



**MONASH** University

**The Salvation Army and the Social Gospel:  
Reconciling evangelical intent and social concern**

*Jason Davies-Kildea*

*Dip.Miss., B.Theol., M.Theol., M.Soc.Sci*

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## Abstract

The Salvation Army is one of the best-known community organisations in Australia and is highly respected for its service to those in need – at the frontlines of natural disasters, housing the homeless and lending a helping hand to struggling families. What is less well known to those outside the movement is that The Salvation Army is a Christian church. Unlike the general public, the members of this church, who are called Salvationists, see their primary purpose through the lens of evangelical Christianity. All Salvationists are involved in church activities but only a much smaller proportion take part in the Army's social work.

A series of interviews with Salvation Army officers undertaken for this research revealed that the organisation's evangelical and social service arms often appear to be engaged in intraorganisational contestation, competition and conflict. Because some of the driving influences of conflict are related to wider social changes, such as increasing secularisation, they can also be seen to impact upon other churches and faith-based organisations. As their congregations diminish in size and number and their social service agencies continue to expand, many Australian churches are raising questions about organisational identity and mission. In addition to the numerous requirements and restrictions placed upon services by government contracting, the professionalisation of social work has seen the large-scale withdrawal of both religious professionals and laypeople from the frontlines of service delivery. The changing face of their social ministries has left churches wondering about what is left of their spiritual mission and what role they are now meant to play in society.

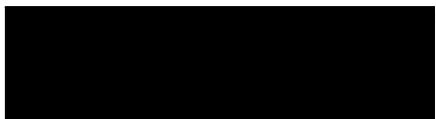
This research explores intraorganisational conflict within The Salvation Army in order to better understand what it is about, how it manifests and what drives it. Many of these conflictual dynamics are rooted in tensions that are as old as The Salvation Army itself, while others seem to have emerged more clearly in recent decades. They are embodied in the lives of Salvationists, staff and other organisational supporters, such as volunteers and donors. It will be seen that these tensions are continually realised through practices, policies and organisational discourse. However, most of those involved in these struggles recognise that, as problematic as this relationship can sometimes be, The Salvation Army's historic identity requires both evangelical and social work elements to coexist. Can these tensions be resolved or are they a natural part of organisational life?

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## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Print Name: ....JASON DAVIES-KILDEA.....

Date: .....Friday, 11 August 2017.....

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# Glossary of Salvation Army terms<sup>1</sup>

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**Adherent**

An adult member of The Salvation Army who has chosen not to pursue soldiership.

**Cadet**

A Salvationist who is in training for officership.

**Chaplain**

Religious personnel usually assigned to a non-church pastoral role. In The Salvation Army most are officers but some are also soldiers. Chaplaincy occurs in residential programs for homelessness and addictions, as well as offering material and spiritual support in courts, prisons, airports, hospitals and schools.

**Corps**

A Salvation Army church, usually referring to the body of members though also sometimes to the building.

**Corps Officer**

A Salvation Army officer who is appointed to corps ministry i.e. preaching the gospel, worship, Christian teaching and fellowship and service to the community.

**Covenant**

A solemn agreement made by officers and soldiers before God, which contains a range of commitments regarding behaviours and lifestyle.

**Division**

A collection of corps and social programs grouped together by geography and divisional leadership. Smaller divisions are sometimes referred to as Regions.

**Divisional Commander (DC)**

The officer in charge of a division.

**General**

The officer elected to command The Salvation Army worldwide.

**Mercy Seat**

A long bench at which people kneel for prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Year Book* (London: The Salvation Army, 2017). 20-22.

**Officer**

A Salvationist who has been trained, commissioned and ordained as a minister of religion. Commissioned officer ranks include: lieutenant, captain, major, lieut-colonel, colonel, commissioner and general.

**Salvationist**

Usually refers to officers and soldiers.

**Soldier**

A member of a corps who has been enrolled and signed the Soldiers' Covenant, committing themselves to The Salvation Army's doctrinal beliefs and lifestyle.

**Territorial Commander (TC)**

The officer in command of The Salvation Army in a territory.

**Territory**

A country, part of a country or several countries combined, in which Salvation Army work is organised and governed.

# Chapter One: Defining the Problem

## Introduction

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The Salvation Army is one of the best-known community organisations in Australia and is highly respected for its service to those in need – at the frontlines of natural disasters, housing the homeless and lending a helping hand to struggling families. What is less well known to those outside the movement is that The Salvation Army is a Christian church. Once the driving force of an evangelical movement dedicated to social change, the organisation's religious roots are increasingly becoming a fact of history and less a noticeable presence within the community. For an organisation that was built upon Christian social care, the gradual but steady erosion of its spiritual identity, at least in the public eye, is deeply concerning to many Salvationists.<sup>2</sup>

The contrast between the Australian community's view of The Salvation Army and that of its own members is striking. Salvationists readily identify their organisation primarily as a church and secondarily by its commitment to social justice, which is seen through a multitude of caring programs. All Salvationists are involved in church activities but a much smaller proportion take part in the Army's social work.<sup>3</sup> However, for the general public, the impression is reversed – many know the Salvos only as a social welfare organisation and even those who are aware of the movement's Christian roots are likely to see this characteristic as secondary. Decades of advertising have portrayed the uniformed Salvationist as the exemplar of compassionate outreach. Yet, the more common reality is that the uniform signifies a Salvationist on their way to church on Sunday morning, while the grittier task of helping the homeless and marginalised is undertaken by a paid social worker in jeans.

A series of interviews with Salvation Army officers<sup>4</sup> undertaken for this research revealed that the organisation's evangelical and social service arms often appear to be engaged in intraorganisational contestation, competition and conflict. However, most of those involved in these struggles recognise

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<sup>2</sup> Salvationists is a term that refers broadly to the church membership of The Salvation Army.

<sup>3</sup> Salvationists frequently refer to their organisation as 'the Army' while most Australians know them as 'the Salvos'. Throughout this thesis, the Army and the Salvos are used interchangeably to refer to The Salvation Army, as are descriptors such as movement or organisation.

<sup>4</sup> Salvation Army officers are ordained clergy who are assigned a military rank and may be appointed to a church, social service or administrative role by the organisation's leadership.

that, as problematic as this relationship can sometimes be, The Salvation Army's historic identity requires both evangelical and social work elements to coexist. Can these tensions be resolved or are they a natural part of organisational life? The following excerpt from a Salvation Army magazine illustrates some of these tensions:

Along with the spiritual work, the Army applied the social gospel ... And the more the Army got involved in social work, the more it was praised. We gained quite a reputation for ourselves as a humanitarian organization. And it was at this point, so very subtly as to be unnoticed, that the Army began to change ... Governments gave us grants. People poured money into our coffers. Donors stuffed envelopes with cheques and mailed them to us. Humanitarian work was profitable. Much more profitable than spiritual work ...

Our social programs grew at the expense of our spiritual ones. And so we find ourselves today on the brink of morphing into another YMCA, which began in 1844 as another Christian mission to the young men of London, England, "to substitute Bible study and prayer for life on the streets," but is now a world-class humanitarian organization with little or no Christian message. Humanitarian work is good but that is not our calling as The Salvation Army. Our work is first and foremost spiritual.<sup>5</sup>

This research explores intraorganisational conflict within The Salvation Army to better understand what it is about, how it manifests and what drives it. Many of these conflictual dynamics are rooted in tensions that are as old as The Salvation Army itself, while others seem to have emerged more clearly in recent decades. They are embodied in the lives of Salvationists, staff and other organisational supporters, such as volunteers and donors. It will be seen that these tensions are continually realised through practices, policies and organisational discourse. A social worker who had been employed by The Salvation Army for several years told me once that they had assumed their job made them a 'Salvo', until an officer pointed out that this term only referred to uniformed Salvationists. This example demonstrates how underlying conflict about organisational mission and identity can be revealed through messages and practices that reinforce prevailing power through exclusion. As concerning as these tensions within the movement are for The Salvation Army, the Salvos are not the only religious group experiencing internal challenges linked to questions around identity, belonging and missional purpose. Because some of the driving influences of conflict are related to wider social changes, such as increasing secularisation, they can also be seen to impact upon other churches and faith-based organisations.

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<sup>5</sup> Fred Ash, "Our future lies in our past," *Salvationist*, 15/1/10 2010.

## **Questioning identity and mission**

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As their congregations diminish in size and number and their social service agencies continue to expand, many Australian churches are raising questions about organisational identity and mission.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the numerous requirements and restrictions placed upon services by government contracting, the professionalisation of social work has seen the large-scale withdrawal of both religious professionals and laypeople from the frontlines of service delivery.<sup>7</sup> The changing face of their social ministries has left churches wondering about what is left of their spiritual mission and what role they are now meant to play in society.

In 2016, both the Catholic and Uniting Churches ran conferences that tried to address this perceived missional disconnection. The Catholic Social Services conference, "Review, Reimagine, Renew: Mission making a difference in a changing world", was explicitly focussed on the social context in which their services operate, with a view to shaping responses in light of Catholic Social Teaching on compassion, justice and the common good.<sup>8</sup> Uniting Care partnered with the Uniting Church's Centre for Theology and Ministry as well as the Diaconal Research Institute, University of Heidelberg, Pilgrim Theological College and the University of Divinity to host a conference unambiguously entitled 'Recapturing Our Soul'. The purpose of the conference acknowledged that due to "the professionalisation of health provision in an increasingly plural society, some gap has developed between believing communities and the associated agencies" and promises to examine this gap with a view to bringing together "Uniting communities, church congregations, community service delivery and the state sector."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ray Cleary, *Reclaiming Welfare for Mission* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2012); Wilma Gallet, "Christian mission or unholy alliance? The changing role of church-related organisations in welfare-to-work service delivery" (University of Melbourne, 2016); Gabrielle McMullen and John Warhurst, eds., *Listening, Learning and Leading: The impact of Catholic identity and mission* (Ballarat: Connor Court Publishing, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> David Ranson, "A Service Shaped by Catholic Identity," in *Identity and mission in Catholic agencies*, ed. Neil Ormerod (Strathfield, N.S.W.: St Pauls Publications, 2008), 86.

<sup>8</sup> Catholic Social Services, "Review, Reimagine, Renew," Catholic Social Services Victoria, <http://www.css.org.au/MissionRenew>.

<sup>9</sup> Uniting Care Victoria and Tasmania, "ROSConference: Melbourne 2016 - Recapturing Our Soul," Uniting Care Victoria and Tasmania, <http://rosconference.org.au/>.

This is a conversation that clearly has currency but it has also been going on for some time. Almost a decade ago, Bishop Michael Putney described the significance of this identity question for the Catholic Church:

The major task asked of the Catholic Church in Australia at this point of its history may well be to find the language to describe to itself, and to others, who it is in this non-religious, secular context. Our ability to do that in a way that is faithful and yet has some chance of convincing the secular 'other' of its credibility and, ultimately, its beauty, is the most challenging task that lies ahead of us.<sup>10</sup>

Bishop Putney and David Ranson both point to the vital link between identity and mission: *Who you are as an organisation is inseparable from what you do.*<sup>11</sup> Yet, in a rapidly changing social environment, activities that were once central to organisational identity may no longer have the same ongoing relevance. Organisations, perhaps especially faith-based organisations, can readily find themselves so occupied in being faithful to their historic missions that they may fail to notice changes around them that call into question the methods, or even purpose, of their activities. Ranson articulates this challenge very well when he says:

the identity of institutions generally, and the identity of Catholic institutions, in particular, must be thought of as something caught in a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity - constantly growing; continually adapting; and being engaged with, and challenged by, variable circumstances - whilst, at the same time, capable of recognising itself as an uninterrupted narrative of meaning. The challenge is to find a way to affirm Catholic identity which simultaneously values that which is contiguous to its significance and remains responsive to context.<sup>12</sup>

These concerns, articulated from a Catholic perspective, are broadly similar to those being raised in other church contexts. Churches are grappling with an evolving sense of mission and identity, while trying to stay faithful to their traditions. At the same time, messages from both within and outside their borders are challenging the churches' sense of ongoing relevance to the Australian community. Intraorganisational conflict between churches and their social service arms is not merely *occurring* within this unstable context; it is *driving* some of the most difficult questions.

This is not a new phenomenon. Longstanding organisations always need to rediscover and reinterpret their identities for a new age. However, the current conflicts are heightened by external pressures and the absence of a common authority between churches and social services that

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<sup>10</sup> Putney in Neil Ormerod, ed. *Identity and mission in Catholic agencies* (Strathfield, N.S.W.: St Pauls Publications, 2008), 29.

<sup>11</sup> Ranson in *ibid.*, 84. Cf. Putney, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ranson in *ibid.*, 85.

defines missional meaning. While one could reasonably expect a highly structured military hierarchy such as The Salvation Army to provide clarity in such circumstances, the situation is more dynamic and contested than it might at first appear.

A foundational idea underpinning the approach taken in this research is that *organisational identity is an ongoing social construction by diverse stakeholders in an evolving social context*. How The Salvation Army defines its own identity or describes its mission are the products of many people and processes in conversation with each other and their socio-cultural environment over time. Even when conflicts about mission are framed as ‘all or nothing’ battles, each side is being co-created by engagement with the other.

The military metaphor on which The Salvation Army is modelled may give the impression of a rigid, hierarchical institution and there are indeed some parts of the organisation that operate this way. For the most part, though, the reality is much more fluid and more complex. A hierarchical form may represent an organisation’s structure but simplistic interpretations of how this functions will fail to take into account the nuances of relationship and everyday acts of subversion and compromise that make up the complex interplay of organisational life. The following example about government illustrates this notion:

While it is always defined as a legal warrant, authority is less a fixed quantity of power poured into a mandate, and is more like a negotiated relationship between unequals requiring interpretation and testing. Each instance of authority is a mix of certain rights to act, plus a boundary with more contested issues. Once we see that authority is subject to significant movement and flow, to the process of intra-governmental politics, we can see that policy-making rests not on a fixed foundation but upon an alliance of forces among separate agents who must agree on actions before a result can be achieved. Each attempt to enact or change policy is therefore a means to interpret a prevailing distribution of authority.<sup>13</sup>

While the statement above relates to government policy making, the same principles may be seen to apply in any large organisation, including The Salvation Army. The image promoted to the outside world is one of a united front brought together by a common purpose. Those inside the organisation may receive the same messages but they know that the rhetoric does not always correspond with their lived experience.

The Army’s leadership frequently seeks to promote unity and reinforce the bonds between its members by issuing clear directives and rallying their troops into mission. Often this involves an

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<sup>13</sup> Mark Considine, *Making Public Policy: Institutions, Actors, Strategies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005). 31.

appeal to the movement's history or even its divine calling, in an attempt to bolster the authority of leadership. The report of The Salvation Army's International Spiritual Life Commission issued a 'Call to Salvationists' that opened with these words "The Founders of The Salvation Army declared their belief that *God raised up our Movement to enter partnership with him* in his 'great business' of saving the world. We call upon Salvationists worldwide to reaffirm our shared calling to this great purpose, as signified in our name."<sup>14</sup> (italics mine) The Salvation Army's most recent edition of the Handbook of Doctrine strongly affirms the organisation's identity as a denomination of the Christian "Church Universal ... called into and sustained in being by God."<sup>15</sup> Even though these appeals come from the highest levels of the organisation, they can be seen to represent an aspirational vision held by those temporarily in power rather than objective, universal and permanent descriptions. Although not part of its public image, what is at the centre of a movement's identity and mission is being continually contested in light of emerging knowledge, social trends and political plays to gain or maintain power.

The interviews in this research reveal significant diversity among the perspectives of Salvation Army officers, even though all share a common vocation, serve in the same territory and are no more than a generation apart. They show how officers have been informed by varying experiences and that these experiences can cause them to question and challenge the authority of their leaders. Even appeals to divine mandates, such as those illustrated above, are not universally agreed upon but may also be subject to contestation and disagreement.

While there are some identifiable lines of commonality among interview participants, they do not fall neatly into organisational factions. Some corps officers<sup>16</sup> have more in common with social program chaplains<sup>17</sup> than they do with other corps officers. Furthermore, because similar and increasing signs of conflict are appearing between other denominations and their agencies, they may be pointing to common factors in the external environment. Considering this, the challenges that are being

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Street, *Called to be God's People* (London: The Salvation Army, 1999). 7.

<sup>15</sup> The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (London: Salvation Books, 2010). 310.

<sup>16</sup> Corps is The Salvation Army term for a local church. The corps officer is the minister in charge of that church.

<sup>17</sup> Chaplains are social officers who may be appointed to homeless shelters, prisons, courts, drug treatment programs, crisis facilities, airports or hospitals.

experienced around organisational identity and mission can be seen as not just internally driven but profoundly influenced by changing views about religion and society more widely.<sup>18</sup>

## **The bigger picture: Faith-based organisations and the welfare state**

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Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the evolution of welfare states in developed countries across the world has been changing the way that religious groups engage with the societies in which they exist. For centuries beforehand, the poor and marginalised survived largely through the charity of religious benefactors. Spiritual motivations drove charitable giving of funds sourced through congregations of one type or another; those who had a greater share passing on what they could to those who had less. Churchgoers who contributed financially felt that they were fulfilling a religious obligation. In some cases, this was encouraged by the promise of spiritual rewards. In addition to financial contributions, practical assistance such as providing meals, a roof over someone's head or a job were seen as the actions of neighbours before they became understood to be the responsibility of governments. In twenty-first century Australia, such notions mostly seem to belong to a distant past.

Though usually still the leading non-government providers, Australian faith-based organisations are now progressively part of a wider market of community service providers competing for billions of dollars in government funds. Larger amounts of money have enabled faith-based organisations to do significantly more than they previously were able to do. However, the marketisation and commodification of the community sector also makes these services increasingly reflect governmental bureaucracies and business standards, driving for continuous quality improvement, greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering desired outcomes to the contracting agents. Philanthropic care has become big business.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Fred Lamar Kniss, *Disquiet in the land : cultural conflict in American Mennonite communities* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997). 11; Mark Chaves, *Ordaining women : culture and conflict in religious organizations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). 12.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Housego and Terry O'Brien, "Delivery of Public Services by Non-Government Organisations," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 71(2012); Gabrielle Meagher and Karen Healy, "Caring, Controlling, Contracting and Counting: Governments and Non-profits in Community Services," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 62, no. 3 (2003); Ed Carson and Lorraine Kerr, "Contractualism, workforce-development and sustainability in the community-services sector in Australia," *Third Sector Review* 16, no. 1 (2010).

The shifting context for the delivery of social and community services has not gone unnoticed by faith-based organisations, prompting a series of introspective questions about the impact of government funding upon the churches' mission.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, the conditions under which contracted services are delivered have become highly prescriptive, reducing differentiation between providers. On the other, religious activities that were once commonplace amongst church-based agencies, such as chapel services, are disappearing from the social service environment.

However, these changes in social service delivery are only one part of the social context that is heightening intraorganisational tensions in faith-based organisations. The impact of increasing secularisation more broadly can be seen in declining church memberships and attendance rates, the decreasing prominence of religious authority, and even credibility, within Australian society and an uptake in forms of religion and spirituality beyond the control of the institutional churches. These changes, which have been taking place for decades, have had a destabilising effect upon religious structures and exacerbated existing tensions between churches and their social service agencies. However, the nature and degree of the conflict that has resulted from these tensions is not the same in each church, due to varying subcultural, demographic and historical factors.

## **What's distinct about The Salvation Army?**

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The Major Church Providers' coalition in Australia includes Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church and Salvation Army representatives.<sup>21</sup> The group was formed to bring together the key faith-based community organisations in the country so that they could unite on issues of social policy and advocacy with the Federal Government and, through the media, communicate to the Australian public. In some sectors, such as employment services, these four churches have represented well over half the quantum of services provided across the country.

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<sup>20</sup> Dennis Garland, "The Salvation Army and the state of welfare : an analysis of text and narrative : an analysis of the discourses influencing the development of Salvation Army policy" (University of Western Sydney, 2004); Samuel Gregg, "Playing with Fire: Churches, Welfare Services and Government Contracts," *Issue Analysis* 14(2000); Douglas George Hynd, "On (Not) Becoming 'An Extension Of The State' In 'Seeking The Flourishing Of The City': A Theologically-Informed Inquiry Into The Impact On 'Church-Related' Agencies' Of Contracting With Government To Provide Social Welfare And Human Services In Australia, 1996 To 2013" (Australian Catholic University, 2016); Gallet, "Christian mission or unholy alliance? The changing role of church-related organisations in welfare-to-work service delivery."

<sup>21</sup> Major Church Providers, "Major Church Providers welcome meeting with Deputy Prime Minister," Major Church Providers, <http://community.newsarticles.net.au/Religion/Major-Church-Providers-Welcome-Meeting-With-Deputy-Prime-Minister.htm>.

