasing personal investment in social orders which fabricate spiritual and political idolatries. Examples would be: the Old Testament prophets who threw ecclesiastical advancement and social acceptance to the wind by exposing the godless immorality of a civilized Hebrew nation; the slaves and politically powerless peoples of the first- and second-century Roman Empire, among whom Christianity had its most extensive appeal; the mendicant friars of the Middle Ages who abandoned the security of settled religious life for the drifter lifestyle of roving preachers; the less privileged classes of 18th-century England, who made the most substantial response in the great Wesleyan revival.


40 Eller, pp 26ff.

41 Ibid, pp 30ff.

42 The Salvation Army flag consists of three colors: red, symbolizing God’s redemptive work in Christ and therefore the saving grace which has transformed the Salvationist’s life; blue, symbolizing God’s purity and also the purity which marks the lives of those who single-mindedly pursue discipleship; and yellow (in the shape of a blazing star), symbolizing the cleansing and empowering fire of the Holy Spirit by which discipleship becomes possible.

43 The Song Book of The Salvation Army (1986 edition), Song No 789, verses 5, 6.

44 Ibid., Song No 685, verse 1.

45 Ibid., Song No 809, verse 1.

46 See, e.g., Eller, pp 32-35.
47 The Song Book of The Salvation Army (1986 edition), Song No 512, verse 1.

48 For example, the prominence of elders (presbuteroi) in the Judean Church demonstrates the continuance of the Jewish model of religious government, a model that was very suitable for both organization and mission in the Jewish milieu. As the Church moved westward, it increasingly adopted an episcopal form of government which corresponded to Roman organization and provided a means of authoritative guidance, teaching and assignment which the rapidly growing movement required in Gentile soil.

CHAPTER FOUR—COMMISSIONED FOR BATTLE

49 Harvey Cox, God's Revolution and Man's Responsibility (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1965), pp 115ff. Cox notes: the apostle Paul’s use of the soldier’s armor as an analogy of the resources and protection needed by the Christian in his life in the world; the New Testament use of the word paganus, meaning one who was not in military service, to refer to those who were not the people of God; and the designation of Jesus as kurios, the commander, the one who was to be obeyed in political and military decisions. Cox also concedes that the military terminology has some dangers when adopted uncritically and that the limits of its application to the life of the Church should be spelled out. He specifically mentions two of these dangers. First, armies tend to develop rank systems which create a military elite who control the decision making and wield power over the common soldiers. This is precisely what happened in the evolution of an early Church hierarchy. Second, armies tend to shed blood; they are organized to attack an outside enemy. Cox points out that the soldier of Christ fights for shalom, that “the difference between him and a soldier of Caesar is that, instead of shedding someone else’s blood, he sheds his own. He pours himself out as a sacrifice. He dies in order to win. His victory is his defeat” (p 117).


51 Chapter 5 will deal with the important nurturing role of small groups in the Church.

52 George W. Webber, p 179.


54 Ibid, pp 141-142.

55 Ibid. p 153.

56 Paul cautions against three dangers of a pragmatic approach to Church order. The first is the danger of creating a spurious tradition. Traditions which were originally evangelically pragmatic often become self-perpetuating and assume a false aura of sanctity; they become institutionalized as standard operating procedures. These, in turn, become obstacles to change, especially since they often speak of mission. The only way to avoid this tendency is the continued practice of evangelical pragmatism in re-ordering the life of the Church.

The second danger is that of a particular congregation or denomination mistaking the gospel’s objectives for its own. A congregation may falsely assume that the gospel is at the center of its plans and that its orders are coming from Jesus Christ. It may even identify its own prosperity with the expansion of God’s Kingdom. The antidote, of course, is critical self-evaluation as a part of continuing evangelical pragmatism. The Church’s mission requires ongoing institutional change in response to God’s activity in the world terrain, and the only way in which the Church can be faithful to its missional calling is to continue pragmatic adaptation of methods and structures to the needs of the gospel in each new situation. Obsolete forms would be shed, and new forms which facilitate missional responsiveness in the present context would be adopted.