While The Salvation Army's suite of social service services earned its place in this group, its church demographic footprint is much smaller, equivalent to only six per cent of the Uniting Church, just over one and a half per cent of the Anglican Church and only around one per cent the size of the Catholic Church in Australia.<sup>22</sup> The Salvation Army does not even make the national top ten listing of Christian churches. Though all of these churches are facing challenges in membership and attendance rates, the contrast for The Salvation Army is more marked because its congregations are so small compared to its large array of social services and its public reputation.

In the 2015-16 financial year, The Salvation Army in Australia reported income for its social work of just under \$800 million.<sup>23</sup> More than half of this amount directly relates to service delivery contracts with state and Commonwealth governments, a significantly larger figure than the £400 first granted by the Victorian Government in the 1880s "to dispense in keeping the starving from perishing."<sup>24</sup> Most of this growth in social programs has occurred over the past 30 years, a period that is also marked by consistent decline in The Salvation Army's church membership.<sup>25</sup> There is no possibility of balancing the church and social service activities within The Salvation Army – in every dimension, the social side vastly outweighs its church presence.

Another element that intensifies The Salvation Army's particular situation is its commitment to evangelistic ministries. Since its birth in the revival period of the mid-nineteenth century, The Salvation Army has remained dedicated to soul-saving evangelism at the core of its theology and practice.<sup>26</sup> Not only has this commitment generated periodic tensions with the more pragmatic social service arm of the movement, but in an increasingly secular and pluralistic Australian society, it has been demonstrably failing for at least 50 years.<sup>27</sup> Compounding this inability to attract outsiders into the church side of the organisation, there has also been a steady exodus of young people from the movement. Being born into the faith is not proving sufficient to hold on to young Salvationists, the

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<sup>22</sup> Philip Hughes, Margaret Fraser, and Stephen Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures* (Nunawading: Christian Research Association, 2012). 5.

<sup>23</sup> The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory 2016 Annual Report," (Melbourne, 2016); The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory 2016 Annual Report," (Sydney, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: The Salvation Army, 1890). 275.

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures*: 90.

<sup>26</sup> Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*: 132-33, 42.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 9.

clear majority of whom leave by the end of their teen years – though this is a pattern familiar to other churches as well.<sup>28</sup>

The relationship between ecclesiastical functions and social service plays out differently in other denominations. By comparison, the Catholic Church has 125 years of explicit social teaching backed by centuries of community service, which yields an approach to the common good that does not fall into conflict or competition with any evangelistic impulse.<sup>29</sup> The Uniting Church also shows little sign of being burdened by the kind of evangelical urgency that drives some Salvationists. Some Anglicans share a similar evangelical bent with The Salvation Army, but the comparative size of the Anglican church suggests that they are likely to remain a force in Australia for some time to come. The Salvation Army's statistical decline in church membership and lower overall numbers means that this movement may have less than two decades left as an Australian denomination. What might happen to its social services at that time is currently unclear.

The Salvation Army's two-year residential training program for officers is also significantly shorter than other churches and focusses almost exclusively on the theological and pastoral requirements of corps officership. This means that although the proportion of officers in social program chaplaincy can sometimes be relatively high (up to a third in some divisions), most of the learning for these roles happens 'on the job' and very few officers progress into management. At the same time, senior positions within the organisation are reserved for officers and cannot be consistently filled from the small pool of officers with sufficient experience and expertise in social program management. Consequently, an organisation with a comparatively large array of social programs is generally governed by officers with ecclesiastical and administrative backgrounds because there has been insufficient investment in building social service expertise.

The combination of the factors outlined above creates a distinctive situation for The Salvation Army, which focusses the challenges that are currently being experienced by all Australian churches in a very particular way. Although the organisation itself is highly recognised in Australia, much less is known about the inner workings of The Salvation Army and especially its religious elements. Yet,

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<sup>28</sup> Philip Hughes, Stephen Reid, and Claire Pickering, *Shaping Australia's Spirituality: A review of Christian ministry in the Australian context* (Melbourne: Mosaic Press, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Charles E. Curran, "Catholic Social Teaching," *The Good Society* 10, no. 1 (2001); Nicholas Coote, "Catholic Social Teaching," *Social Policy & Administration* 23, no. 2 (1989).

these elements are key to understanding the specific drivers of internal conflict within the organisation.

## Inside The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an international movement, founded over 150 years ago in London and brought to Australia in 1880. Its military nomenclature originally served to communicate the missional idea of being at war with sin and evil; it also produced a hierarchical organisational structure that suited its founder's authoritarian leadership style. Organisational authority continues to be invested almost exclusively in the Army's officers, who form the senior leadership of the organisation and hold executive decision making power over all aspects of its work.

Today, The Salvation Army exists in 128 countries and operates in more than 175 different languages. Just over 1.1 million soldiers<sup>30</sup> make up its ranks, under the leadership of more than 16,000 active officers.<sup>31</sup> The Salvation Army has one international leader, its General, who operates out of International Headquarters (IHQ), which is still located in London. Administratively, the work of the Army is then broken up into geographic zones, territories and divisions. Australia currently belongs in the South Pacific and East Asia Zone. Since 1921, the country has been divided into two territories, the Australia Southern Territory (Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia) and the Australia Eastern Territory (New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and Queensland). At the time of writing, these two territories are in the process of being merged back into a single national entity, which will be complete by 2019.

Some 313 Salvation Army churches, known as 'corps', are spread across Australia. Just over 900 Salvation Army officers, who are ordained clergy, can be found in both corps and social work in varying roles from hospital chaplain to youth worker, international disaster relief provider and 'flying padre'.<sup>32</sup> While almost all corps are led by officers, the Army's social services are much more

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<sup>30</sup> A soldier is an adult Salvationist who has signed a covenant that commits them to a series of organisational beliefs and behaviours and has been enrolled in a Salvation Army church or 'corps'.

<sup>31</sup> Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Year Book*: 29.

<sup>32</sup> The flying padre is an officer appointment that encompasses both pastoral care and practical assistance to remote communities in the north of Australia.

dependent upon professional staff and volunteers. Currently, there are almost 10 times more staff than officers and approximately twice as many volunteers as there are staff.<sup>33</sup>

## The author's perspective

I write as an insider to The Salvation Army, a soldier for nearly 30 years and an officer for about half of that time. Yet, mine is also a minority perspective, as I was not born into The Salvation Army but became a convert in my late teens. I have no Salvation Army 'pedigree'; a cultural marker of a social group that generates most of its membership through births and counts its family history by generations of Salvationists.<sup>34</sup>

I see myself as someone 'with a foot in both camps' – the evangelical and social missions – that are the subject of this research. Although I have spent most of my working life in the social services of the Army, I have also led churches and continue to be actively involved in a local corps. My cross-disciplinary academic interests are unusual in The Salvation Army. I have post-graduate qualifications in theology, as well as social policy and human services.

It is this location, across both of the Army's missional streams, which informs my perspective throughout this thesis. I have firsthand experience of the conflicts and contested ground that are revealed in the following pages. Although every effort has been made to mitigate my own subjectivity and bias in this research, my approach has been to openly acknowledge these personal interests and utilise this understanding to deepen the analysis and insight that follows. As an insider to the organisation, I bring knowledge and experiences to the research that may not otherwise be available to an external investigator. However, I have also learned, through conversations with fellow Salvationists, social program staff and colleagues from other faith-based organisations, that the challenges and questions I have experienced are not unique to The Salvation Army. Wider social changes are continually reshaping the context in which churches are trying to engage with their communities and meet local needs.

In another academic work, I explored some of the tensions between The Salvation Army's evangelical and social expressions of mission using a theological lens to interpret the problem. That

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<sup>33</sup> Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Year Book*.

<sup>34</sup> Salvationists meeting for the first time can often be observed trying to locate each other's place within known family groups.

thesis, on the meaning of salvation in The Salvation Army,<sup>35</sup> also introduced the notion of organisational identity as a key factor in an evolving and competitive religious environment. This current research does not dismiss the significance of theology in religious organisations. The sociological approach, however, situates the investigation of intraorganisational conflict within a much broader scope. In doing so, it is hoped that not only will the influence of external factors upon the life of The Salvation Army become clearer but also that the relevance of these insights to other churches will be seen.

## **The way forward: Exploring the evidence**

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This thesis is guided and shaped by the following research objectives:

- To explore the relationship between The Salvation Army's identity as a Christian church and its role as a major social service provider in Australia;
- To examine the nature and content of intraorganisational conflict between these two missional streams;
- To understand the sources and drivers of change in this relationship, as well as their impact on organisational identity and mission; and
- To contribute to sociological studies of other denominations and faith-based organisations that are experiencing similar challenges.

These objectives are so closely related that they frequently overlap. Rather than attempting to deal with them separately, they will appear throughout the course of this research both individually and collectively as they align with the subject matter under discussion. In this final section of the introductory chapter, I summarise the chapters that will follow so that the pathway ahead is clear.

## **Understanding the historical context**

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, when The Salvation Army first came into being, Christianity and social action were frequent, and mutually reinforcing, allies. This relationship included localised social care initiatives springing up in the wake of evangelical revival campaigns, as much as it did with wider movements like the Social Gospel or Christian Socialism. However, over the last 150 years, the ground in which these seeds were once planted has shifted significantly and the once natural synergy between faith and community care is no longer taken for granted. As Australian society has come to reflect both increasing secularisation and plural expressions of religion, the

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<sup>35</sup> Jason Davies-Kildea, *What is the meaning of salvation in The Salvation Army today? Exploring a theology of social service and holistic mission* (Koln: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009).

predominance of Christianity has steadily slipped away; a shift which has become cause for concern amongst those who are used to the previously privileged position.

In Chapter Two, the historical context in which the problems outlined here have developed is examined in more detail. This examination includes reference to the evolution of The Salvation Army, as well as the ways in which similar challenges have played out in other churches.

## **Exploring a theoretical framework**

Chapter Three builds three theoretical interpretive layers to create a distinct model for exploring the challenges that are currently facing The Salvation Army in Australia. The first of these layers takes its lead from the rich field of church-sect theory, one of the oldest ideas in sociology of religion, and shows that there are still applicable learnings from this source. The key aspect used for comparison and contrast here is the relationship between organisational elements and their social context, which may be affirming or conflictual.

The second layer focuses upon the role of secularisation, not only as an external influence, but also as something that is transforming religious organisations from within. It also sets out parameters for interpreting the dual nature of denominations and their associated agencies, which both helps to understand the internal dynamics of The Salvation Army and facilitates comparisons with other churches.

The third and final layer is particularly significant for questions about identity. This layer focuses on how religious groups themselves define what is and is not religious; this approach simultaneously avoids the pitfalls of externally applied definitions and emphasises the power dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

## **Outlining the research methodology**

In Chapter Four, the overarching interpretive framework for conducting qualitative research is explained, as well as the methodology on which this project is based. The reasoning behind key design decisions is given and limitations of the current approach are also laid out. This chapter closes out the first section of the thesis and marks the turn towards an exploration of the field research.

## **Varying opinions about missional identity**

Despite the image of uniformity that comes with the military terminology, The Salvation Army is a much more diverse organisation than many people expect. In Chapter Five, interviews with Salvation Army officers and an examination of both printed and online literature demonstrate that conflicting

identity claims exist within The Salvation Army and that these claims are rooted in varying motives for and means of missional engagement. The significance of this connection shows that for organisations, even more than individuals, ‘what one does’ is inherently and deeply intertwined with ‘who one is’. Diverse and sometimes seemingly irreconcilable views can be mapped along a continuum that illustrates a series of positions about missional purpose – from the notion that social service delivery has become a distraction from the movement’s core evangelical purpose, to the possibility that, in an increasingly secularised environment, spirituality is an optional extra.

## **Two missions**

In Chapter Six, the research interviews reveal the outcomes of increased competition and conflict between the social and evangelical aspects of the organisation’s dual mission. Despite numerous efforts to bring them together, social centres and corps continue to act independently as separate entities pursuing separate missions. In some cases, mutual antagonism and suspicion act to keep the players at bay and reinforce existing prejudices. Corps officership has become normalised as the ideal role for Salvation Army officers, reflecting a lack of expertise in the increasingly professionalised field of social work. Those social officers that remain consequently feel devalued, along with social work staff, because they are made to feel that they are not pursuing the ‘real’ mission of the Army. Even in the administrative domains of the organisation, a decreased understanding of the specialisation required in social work and the nature of its evolving field is felt negatively, resulting in increased bureaucracy and a growing sense of risk averseness.

## **Marking boundaries with theology**

Chapter Seven considers the impact of The Salvation Army’s theological beliefs upon the subjects that have been explored throughout this thesis. In religious groups, theology can support or undermine missional engagement as much as, and sometimes more than, any other factor. While individual approaches to theology vary widely, even amongst Salvation Army officers, there are official theological positions that shape the organisation and its relationship to the world in which it exists. These beliefs and the way that they interact with notions of identity and mission are examined through interview data, written materials and by comparison with other churches.

## **Turning inward**

This crisis of identity within The Salvation Army does not have a single cause, rather it is influenced by a range of factors from both internal and external sources. Chapter Eight continues the examination of interview narratives, focussing initially on organisational changes that may have contributed to current conflicts. These factors range from generational social uplift to the

development of a strong, internal subculture and the consequences of stepping outside that subculture. The institutionalisation of the organisation and its military structure serve to resist change, a function which is exacerbated as The Salvation Army's membership demographics continue to trend towards a smaller and ageing population.

## **The Salvation Army and Australian society**

Chapter Nine discusses The Salvation Army's relationship with the Australian community and some of the reasons for the divergent fortunes of its social and evangelical efforts. The data from Australian Census and other church surveys, as well as The Salvation Army's own internal records, shows consistent and even accelerating decline over at least the past three decades. However, the same time period corresponds with massive growth in the organisation's suite of social services. The difference between the public popularity of the Army's social services and the ongoing exodus from its churches raises questions about the differing ways in which these two missional streams have engaged (and disengaged) with Australian society in the 20th and 21st centuries. These questions are examined in light of available evidence from public and organisational literature, as well as commentary produced through the field interviews.

# Chapter Two: Historical and Social Context

## Introduction

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Intraorganisational disputes have been a part of The Salvation Army's organisational life throughout its history. From the moment that social work first began to play a substantial role in the movement, concerns about competing interests with evangelical work have been raised. In 1994, Norman Murdoch offered this description:

Tensions that existed with the army by 1888, between its revivalist wing, which worked to build the kingdom of God, and its social wing, which gave material succor to the poor to improve the kingdom of man, exist to the present. The Salvation Army trains its officers primarily as evangelists but then assigns them to serve under two administrative wings which compete for status within the movement. Within its ranks, the army argues over whether or not the two wings are congruous and whether or not social reform fits with its original nineteenth-century revival aim. In some cities, social programs absorb as much as 90 percent of its budget. Still the army has not considered excising either the social service or the religious program to achieve a singular ministry. Tension between the wings has been contained, with only occasional expressions of frustration.<sup>36</sup>

Murdoch's account still resonates a couple of decades later, except that, if anything, the discord between the two 'wings' appears to have increased. In order to better understand the roots of these issues, and why internal tensions might be getting worse, this chapter will explore the historical and social contexts out of which they have arisen. Some of the issues which were briefly introduced in the last chapter are expanded to show that although The Salvation Army has its own distinctive challenges, many of the questions that will be explored throughout this thesis are also broadly applicable to other churches.

## The first generations (1865-1929)<sup>37</sup>

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The historical records of the first six decades of The Salvation Army's life describe the emergence of a movement that captured the attention of the world into which it had marched. They also show that divergent views about the movement's missional purpose existed from very early on, even within the family that founded it. These differing perspectives have continuing relevance, not just because of the ongoing presence of intraorganisational conflict, but because Salvationists frequently draw

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<sup>36</sup> Norman H. Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994). 171.

<sup>37</sup> The timeline for this period begins in 1865 with the formation of the East London Christian Mission, which would be renamed The Salvation Army in 1878. The latter date, 1929, signals the changeover from the Booth dynasty to a new constitution that allowed the election of future Generals.

upon the authority of the Army's Founders to justify their own arguments about identity and mission today.

## **The Salvation Army's founders: William and Catherine Booth**

When William and Catherine Booth first began the work that would eventually become The Salvation Army, it was unequivocally an evangelical enterprise with no intention of straying beyond a soul-saving mission. It was William that saw his calling as especially focussed upon the poor of East London, a group that he regarded as being forgotten and neglected by the mainstream church. However, it was not long before William's calling brought his attention to the material plight of the poor amongst whom he preached. The joining of social and evangelical concerns that would identify The Salvation Army from its inception became indelibly marked upon him.

Catherine supported William's efforts but her unapologetic priority on evangelism can be clearly seen in her *Papers on Aggressive Christianity*.<sup>38</sup> In *The Salvation Army in Relationship to the Church and State and Other Papers*, Catherine bemoans the condition of the poor in an apparently Christian country. She sees it as a Christian responsibility to take this situation into hand, but is also convinced that Christianity is something of a cure for the evils in which the poor find themselves engaged. She describes Christianity as a 'civilising' influence on the masses.<sup>39</sup>

In 1881, Catherine preached a series of sermons about true and false charity, which acknowledged the importance of caring for those in need but placed an absolute priority on the salvation of souls. Here are her words:

My friends, are you more concerned about relieving temporal distress than you are about feeding famished souls? If you are, you may know where your charity comes from! Don't misrepresent me, and say that I teach all of one, and none of the other ... I know that real Christianity cares for body and soul. Bless God, it does; but, always mind that it sets the soul FIRST. I know the Master fed the multitude; but, before that, He had them with Him three days, trying to save their souls, and when they got hungry in the process, then He made them sit down, and fed their bodies. He always looked after the soul first, and so does everyone possessed of Divine Charity.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Catherine Booth, *Papers on Aggressive Christianity* (London: The Salvation Army, 1880).

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Mumford Booth, *The Salvation army in relation to the church and state, and other addresses* (London: S.W. Partridge and co. etc., 1883).

<sup>40</sup> Catherine Booth, *Godliness : being reports of a series of addresses delivered at James's Hall, London* (Boston: McDonald and Gill, 1881).

Catherine was a renowned preacher and her appeals to the wealthier crowds on the West side of London significantly aided William's efforts to aid the poor and suffering in the East End. Her own engagement with the social efforts of the Army was naturally more focussed on women, seeking the moral redemption of the "dangerous classes" through conversion to Christianity. For Catherine, if the soul was secured in Heaven, then nothing else mattered, even death. She put this position forward explicitly, saying: "Oh! How I see the emptiness and vanity of everything compared with the salvation of the soul. What does it matter if a man dies in the workhouse? If he dies on a doorstep covered with wounds, like Lazarus – what does it matter if his soul is saved?"<sup>41</sup>

There is one interesting exception that occurred towards the end of her life. When commissioning female officers to social work in the late 1880s, Catherine gave some consolation to her charges, telling them "not to wish that they had been called to do more spiritual work. They could be as spiritual in sewing on buttons as in dealing with girls about their souls."<sup>42</sup> This statement is remarkably close to a comment that William had made about five years earlier. When asked if The Salvation Army 'proper' (i.e., the evangelical mission) had suffered from the competition of social operations, he responded: "I know what you mean; but in my estimation it is all The Salvation Army *proper*. We want to abolish these distinctions, and make it as religious to sell a guernsey or feed a hungry man as it is to take up a collection in the barracks. It is all part of our business, which is to save the world body and soul, for time and for eternity!"<sup>43</sup>

While these ideas had time to develop in William and a more holistic perspective is reflected in his later writings, Catherine's life was cut short due to cancer and her evangelical zeal never gave way to the broader visions to which her husband was exposed. In a letter to W. T. Stead, who was one of the key influences on the development of Salvation Army social work, Catherine said "Praise up humanitarianism as much as you like, but don't confuse it with Christianity, nor suppose that it will ultimately lead its followers to Christ. This is confounding things that differ."<sup>44</sup> Murdoch believes that

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Norman H. Murdoch, "Frank Smith: Salvationist Socialist," in *National Salvation Army Social Services Conference* (Orlando, Florida 2003), 8.

<sup>42</sup> Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*: 154.

<sup>43</sup> William Booth, "Interview - 14th January 1893," *The War Cry*, 14th January 1893.

<sup>44</sup> Catherine Bramwell-Booth, *Catherine Booth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970). 302.

by the time she died, Catherine Booth had embraced the social work of the Army; however, she refused to advocate these views publicly.<sup>45</sup>

William Booth's opinion on the relationship between evangelism and social action was not always as clear as Catherine's. It appeared to change over time, under the influence of a growing suite of social programs and some prominent advocates, though the evolution of his thinking appears to be neither constant nor linear. Two of his writings stand out in relation to the subject at hand. The first was an 1889 article in *All the World* magazine called "Salvation for Both Worlds."<sup>46</sup> The article describes the experiences and reflections that led to a broadening of William's understanding of salvation, as well as its implications for mission. He writes:

the Bible and my own observation concurred in showing me that the highest service I could render to man was to rescue him from this position of antagonism to the Divine Government ... But as time wore on, the earthly miseries connected with the condition of the people began to force themselves more particularly on my notice ... I discovered that the miseries from which I sought to save man in the next world were substantially the same as those from which I everywhere found him suffering in this [world].<sup>47</sup>

A year later, shortly after Catherine's death, William published *In Darkest England and the Way Out*,<sup>48</sup> outlining an ambitious plan for the social redemption of the 'submerged tenth' by setting up work farms in colonies around the world. Though his sole authorship is historically questionable, *In Darkest England* is still the most thorough exposition of The Salvation Army's social goals in this critical period. Later commentators have noted that the publication heralds a change in Booth's theological and missiological outlook - from 'pure' evangelism to a more holistic mission, with an emphasis on social or temporal salvation. According to Murdoch, it was at this point that The Salvation Army's association with social reform was permanently fixed in the public eye, even if a few qualms remained internally.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*: 165.

<sup>46</sup> William Booth, "Salvation For Both Worlds: A Retrospect," *All The World*, January, 1889 1889.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*.

<sup>49</sup> Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*: 152-67.

Murdoch argues that the division created in the Army's ranks at that time "never completely meshed. Salvationists who had accepted Booth's call to revivalism saw social work as a distraction."<sup>50</sup> One example of this was Colonel Brindley Boon, who, like Catherine, firmly believed that the only cure for society's ills was for individuals to be converted to Christianity, which would result in them leading more moral lives. Boon, who at one time led the evangelical stream of the Army's mission, thought that even social conditions such as unemployment "could only be altered by inner change. Land laws, aristocracy, and religious people did not create the condition of the unemployed."<sup>51</sup> While Boon's views might seem naïve today, they are not far from the ideological positions of the religious right even now. The Salvation Army in Australia has just recently debated the merits of a 'Work for the Dole' program, which though lacking in Boon's religious rationale, is founded on the same premise of individual responsibility for social and economic trends.

George Scott Railton was the first Commissioner of The Salvation Army and a close associate of the Booths. After her death, Railton appointed himself as "the custodian of Catherine Booth's strict evangelical tradition."<sup>52</sup> He publicly protested the movement's introduction of an insurance scheme by dressing himself in sackcloth at Queen's Hall and preaching against it.<sup>53</sup> In Railton's eyes, the primacy of the Army's evangelical work was being compromised by the burgeoning social work – a fatal distraction, because in the end all this "social does not save."<sup>54</sup> Railton exemplifies the uncompromising division between evangelical and social work in The Salvation Army and is remembered as "a renowned foe of social work."<sup>55</sup>

The legacy of these key characters in the early Salvation Army continues to fuel internal debates around the relationship between the movement's dual missions. Not only have these debates remained unresolved, but their ongoing presence for well over a century has undoubtedly shaped the movement's historic character. However, it was not only The Salvation Army that struggled to reconcile evangelism and social action.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 165-66.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Murdoch, "Frank Smith: Salvationist Socialist," 8.

<sup>55</sup> Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*: 166.

## The Great Reversal – An end to evangelical social action?

In the early decades of the twentieth century, rising tensions within Christianity created a massive divide in theology and practice, the consequences of which are still discernible today. This division between and within churches illustrates the interaction between wider social forces and the organisational dynamics that shape everyday practices and beliefs. Social forces set the stage for religious revolutions, just as they do in other areas of life. Major social upheavals, such as the post-Great War disillusionment, frequently result in the reshaping of religious ideals and expressions. Mark Regnerus and Christian Smith point out that a sense of competition between religious traditions can cause these changes to occur in disparate, even opposite, directions.<sup>56</sup>

As the nineteenth century waned, the rise of critical biblical scholarship, theological liberalism and the social gospel reflected a socially engaged Christianity that was attempting to keep pace with rapid cultural change. Liberal Christianity in particular was deeply influenced by social trends towards secularisation, accompanied by scientific advances and an emphasis on rational authority. Liberals did not want to discard their religion but they sought to reshape it and communicate it in ways that would appeal to a changing world. A powerful, reactionary counter-movement arose in response, which was instead focussed on individual conversion, shaped by pre-millennial ideas and ultimately gave birth to Christian fundamentalism. Illustrative of the tension are these words of one of the leading evangelists of the early twentieth century, Billy Sunday, who responded to a critique by social gospeller, Washington Gladden, saying “we’ve had enough of this godless social service nonsense ... trying to make a religion out of social service with Jesus Christ left out.”<sup>57</sup> While the main battleground existed in the United States, similar patterns were also emerging in Britain.<sup>58</sup>

One of the worst casualties of this split was evangelical social action. As fundamentalists strived to draw sharp lines that separated them from liberals, the close association between the social gospel and social action resulted in a large-scale withdrawal of evangelicals from all kinds of community endeavours. The withdrawal of evangelical Christians from their own strongly, socially-engaged

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<sup>56</sup> Mark D. Regnerus and Christian Smith, "Selective Deprivatization among American Religious Traditions: The Reversal of the Great Reversal," *Social Forces* 76, no. 4 (1998): 1351.

<sup>57</sup> George M. Marsden, *Understanding fundamentalism and evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 31.

<sup>58</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain : a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London ; Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989). 212.

roots was later dubbed 'The Great Reversal' by historian Timothy L. Smith.<sup>59</sup> According to David Moberg:

The sharp polarization that developed during the conflict made it politically impossible to remain both an evangelical and a social gospeller, and emotional involvements prevented Christians from recognizing the fallacies of being impaled upon the horns of a false dilemma. Christians became either evangelistic or socially involved, not both.<sup>60</sup>

For The Salvation Army, which had been explicitly established as an evangelical mission to the poor, the pressure to choose sides was particularly difficult. A more robust theological foundation for its social ministries might have exposed the fallacies of this spurious dichotomy but the Salvationists' leaning towards activism left the movement somewhat vulnerable to external pressures such as this.

There were, however, some mitigating factors that acted to keep both evangelical and social programs as active streams within The Salvation Army. As long as Christian social movements held fast to their mission amongst the poor and marginalised, the temptation to succumb to a more disengaged fundamentalism could be held at bay. The Wesleyan/Holiness tradition from which the Army was birthed held to an ethic of social holiness that was love in action.<sup>61</sup> This pragmatic orientation was essential in resisting the extremes of the fundamentalist/modernist conflicts of the early twentieth century.<sup>62</sup> The Salvation Army experienced growing tensions between its two missional arms but they were not sufficient to split the organisation.

Susie Stanley comments that:

Wesleyan/Holiness groups initially did not participate in the battle over the Bible ... The insistence upon the internal witness of the Holy Spirit as a source of biblical authority meant that Wesleyan/Holiness adherents were not as worried as fundamentalists by issues emerging from higher criticism ... The popularity of the

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<sup>59</sup> David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Reconciling Evangelism and Social Concern* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 30.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>61</sup> Susie C. Stanley, "'Bumping' into Modernity: Primitive/Modern Tensions in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement," in *The primitive church in the modern world*, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 130.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-22.

inductive method of Bible study at many Wesleyan/Holiness schools is another factor contributing to the movement's openness to higher criticism.<sup>63</sup>

Like the social gossellers, the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition rejected the fundamentalist pessimism about the fate of the world, sharing the optimism of modernity.<sup>64</sup> They stressed God's immanence, God's presence in the world to positively transform culture, whereas the fundamentalists emphasised God's transcendent nature, rejecting divine involvement in social structures in favour of radical individualism.<sup>65</sup>

While this theological tradition initially provided some protective elements to resist falling with fundamentalists into the path of the Great Reversal, a more subtle but powerful shift was occurring. The Salvation Army's socially dissenting roots were tied to William Booth's recognition that, since Wesley's day, Methodism had become 'respectable' and indifferent to the poor. As the twentieth century progressed, this very same lure now beckoned in the direction of the Army.

## **Consolidation and challenge: Turning inwards**

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In the 1930s, The Salvation Army entered a period of consolidation. As subsequent generations produced children and grandchildren, the attention of Army corps started to turn inward towards the nurture of their own congregations. Salvation Army social work was becoming institutionalised and what previously might have been seen as many aspects of the same work, started to become many different kinds of work. Evangelism and social action were both still important facets of the Army's identity but their connectivity was beginning to fray. These changes did not happen in isolation from the surrounding social contexts. Post-war rebuilding and the desire for social stability, especially after the Second World War, provided an environment that encouraged the Army's new directions.

The turn inward is marked by the development of programs for Sunday Schools and youth groups such as Corps Cadets and Directory. The primary function of brass bands moved from attracting crowds in the streets to accompanying worship. It was in this time that The Salvation Army

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 123-24.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 131.

commissioned its own 'official' history books with the first three volumes written by Robert Sandall,<sup>66</sup> another two volumes by Arch Wiggins<sup>67</sup> and two more<sup>68</sup> (as well as his own one volume history)<sup>69</sup> by, later General, Frederick Coutts. The move toward official histories, written between 1947 and 1986, shows a concern for controlling what parts of The Salvation Army's story were told and how they were to be interpreted, both critical elements in understanding and shaping the movement's identity and mission. During this period, the military image was taken very seriously, uniforms were formalised, rules and regulations abounded. A strong disciplinary culture ensured the effective delivery of social programs and the Army's theology was shaped by the teachings of its own '*Handbook of Doctrine*'. While none of these things were entirely novel to The Salvation Army, they were no longer the instruments of innovation that they were for early Salvationists but had become the tools of standardisation. The only thing that could threaten organisational stability was a cultural revolution.

## Changes and challenges in the 1960s

The era known as the long 1960s, which started in the late fifties and reached into the early seventies, ushered in a series of seismic cultural shifts that, amongst other things, definitively impacted the relationship between church and society. Whether these shifts directly accelerated the process of secularisation or simply revealed more starkly what had already been taking place, the public perception of the place of religion in society changed substantively in this period. Hugh McLeod suggests that "whatever the real extent of change in popular belief and practice, most people believed that they were moving into a 'pluralist', 'post-Christian', or even 'secular' society. Some were enthused; some were horrified; most simply regarded it as a fact."<sup>70</sup> As will be seen shortly, the

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<sup>66</sup> Robert Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol 1* (London: Nelson, 1947); Robert Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol 2* (London: Nelson, 1950); Robert Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol 3; Social reform and welfare work; 1883-1953*, *The History of the Salvation Army*, (London, New York,: T. Nelson, 1955).

<sup>67</sup> Arch R. Wiggins, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol 4* (London: Nelson, 1964); Arch R. Wiggins, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol 5, 1904-1914*, *The History of the Salvation Army* (London: Nelson, 1968).

<sup>68</sup> Frederick Lee Coutts, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol 6; The better fight, 1914-1946*, *The History of the Salvation Army*, (London,: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973); Frederick Lee Coutts, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol 7; The weapons of goodwill, 1946-1977*, *The History of the Salvation Army* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986).

<sup>69</sup> Frederick Coutts, *No Discharge in This War: A one volume history of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army IHQ, 1994).

<sup>70</sup> Hugh McLeod, *The religious crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2007). 241.

repercussions of this shift continue to be felt today as church memberships and attendances decline across most of the Western world.

### **Can the churches ‘keep up’?**

Although it represented a sharp contrast to comparative stability of the 1950s, some within the church saw the radical shifts of the sixties to be an opportunity to be grasped rather than a widespread social deviation to be avoided or condemned. They thought it possible to transform the church in light of the changing world around them. These ‘revolutionaries’ proposed major challenges to theology and practice, including many of the recommendations coming out of the second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church and several controversial figures and books in the Protestant tradition. The most influential of the latter category included John Robinson's *Honest to God*<sup>71</sup> and Harvey Cox's *The Secular City*.<sup>72</sup>

In his desire to communicate effectively with people of his time, Cox's language and tone reflects the progressive social flavour of his time:

The starting point for any theology of the church today must be a theology of social change ... Our doctrines of the church have come to us from the frayed out period of classical Christendom and are infected with the ideology of preservation and permanence. They are almost entirely past-oriented, deriving their authority from one or another classical period, from an alleged resemblance to some earlier form of church life, or from a theory of historical continuity. But this will no longer do. A church whose life is defined and shaped by what God is *now* doing in the world cannot be imprisoned by such antiquated specifications. It must allow itself to be broken and reshaped continuously by God's continuous action; hence the need for a theology of social change.<sup>73</sup>

Both Robinson and Cox were accused of abandoning traditional Christian faith in favour of the spirit of the age. Cox took a different view, claiming that secularisation was actually the natural descendant of Christianity. He said that “far from being something Christians should be against, secularization represents an authentic consequence of biblical faith. Rather than oppose it, the task of Christians should be to support and nourish it.”<sup>74</sup> Taking his lead from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Cox says that the

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<sup>71</sup> John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963).

<sup>72</sup> Harvey Cox, *The secular city; secularization and urbanization in theological perspective* (New York,: Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 105. Cf Paul Matthews Van Buren, *The secular meaning of the Gospel, based on an analysis of its language*, Library of philosophy and theology (London: SCM Press, 1963).

<sup>74</sup> Cox, *The secular city; secularization and urbanization in theological perspective*: 18.

next step in the evolution of religion is for us to learn “to speak of God in a secular fashion and find a nonreligious interpretation of biblical concepts.”<sup>75</sup> Robinson saw himself as trying to bring to a popular readership a range of theological ideas that had only previously been discussed in academic circles. He was responding to the observation that his church was failing to communicate Christian ideas in ways that made sense to people of that time.<sup>76</sup> *Honest to God* became a bestseller, though it polarised its audience.

The alternate response came from those within the church that felt threatened by the prevailing culture. Responding to their own perceived social marginalisation, they created easily identifiable sub-cultures that both differentiated them from outsiders and affirmed a sense of belonging for those on the inside.<sup>77</sup> Ralph Winter says that at the time:

American Evangelicals were settled in the conviction that there were just two kinds of Christianity, one valid and one invalid. The valid kind talked about Heaven (and later on the prosperity gospel for individuals) – an entirely personal-salvation gospel ... The invalid kind of Christianity was modernist, mainly for university, well-fixed people whose pastors went to seminaries, not Bible Institutes.<sup>78</sup>

The ‘enemy’ could still be identified by the markers made known in the social gospel era, such as an emphasis on turning the biblical concept of the ‘Kingdom of God’ into an inclusive and more equal social reality. Winter goes on to say that “in 1958 it was still a foregone conclusion that if any Evangelical talked about the Kingdom, he was a liberal, a modernist who didn’t believe in the Bible, and had been taken in by German higher criticism.”<sup>79</sup> This sense of strong boundaries is particularly relevant to evangelical Christianity. Christian Smith and Michael Emerson note that “the implicit distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is omnipresent in evangelical thought and speech, so much so that it does not often in fact draw to itself much attention. Yet it subtly and profoundly shapes evangelical consciousness and discourse.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>76</sup> McLeod, *The religious crisis of the 1960s*: 84.

<sup>77</sup> Christian Smith and Michael Emerson, *American evangelicalism : embattled and thriving* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1998). 91-92.

<sup>78</sup> Ralph D. Winter, "Understanding the Polarization between Fundamentalist and Modernist Mission," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26, no. 1 (2009): 6.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Smith and Emerson, *American evangelicalism : embattled and thriving*: 119.

In reaction to proponents of the new age both outside and within the church, conservatives took an uncompromising stance on issues of doctrine and morality. Those who felt uncomfortable with the increasing signs of secularisation in this era found a 'clear cut alternative' in these more conservative religious forms.<sup>81</sup>

Donald Dayton tells of his own experience at an evangelical college that was typical of those at the time, revered as "fortresses against the modern world, in which Evangelical youth can be educated and mate without threat from the pagan ideologies and life-styles of the secular world."<sup>82</sup> In retrospect, Dayton recalls:

The contrast between the pettiness of the issues that troubled us and the magnitude of the issues that were being dealt with in society was frightening ... While other students responded to calls for civil rights workers or took to the streets to protest about Vietnam, we fought our administration over whether the yearbook could picture male swimmers without t-shirts, struggled for the right to watch TV in the lounge on Sundays, and wondered if the Christian should attend the theatre (legitimate or cinema) or read twentieth-century literature.<sup>83</sup>

However, not everyone was convinced that withdrawal from culture was the only Christian alternative or even that the church maintained an exclusive claim on morality. One of the consequences of the church's inability to keep up with the changes of the sixties was the loss of some of its most committed followers. Problems with morale and deep questions about relevance caused a 'crisis in the ministry' in every denomination.<sup>84</sup> Hilliard notes that there were less candidates for ministerial training, as well as higher rates of dropout. Those most frustrated with the church at the time were the ones with a leaning towards more practical 'this-worldly' responses, rather than those who had a supernaturalist or 'other-worldly' orientation.<sup>85</sup> McLeod says that many clergy at the time "were convinced of the need for 'relevance' and 'action' - sometimes to the extent of abandoning their ministry in favour of some form of social work, which seemed to be practising Christ's injunction to 'feed the hungry and clothe the naked' in a more direct way."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> McLeod, *The religious crisis of the 1960s*: 209.

<sup>82</sup> Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 1976). 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> David Hilliard, "The Religious Crisis of the 1960s: The Experience of the Australian Churches," *The Journal of Religious History* 21, no. 2 (1997): 221.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>86</sup> McLeod, *The religious crisis of the 1960s*: 89-90.

The social impact of the sixties on religion goes significantly beyond declining rates of church attendance. On the one hand, the growing influence of secularisation has deepened the contrast between those who choose religion and those who have left it behind. Yet it also has an impact on what is left of religion. Religious groups can react against secularisation or try to find ways to join forces with it but it can no longer be ignored.

## **The Salvation Army in the 60s – fortify or change?**

In the 1960s, much of The Salvation Army world was looking backward in celebration of the movement's centennial anniversary. The strategy of consolidation and nurturing corps' memberships had proven to be reasonably successful in maintaining numbers and produced a strong and distinctive Salvation Army subculture. This was the high period of Salvation Army brass banding, with increasingly demanding original compositions bringing the best out of aspiring musicians. Service to the community, not least in two world wars, had forged an admirable public reputation. Large institutions handled the difficult work that the same public, including many Salvationists, preferred to ignore – teen pregnancies, delinquent children, abused women, alcoholics and the homeless.

A few Salvation Army officers, in the spirit of Cox and Robinson, were looking forward and trying to figure out how to keep up with a rapidly changing cultural context. Bernard Mobbs first tested the boundaries of official orthodoxy and doctrine by claiming that the resurrection of the body was a far richer expression of Christian hope than the immortality of the soul<sup>87</sup> and then explored the controversial subject of sexuality in *Our Rebel Emotions*.<sup>88</sup> However, the greatest test of that time came from a Salvation Army officer and his team who successfully engaged with the flower children and other marginalised groups in Oxford St, London in the late 1960s. Fred Brown's book<sup>89</sup> about this period was so controversial that when he refused for it to be submitted to editing by The Salvation Army, he was dismissed from officership. Brown advocated a radical engagement with culture at a time when most evangelicals were more interested in withdrawing from popular culture.<sup>90</sup> Kenneth

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<sup>87</sup>Bernard Mobbs, *Eternity Begins Now* (London: The Salvation Army, 1964). 30.

<sup>88</sup> Bernard Mobbs, *Our Rebel Emotions* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970). 51-62.

<sup>89</sup> Fred Brown, *Secular evangelism* (London,: S.C.M. Press, 1970).

<sup>90</sup> With the notable exception of the Jesus Movement. See for example Kevin John Smith, "The origins, nature, and significance of the Jesus Movement as a revitalization movement" (D.Miss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2003).

Leech refers to Brown's impact at the time in *Keep the faith, baby: a close-up of London's drop-outs*,<sup>91</sup> a series of reflections on the lives of socially marginalised drug users in London. Leech, an outsider to the Army, recognised the value and impact of Brown's methods, which were unappreciated and seen as threatening by his own organisation.

Similar attempts to recapture the Army's original charism for engaging and transforming popular culture, including a charting sixties pop group, *The Joy Strings*, did not prove to be sustainable as the movement largely sided with conservative evangelicals in a withdrawal from culture into more internalised corps communities. At the same time, social programs were becoming increasingly institutionalised and operating more separately from corps life. While religion was still a vital part of the institutional model, it was less and less connected to the Christian communities that had once been central to William Booth's redemptive vision.