The third danger is that of “selling out.” The facility for pragmatic adaptation is transferred from application to the needs of the gospel to application to personal or institutional ends. The transfer can be very subtle, and therefore insidious. An institution’s objectives become closely identified with the cause of the gospel, and attempts at self-aggrandisement within the institution, or on the part of the institution, are so cloaked in evangelical piety that identification of real motives becomes difficult. Religious institutions can be perfect cover-ups for opportunism.
What the missional Church needs constantly to keep before itself is the need for an **evangelical** pragmatism—that is, a pragmatism that serves only the **gospel**. The Church is called to be pragmatic **for the gospel's sake!** Pragmatic decisions, therefore, must always be made in the context of asking what the gospel in the world requires. *(Ibid, pp 158-160.)*

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


60 It should also be pointed out, however, that there was a serious omission made because the movement came into being as an evangelistic agency with no intention of becoming a church fellowship (denomination) as well. There is no stated doctrine of the Church.


62 “Kingdom” is basically a socio-political concept. The Kingdom of God as understood by Jesus is a socio-political reality in which God rules (*basileia* = rule, reign), every citizen has infinite worth (see, e.g., Matthew 11:11), love is the source of power in all relationships (see, e.g., Matthew 5:43-48), and the priorities of a power-hungry world are reversed (see, e.g., Mark 10: 17-31).

63 Jesus radically personalized the concept of the Kingdom. He spoke of it in terms of a person’s relationship to the Father; he called for individual repentance (see Mark 1:15) and belief in himself (see especially John’s gospel 3:16, 18, 36; 6:35, 47; 9:35; 12:46; 14:1), he identified the gospel with his own person (see Mark 8:35). All of this points to the necessity of personal response to, and relationships with, the one in whom the Kingdom is realized. The Kingdom is through Jesus alone (see John 14:6). Hence personal invitation to confront Jesus as Lord is essential to the Church’s missional witness.

64 Quoted by Brigadier Fred Fox, lecture to cadets, 4 January 1924, The Salvation Army Archives, New York.

65 Quoted from the articles of war in use, 1987.


67 *The Song Book of The Salvation Army* (1986 edition), Song No 799, verses 1, 2.


71 Accounts of major defections and splits during the first thirty years of the movement’s history provide interesting corroboration of the importance of unity and autocracy in building the Army’s missional strength. For the most part, these groups that parted company died out rather quickly. The one exception worth mentioning, the Volunteers of America, itself developed an autocratic, unified government.

72 An important distinction between **adaptation** and **identification** needs to be made. Adaptation is suiting of missional language, forms, concerns and methods to the social and cultural situation of the people targeted in mission. Identification, as we have used the term in this book, refers to a “sellout” to the prevailing culture, the uncritical adoption of its values (whether overtly or covertly), and the consequent role played by churches to “sacralize” the values of that culture rather than those of the new Kingdom in Christ.


CHAPTER FIVE—ENCAMPED FOR RENEWAL

78 Because of its missional character and traditional predilection for community service, The Salvation Army has tended to invest too much in outreach and not enough in the cultivation of the fellowship. In corps where this imbalance has persisted over a long period of time, the eventual result seems usually to be the loss of missional vitality. Soldiery in mission who are not sustained, supported, nurtured and taught in the corps fellowship become weakened and succumb to mission burnout in one form or another. Increasingly, Salvationists are relearning for themselves that the Church’s mission cannot be carried out effectively unless it is, in fact, the mission of the Church—an expression of the community of saints, which begets it, supports it, resources it, prays for it and provides a place of spiritual nurture, reflection and love for its leaders and workers.


80 Gustafson derives these definitions from Wilhelm Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 7 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1927).

81 The term “dialogue” is used here not in the literal sense—although some preachers have literally dialogued with another preacher or the congregation in preaching—but in the figurative or imaginative sense to describe two-way preaching in which the preacher is projecting (imagining) interaction with the congregation in one form or another.


83 It should be pointed out, however, that a small group can itself become a vehicle for the reinforcement of prejudice. This happens when a group is formed for the purpose of protecting a prejudice or isolating members from the larger community. The best corrective for such tendencies in a congregation, of course, is the insistence that all groups be missional or fit into the larger missional plan.

84 See William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), for definition and development of these four functions in pastoral care practice during the history of the Christian Church.

85 This fact suggests a very important responsibility of the ordained minister or other designated person in the congregation: the training of lay shepherds.

86 The first of the Eleven Doctrines of The Salvation Army asserts that “the Scriptures... only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice” (italic mine). The Scriptures, therefore, are the only source for authoritative guidance on the nature and use of spiritual gifts.

87 For this reason we recommend that each group in the congregation have a permanent, built-in agenda item: calling each member to account for his continuing development and deployment of ministry gifts.