Just as The Salvation Army had begun to most clearly affirm its primary role as a part of the wider evangelical church, to the detriment of its social programs, the rest of the evangelical world started rediscovering their social roots. The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation in 1974 directly questioned the marginalisation of social concern from evangelical mission and began a much-needed pathway of reform. Article 5 of the Lausanne Covenant, which came out of the Congress, is entitled *Christian Social Responsibility* and expresses corporate penitence "both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive."<sup>92</sup> Over time, voices like those of Jim Wallis and Ron Sider began to call evangelicals back to their roots in order to reengage with the socially-concerned dimension of Christianity that they had abandoned. Though this reclamation is by no means either complete or comprehensive, it does demonstrate some potential for reconciliation with those social elements that were so strongly resisted in evangelicalism since the time of the Great Reversal. Smith and Emerson note that because of this change, "Evangelicals, it appears, may ironically be the most committed carriers of a new social Gospel."<sup>93</sup>

The Salvation Army found itself largely out of step with this change. Having committed its focus so strongly to nurturing its own congregations, the social gospel was virtually unknown. Corps and social work had become largely independent parts of the organisation with little interaction between them. As several officer interviews will later reveal, many Salvationists grew up in corps knowing

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<sup>91</sup> Kenneth Leech, *Keep the faith, baby: a close-up of London's drop-outs* (London,: S.P.C.K., 1973).

<sup>92</sup> Lausanne Movement, "The Lausanne Covenant," Lausanne Movement, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

<sup>93</sup> Smith and Emerson, *American evangelicalism : embattled and thriving*: 12,88.

nothing about the social work of the Army. In the next section, this move towards church as the primary identity association for The Salvation Army is explored through a growing body of academic work and internally published books.

## Organisational introspection

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### Seeking identity in history and the church

A key indication of The Salvation Army's concerns about identity appears to be a fascination with history and ecclesiology, the study of the church. In the absence of either clarity or consensus about organisational identity, answers have most often been sought by looking back at the movement's roots or by looking around at other churches and trying to understand where the Army fits in. Until relatively recently, academic interest in The Salvation Army has also been dominated by historical interests. As the scope of enquiry has begun to broaden, mostly in the last decade, what has been revealed is both an internal quest for meaningful identity, as well as an external fascination with the Army's endurance.

In the mid-1980s, a small, but nonetheless significant, stream of Salvationist writing began to arise focussed on The Salvation Army's place amongst other churches. The subject was topical at the time because of the Army's withdrawal from the World Council of Churches in 1981. These writings reflect a growing interest in ecclesiology, driven by the tension between a large body of historical material that refused to concede identification of The Salvation Army as a church and the pragmatic realisation that it had been acting very much like a church for many years. The growth of interest in this subject is especially salient for this study because it highlights a key struggle to define organisational identity. The missional shift from Christian movement to church acted to marginalise social programs because there was no clear place for them in the evolving ecclesiological framework.

Significant contributions include John Rhemick's ecclesiological study of The Salvation Army, *A New People of God – A Study in Salvationism*,<sup>94</sup> Phil Needham's *Community in Mission – A Salvationist*

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<sup>94</sup> John Rhemick, *A New People of God - A Study in Salvationism* (Des Plaines: The Salvation Army, 1984). See also John R. Rhemick, "The theology of a movement : the Salvation Army in its formative years," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 1 (1987).

*Ecclesiology*<sup>95</sup> and Shaw Clifton's analysis of corporate identity, *Who Are These Salvationists?*<sup>96</sup> Each of these takes a relatively conservative position relating The Salvation Army's corps forms and activities in comparison with other churches and with little or no mention of the organisation's social programs. Clifton, later appointed General of The Salvation Army, was openly critical of social services that were not explicitly Christian in character or evangelistic in aim.

A different perspective is offered in Harold Hill's doctoral thesis,<sup>97</sup> later published as *Leadership in The Salvation Army*,<sup>98</sup> which presents the most critical view of the Army's trend towards becoming a church, with a particular emphasis on the clericalisation of officers. Hill, a retired officer himself, is unapologetic in his thorough exposition of the historical and theological dimensions of, and consequences for, The Salvation Army's slide into clericalism. Hill's interest was triggered by the introduction in 1978 of ordination to the commissioning ceremony for Salvation Army officers, which he argues symbolises a fundamental change in the nature of officership. Where previously officership had been about carrying out particular *functions*, which were not exclusive to officers, Hill suggests that ordination heralded a change in *status* for officers, separating them from lay Salvationists.<sup>99</sup> Hill's insights have important ramifications for The Salvation Army's social services, which have no need for officers with clerical status but remain aligned to more functional concerns. Thus, the introduction of ordination can be seen to mark the normalisation of corps officership and a corresponding marginalisation of social officers – a pattern that was already occurring informally but was now annually reinforced through institutional blessing at commissioning events.

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<sup>95</sup> Phil Needham, *Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology* (St Albans: Campfield Press, 1987).

<sup>96</sup> Shaw Clifton, *Who are these Salvationists? An analysis for the 21st Century* (Alexandria: Crest Books, 1999).

<sup>97</sup> Harold Ivor Winston Hill, "Officership in The Salvation Army: A Case Study in Clericalisation" (Victoria University of Wellington, 2004).

<sup>98</sup> Harold Ivor Winston Hill, *Leadership in the Salvation Army : a case study in clericalisation* (Milton Keynes ; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006).

<sup>99</sup> Hill, "Officership in The Salvation Army: A Case Study in Clericalisation," x.

## Organisational analyses

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In the late 1990s, sociology professor, John Hazzard, published an organisational analysis of The Salvation Army that places it in the margin between mainline and evangelical denominations.<sup>100</sup> However, more significantly for this current project, Hazzard describes the Army as transitioning from sect to church with an emphasis on its orientation toward secular society. A Canadian officer, Bruce Power, followed this sociological stream, noting that classification of The Salvation Army appears to be complicated by the subjectivity of the classifier. Internally, some have leaned towards 'church' or 'denomination', while external opinion seems to favour 'sect'. Power claims that neither successfully accounts for the Army's breadth of social services and furthermore that the identification of The Salvation Army as a denomination "is reached at the expense of the entire social 'wing' of the organization."<sup>101</sup> A more flexible approach to church/sect typology is necessary to more fully understand the broader dynamics of the different streams, which will be argued further in the next chapter.

Another comparatively small but important body of work is dedicated to exploring the place and meaning of social services within The Salvation Army. The most extensive study, *Creed and Deed*,<sup>102</sup> is an edited book of papers presented at a symposium on "The Theology of Social Services" more than 30 years ago. The papers include both historical and theological perspectives, as well as several proposals for the future, but are more representative of the starting point of a journey rather than a series of thoroughly developed positions.

Just over a decade later, a similar collection of papers came out of a conference on the theology and practice of health ministry in The Salvation Army.<sup>103</sup> The papers and case studies demonstrate that in international health, The Salvation Army has been actively reflecting on a more holistic framework for mission than has typically occurred in its Western social services contexts. Even more recently, Dean Pallant has published what he describes as 'A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health

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<sup>100</sup> John W. Hazzard, "Marching on the Margins: An Analysis of the Salvation Army in the United States," *Review of Religious Research* 40, no. 2 (1998).

<sup>101</sup> Bruce Power, "Towards a Sociology of Salvationism," *Word and Deed* 2, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>102</sup> John D. Waldron, ed. *Creed and Deed: Toward a Christian theology of social services in The Salvation Army* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda, 1986).

<sup>103</sup> Graham Calvert, ed. *Health, Healing and Wholeness: Salvationist Perspectives* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1997).

Ministry'.<sup>104</sup> Pallant combines a holistic view of medicine with a theocentric understanding of mission, reasserting the critical place of faith in Salvation Army international health ministries.

In the late 1990s, a working group named 'Theology in Mission', was set up to explore and articulate a theological basis for the social mission of The Salvation Army in twenty-first century Australia. The initially intended product, a manuscript that reached its sixth draft,<sup>105</sup> was never published but has been widely distributed in its unfinished form and has been extensively quoted in a range of settings. It was more recently reconceived as a 4-part DVD series<sup>106</sup> covering perspectives on the History, Theology, Culture and Mission of The Salvation Army, with a distinct emphasis on Australia. In some ways, this project typifies the conflicted relationship that The Salvation Army has with its own missional streams, as it was variously blessed and then buried by changing leadership for more than a decade.

The doctoral thesis of the chair of the 'Theology in Mission' working group, Craig Campbell, explores the theme of hospitality as a theological image for mission in The Salvation Army.<sup>107</sup> He notes a profound theological shift in the second 50-year period of the Army's history away from "a practical theology seeking to connect the experience of the transcendent with daily life" to one which removed "God's concern more to the spiritual and hereafter."<sup>108</sup> Campbell's theological approach critiques the narrowness of some evangelical perspectives, making room for more generous, socially oriented and community ministries.

Even where a more balanced perspective appears to be voiced within the movement, the reality can be considerably different. Although known as a trailblazer in women's ministry, The Salvation Army's record on gender equity is still far from exemplary. Investigations into women's roles within the movement have shown that there are substantial systemic and cultural barriers that inhibit women's

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<sup>104</sup> Dean Pallant, *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012).

<sup>105</sup> John Cleary, "Boundless Salvation," (Unpublished document available from The Salvation Army Training College Library, Melbourne6th Draft).

<sup>106</sup> John Cleary, *Boundless Salvation - 4 Part DVD Series*, (Melbourne: The Salvation Army, 2008).

<sup>107</sup> Craig Campbell, "Emerging Images of Salvationist Mission: For the Glory of God and the Benefit of Your Generation" (Melbourne College of Divinity, 2004).

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

advancement (especially married women) and privilege men in leadership and decision making.<sup>109</sup> According to Andrew Eason, the principle of gender equity never extended far beyond the Booth family.<sup>110</sup> Victorian era social attitudes about gender roles were supported by patriarchal theological assumptions that are still evident today. For instance, the allowance for married female officers in the USA was paid to their husbands until 2017. Apart from the right to preach, women's ministries were largely directed towards work with other women, children and social work.<sup>111</sup> Consequently these areas have also had diminished representation in leadership, which was and continues to be dominated by men.

The growing interest in organisational identity and missional alignment since the 1980s that has been described here shows that The Salvation Army has been trying to rediscover its place in a changing world. While some of this can be attributed to stages of organisational life, it also reflects wider social changes that are common to other faith-based organisations as well. In the final section of this chapter, the challenges being faced by The Salvation Army are compared with those currently being tackled by other Australian churches.

## **The contemporary Australian landscape for FBOs**

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The rising tensions between churches and their social agencies is not unique to The Salvation Army. The specific details differ between churches but many of the broader themes relating to the churches' social context will resonate for others as well. The role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) as providers of social and community services has been the subject of a growing body of literature, particularly in the United States and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom.<sup>112</sup> While The Salvation

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<sup>109</sup> Andrew Mark Eason, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army*, Studies in women and religion (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003); Hill, *Leadership in the Salvation Army : a case study in clericalisation*: 230-68.

<sup>110</sup> Andrew Mark Eason, "Gender and equality in God's army: An examination of women's public and domestic roles in the Salvation Army, British origins to 1930" (M.A., University of Windsor (Canada), 1998), 244.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> See for example Helen Rose Ebaugh, Janet S. Chafetz, and Paula F. Pipes, "Where's the Faith in Faith-based Organizations? Measures and Correlates of Religiosity in Faith-based Social Service Coalitions," *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (2006); Sheila Furness and Philip Gilligan, "Faith-based Organisations and UK Welfare Services: Exploring Some Ongoing Dilemmas," *Social Policy and Society* 11, no. 04 (2012); Kathleen M. Tangenberg, "Faith-Based Human Services Initiatives: Considerations for Social Work Practice and Theory," *Social Work* 50, no. 3 (2005).

Army has only occasionally been the subject of these investigations,<sup>113</sup> the broader themes applicable to other FBOs generally apply to the Army as well. However, the focus of these investigations has most often been either to analyse the effectiveness of FBOs as providers of social services or to explore their relationship with government either as contracted agencies or advocates for social policy. In Australia, there has been comparatively little research on the role of churches as service providers, though there does appear to be increasing interest within the churches themselves about this relationship, their role with government and their changing place in the community. Following are examples from both the Anglican and Catholic Churches.

A clear parallel to the subject of this thesis comes from Anglican priest Ray Cleary, who writes that “at the beginning of the new millennium, many church welfare agencies find themselves living in a state of ambivalence, unsure of both their identity and future.”<sup>114</sup> According to Cleary, the source of this ambivalence can be found in the relationship between the church and its social service arms.<sup>115</sup> His book, *Reclaiming Welfare for Mission*, stands as a warning to church agencies that may be compromising their mission principles in order to more effectively serve a government agenda. Cleary recalls the historical movement when government funding increased the scope and capacity of the community sector, but the accompanying professionalisation of social work also resulted in a new wave of staff who did not necessarily share the religious beliefs of the organisations for which they worked. At the same time, churches relinquished their own involvement in local community ministries, leaving hands-on engagement to the professional field.<sup>116</sup>

Alongside these changes were a series of concerns about church agencies “losing their independence”, becoming “an arm of government” or being controlled “by stealth.”<sup>117</sup> The anxiety about external influences were exacerbated by internal tensions. Cleary specifically identifies “occasions when the view of the church and their agencies are on a collision course over matters of personal morality and the call for justice.”<sup>118</sup> A recent example is Anglicare’s drive to recruit foster

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<sup>113</sup> See for instance Beth M. Lewis, "Issues and dilemmas in faith-based social service delivery: the case of the Salvation Army of Greater Philadelphia," *Administration in Social Work* 27, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>114</sup> Cleary, *Reclaiming Welfare for Mission*: 16.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

carers living in same-sex relationships, a position not yet fully endorsed throughout the Anglican Church.

In an increasingly competitive social services field, faith-based values are irrelevant to the determination of winning government tenders. Churches are just one category among many of the wider field of contracted service providers.<sup>119</sup> As government contracts become increasingly directive about the way services are delivered, there is often little room left to differentiate one service provider from another – a faith-based provider from a secular provider or even a for-profit from a not-for-profit. It is little wonder in this environment that churches might begin wondering what their distinctive contribution might be or even whether they need to continue to be involved in some kinds of welfare work at all.

In October 2013, Catholic Social Services Victoria hosted a conference entitled '*Listening, Learning and Leading: The impact of Catholic identity and mission on what we do and how we do it*'. The following year, the papers that were presented at this conference were published in a book<sup>120</sup> and together they help to capture some of the most pertinent aspects of these questions for the Roman Catholic Church. The depth and breadth of nearly 125 years of Catholic Social Teaching means that there appears to be no question about whether the Church should be involved in social ministries. Instead, the key question for the Catholic Church seems to be "what makes this program distinctively 'Catholic'?"

For instance, David Beaver and Peter Hudson describe a "creative tension that sits with the organisation expressing its identity as both a demonstrably Catholic agency and as a first-rate human services provider. Is there a distinction? Does there need to be one?"<sup>121</sup> Prior to the 2013 conference, Neil Ormerod had also raised similar questions, tying them specifically to changes in staffing. According to Ormerod:

The question of the 'Catholic' nature of various Catholic institutions has become increasingly pressing in recent years, notably as the leadership of these institutions has moved from persons who have been formed within the culture of priestly or

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<sup>119</sup> Stout and Cornode in N. J. Demerath, *Sacred companies : organizational aspects of religion and religious aspects of organizations*, Religion in America series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). 69.

<sup>120</sup> McMullen and Warhurst, *Listening, Learning and Leading: The impact of Catholic identity and mission*.

<sup>121</sup> David Beaver and Peter Hudson, "Position Vacant/Position Filled - Mission Flourishing! Getting Recruitment and Induction Right," in *Listening, Learning and Leading: The impact of Catholic identity and mission*, ed. Gabrielle McMullen and John Warhurst (Ballarat: Connor Court Publishing, 2014), 119-20.

religious life, to a lay leadership, who, while professionally competent, does not have the same depth and breadth of Catholic formation as the previous generation of leaders.<sup>122</sup>

While he begins by associating identity questions with a transfer of leadership, Ormerod later points to the wider staffing of agencies as also contributing to this uncertainty, saying that “questions of identity tend to be more problematic for agencies that draw upon staff from the general society, who may or may not have any particular commitment to a Catholic or Christian identity.”<sup>123</sup> In the face of such problems, there can sometimes be an overreaction intended to compensate for the perceived loss. Andrew Hamilton SJ talked about the ways that he had seen internal, church-focussed priorities shape the interpretation of organisational identity in some Catholic social services:

Catholic identity was to be asserted, sometimes combatively, in the face of secular society. These trends caused some unease among people working in Catholic organisations whose attitudes towards Catholicism were conflicted. They were exacerbated by regulations enforced in particular cases that would exclude laicised priests, people in irregular marital situations and people in gay relationships from teaching in Catholic schools. In this climate concern for identity could obscure the importance of mission.<sup>124</sup>

Hamilton saw the fear that Catholic identity was being compromised or diluted create a strong counter-response. While this response reasserted a particular understanding of Catholic identity, by doing so it also drew lines of harsh exclusion, which conflicted with the Church’s mission values. This tension was resolved for Hamilton at the conference, which heralded a different approach from the presenters:

Evident at the conference was the easy acceptance of diversity of belief in Catholic organisations. Participants generally saw this as a challenge but not as an obstacle to introducing people to the connection between mission and its faith basis ... They did not allow staff to feel that acceptance of faith was a condition of full or real membership, but allowed people to respond and own in their own way the language and symbols of mission. Diversity was a gift because it allowed people from a different background to illuminate and to help shape the mission.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Neil Ormerod, "Identity and Mission in Catholic Organisations," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 87, no. 4 (2010): 430.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>124</sup> Andrew Hamilton, "Mission Shapes Identity," in *Listening, Learning and Leading: The impact of Catholic identity and mission*, ed. Gabrielle McMullen and John Warhurst (Ballarat: Connor Court Publishing, 2014), 156.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 158-59.

Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services, spoke about the importance of staff values as something that transcended both identity claims and adherence to organisational symbols.

Nothing 'magic' happens in terms of living out our mission just because we say we are a faith-based organisation or because we put a crucifix up on the wall, paint a logo on our door, or display inspirational values in our entrance foyer. These may reflect a particular way of doing things in our organisation but, in and of themselves, they do not guarantee anything. I have had the experience of working with strong social justice advocates and people who profess deep faith but who treated colleagues and others terribly. I work with people who profess no religious faith but who are the most wonderful examples of our values in action, through their behaviour.<sup>126</sup>

Ormerod recommends an approach to identity that acknowledges the dynamic interplay between forces that naturally extend, grow and reshape organisations that are deeply engaging with the world in which they exist, and those forces that are driven to provide continuity with the past. According to Ormerod, this approach is superior to 'essentialist' conceptions of identity, which claim a subset of objective and eternal markers. It also reflects the nuance that changes may occur 'in' the construction of identity but these changes do not necessarily reflect an exchange 'of' identity.<sup>127</sup>

These examples seen in the Catholic and Anglican Churches reflect common experiences in other faith-based organisations as well, because they are drawn from a common context. They share the same contractual and regulatory burdens with government, have experienced the same wave of professionalisation of social work and the consequent shifting demands for more qualified, experienced and specialist staff. They also share the challenges that secularisation brings to their congregations, their leadership and the delivery of their social services. Although the main emphasis from here will be to examine the implications of these changes for The Salvation Army, the commonalities just listed suggest that what follows will also have some interest for other churches as well.

## Summary

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In this chapter, there has been a broad discussion of the historic and social contexts that are the foundations of conflict within faith-based organisations. It has been noted that from the very first generation of Salvationists, there were concerns about the relationship between evangelism and social action and their place within the Army. These concerns were not unique but reflective of wider

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<sup>126</sup> Julie Edwards, "Sharing the Mission with the Whole Organisation," in *Listening, Learning and Leading: The impact of Catholic identity and mission*, ed. Gabrielle McMullen and John Warhurst (Ballarat: Connor Court Publishing, 2014), 48.

<sup>127</sup> Ormerod, "Identity and Mission in Catholic Organisations," 431-32.

tensions in the evangelical church, especially those embodied by the split that generated The Great Reversal. The challenges experienced in evangelicalism were, in turn, shaped by larger social trends, such as secularisation, that continue to affect religion today by contributing to increasingly divergent beliefs and values between competing missional streams.

In addition to historic trends, The Salvation Army's own organisational life stages have impacted the relationship between its own ministries, particularly the inward turn of corps life to care for the movement's own children and grandchildren. Although this introspective phase was temporarily challenged in the 1960s, the challenge failed and services became increasingly institutionalised and separate from corps. As the context in which services are delivered has been changing, including trends that show decreasing alliances with Christianity and increasing secularisation, churches have been re-examining their role in Australian society. Similar questions have arisen between The Salvation Army and other churches, highlighting the need to rediscover a sense of organisational identity and clarity of mission. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework for understanding and analysing tensions within religious groups will be explored.

# Chapter Three: Theoretical Foundations

## Introduction

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In October 2011, General Linda Bond launched a new international vision statement for The Salvation Army, "One Army, One Mission, One Message."<sup>128</sup> This aspirational vision of global unity inherently suggests a current problem – that the organisation, as it is today, is fractured. The preceding chapters have described one of the fault lines of this fracture, which appears between the evangelical and social missions of The Salvation Army. Though tensions between these two organisational streams are as old as the movement itself, not only do they remain unresolved but they seem to be getting worse.

How can this problem be understood? In this chapter, three sociological theories are introduced that will provide insight into intraorganisational tensions like those present within The Salvation Army that are common to faith-based organisations. These theories explore religious groups' orientation to society, the impact of internal secularisation and the shifting boundaries of religion. Each theory offers a distinctive perspective but they work together to 'unlock' the various strands of the complex organisational and social dynamics that are the subject of this research.

Before proceeding to these three theories, a prior problem must be resolved regarding the scope of enquiry. Although the vision of 'One Army' suggests a more singular model, the presence of intraorganisational conflict, which has already been identified as a major theme of this thesis, indicates the significance of subgroups within the organisation. Although there are some distinctive features to The Salvation Army's structures, research into similar patterns of division in other denominations seems to suggest that the overarching layer of organisational unity can be fairly thin.

## Denominations as dual structures

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Most analyses of The Salvation Army begin with the assumption that the organisation fundamentally exists as a unitary structure.<sup>129</sup> While the various legal entities that comprise The Salvation Army in

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<sup>128</sup> The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army International - Vision," The Salvation Army IHQ, <http://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/vision>.

<sup>129</sup> See for instance: Clifton, *Who are these Salvationists? An analysis for the 21st Century*; Rhemick, *A New People of God - A Study in Salvationism*; Robert A. Watson and Ben Brown, *Mission Inc.: Management Distinctives of The Salvation Army*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Salvo Publishing, 2009).

each territory are generally linked to the same primary governance structure, these arrangements say more about the legislative requirements of the state than they do about the way an organisation functions. In order to better understand the nature of intraorganisational conflict, an alternative way of viewing this particular kind of situation must be sought.

Mark Chaves' explanation of the dual structures within denominations provides such an alternative.<sup>130</sup> Pointing to historical developments, he notes that in the nineteenth century, the same era in which The Salvation Army was founded, a range of church-based special purpose agencies evolved out of denominations including publishing bodies, financing schemes, educational institutions and various missional programs, which also covered social service provision.<sup>131</sup> Since that time, according to Chaves, the religious authorities and the agencies that their denominations once birthed have become "essentially parallel structures performing different kinds of tasks, responding to different parts of the environment, coping with different kinds of uncertainty and containing separate lines of authority."<sup>132</sup> The agencies that were created to serve specific functions within the church usually still share a related name but in most aspects of their work have become increasingly autonomous from their parent organisations.

To further illustrate the distinctions between these structures, Chaves makes three key points that illuminate some of the dynamics seen in this research:

Firstly, according to Chaves, the scope of authority within each structure is drawn according to different **boundaries**.<sup>133</sup> In the highly-structured environment of professional social programs, lines of authority are clear and consequences for breaching the relationship can include loss of employment and legal action. However, religious structures such as churches rely much more on volunteer commitment, weakening the natural bounds of their authority.

Secondly, Chaves distinguishes religious **authority** structures by their use of supernatural language and concepts to legitimate the use of power, to motivate and to control members.<sup>134</sup> In the absence

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<sup>130</sup> Mark Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures: An Organizational Analysis," *Sociology of Religion* 54, no. 2 (1993).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-48.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 150,51.

of the formal, structured relationship of employment or other contractual obligations, religious authorities may seek to bolster their power within congregations by appealing to divine mandates. In the social service environment, such references to the supernatural are superfluous to the needs of management, who operate according to well defined systems and structures with clear lines of authority and professional standards.

Finally, Chaves raises a vital distinction for this research – different **goal orientations**. Religious authority structures are internally focussed while agencies look outward.<sup>135</sup> Chaves' perspective is that churches exist largely for the benefit of their own members. On the other hand, social programs exist explicitly for the benefit of others. Social programs are evaluated according to their impact on those outside the organisation, corps are judged on their ability to increase the number of people inside their own walls.

The insight that denominations should be analysed as dual structures reveals important contrasts and dynamics within the organisation. It also facilitates cross-denominational comparisons, as the common features of religious authority structures and agencies across different faith groups become clearer. Although the nature of the divide between these dual structures differs between churches due to varying ecclesiological and governance systems, the patterns of conflict are readily recognisable.

My experience of nearly 30 years in The Salvation Army, along with extensive investigation and interviews done for this research, confirms that these three distinctions are evident in the daily operations of corps and social programs. They influence policies, practices and discourse at every level of the organisation. For the purposes of this study, the identification of varying goal orientations between churches and their agencies is of particular interest because it brings into focus the ways that organisational priorities and messages are shaped by their social environments. A religious group that sets itself against society will not form easy alliances with those who are more in tune with their social context. So, when two parts of the same denomination find themselves aligned in opposite directions, tensions can be expected to arise.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 155.

## Theoretical Perspective 1: Religious groups for and against society

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A longstanding theoretical stream for interpreting the different ways that religious groups relate to their social context can be found in church-sect theory, one of the most influential early formulations in sociology of religion. Its most prominent advocates were Weber, Troeltsch and Niebuhr. Max Weber introduced the notion that church and sect can be helpfully analysed as “ideal types.”<sup>136</sup> A key distinction was the path by which members were introduced – in the church, this usually happened at birth, whereas sect membership was primarily obtained through voluntary conversion. Ernst Troeltsch moved the focus of the church-sect typology from membership to relationship with the state. For Troeltsch, the church has a positive relationship to its social environment. It is externally oriented and imbued with power because it dominates the masses. Because there is a mutually beneficial relationship with the state, the church has some acceptance of ‘the secular order’. Furthermore, because it is aligned with the ruling classes, it “both stabilizes and determines the social order.”<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, the sect is a comparatively small group, which is primarily internally oriented, focussed on ‘inward perfection’ and ‘direct personal fellowship’.<sup>138</sup> Richard Niebuhr saw that, under certain conditions, some sects could become churches, or more specifically denominations.<sup>139</sup> Having left their roots, these new denominations lose their capacity to engage with their original mission. As sect members become further separated from the disadvantaged classes that marked their origins, they will be less able to connect with newer recruits from the ranks of the ‘underprivileged’, with whom they have less and less in common.<sup>140</sup>

A key challenge to the development of church-sect theory has been the almost complete disappearance of the ideal church-type in the West due to increasing religious plurality,

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<sup>136</sup> William H. Swatos, "Weber or Troeltsch? Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory," *Journal for the scientific study of religion* 15, no. 2 (1976).

<sup>137</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The social teaching of the Christian churches*, 2 vols. (London, New York,: Allen & Unwin; Macmillan, 1956). 331.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Chapter 8 discusses Niebuhr’s understanding of this transition in more detail as it relates to a number of organisational narratives offered in research interviews.

<sup>140</sup> Bryan R. Wilson, *The social dimensions of sectarianism : sects and new religious movements in contemporary society* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press; Clarendon Press, 1990). 124.

secularisation and separations of church and state.<sup>141</sup> As the notion of an established state church has been replaced by a multiplicity of competing religious movements, the need for church-sect theory to undergo significant revision has become clear.<sup>142</sup> One of the ways that this has progressed has been to direct the focus on the nature of sects. This has led to a range of competing definitions and expanding criteria.

Bainbridge, Wilson and Pope provide examples. William Bainbridge says that there are three defining and related characteristics of sects: an intensification and exaggeration of mainstream religious beliefs and practices; disproportionate representation from the poor and uneducated social classes; and a genesis in denominational schism.<sup>143</sup> Bryan Wilson suggests four criteria that delineate sects: social exclusivity and complete allegiance; special claims to religious truth; an emphasis on voluntary and lay participation in contrast to the prioritisation of a professional priestly class; concern for and strong application of strict moral and behavioural standards.<sup>144</sup> Liston Pope mapped 21 specific points of variation between the denomination, which has lower levels of tension with society, and the sect, which has much higher levels of tension with society.<sup>145</sup>

Unsurprisingly, in the absence of any widespread agreement on the nature of sects or any clarity about what now sits at the other end of the spectrum, church-sect theory has received a significant amount of criticism.<sup>146</sup> A recent sample includes being “ambiguous and vague, lacking precise definitions, unsuited to tests for validity and reliability, merely descriptive rather than explanatory, less informative than other possible approaches, historically and geographically restricted, and

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<sup>141</sup> Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). 90-91.

<sup>142</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, *The sociology of religious movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997). 39-40.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>144</sup> Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective*: 91-92.

<sup>145</sup> Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1942). 122-24.

<sup>146</sup> William H. Swatos, "Monopolism, Pluralism, Acceptance and Rejection: An Integrated Model for Church-Sect Theory," *Review of Religious Research* 16, no. 3 (1975): 174; Warren S. Goldstein, "The dialectics of religious conflict: Church-sect, denomination and the culture wars," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 1 (2011): 77; Swatos, "Weber or Troeltsch? Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory."

unrelated to the rest of sociological theory."<sup>147</sup> However, there remains a more promising direction for this theoretical strand, which helps to inform the conflict under examination in this thesis.

In the light of this kind of critique, some theorists have taken a more modest approach to revisiting the distinctions first recognised between different religious groups. One element is central: whereas the church side of the spectrum is characterised by accommodation and compromise, even to secular institutions and values,<sup>148</sup> the sect is first and foremost a protest group. The subject of sectarian protest may have shifted from the established or mainstream church to secularisation, the state or wider social trends.<sup>149</sup> However, the essential position of dissent and uncompromising values remains. Benton Johnson defined this essential distinction as acceptance (church) or rejection (sect) of the social environment in which a religious group exists.<sup>150</sup> By limiting analysis to a single variable which could be analysed along a continuum, Johnson encouraged comparisons between religious groups based on their perceived relationship to the societies in which they exist. Johnson's clarification influenced many of those who followed him and is critical to the interpretation used in this research.

Rodney Stark and Bainbridge took up Johnson's approach, describing a similar spectrum of points existing in varying degrees of tension with the sociocultural environment.<sup>151</sup> Laurence Iannaccone has also proposed that the strength of sectarian groups is directly related to their distinctiveness, costliness or strictness.<sup>152</sup> He is careful though to avoid directly associating these factors with numerical growth or decline, noting that the Catholic Church may be facing challenges because its strictness in some areas has exceeded the limits that people find reasonable (eg. contraception,

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<sup>147</sup> Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos, and Peter Kivisto, *Sociology of religion : contemporary developments* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008). 90.

<sup>148</sup> Bainbridge, *The sociology of religious movements*: 39.

<sup>149</sup> Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective*: 92.

<sup>150</sup> Benton Johnson, "On Church and Sect," in *The sociology of religion, an anthology*, ed. Richard D. Knudten (New York,: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), 127.

<sup>151</sup> Bainbridge, *The sociology of religious movements*: 41.

<sup>152</sup> Laurence Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong," in *Sacred companies : organizational aspects of religion and religious aspects of organizations*, ed. N. J. Demerath, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 282.

priestly celibacy) and it has discarded some of the previously attractive features that made it distinctive.<sup>153</sup>

Fred Kniss has suggested that 'unidimensional binary conceptions', such as church-sect, should be rejected in favour of a more nuanced exploration of emerging patterns in religion and society.<sup>154</sup> Kniss argues that whether a movement fits a sectarian pattern is less useful than understanding how that sectarianism functions both within the group and society.<sup>155</sup> Thus, the point of this exploration is not to apply a perfectly fitting label, either to The Salvation Army as a whole or any of its constituent elements. No individual instance is expected to exactly match the 'ideal type', variation in specifics are not only allowed, they are expected.<sup>156</sup> Rather, by examining the differing ways that religious groups respond to their immediate social context, it is hoped that better understanding will be gained of their relationship to society, each other, and their particular expressions of religion.

William Swatos took Johnson's insight and applied a macrosociological approach that took into account how wider social factors might influence a religious movement to accept or reject their environment.<sup>157</sup> The model that Swatos produced took 'monopolism' and 'pluralism' as the key social poles against which religious bodies might determine the degree of acceptance or rejection of their environment.<sup>158</sup> This model was useful in that it clearly opened up the possibility for the model of church-sect to evolve over time, specifically in relation to the social conditions in which it existed. For instance, societies becoming more pluralistic may see a shift from established churches towards denominations. In the centre of Swatos' model is the 'established sect', "the transitional type through which any group moving from one comparative type to another passes."<sup>159</sup> According to Swatos, the established sect lives in the contradictory tension between world-accepting and world-rejecting,

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>154</sup> Fred Kniss, "Against the Flow: Learning from New, Emergent, and Peripheral Religious Currents," *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 3 (2014).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 360.

<sup>156</sup> Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective*: 95.

<sup>157</sup> Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto, *Sociology of religion : contemporary developments*: 91.

<sup>158</sup> Swatos, "Monopolism, Pluralism, Acceptance and Rejection: An Integrated Model for Church-Sect Theory," 177.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 179.

maintaining elements of both. Because of this, it suffers from 'norm-confusion', disorientation and can be described as "almost schizophrenic in nature."<sup>160</sup>

From Johnson's emphasis on varying orientations to society through to Swatos' recognition that a single group, such as the established sect, may simultaneously contain contradictory elements, there is a rich theoretical stream to draw from in order to better understand intraorganisational tensions within The Salvation Army. Furthermore, the notion of orientation to society has a strong correlation with traditional organisational language about relating to 'the world', which has already had some scholarly attention in relation to The Salvation Army.

## The Salvation Army and the world

Roland Robertson gives the Army's social wing credit for both its acceptance by the wider society and a good degree of its accommodation to that society.<sup>161</sup> Yet he also recognises the paradox inherent here. Although the Army's social work is the basis upon which it has gained respect, been accorded many honours and indeed achieved a form of 'indispensability', "its doctrine, social teachings, organisation and the demands which it makes upon its members all underline the essentially sectarian nature of its self-conception."<sup>162</sup>

The Salvation Army's church membership is an example of what Wilson calls a "world-indifferent sect."<sup>163</sup> These groups see themselves as being "*in* the world but not *of* the world", a phrase frequently used within The Salvation Army. They pursue normal economic activities but their social lives are primarily oriented around the 'in group'. Johnson sees this as consistent with other holiness movements that call for the total commitment of their members, a strict moral code and have a disdain for 'worldly things' without rejecting the world entirely.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Roland Robertson, "The Salvation Army: the Persistence of Sectarianism," in *Patterns of sectarianism: organisation and ideology in social and religious movements*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (London.: Heinemann, 1967), 55.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective*: 111.

<sup>164</sup> Johnson, "On Church and Sect," 131-32.

However, Robertson also detects some compromise in its relationship towards society occurring in both the social and doctrinal positions of The Salvation Army.<sup>165</sup> The former is accelerated by an essentially outward orientation characteristic of social services, while the latter is slowed by the more inward leaning sectarian tendencies that favour tradition and conservatism. John Hazzard picked up similar trends, noting that the Army, like many other evangelical denominations, is largely unwilling to change its theology to reflect the increasingly dominant secular assumptions of society. Yet, when it comes to social issues, the Army is more in line with mainstream denominations and the wider sociocultural environment.<sup>166</sup> The Salvation Army, in its component parts, wants essentially to reject secular society at the same time as it is being embraced by it. These variations in perspective can be seen in the interviews conducted with Salvation Army officers for this research and which will be explored further in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Because they were looking at the overarching organisational structure, which is typically dominated by evangelicals, neither Robertson nor Hazzard mention that the theology evolving in social programs tends to be more progressive, or that the social views of corps' members can be much more conservative. However, in this study the recognition of the fundamental difference between the dual structures of The Salvation Army allows for separate attention to be paid to the 'world-affirming' or 'world-denying' behaviours of the Army's constituent parts; how these form consistent patterns and the ways in which competing approaches lead to conflict. Furthermore, utilising the relationship of a religious group to its environmental context complements the dual structures of denominations approach because it: a) connects well with the claim that religious authority structures tend to be internally focussed, while agencies mostly look externally; and, b) helps to interpret the varying religious responses in each structural element, rather than simply assuming that one is religious and the other is not.

Once these varying attitudes towards and responses to society come into view, a further line of enquiry about the influence of society upon the organisation is opened up. Swatos used monopolism and pluralism as the endpoints on a continuum that showed society's influence on religion, but a similar approach can be taken with secularisation. In a world that is increasingly secularised, a 'world affirming' stance invites the secular into the life of religious organisations, while the 'world denying' perspective acts to further disconnect the sectarian elements from their social context.

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<sup>165</sup> Robertson, "The Salvation Army: the Persistence of Sectarianism," 74.

<sup>166</sup> Hazzard, "Marching on the Margins: An Analysis of the Salvation Army in the United States," 128.

## **Theoretical Perspective 2: Internal secularisation**

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Chaves, following Karel Dobbelaere,<sup>167</sup> describes secularisation as a multidimensional concept which can be understood as operating on three levels: societal, organisational and individual.<sup>168</sup> The signs of secularisation are played out differently at each level. For instance, secularisation in society can be seen through a process of functional differentiation, in which religious institutions cease to play an overarching social role, ceding their historic involvement in spheres such as health and education to specialist institutions. In secular societies, religion no longer holds a privileged place amongst the various elements of society. Accompanying this societal shift is a correlated change in the role of religious personnel, whose scope of authority diminishes with every discipline that moves outside of their control. For the individual, secularisation is reflected in changing patterns of religious involvement, including the degree to which religious beliefs influence, or cease to influence, everyday behaviours and attitudes. Chaves interprets the shift towards secularisation through a focus on declining religious authority at each level, rather than trying to define religion in a broader sense by its form or content.<sup>169</sup> This focus on authority is useful to the degree that it reveals changing power dynamics but it is also potentially problematic because it draws attention away from more subtle religious developments.

At the organisational level, Chaves describes 'internal secularisation'<sup>170</sup> as "the declining control of religious authority within religious organisations themselves."<sup>171</sup> As is the case with the other two levels, secularisation at the organisational level is neither inevitable nor irreversible but, in some cases, its progress or resistance against it can be seen through intraorganisational power struggles. The structural division between denominations (which represent religious authority structures) and their agencies already reflects an outcome of secularisation. Any shift of power across this divide

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<sup>167</sup> Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*, ed. Gabriel Fragniere, God, Humans and Religions (Brussels: P.I.E - Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>168</sup> Mark Chaves, "Intraorganizational Power and Internal Secularization in Protestant Denominations," *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 1 (1993): 3.

<sup>169</sup> Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Social Forces* 72, no. 3 (1994).

<sup>170</sup> Following Thomas Luckmann, *The invisible religion; the problem of religion in modern society* (New York,: Macmillan, 1967).

<sup>171</sup> Chaves, "Intraorganizational Power and Internal Secularization in Protestant Denominations," 3.

from denominations to agencies, such as the establishment of differing bases of authority, may be further understood as a process of internal secularisation.

Reflecting on how agency structures that were created out of denominations in the nineteenth century became increasingly autonomous during the twentieth century,<sup>172</sup> Chaves remarks that “this is a story of internal secularization in that it is a story about religious authority’s declining scope even inside religious organizations.”<sup>173</sup> Agencies created as tools for denominational purpose have discovered that their existence has meaning independent of their auspicing bodies, just as other elements of society have progressively found their way free of religious dominion. Power struggles over resources and the autonomy of agencies are examples of internal secularisation because religious authority structures are challenged on non-religious grounds in both cases.<sup>174</sup>

Even when specialist agencies remain, at least nominally, under the banner of the church, they may operate under a different kind of authority. This changing relationship to authority may be explicit or implicit, intentional or unintentional. For instance, in Chaves’ ‘dual structures’ model the key role in agencies is the administrator/manager, whose professional competence is measured against the specialist field in which the agency operates. The person fulfilling this role may or may not be clergy but even if they are, their ecclesiastical role is subordinate to their professional capacities.<sup>175</sup> This shift in authority, which is driven by specialisation and professionalisation, is itself a source of intraorganisational conflict because it has diminished the social position of religious authorities, even within their own organisations. A salient example comes from John Kellogg, who founded a range of medical services on behalf of Seventh Day Adventists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Kellogg is quoted as saying that “self respecting medical men are willing to work on an equal footing with preachers even though they may be of inferior education and ability ... but it is not human nature that they could be willing to be slaves to such men while doing their own professional work.”<sup>176</sup> Kellogg’s appraisal highlights the impact of functional differentiation on the credibility of clergy, the reduction of their power and the potential for conflict when resistance occurs.

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>175</sup> Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures: An Organizational Analysis," 157.

<sup>176</sup> Chaves, "Intraorganizational Power and Internal Secularization in Protestant Denominations," 14.

The relationship between the advance of internal secularisation and the rise of conflict between the dual structures of denominations can be used as a theoretical lens to interpret intraorganisational struggles. However, the relationship between the religious and the secular is more complex than that of a simple binary, a zero-sum game. Religion might be declining in measurable ways but it is also changing in ways that are not compatible with old measurement systems. For instance, the timing, place and nature of church services is less confined than it was half a century ago. Changing social patterns mean that Sundays are seen very differently by younger generations than the way that their grandparents experienced them. For some people this does indicate a withdrawal from religion but for others it may simply mean engaging with religion on different terms.