88 It is noteworthy that William Booth was so concerned that his officers cultivate and practice the art of shepherding their flock that he published an allegory of Salvationist pastoring: A Good Shepherd: or, What a Salvation Army Captain Should Be (Being a Shepherd’s Letter to General Booth), London: The Salvation Army Book Stores, nd). Early on, then, there was the fear that officers might become so involved in other ecclesiastical duties that pastoring would be ignored.

CHAPTER SIX—COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE

89 “Eschatological” refers to the last or latter things (Greek eschatos). In the New Testament the eschatos of God’s decisive saving action begins in Jesus Christ, who represents or brings God’s kairos (opportune time for salvation) (2 Corinthians 6:2). But the duration of kairos has not yet been
exhausted. The saving opportunity will end in the last days which will herald the approach of the last day in which Christ shall be finally revealed (Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 1:33; John 6:40; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Revelation 22:13).

90 Quoted from a letter written by Commissioner Tucker, 1 February 1902, from National Headquarters in New York City.

91 A “gnostic type of salvation” is a doctrine of salvation based upon the gnostic assumption that spirit is good and matter evil. From this assumption one reasons that salvation consists of freeing oneself from bondage to matter by discovering the knowledge—gnosis in Greek means “knowledge”—through which one can move toward a higher order of existence (i.e., less tied to the material) and eventually to pure spiritual bliss and perfection. This view had gained a powerful foothold in the Mediterranean world in the time of the early Church, and in fact there are some passages in the New Testament which seem aimed at combating its insidious threat to Christian faith and practice. In the prologue to his gospel, John affirms the Incarnation (1:14), and in his letters asserts that those who do not believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh are not of God (1 John 4:2, 3; 2 John 7). The very idea of God’s Incarnation—i.e., the intentional union of perfect spirit and that which was, in their view, inherently evil (matter) was unthinkable to Gnostics. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul launches a frontal attack on gnostic views which were threatening to infect the church there in matters of both doctrine and practice. He affirms that the fullness of God did indeed dwell in Jesus (1:19; 2:9); that through the agency of God’s perfect Son all things, including matter, were created (1:16); that rejection of the material as evil (extreme asceticism) as the only way of dealing with temptations of the flesh is seriously misguided (2: 16-23); that going to the other extreme by indulging the flesh as that which is inferior and therefore can have no effect on one’s spirit, is equally misguided (3:5); and that salvation in Christ is not for a small elite who can attain the keys or secrets to saving knowledge (gnosis) but rather is actually made available to all men (1:27, 28).

Hence, Gnosticism disparages the place of the material in human existence, and a gnostic view of salvation is elitist and therefore incompatible with universal salvation in Christ. This means that a view of salvation for the poor that offers only postponement of hope (they are not considered part of the spiritual elite) and that does not deal hopefully with their existence in the world (they should recognize that matter does not matter) is thoroughly gnostic and contrary to the gospel.

92 This scheme for social salvation was developed in William Booth’s, In Darkest England and the Way Out (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1890).

93 Quoted by Bramwell Booth in These Fifty Years (London: Cassell and Co Ltd, 1929), p 46.

94 All ecclesiastical discipline should be understood and evaluated in relation to the freedom that is in Christ and to the future to which God calls his Church. When Salvationists, for example, discipline themselves to abstain from substance abuse as well as from any use of alcohol and drugs, they are not condemning the mild use of alcohol and tobacco by some Christians; rather, they are undergoing a discipline to eliminate impediments to the best possible stewardship of the future. Drugs produce diversion from reality and escape from pain, leading often to sinful delusion, and eventually to self-destruction. Hence, abstinence can be pursued as an effective means of fostering positive movement toward God’s future, avoiding certain pitfalls to pilgrimage, and encouraging others who are tempted to be diverted. (It is only fair to note, however, that there are other forms of substance abuse which deter from serious commitment of the body to God’s future—for example, over-eating and caffeine abuse. Salvationists have been strangely silent on these two.)

95 The term “poor” is used here to refer to those people in a society who suffer from severe social and economic debility and comprise that part of the population which is most powerless against the vagaries of the economic system and most susceptible to its ill effects. They are those whose health, well-being and security are most uncertain from day to day.