## **Theoretical Perspective 3: What counts as religious?**

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### **Looking beyond internal secularisation**

Up to this point, following the notion of 'internal secularisation' has offered some potentially useful insights into the dynamics of intraorganisational conflict within The Salvation Army. Difficulties sometimes associated with defining religion as the object of secularisation have been avoided by shifting the object of examination to 'declining religious authority'. This at least gives a proxy measure that is likely to reflect wider secularising processes, it's specific enough to be measurable and puts the focus on conflict and power struggles.<sup>177</sup> In The Salvation Army, the role of 'religious authority' can reasonably be aligned with officer clergy, who represent the highest levels of leadership. This places the explicitly religious dimension of officership in a position of authority above other functional concerns, such as professional experience, qualifications or subject matter expertise.

However, this approach fails to tell the full story of religious change that is happening within The Salvation Army; change that is reflected in organisational debates about identity and mission. Too much focus on established officer leaders as the objects of secularising forces can miss the conversations happening amongst emerging officers, lay-Salvationists, employees and volunteers. An overemphasis on religious clergy misses the ways in which the organisation's history and values are transmitted and embodied beyond traditional religious forms but in line with evolving patterns of religion and spirituality.

A greater problem still is the limited view of the secular/religious polemic. Craig Calhoun claims that operating from the assumption of a "sharp binary of secularism versus religion" is problematic

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 7.

because doing so misses the ways in which religious people (and organisations) act in the temporal sphere and the influence that religion has upon notionally secular institutions. The secular needs to be understood as more than the absence of religion – both religion and the secular are socially co-constructed, their paths are indelibly intertwined.<sup>178</sup> This is where the idea that what groups 'count as religious' adds nuance to the understanding of changing religious beliefs and practices – a distinction that is absent in a zero-sum approach to religion and secularity.

James Beckford discusses the possibility that what was thought to be secularisation is actually a change in the forms of religion under the category of 'metamorphoses'.<sup>179</sup> Power struggles may not be for or against religion per se but rather for a particular form of religious expression. In order to better understand these dynamics, this research will explore how religious resources are interpreted to serve concrete situations, to buttress or challenge power and the shifting, co-creative relationship between religious and non-religious perspectives. This is explored throughout Chapters Six and Seven. Some examples of these changes that came through in the interviews for this research fall along similar lines to those identified in the emerging church movement. The emerging church has arisen as a reaction against conservative and fundamentalist versions of evangelicalism, even as it appropriates and adapts other parts of the Christian tradition.<sup>180</sup> Although the movement takes many and diverse forms, one common factor is a renewed emphasis on social action and communal living. For instance, under the broad heading of 'Welcoming the Stranger', Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger note the following transitions taking place in emerging churches: welcoming those who are different; changing from salespersons to servants; moving from changing beliefs to changing lives; moving from privatised faith to public faith; and, moving from evangelising to being evangelised.<sup>181</sup> Each of these shifts represents a move from the most common expressions of Christian practice in Salvation Army corps to something much more akin to the engagement that occurs in frontline social services.

If the forms of religion are undergoing such significant change, they may no longer be easily recognised to those familiar with their previous incarnations. This means that it will be necessary to

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<sup>178</sup> Craig Calhoun, "Rethinking secularism," *The Hedgehog Review* 12, no. 3 (2010): 35,46.

<sup>179</sup> James A. Beckford, *Social theory and religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 52-59.

<sup>180</sup> Gerardo Marti and Gladys Ganiel, *The Deconstructed Church: Understanding Emerging Christianity*, (New York: Oxford Universtiy Press, 2014). Introduction.

<sup>181</sup> Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005). 122-33.

ensure that the way that religion is defined is sufficient to account for both current and future transformations.

## Naming and framing religion

While Chaves tries to solve the problem of defining 'religion' by replacing it with 'religious authority', Beckford avoids the question by claiming that sociology does not need to ask whether an activity is religious. That question belongs, along with other religious claims, to the domain of theology – a domain which is not irrelevant but must be approached with different methods. Rather, sociologists are interested in "the social processes whereby certain things are *counted* as religious" (italics mine).<sup>182</sup> Correspondingly, this also has implications for those things no longer counted as religious and the means by which this has changed.

This approach, which looks at what counts as religious and why, helps to reveal the interaction between all three levels (social, organisational and individual) of secularisation theories. It also has direct, and vital, implications for questions about organisational identity, because what counts as religious has consequences for what counts as The Salvation Army. Activities that are not counted as religious can be expected to be marginalised within an organisation that sees its identity and mission as fundamentally religious in character. As the boundaries of what counts as religious fluctuate over time and in relation to both internal and external forces, individuals and groups within religious organisations may find themselves closer to or further away from the centre of organisational life.

The discovery of what counts as religious is unlikely to come in any straightforward or uniform way. Beckford warns that we should not assume that "all members of faith communities think or act alike and that they do so because their religion somehow predisposes or programmes them in deterministic ways."<sup>183</sup> Therefore, we should be wary of uncritically accepting the normative claims of members or even leaders of varying facets of an organisation, and thereby potentially miss emerging or alternative views.<sup>184</sup> Religion exists not as an essentialist form but rather as a contested, social construction.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Beckford, *Social theory and religion*: 3.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

The existence of diverse views within a large organisation is itself hardly noteworthy, despite ongoing and expected attempts to present more uniform, homogenous images in the public arena. Of greater interest to this study, beyond even the reasons for these diverse viewpoints, is how these various perspectives are managed within The Salvation Army. By what means are some understandings privileged and others relegated to the margins? Because The Salvation Army is a religious organisation, religion and theology play key parts in interpreting the various machinations that affirm and challenge existing power structures.

Questions about identity and mission (who are we and what do we exist for) are central to navigating this changing environment because they are fundamentally tied to the experience of social belonging. Certain positions, and therefore their proponents or detractors, can be promoted or marginalised by appeals to group identity. Those who hold the power to define organisational identity thus also have the means to exclude those with alternative viewpoints. However, even in a hierarchical organisation like The Salvation Army, this power is not assigned in any straightforward manner. It may or may not fall to particular levels of leadership but is also contested in public spaces, through publications and social media. These conflicts will be examined throughout the course of this thesis.

## **Summary**

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This chapter began with the claim that The Salvation Army, like many similar denominations, is more than a monolithic structure. In order to appreciate and understand the intraorganisational dynamics between varying component parts of the organisation, attention needs to be paid to them in their respective contexts, as individual elements as well as parts of a whole. This foundational understanding was then complemented by adding three interpretive layers: orientation to society, internal secularisation, and looking at what counts as religious.

As has been seen, a critical factor in shaping religious understanding is the orientation and attitude of a group to the society in which they exist. This facet of church-sect theory will help to interpret the different approaches within The Salvation Army's evangelical and social arms, the relationship to their mission and to each other. The recognition that shifts in power from religious authority structures to agencies may be an example of internal secularisation sets the scene for understanding much of the intraorganisational conflict within The Salvation Army. However, for the reasons described above, this recognition alone is insufficient. The relationship between religion and secularisation, even within organisations, is a dynamically contested social construct with a multitude of drivers and influences. Within The Salvation Army, the borders between the two are continually being enacted and challenged through a range of practices and discourses, both emerging and traditional.

Understanding this requires more than keeping score; it deserves rich exploration that considers the varying perspectives, their motivations and consequences. In the next chapter, the focus turns towards how these theoretical perspectives will be put into practice to answer the questions that have been raised to this point.

# Chapter Four: Methodology

## Introduction

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This chapter outlines the methodological approach for delivering the research objectives that were laid out in Chapter One. In summary, these objectives are:

- To explore the relationship between The Salvation Army's identity as a Christian church and its role as a major social service provider in Australia;
- To examine the nature and content of intraorganisational conflict between these two missional streams;
- To understand the sources and drivers of change in this relationship, as well as their impact on organisational identity and mission; and
- To contribute to sociological studies of other denominations and faith-based organisations that are experiencing similar challenges.

The chosen methodology follows a common and well-established pattern for qualitative research, which also makes comparison with past and future studies easier. The qualitative research process itself is not linear but rather it is led by inductive logic along more creative, iterative and flexible series of paths which help to bring order and meaning to previously disordered and diverse data sets. In the following sections, the research design will be described, beginning with the specific details of research methods planned and conducted, and concluding with an acknowledgement of the limitations of this study.

## Methods

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Qualitative research utilises a range of interconnected interpretive practices or methods,<sup>186</sup> each drawing upon and translating their objects in different ways. Denzin and Lincoln describe the use of multiple methods in quantitative research as a 'triangulation' strategy that builds rigor, richness, and depth into an enquiry.<sup>187</sup> The primary source of data for this project was a series of interviews with Salvation Army officers. This source was amplified by, and brought into conversation with, a range of written materials from a much wider catchment. An explanation of both sources and the means by which they have been used in this research follows.

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<sup>186</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005). 4, 21.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

## **Written sources**

The use of a wide range of written sources is intended to set the background for, complement and expand upon the interview data that is at the centre of this study. This meant not only that non-officer perspectives could be taken into account, but also those of non-Salvationists. Views from outside the organisation add critical insight into the discussion of identity, particularly around how The Salvation Army is perceived by the general public, which is a vital component in the struggle for organisational identity. External perspectives also help to raise insights into, and comparisons with, similar points of conflict within other denominations.

The array of written sources used in this research include academic writings, popular published writings (books, magazines) and online sources (websites, blogs). They come from writers who are or were Salvationists, as well as those outside the organisation. They include both 'authorised' documents, which are usually published by The Salvation Army itself, and 'unauthorised', independent works. In addition to being used to compile the background and contextual information for this project, written sources are also used alongside the interview data to compare and contrast the views of the officer participants with other relevant voices.

## **Semi-structured, in-depth interviews**

The main source of data for this research came from a set of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Salvation Army officers. The design and constraints involved in these interviews are explained in the following sections, which include how participants were chosen and invited to take part, as well as the nature of the interview process itself.

## **Sampling strategies**

An early decision in the research design was to focus participant interviews exclusively on the experiences and insights of Salvation Army officers. This decision meant that there was a body of commonality in interviewees' relationships to The Salvation Army: all had willingly chosen officership as a vocation, had committed to an extensive list of undertakings including prohibitions on gambling, smoking, drinking alcohol or taking non-prescribed drugs. They lived and worked where The Salvation Army appointed them to, with many having moved around Australia and a few across the world. Most were ordained ministers of religion, except those who became officers before this practice was introduced to The Salvation Army in 1978 – though this reflects an ecclesiological rather than a functional distinction.

A purposive sampling strategy<sup>188</sup> was used to select 20 participants that resulted in a mixture of the following attributes:

- Age: 50% (n=10) were aged between 30 and 50 years, 50% (n=10) were between 50 and 65 years
- Years of Officership: 35% (n=7) had 5-15 years' experience as officers, 65% (n=13) had more than 15 years
- Gender: 65% (n=13) were male, 35% (n=7) were female<sup>189</sup>
- Appointment history: 40% (n=8) had mostly corps appointments, 50% (n=10) had mixed corps and social appointments, 10% (n=2) had mostly social appointments. Across all categories, there were also several administrative appointments, usually at Divisional or Territorial Headquarters.

### **Setting up the interview**

Organisational approval was granted by The Salvation Army's Territorial Headquarters as part of the ethics submission process to interview active officers within the Australia Southern Territory. Officers were sent invitations to their work email address to take part in the research, along with the explanatory statement and consent form. A small number (5) either declined to take part or did not respond to the invitation, so subsequently additional officers were selected and invited to take their place. Those who agreed to participate were contacted via phone or email to arrange a mutually convenient time and place for the interview to be held.

### **Conducting the interviews**

Face to face interviews were held in a variety of locations, including the workplaces of both the researcher and the participants, at the choice of the participant. Quiet and private spaces were chosen in order to minimise distractions and interruptions, encourage free-flowing conversation and ensure optimal recording quality.

A common schedule of questions was used for each interview. The semi-structured nature of the interview process gave a consistent framework from which to conduct the conversation but was flexible enough to reflect the individual perspectives, directions and expertise of each participant.

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<sup>188</sup> Gary D. Bouma and Rod Ling, *The research process*, 5th ed. (Melbourne ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). 117.

<sup>189</sup> The gender imbalance partially reflects a patriarchal domination of officer leadership positions, which is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

Interview questions were not always asked in the same order and participants sometimes intuitively answered more than one question at a time, giving the freedom to skip duplicate answers later on.

All interviews were digitally recorded with the prior permission of each participant. Additional handwritten notes were sometimes taken during the interviews, usually for the purpose of follow-up questions. All recordings were later transcribed verbatim for analysis. In the end, the 20 interviews yielded more than 15 hours of conversation, were transcribed into more than 76,000 words, and captured more than 200 years of corps experience, 100 years in social work and another 100 years in headquarters/administrative appointments.

## **Data analysis**

Data analysis began by reading through each of the interview transcripts and making notes about potential trends, themes and key words as they emerged. Transcripts were then imported into Nvivo 10 for further analysis. The data could be regrouped according to interview questions, allowing each participant's answers to be considered side by side, and also coded by the emerging themes. This allowed a more comprehensive and consistent method for exploring the initial themes and helped to identify additional commonalities and contrasts in the interview data.

## **Ethical considerations**

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Ethics approval was granted by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee in June 2013. The major ethical considerations relating to the sampling process and resulted in limiting the available field of potential participants. It was determined that Salvation Army officers who were currently or had previously been under the researcher's direct line management would be excluded so that the power carried in these relationships would not influence the direction of interviews. For similar reasons, current or former students of the researcher were also ruled out. The teacher/student relationships may also have yielded 'expected' answers based on students' prior experiences and learnings from the researcher's classes and previous writings.

## **Limitations**

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As the researcher was in a management role covering approximately half of The Salvation Army's Victorian social programs at the time of the interviews, the exclusion of officers under the direct line of management resulted in missing out on substantial expertise, particularly with regard to social services. This limitation was able to be at least partially compensated through the purposive sampling method, which allowed targeting of high levels of experience and expertise in the remaining field of officers. The researcher's own experience as an officer is also weighted towards social

program leadership, which may compensate for some loss of potential interview candidates in this area.

Another limitation relates to the exclusion of the researcher's students from the study, which covers a decade of teaching theology and social services at The Salvation Army College for Officer Training. This means that younger participants were not able to be interviewed, which is why the lower age group of interviewees begins at the age of thirty.

Finally, limiting the pool of interview participants to officers also has implications for the data emerging out of the fieldwork. As noted above, Salvation Army officers share a good deal in common, at least in relation to the conditions of their officership and relationship to the organisation. Despite different appointments, all reflect a close working relationship at the heart of The Salvation Army. Essentially, they are insiders to this story. Regardless of the role they perform at any point in time, officership as a class within The Salvation Army are those with the closest ties to the organisation – and the most to lose. Their covenant with the movement includes more than employment; it impacts upon housing, retirement benefits, transport, healthcare, identity and social belonging. Many personal and professional relationships are formed with other officers because of these commonalities. Officers, therefore, are highly invested stakeholders.

Though there are theological differences, all officers share an explicit commitment to Christianity. They are all ministers of religion, so their worldview is permeated with theological meaning. This has implications for the way they see themselves, their roles, the organisation and the rest of the world. Even accounting for a broad diversity in theological views, this still sets some boundaries on officers as a group which would be different if the sample were wider.

## **Research bias and reflexivity**

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A strength of the qualitative approach to this research is that it allows conversations to occur and be interpreted within their natural social context. Instead of presuming objectivity on behalf of any actor, the presuppositions and bias of the researcher are acknowledged, along with those of research participants. There is an explicitly reflexive element that accepts that “the researcher is part and parcel of the setting, context and culture they are trying to understand and analyse.”<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> P. L. Rice and D Ezzy, *Qualitative research methods: a health focus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). 41.

In this case, the researcher is a Salvation Army officer. In a positivist or post-positivist approach, such an acknowledgement of personal interest in the subject would be seen as bias that could impede the objectivity of the research. However, the qualitative approach taken here realises that the researcher is always an active participant and brings their own background and perspectives into every element of research design and practice. Rather than pretend that such interests do not exist or dismiss their significance, they are recognised and understood as part of what shapes the interpretation of data and any research findings.

A potential concern related to interviewing fellow officers is that they may have been hesitant to speak openly and honestly about their experience of The Salvation Army for fear of organisational repercussions or even anxiety about judgement from the researcher. This concern does not appear to have been realised as all participants appeared to be able to speak freely about their frustrations and fears, in addition to their hopes both personally and for the organisation. If anything, the collegial atmosphere may have helped to draw out commonalities and set an expectation of empathy because officers have many shared experiences. In addition, participants were assured that they would not be named and wherever possible that identifying elements of their stories would be removed so that their anonymity could be maintained. In practice, this meant that small amounts of the interview data had to be excluded so that the likelihood of any individual officer's statements becoming identifiable would be minimised.

## **Scholarly critique**

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Intradenominational conflict has been the subject of many academic endeavours. A critique by Kniss and Chaves of 61 articles published in six journals over a 25-year period (1965-1990) raised a series of methodological failings.<sup>191</sup> Subsequently, they recommended that future research should focus more on the content of conflict rather than just its existence, the interactions between internal and external environments, have a diachronic approach, explore micro-macro connections and compare multiple cases.<sup>192</sup>

This project has tried to address the first three items in this list by paying particular attention to the individual and organisational narratives through which intraorganisational conflict is being worked out, by acknowledging and analysing the impact of external forces such as secularisation, and by

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<sup>191</sup> Fred Kniss and Mark Chaves, "Analyzing intradenominational conflict: New directions," *Journal for the scientific study of religion* (1995).

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-78.

placing the current problems in their historic context. This last factor could be more rigorously applied by using a similar methodology over several years. However, neither this option nor an opportunity to examine multiple cases or explore micro-macro connections were within the reasonable scope of this project.

## **Summary**

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In this chapter, the underlying research principles and assumptions behind this project have been outlined, along with the specific details of the various research methods and practice approaches. This chapter concludes the first major section of this thesis, which has explored the nature of the problems that are to be discussed, the background, relevant theoretical frameworks and research methodology. In the next section, Chapters Five to Nine, the data from the research fieldwork will be examined.

# Chapter Five: Varying Opinions About Missional Identity

## Introduction

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In the autumn of 2014, an article in the Salvationist magazine, *On Fire*, entitled “A Missional Miss” raised questions about whether The Salvation Army’s engagement in social work is ‘core mission’ or simply an added extra; a good thing to do, but not the main game. In that article, Editor-in-Chief, Captain Malcolm Davies, extensively quotes The Salvation Army’s founder, William Booth, in order to demonstrate the centrality of evangelism to the movement’s historic mission. “Was The Salvation Army raised up by God merely so we could serve soup?” asks Davies.<sup>193</sup> He then claims that the definitive answer to this question has already been given by Booth, who “once suggested that our efforts should be focussed on saving someone’s immortal soul, not simply making someone comfortable on their way to hell.”<sup>194</sup> Davies concludes that The Salvation Army should continue to help people; however, its *primary* mission is not helping but saving.

A response to this article appeared in *On Fire* a few weeks later, in which the breadth of Davies’ notion of salvation and mission was challenged. The writer, Salvo and long term employee, Barry Gittins, suggests that “saving people is a holistic process that the Army assists in, not performs.”<sup>195</sup> Gittins’ holistic view of salvation is explicitly social, temporal and unapologetically material. It includes access to essential items such as food, drink and adequate housing, as well as healthcare and educational opportunities. Gittins draws his justification for this expanded notion of salvation from a range of sources, including current leadership, Salvationist academics and media personalities. He also counters Davies’ appeal to organisational authority with his own set of quotations from William Booth. Gittins’ response concludes with a quote from Major Brendan Nottle: “If we only focus on ‘making disciples’ we reject our holistic theology, which was always the Army’s approach. If we are only focussed on converting people, if that’s the sole reason for caring for people, then we are selling a lie to the public and ourselves. There’s no integrity in offering conditional compassion.”<sup>196</sup>

Elements of this exchange match the pattern of internal secularisation in the dual structure model of denominations, which was put forward in Chapter Three. For instance, Davies’ appeal to authority comes not only from the Army’s founder but also explicitly from God, who is said to have ‘raised up’ The Salvation Army to do more than serve soup. This use of supernatural language and concepts is

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<sup>193</sup> Mal Davies, “A Missional Miss,” *On Fire*, 22 March 2014.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Barry Gittins, “The Nature of Mission,” *On Fire*, 3 May 2014.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

a recognisable feature of religious authority structures. Gittins' response has a distinctly different flavour. He still includes some theological arguments, as well as historical ones, but also reveals a wider range of authorities. Instead of claiming divine authorisation, Gittins uses academic sources to buffer his arguments in the same way that they would be used in secular fields. The quotation from Nottle shows concern for the public, the outsider, not as the object of evangelism but as an organisational stakeholder to be treated with respect. These different approaches to theology, as well as the varying internal/external orientations, conform to the theoretical distinctions previously outlined between religious authority and agency structures. However, the dividing line does not fall as neatly as Chaves suggests. Neither Gittins nor Nottle represent secularised social services; they are connected to both the Army's corps and social work.

Though the lines of conflict may not be as straightforward as they initially seemed, the differences are genuine. The divergence illustrated by these two competing articles is symptomatic of the split in identity and mission that has occurred within The Salvation Army. In reference to the breadth of this divide, one officer suggested that "I would say there's very little commonality between what people would say The Salvation Army is." (P9)

In this chapter, I will examine the evidence from interviews and a range of written sources that conflicting organisational identity claims exist within The Salvation Army and that these identities are revealed through varying motives for and means of missional engagement. Diverse and sometimes seemingly irreconcilable views will be revealed along a continuum that illustrates a series of positions about missional purpose. This continuum ranges from those that are primarily evangelical and have little, or no, concern for social work, to those who embrace The Army's success in social and community services, and who may reject the idea that helping people in need requires any spiritual component. The theoretical idea of internal secularisation will be used as one way of interpreting these variations in organisational perspectives.

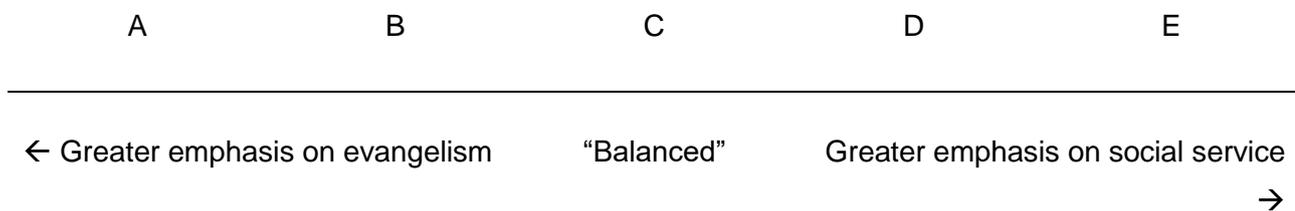
## **A continuum of perspectives on missional intent**

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One of the officers interviewed for this research described differing views about The Salvation Army's mission as a continuum with one end representing those "who see that our one main purpose is the salvation of souls", with social activity relegated as either being "very much less important" or only existing in service of the evangelical goal. At the other end of the spectrum are those "who perhaps take an even broader idea of what salvation is and then they downplay the specific Christian decision; they might see it as a faith journey." (P4)

Another officer described their own personal journey along this continuum, saying that their understanding of mission “was narrower when I started. It was probably more about the evangelical, very narrow view of our mission, but I think it’s broadened with a deeper appreciation of the breadth of social activity that we’re engaged in.” (P18) However, this enlarged concept of mission comes at a cost. The same person acknowledged “the downside of that is that it can tend to water down an evangelical thrust.” (P18)

While the exact points on this continuum are open to debate and it may be possible for individuals to hold multiple points simultaneously and in tension with one another, for the purposes of this exposition a five-point model is proposed as follows:



The various points on the scale may be described in the following ways:

- a. *Social services are a distraction from The Salvation Army’s evangelical purpose.* They can be seen to be legitimate expressions of Salvation Army mission only where they produce evangelical results.
- b. *Social services are good, but they are not ‘the real thing’.* Social services are an important part of The Salvation Army’s mission but they are a secondary priority after soul-saving.
- c. *The Salvation Army’s evangelical and social missions are equal and should be integrated,* so that all social programs have explicit spiritual content or links and all corps are involved in service to their communities.
- d. *Evangelism and social services make distinct contributions to a holistic approach to mission.* Both have inherent value for the parts they play.
- e. *Spiritual services are an optional extra.* In a pluralistic society, where many of our services are funded by a secular government, The Salvation Army should only provide spiritual services when specifically requested by someone seeking our help.

The following sections explore the various viewpoints on this continuum using a range of examples to illustrate their meaning. The strongest and most frequent arguments appear to come from the evangelical end of the scale, though this may reflect the sources, who are predominantly Salvation Army officers.

## A. Social services are a distraction from The Salvation Army's evangelical purpose

The Salvation Army has usually refrained from publishing direct criticisms of its own social service arm. However, a more subtle position, which does pervade official publications, is that of exclusion or invisibility. Considering the prominence of the organisation's social programs right across the world, it is surprising to discover descriptions of mission that either ignore or reject this aspect of the Army's work. General Shaw Clifton, a former international leader of the Army, gives an explicit example of this kind of exclusion when he says:

God called the Army into being to be faithful in a two-fold mission, a 'twin' mission. I refer here not to:

- Evangelism; and
- Social Service.

I stress this because one often hears these stated as our two-fold mission or our *raison-d'etre*. The two-fold mission I have in mind is:

- The proclamation of salvation and raising up of saved persons to be pro-active soul-winners; and
- The proclamation, teaching, and living out in practical example of the life of holiness.<sup>197</sup>

Clifton's active exclusion of social service from the dual mission of the Army has been embraced by evangelical bloggers. Major Stephen Court described it as 'teasing the social-wingers in our ranks'.<sup>198</sup> Salvationist James Thompson comes to the same conclusion when examining the missional meaning in the Army's symbols saying, "If we look at our crest or flag we see a glimpse of our mission. Neither mention social work. Instead they both depict holiness and evangelism."<sup>199</sup> Clifton acknowledges that evangelism and social service are often understood as the complementary components of the Army's dual mission but goes on to correct this by elevating holiness as a substitute for social work.

The Salvation Army's Wesleyan theological roots<sup>200</sup> could provide the means to link a wider understanding of social holiness with the movement's social service engagement, at the very least as overlapping categories. Yet it seems that this connection is either unknown or ignored by the

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<sup>197</sup> Street, *Called to be God's People*: 100-01. Cf. Clifton, *Who are these Salvationists? An analysis for the 21st Century*: 148-49.

<sup>198</sup> Stephen Court, "Captains' Blog," [http://www.armybarmy.com/blog\\_archive/2003\\_02\\_01\\_captblog.html](http://www.armybarmy.com/blog_archive/2003_02_01_captblog.html).

<sup>199</sup> James Thompson, "Salvo Mission," <http://whollyholly.blogspot.com.au/2007/05/salvo-mission.html>.

<sup>200</sup> As discussed in Chapter Three

above writers. This could be because most social work is no longer carried out by Christians and there is an unwillingness to apply the category of holiness to their actions or, conversely, to exclude from holiness those Christians who are uninvolved in social change. Regardless of the theological intention, the removal of social work from these explanations of The Salvation Army's mission acts to marginalise a very large group of employees and volunteers. The unambiguous message is that those who do not share the Army's religious convictions have no share in its mission and no claim to its identity.

However, in most cases, such intentional and explicit exclusion is lacking from Army publications. As engagement in the social mission of the Army has become less and less connected to the life of its corps, it has simply dropped away as subject of interest. A person seeking to understand the nature of Salvation Army soldiership could delve through relatively recent books such as *A New People of God – A Study in Salvationism*,<sup>201</sup> *Who are these Salvationists? An Analysis for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*<sup>202</sup> or *Called to be God's People*<sup>203</sup> without finding much reference at all to the social work of The Salvation Army.

In a paper presented to an International Summit on Poverty, Herbert and Fran Rader identified the key historical proponents of this view as Catherine Booth and George Scott Railton. They claimed that:

The social services were at first considered a distraction and a financial drain without much benefit in achieving [William Booth's] overarching goals. Catherine had reviewed every chapter of *In Darkest England* [and concluded that] Soup and soap were at best ancillary to soul-saving. Railton expressed the strongest opposition to this diversion, though he was an advocate for equal pay for women. He dressed in sackcloth and ashes to oppose the Life Assurance program in 1894.<sup>204</sup>

Following in this tradition, Court consistently argues for an uncompromising missional focus on evangelism.

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<sup>201</sup> Rhemick, *A New People of God - A Study in Salvationism*.

<sup>202</sup> Clifton, *Who are these Salvationists? An analysis for the 21st Century*.

<sup>203</sup> Street, *Called to be God's People*.

<sup>204</sup> Herbert C. Rader and Fran Rader, "Salvation Army Missionary Strategy and Ministry to the Poor: A paper for The Salvation Army's International Summit on Poverty USA Eastern Territory," *Journal of Aggressive Christianity*, no. 28 (2004): 40.

In one blog piece, he lists a range of “concerns that biblically minded people have with taking on what they deem ‘social issues’” including:

Social Activism Wastes Church Resources  
 People Will Not Change Without Being Regenerated  
 Being Salt and Light Refers Not to Moral Influence but Rather Gospel Witness  
 Social Activism has no New Testament model to follow  
 Social Activism Creates Unholy Unions Across Divergent Faiths  
 Social Activism Invites Hatred and Persecution Upon Christians for the Wrong  
 Reasons<sup>205</sup>

Court acknowledges that questions of identity are currently presenting an organisational challenge to The Salvation Army. He proposes that the Army has taken an easy road, substituting the difficult task of evangelism with the relative simplicity of helping people. According to Court, “of course it is easier to serve than to save ... easier to feed, clothe, and shelter than save, disciple, sanctify. And it is easier to sleep at night when you've accomplished something, so we tally up the numbers of those fed, clothed, and sheltered.”<sup>206</sup> From Court’s perspective, these things might be good, perhaps even necessary, but they are not the mission of The Salvation Army, which is “to win the world for Jesus.”<sup>207</sup>

Another example given by Court of the Army’s mission drift away from evangelism toward social service is a shift in interpretation of the two letter ‘S’s that soldiers and officers wear on their uniforms. He writes:

Saved to SAVE is the legitimate motto. At least 60 years from the origins of The Army, under at least two generals (the first two) this is how we understood the Ss. During this time we also experienced our most explosive growth, including the historic revival of 1878-1888 in England and national revivals on a smaller scale in just about every country we invaded.

Some time later ..., someone replaced 'save' with 'serve'. It SOUNDS like a subtle difference. After all, The Army is famous for its effective service. And we intend to glorify God in and through our lives (sometimes through service). *However, the result is a completely different mission.* [italics mine] One is to save the world (from sin); the other is to serve the world (in its sin) ... So, a drunkard stumbles in off the street. 'Saved to Save' preaches the Gospel as a means of becoming a new creation through Jesus' forgiveness and deliverance. 'Saved to Serve' detoxes and teaches that he is

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<sup>205</sup> Stephen Court, "Objections to Christians taking on 'social issues'," [http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2011\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2011_03_01_archive.html).

<sup>206</sup> Stephen Court, "Organisational Challenges," [http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2011\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2011_05_01_archive.html).

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

a recovering addict forever. And so on. Not only does mere 'Service (sic) do a disservice to the one served in that it leaves them bound for hell, but it does a disservice to our Lord who came to seek and to save us all. It ends up not helping us much either, in that we've proven disobedient and ineffective (if our service does not include the goal of saving).<sup>208</sup>

For Court, the idea that Salvationists might be 'Saved to Serve' is "the illegitimate liberal cousin of the original Ss. The destinations are completely different."<sup>209</sup> He revisits the subject in his blog on multiple occasions, each time with increasing vigour about the conspiracy to deflect Salvationists from their evangelical roots:

The passage of time has seen the increase of fuzziness around the uniform S's in the minds of Salvationists. At some point between 1925 and today someone suggested that the S's 'really' mean 'saved to serve'. And that misreading subtly infiltrated the minds and mission of some Salvationists the world over, and threatened to morph an effective great commission movement into a small 'c' Christian charity ... It is the second saving component that distinguishes us from some ineffective churches and denominations on the one side, and non-government organisations and even 'faith-based' charities on the other.<sup>210</sup>

One of the officers interviewed for this research shared Court's views about this subject. Here is their perspective:

It excites me that we're returning to a Saved to Save mission and that's something that's been a big shift in my thinking as well because I grew up with the understanding that we were a Saved to Serve Army and that was reflected in everything we did. Whereas while services is a very, very important part of what we do and a part of the journey, that's not our end goal. If that's our end goal, then we're no different to any other philanthropic organisation in this country. Our end goal is the salvation of the lost and service is a vehicle; service is an interaction as a part of that. (P15)

These last two quotes both emphasise differentiation as an important consequence of evangelical undertakings. This is significant because differentiation is a contributing factor to identity formation. According to these Salvationists, evangelism is a key distinguishing factor that separates The Salvation Army from other community service organisations and points to the organisation's true purpose, which is the salvation of souls.

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<sup>208</sup> Stephen Court, "Armybarmy Blog - March 08," [http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2008\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2008_03_01_archive.html).

<sup>209</sup> Stephen Court, "Armybarmy Blog - June 08," [http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2008\\_06\\_01\\_archive.html](http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2008_06_01_archive.html).

<sup>210</sup> Stephen Court, "Armybarmy Blog - May 10," [http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2010\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2010_05_01_archive.html).

## **B. Social services are good, but they are not ‘the real thing’**

This second point on the continuum is mainly distinguished from the former by the presence of some compromise, even if this is relatively minor at times. Here it is suggested that social services may exist as part of the evangelical mission, particularly if they contribute to soul-saving outcomes. However, their position is always subordinate to evangelism, which sits unquestionably at the heart of all true Salvation Army mission endeavours.

Thompson gives a good example of the rationale for this prioritisation when he says:

Surely soul saving is more important? Its (sic) eternal right? I think soul saving is the most important thing about being a salvo (even officers agree that soul saving will be there (sic) number 1 priority...). The social-justice and charity stuff, whatever you want to call it is good too. But not the number one thing...<sup>211</sup>

One of the officers interviewed expressed their perspective in this way:

I'm more of an evangelical. What I mean by that is that at the end of the day if we're not having people come to faith, whatever, I'm not talking about soldiership here, just people coming to faith. If at the end of the day, we're not doing that then I'd say well something's not working here. So by that statement, I'm not suggesting at all that everyone's got to become converted or anything like that. But I am saying that I think it needs to be more than just the cup of cold water. I think it's wrong to say that if we're just providing a cup of cold water, we're doing our job. I think, who we are, we're a spiritual movement so part of our outcome has to be spiritual results. (P5)

In the following passage, Matt Clifton describes the danger associated with giving equal priority to social services – that people will mistake the Army as representing only its most successful enterprise. His solution is straightforward: keep social services in their historically justified place, subservient to the evangelical mission.

Where our mission has been described as twofold, and social service elevated to the status of core purpose, the seductive option of offering soup and soap without salvation has been legitimised and the importance of our social services magnified in the view of the public. There are territories where the Army is understood to be a charity first and a church/mission second, if at all. There are communities where it is assumed that a Salvationist on the doorstep is fundraising for social services, not sharing the gospel. There are Army centres where client-facing staff are not Christians, evangelism is restricted or forbidden by the funding body and clients come, are helped and go without hearing the gospel. In these places, ambiguity of purpose has led to the severing of our vital, evangelistic nerve.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> James Thompson, "Evangelism," <http://whollyholly.blogspot.com.au/2007/08/evangelism.html>.

<sup>212</sup> Matt Clifton, "In Darkest Ambiguity and the Way Out," *Journal of Aggressive Christianity*, no. 14/50.

The situation that Clifton describes here strongly reflects that of The Salvation Army in Australia at every point: the public do know the Army primarily as a social service provider; the appearance of someone bearing the Salvos' Red Shield invariably raises expectations of fundraising and social centres are indeed places where clients are materially helped without any spiritual imposition. He goes on to say:

To these situations may be applied the key insight from examining 'Darkest England'. It is surely this: the core purpose of providing social services is to facilitate the salvation and growth in holiness of the person in need. As with anything occupying the energies of officers and soldiers, *their existence is justified and their effectiveness evaluated on these criteria alone* [italics mine]. This is no legalistic rigidity, but an absolute driven by clarity of purpose, fidelity to our origins and sacred calling, and a consuming passion for the salvation of the lost.<sup>213</sup>

Andrew Bale understands the idea of a 'social gospel' as being a reductionist splitting up of a more holistic gospel. In his blog post "No Social Gospel Here – Just the Gospel!", he gives "an important warning about the church's current infatuation with social gospel." According to Bale, the social gospel is not a complete gospel. He warns:

Christianity is not a buffet of disciplines and practices in which the 'believer' can select those foods which are to his liking. Christianity is Christianity and comes as a complete lifestyle which requires as the bare minimum the absolute surrender of the devotee. Breaking down Christianity into specialist chunks is dangerous, destructive, distracting and has deadly consequences.

Let us be clear:-

- You cannot have mission without evangelism,
- You cannot have social service without evangelism<sup>214</sup>

As a consequence, for Bale, any genuinely Christian social program must always come with a spiritual dimension. Even the example of Jesus feeding the five thousand has eternal as well as temporal connotations:

Jesus is saying quite plainly my job is not to dish out free bread. Jesus is clearly saying, I'm on to you! You are following me because you are hoping I will meet your physical needs but that is not my immediate priority'. In effect, Jesus is saying it is not

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Andrew Bale, "No Social Gospel Here, Just The Gospel," <http://beyondthebrook.blogspot.com.au/2006/03/no-social-gospel-here-just-gospel.html>.

my job to subsidise your inability to organise a packed lunch my job is to preach the gospel. However he is saying (like Booth) that if a barrier to your belief is a physical need then I will meet it. If as a consequence of your seeking the truth you present a physical need then I will meet it.<sup>215</sup>

Even though Bale's Jesus appears to have a surprisingly neoliberal anti-welfare ideology, he illustrates the point about priority that exemplifies this position. Whereas at the first point of the continuum, social service was deemed unnecessary and a potential hindrance, here it is seen as the subordinate partner to evangelism where its usefulness is contingent upon its ability to facilitate soul-saving activities. Social service is a means to religious ends but not a sufficient end in its own right.

The impact of this prioritisation of evangelism may not be complete exclusion of those engaged in social services – at least not of those also pointing the way towards evangelism – but it does inherently devalue their contribution. In addition, it marginalises social service staff from identification with The Salvation Army, as their work is deemed to be ancillary to the central cause.

Both of these initial points on the continuum demonstrate how theology shapes mission. The prioritisation of evangelism is contingent upon an eschatology that emphasises heaven and hell as the endpoints of human life. Consequently, evangelical activities that might save a person from eternal suffering are thought to be of far greater importance than the temporary relief of earthly miseries. This has significant consequences for The Salvation Army, whose investment in such temporary relief efforts not only amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars in Australia but also the employment of thousands of staff. These consequences are explored further in Chapter Seven.

### **C. The Salvation Army's evangelical and social missions are equal and should be integrated**

The mid-point of this continuum, which came through in several interviews, seems to represent an attractive option for people looking for a more balanced alternative. It acknowledges the importance of both evangelism and social action, seeing a relationship of positive cooperation rather than competing interests. One interviewee represented this position as central to The Salvation Army's historic identity, "a Christian organisation who provide both church and social services. It's always been that – dual mission." (P8) The Salvation Army's international mission statement, which describes preaching the gospel *and* meeting human need, is seen as foundational to this dual mission. Another officer talked about "two approaches: the evangelistic, faith, worship side and the

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

meeting the human need but as much as possible integrated and not in opposition to each other. And I don't see the 'bring the souls to Jesus' [task] as any more urgent, important or essential as meeting human needs." (P4)

One of the officers interviewed thought that the differences between corps and social services contributed complementary strengths, describing them as "two circles that intersect because the social side offers stuff that the corps will never be able to offer ... And you find on some of the social areas ... they will not be as strong at providing necessarily a focussed view on the gospel and the person of Jesus ... But when you put it together, the intersection of the two is a beautiful thing, it happens." (P1)

Another officer gave this more detailed view about how such complementarity might work:

In my view a lot of our ministry can function from corps and should function from corps and that's essentially stuff that's about early intervention and prevention, about development of people, about capacity building ... about living in community, participating in community and belonging, all that sort of stuff. [However,] I think there's an element of what we do that cannot be held in the context of, if you like, a normal corps, that does require fairly high level of professional skill and training, which is beyond the scope of people who have an interest and are prepared to provide support in a voluntary capacity. But I do think that we need to have people who can link the two together, so that when people are coming out of that much more sort of heavy and professional kind of structure, be it some alcohol therapeutic kind of program or some kind of long term development for families that have been in difficult circumstances. There needs to be the point at which they can be reintegrated into community and they can find a place of belonging, not only where they are accepted but where they are able to participate and where they are able to reshape themselves. (P2)

A corps officer described their own integrated approach by giving an example of a woman who came in asking for food and ended up getting involved in a range of community activities, including church. "We don't shy away from what we do, what we believe and what we're about", said this officer, "We don't feel the need to shove it down people's throats either. But I think in finding the balance between those two things, it works out and it works out differently for each person." (P20)

This view affirms both evangelism and social action. However, because it defines them as separate activities, it reinforces a dualistic worldview that undermines the very sense of balance that it sets out to achieve. This perspective suggests that evangelical activities relate to a separate spiritual dimension and aim to achieve spiritual outcomes, whereas social and community work is linked with the material and temporal world and its outcomes are constrained by that reality. Dualistic approaches such as this still act to divide rather than unite The Salvation Army's diverse missional goals, because even the middle point of a continuum accepts the polemic nature of the endpoints. It

does not address the theological drivers on the leftmost side or the secular reductionism of the right. Although the intent is to deal with fairness to both sides and create a sense of balance, the essential problem of competing identities is ignored rather than resolved.