96 We are not naively suggesting that the poor should feel at home in every local congregation. The distinctive social and cultural character of specific congregations is a reality that ought not to be disparaged of itself. Rather, it can be looked upon as an asset for communicating with and offering community to persons of like background and orientation. What
we are saying is indispensable to the congregation whose life and mission are based upon the gospel is both strong support of mission to the poor and sincere commitment to universal fellowship in Christ by making the outcast welcome and endorsing the Church’s diverse cultural expression.


98 See Inglis, which deals with the Victorian churches’ social and economic discrimination against the working classes. The pew system, for example, was one glaring form of this discrimination (pp 49ff).


100 Sandall, vol. 1, p 137.


102 In 1875, three years before it was to become The Salvation Army in name, The Christian Mission wrote the following into its Foundation Deed:

> Nothing shall authorize the Conference to take any course whereby the right of females to be employed as evangelists or class leaders shall be impeded or destroyed or which shall render females ineligible for any office or deny them the right to speak and vote at all or any official meetings of which they may be members.

103 Catherine Booth, *Female Ministry*, pamphlet, 1859.

104 From letter dated 24 February 1890.

105 In utilizing children as models of openness and trust, humility and honesty, understanding and insight, we are not suggesting the idealization of pre-adulthood. Children can be dogmatic, suspicious, imperious, dishonest and very conditioned in their thinking. But we hold that these negative characteristics are learned or produced by conditioning from the adult world which inevitably, it seems, visits its sins and sinful dispositions upon the children.

106 In emphasizing what children have to teach adults, we are not at all questioning the importance of Christian education for children in the Church. Rather, we are pointing out that adults in the Church also need Christian education, that a significant part of that education is the unlearning of acquired worldly outlooks that are contradictory to the Kingdom, and that children have an important role to play in providing refreshing outlooks that call prevailing world views into question. The Church, however, does have a crucial responsibility to teach and help the developing person to articulate and apply Christian faith. With the child, however, there is likely to be much less to unlearn and much more intuitive faith to build on.


109 By “structure” we mean the forms and patterns by which the Church lives its life and carries out its tasks. This includes church government, rituals, the decision-making process, procedures and program.

110 The special celebrations we have in mind here range from the Lord’s supper and the love feast... to the recognition of Sunday-school teachers. They include: baptism, enrollment of soldiers, dedication of infants, commissioning of local officers and other events that do not occur in every worship service. It is important that these celebrations should not be seen and carried out as independent observances that are unrelated to the focus and progress of worship. They should rather be observed as concrete expressions of the ways in which the Kingdom celebrated in worship is being received and God’s future embraced.

111 *Echoes and Memories*, p 67.
PHIL NEEDHAM and his wife Keitha now live in retirement in the Atlanta area following thirty-seven years of service as Salvation Army officers.

Needham's passion is for the Church to see itself as the missional people of God and to live out this understanding in life transforming ways. His skills are writing, teaching, leadership, preaching, and pastoring. In addition to Community in Mission, Needham has authored He Who Laughed First! (Delighting in a Holy God), When God Becomes Small (released by Abingdon Press in March of 2014), and is co-author with Jack McDowell of There’s More to Life than Making a Living: Mastering Six Key Essentials on the Way to a Life of Significance.

Phil’s formal studies were completed at the University of Miami, Princeton Theological Seminary, Emory University, and the International Training College for Officers in London, England. Commissioned as Salvation Army officers in 1969, he and his wife subsequently served in pastorates, officer training work, and administrative leadership, both in the Southeastern and the Western regions of the USA, as well as in London. For three years following retirement, they served as pastoral care officers for officers in the state of Georgia. For many years they have conducted marriage enrichment retreats and seminars.

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“Besides clearly setting out the Salvationist stance on baptism, Eucharist and ministry, the writer challenges present-day Salvationists to recognize, apply and practice the Army’s approach in everyday living and service.”

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“Each generation provides its peculiar challenges to the life and mission of the Church. In responding to those challenges, the Church searches the Scriptures and its faith and inevitably discovers aspects of its life and calling which need to be taken more seriously in the light of the present situation. In this way historical circumstances stimulate the recovery of neglected areas of ecclesiology.

The Salvation Army came into being in an era when the urban Church was, for the most part, neglecting its missional calling. The social, economic and spiritual alienation of the poor masses cried out to the Church for response, but few heard. The early Salvationists were among the few who did. The cry drove them to rediscover the pre-eminence to the work of the New Testament Church, and out of this rediscovery the Salvation Army came into being.”

—COMMISSIONER PHIL NEEDHAM (from his Introduction)