On a practical level, this position affirms the co-existence of parallel streams, in line with the dual structures model of denominations. Each stream speaks a different language, has different goals and different means of achieving them. This might not present a problem if these streams never conflicted or competed for resources. Yet within the one organisation both possibilities are bound to occur.

### **D. Evangelism and social services make distinct contributions to a holistic approach to mission**

This option along the continuum still includes both social and evangelical activities as part of the wider work of The Salvation Army but takes a more pragmatic approach about the kinds of programs that can fit into different contexts. People that typify this perspective do not try to force spiritual content into situations or programs where there is not a natural fit, while still maintaining respect for and valuing the work that these programs do.

One officer, reflecting upon The Salvation Army's involvement in social services, said that "over a long period of time, I came to the conclusion that we do it because it's the right thing to do as humans, let alone Christians ... if we do social services as the bait on the hook to evangelism, we're doing it for the wrong reason." (P11) Consequently, they also concluded that opportunistic evangelism might also be an abuse of power. "Just because we've got an audience", they said, "doesn't mean we can coerce." (P11)

Another interviewee talked about their strong resistance to compulsory attendance at chapel in a residential program:

I felt chapel needed to be voluntary because Jesus never forced anybody to worship God. I felt that very strongly and so sometimes chapel was only 3 or 4 people and then other times 12 or 13. That was really one of my very strong points. I felt it had to be willing. I felt that really freed clients up then. If somebody's coming to something and they have to and they don't want to, there's already resistance. It's not going to be conducive for God to connect with them, let alone for them to hear what I'm saying. (P14)

The most common example of acknowledging that not all parts of The Salvation Army had to fulfil every component of its mission was expressed in reference to the Territory's four 'mission intentions': Transforming Lives, Caring for People, Making Disciples and Reforming Society. These

organisational objectives have been the subject of some debate, particularly the third item in the list. An officer recounted having to explain this: "I remember sitting on [a Divisional] Board and [the HR manager] was new, had just come on, and he was trying to understand the 4 mission intentions and I was trying to say to him that the Making Disciples part is probably going to be done in a different arena in [the social network] than it is in a corps. But that's ok because it's still the holistic ministry of The Salvation Army." (P18)

Another said "I think social program largely ignores the Making Disciples plank. They would say that's not our job, that's the corps' job" and acknowledged that "you could make that argument to some degree." (P19) However, it was also noted that to focus on social programs only fulfilling three out of four mission intentions could be hypocritical when some corps struggled to fulfil even one of them:

I remember arguing with an officer at DHQ, who was saying "How can non-Christian employees preach the gospel and tell people about Jesus?" And my argument was that these are our four mission intentions, so you'd like to come to [a social network] and put that blowtorch to them. Yes, they Care for People, Transform Lives, Reform Society but Making Disciples, you could probably question that. But if you're going to do that to them then you need to do that at all our big corps, at THQ, with the Staff Band, Staff Songsters. If you're going to be so particular about our social work in one area of what we do, then you need to look at all the areas you're working in and find what boxes you tick. (P20)

This position on the continuum accepts the separation of evangelical and social activities as complementary, in a similar way to that in which functional differentiation is described in secularisation theory. Religion has a place but it is not necessarily the same place as social service; and religious authority has no inherent claim upon fields beyond its own scope. Chaves' description of internal secularisation can be seen to be in operation here to the degree that social programs have gained a distinct life of their own. They are no longer measured against religious criteria, reflecting greater autonomy. But neither are they excluded from belonging under the organisational umbrella, as they would have been under points A and B.

There is an ethical driver here that values freedom, including freedom of (or from) religion. This may be reflective of a clearer break from the eschatological imperatives that drive the left end of the continuum (ie. heaven and hell). Religion plays one part among many in a holistic approach to health and welfare. This part is also usually less deterministic and more pluralistic; therefore people may follow their own spiritual paths, with Salvationism being only the preferred but not exclusive option.

## E. Spiritual services are an optional extra

Option E completes the continuum, although it is a minority view by staff and was not raised by any of the officers interviewed. It is included here for two reasons: firstly, because it is reflected in practice more than it is acknowledged; and secondly, because it more accurately represents the secular and pluralistic social context in which Salvation Army social programs currently operate.

Despite the best attempts by those at the other end of the continuum, many Salvation Army social programs operate with little or no explicit spiritual inputs and produce no evangelical outcomes. One of the officers interviewed did offer this explanation:

I think the Army wants to be something that it used to be and it's not anymore and the way it's going about trying to get back there is never going to get us there because it's not using the same ingredients as what we started with. So essentially, you want your social programs to be evangelical? Well, they're not going to be because (a) it's not that world anymore and (b) the majority of people wouldn't profess to have any kind of faith in Christ so it's not going to be the kind of evangelical program that you once had and I'm ok with that. I'm completely comfortable with that because people are still being assisted and bottom line that's a good thing. But it worries me when some leaders come in and want to change things. (P9)

Most Salvation Army social programs are funded by State and Federal Governments under extensive service agreements that prohibit discrimination against anyone because of their religious beliefs, as well as forbidding proselytization. Some of the details about how this might be judged in a mixed service environment are unclear; for instance, where programs are run from a church building. However, it is inescapably clear that government funds cannot be used for the promotion of religious purposes. Where spiritual services are present within government funded service streams, they are increasingly provided in an explicitly multi-faith context. For instance, The Salvation Army's chaplaincy services in hospitals and prisons exist within multi-faith teams, which require working relationships that exhibit mutual respect for diverse belief systems and practices. These pluralistic practices put social program chaplains at odds with their more evangelically conservative counterparts, as was evidenced by Salvationists who protested religious pluralism outside the Parliament of the World's Religions when it was held in Melbourne a few years ago.<sup>216</sup>

To the degree that officers have withdrawn from social programs, particularly at the frontlines, it may be concluded that some degree of internal secularisation has indeed taken place within The

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<sup>216</sup> A further example of this divergence in perspectives is that while these Salvationist protesters were outside holding placards proclaiming Jesus as the only way to salvation, other Salvationists, including a number of officers, were inside as active participants and presenters in the multi-faith Parliament.

Salvation Army. However, the retention of a strong focus on spirituality amongst those officers who were interviewed suggests that there are limits to this secularising influence. Furthermore, even accounting for a reduction in the officer presence, there are still ways in which spirituality may be continued to be played out amongst non-officer staff working at the frontlines of social programs. The decrease in active involvement of Salvation Army officers in these programs only reflects a particular understanding of religious authority, which although consistent with Chaves' definition, does not necessarily constitute secularisation. It is possible, for instance, that more pluralistic and less hierarchical forms of religion may allow certain forms of spirituality to flourish because this is more in tune with the rest of society. These forms are less likely to be immediately recognisable as distinctly Salvationist because they are inherently more individualistic and less tied to organisational identity.

Despite attempts by conservative leadership to demarcate certain expressions of Salvationism as orthodox or legitimate, there are frequent adaptations of spiritual and pastoral practices in both corps and social programs. The influx of non-Salvationist staff means that people seeking help from The Salvation Army may very well encounter a Buddhist, a Muslim, or someone with no allegiance to any religious system who serves them in the name of the Salvos. For some, such partnerships may appear to dilute or even subvert the Army's Christian mission. For others, this example of religious pluralism is a natural reflection of the society in which we live.

## **A scale measuring secularisation**

The continuum used in this chapter to illustrate the range of views about evangelism and social service in The Salvation Army could also be used to describe internal secularisation. As positions on the continuum move from the far left, which is the most radically evangelical position, towards the right end of the scale, they reflect increasingly secular positions. The left side shows resistance to secularising forces; here the language of theology and the supernatural is commonplace. Positions are justified according to interpretations of Christian scripture and the religious tradition of The Salvation Army. By contrast, the right hand side of the continuum is an essentially secular standpoint, where notions of spirituality and religion are optional extras. The logic of this location is post-modern and rational; religious arguments are subordinate to the authority of the social sciences. Where religion is acknowledged on the right, it is also relativised. Like the emphasis of the evangelical, there is an individual focus, perhaps seen as an expression of human rights. However, unlike the evangelical perspective, this end is essentially pluralist. The secular social worker may seek to help their client to fulfil their own spiritual or religious yearnings but the direction of these is never imposed;

it must always be driven by the client's own desires and interests. Religious authority is limited at this end of the continuum but non-authoritarian forms of spirituality seem to persist.

Because all points along this continuum are currently present within The Salvation Army, it can be argued that secularisation is occurring to varying degrees but also that it appears to be being resisted. This variation in circumstances and accompanying perspectives is in line with the notion that organisational identity and missional purpose are continually evolving as they are tested against developing conditions, both within and outside the movement.

## Summary

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In this chapter we have seen a range of contrasting viewpoints that cannot be easily reconciled. In some cases, differences have arisen because of varying experiences or exposure to challenging situations. Several interviewees raised some inherent differences in perspective between corps and social programs that contributed towards varying senses of identity and place within the movement.

One interviewee suggested that The Salvation Army presented different identities to different audiences. To the public, most of organisational communication is focussed on the social work, but inside the Army (at least in this officer's corps-based context) the conversations are almost entirely about spiritual work. They said "When we look at the YouTube annual report, it contains all of these great social achievements and there's no mention of church activities – yet when [the Army's leadership] ask us what we've done, it's only about the spiritual side. We look at those social activities and feel good about them, even though we may have had nothing to do with them." (P10)

Several interviewees acknowledged that tension existed between The Salvation Army's two missional streams. The following critique came from an officer who had spent most of their ministry in corps:

They should be very coherent but the reality is that they fight against each other ... my experience has been that the social side of it are more engaging or wanting to engage that for their clients. Whether they believe or not, whether they're Christ followers or not, is irrelevant but they're open and very happy for us to engage in any of their clients. I see the corps as a little dumbstruck. The corps for me has been a blockage more than social. I've never had pushback from social but I've had a lot of pushback from corps. (P17)

These divergent perspectives and the pressures that arise from holding them together within The Salvation Army demonstrate the significance of questions about identity and mission that are currently being raised internally. The continuum model illustrates the range of perspectives, which are themselves being continually reshaped by the contested environment. Particular attention has

been given to the fear amongst evangelical Salvationists that their enterprise is under threat due to a disproportionate emphasis on social service activities. Arguably, the external focus of social programs does make them more vulnerable to secularising influences. However, as the next chapter will show, the battle between the secular and the sacred may be revealing a change in the forms of religion rather than just its disappearance.

# Chapter Six: Two Missions – Separate but not Equal

## Introduction

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In the late 1990s, Salvation Army officer Derek Linsell noted a stark contrast between the strong external image of The Salvation Army in Australia, which was reflected in a 94% public approval rating, and an unusually high degree of uncertainty and anxiety within the Army's own ranks:

To say that The Salvation Army has an identity crisis is an understatement. The image of The Salvation Army in the public eye is not the reality from within. This is indicated at the Red Shield Appeal collection time. Every year it is becoming increasingly harder to motivate salvationists to collect. One of the major reasons for this is that the average salvationist is divorced from the actual work that is done in many of the institutions. *The public myth of The Salvation Army does not equal the internal reality* [italics mine].<sup>217</sup>

Linsell's identification of the Red Shield Appeal as both symbol and symptom of missional disconnection is salient. Each year, when publicity around The Salvation Army's social work within the Australian community is being highlighted and the public are being asked to 'dig deep' for donations, the gap between those collecting, who are primarily Salvationists and volunteers, and those who do the social work for which the Army is known, who are primarily paid staff, is impressed upon all who are involved. When someone makes a donation and thanks the collector for the work that the Army do, the volunteer fundraiser may accept this gratitude knowing that the part they play enables The Salvation Army to do its work in the community, but the uniformed Salvationist is confronted by this in a different way. Linsell points out that "the average Salvation Army member seems to hide behind the good works of The Salvation Army's social arm, but ... there are very few Salvationists who are involved in this work or even mix with the poor and marginalised."<sup>218</sup> Most of the Salvationists who are accepting the public's thanks and donations at the time of the Red Shield Appeal are doing so on behalf of an entirely different part of the organisation, from which they are largely disconnected and may even know little about.

In this chapter, I will explore the practical consequences of an organisational split in identity and mission, focussing on the experiences and understandings of those Salvation Army officers who were interviewed for this research. Their views raise questions about how constructions of organisational identity can be used to exclude or include in both social and religious dimensions. Because The Salvation Army's global and historic identity is explicitly linked to its Christian heritage,

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<sup>217</sup> Derek Linsell, "'Thank God for the Salvos' an historical and contemporary assessment for the public acceptance of the Salvation Army in Australia" (manuscript, Monash University, 1997), 74.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 73.

there is a theological aspect to the organisation's struggle to define itself in a changing social environment. Conflicting opinions about what the Army should be doing in the world, its core mission, are deeply intertwined with understandings about religious commitment and spirituality. Some of the ways in which theology is used to shape organisational ideas and practices are explored further in Chapter Seven.

Throughout this chapter and the next, I will refer to the third theoretical perspective, which was outlined in Chapter Three and which highlights the significance of what groups count as religious. This perspective is of vital importance for people whose self-understanding includes a spiritual dimension and whose belonging to a group is tied to their religious identity because it not only validates their own sense of belonging within the group but also determines who else gets to belong. In The Salvation Army, this description most clearly indicates Salvationists, whose religious identity is explicitly linked with the movement. But can employees also be Salvos? In the eyes of the public, the Salvos are those people that help the homeless but inside the organisation it seems that different criteria are often applied.

## **Separate entities, separate missions**

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In every interview for this research, the separation between The Salvation Army's evangelical and social missions was acknowledged. One interviewee reflected that "there were social programs in my home town but that was never connected to the corps. If it was, it was 'we don't go near that'. Very, very separate and it was never encouraged to engage in that at all." (P17) This disconnection in missional engagement has a direct impact upon people's sense of identity, which reinforces tribal boundaries – there is a clear sense about 'us' and 'them'.

While there was hope for a more united front, and in some cases a reminiscent longing for times past when the concept of mission appeared to be more cohesive, it was generally acknowledged that this did not occur much anymore. "In many ways, it's observed as two separate functions", said one officer, "which is totally disastrous because it's [meant to be] one function." (P1)

One interviewee attributed key differences to varying abilities to adapt to the contemporary environment:

I think it's tense because I think one intuitively knows where it's going and the other doesn't. I think there's a clearer world in social work in that you confront a problem, you try and respond to the issue, you do work if not across agencies, across the Army or you try and struggle to figure out how you're going to deal with it, you work partnerships. There is a theoretical framework for behaving in social and I think evangelism's totally lost its way, so we'll flirt with Pentecostalism. We don't really have

strong theological positions, so we haven't got a framework within which to operate.  
(P3)

A shortage of interest in social work was also identified as a contributing factor to the failure of those in corps to understand or want to work with their social program colleagues. "I don't think there is ownership of our social work/program by the majority of corps members", said one officer, "All they're worried about still is their band and songsters and what songs we sing on Sunday and what colour the cups are and we employ someone else to do [the social work]. And I think that's one of our great failings at the moment." (P19) This division, which was so widely identified in interviews, reflects and perpetuates a fundamentally dualistic approach to mission – corps do the spiritual work, social programs do the welfare work. The implication of this demarcation of duties is that social programs are not religious and that corps do not need to be involved in practical works within their communities. Both of these conclusions were challenged in various interviews but the gap that has been established has become increasingly difficult to bridge due to conflict between parties.

## **Antagonism and suspicion**

In some interviews, the description of separation went beyond having distinct missional goals and activities to acknowledge suspicion and even occasionally direct antagonism towards one another. "Unfortunately, we're not on the same page", said a leading officer, "there's suspicion." (P5) An example of this suspicion that was given is when social services staff became concerned about the proselytising intentions of corps members or officers and wanted to protect their clients, who were often in a vulnerable position, from spiritual abuse or manipulation. Concern about the risks of integrating social services and corps work were shared by both sides. One interviewee noted that "where a person is more concerned about their silo and keeping it safe from whatever they perceive as dangers then it won't happen, you won't get the connection happening, you won't get the buy in." (P1)

Another senior officer suggested that there were "some [social service] network leaders and centre managers who are very much non-committal or unconvinced about the integration or about needing the Christian faith stuff." (P4) In some cases, this was thought to go beyond a lack of commitment to integration and became outright antagonistic, though it was acknowledged that this was "more anecdotally and by rumour." (P4) It was also understood that these combative attitudes may have arisen from past experience - "it comes out if they've had bad experiences with chaplains or are disillusioned with The Salvation Army as a Christian organisation." (P4)

However, in other interviews these attitudes towards social services staff were dismissed as buying into "urban myths", which was the direct result of a lack of social service experience in many officers.

“It’s ignorance”, said one officer, “and I didn’t understand it [myself] until I worked there. So if you’ve not actually worked in a social service [you can’t understand].”(P20) Another officer said something similar about how their own understanding was transformed by working in social programs and how, in the absence of such experience, it would have been difficult to fully comprehend how different things are on the ‘other side’:

I think there’s a lack of understanding that [the nature of social mission] needs to be quite so different [from corps] because before I moved into chaplaincy, I think I wouldn’t have seen the need to change. The only people that I think really make a connection, when I’m trying to explain it, are those that have been in social programs. It’s like anything, unless you experience something, it’s only words and it’s hard to really relate to. (P14)

The insight provided here from a chaplain is significant because it shows that a move into social services is not a move away from religion, just certain ways of expressing religious observance that are normalised in corps life. In the context of social services, religious language and forms need to be adapted, and may even be so changed that they are unrecognisable to those who have not gone through similar experiences. This connection between firsthand involvement in The Salvation Army’s social work and the understanding that is derived through this experience came out in several interviews, with a number of officers describing a consequent and substantial change in worldview and theology. However, this paradigm shift itself served to further marginalise those officers from their peers and leadership who did not share the same experiences.

A further challenge experienced by those officers who find themselves in social appointments is that they feel underequipped for their new role. The gap between the training received by Salvation Army officers and the specialist expertise required in the social and community services sector has grown significantly and left many officers struggling to find their place in very different world to most corps environments.

## **The expertise gap**

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Today, there are very few officers in charge of Salvation Army social centres in Australia. While the number of social programs has grown dramatically over the past few decades, the number of officers with relevant qualifications has not kept pace. As a result, an interviewee described a corps-based service where “the officers that were appointed there felt out of their depth dealing with those employed within the social program because to work in social program now, you have to have qualifications. So they felt unqualified, [having relatively] poor education and were trying to deal with these highly educated, well-qualified social workers.” (P19)

This lack of understanding, experience and expertise amongst officers, particularly in relation to social services, was a frequent theme throughout the interviews. “We need officers to get involved in social programs because we face a real challenge in the future getting [officers in senior management roles] with some level of experience in the field”, said one officer in an interview. (P19) Another asked the question “How do we raise up those officers with the necessary skill level?”, noting that unfortunately “it’s a conversation that we don’t have.” (P5)

In some cases, the professionalisation of social work was given as a key driver for division. Here are a few examples:

My big fear for the Army too is that we see this separation of social and spiritual start to happen because we’ve become so good at what we do and so professional at what we do (P15)

It’s already happened. We separated church and social. Church abrogated all social responsibility in light of professionalism. And I don’t know the answer. (P6)

It’s still a huge gulf for us as The Salvation Army. One of the reasons for that is that we’ve engaged professionals, which we’ve needed to do because we didn’t have the expertise. (P5)

Each of these statements links missional separation with professionalisation. Nevertheless, there seems to be little indication that The Salvation Army is responding to this trend in social work practice by raising the professional standards and qualifications of its own officers. If the professionalisation of social work has indeed contributed to distancing the Army’s social services from its own officers, the simplest solution would appear to be a professional upskilling of the officer workforce. It is possible however, that the relegation of social programs to professional staff masks an underlying shift in missional intent. If social work is not thought of as a religious vocation for officers, then the pursuit of academic qualifications in this area, and indeed even experience in this field, may be understood as a diversion from the greater goal, which is to evangelise the world.

## **The roots of separation**

The problem of diverging missional streams has a mixed history. Historian, Norman Murdoch, argues that as early as 1890 the division of The Salvation Army’s work and its officers into separate wings “created two classes of Salvationists ... The Army’s evangelists (spiritual wing) saw their mission as converting souls in Army corps (mission halls), a view that tended to alienate them from social wing

officers and employees who worked to mend social inequities.”<sup>219</sup> According to Murdoch, because most of The Salvation Army’s leadership comes from the ‘spiritual wing’, social officers continue to be seen as ‘second class’ and the alienation created over a century ago continues to be prevalent today. He claims explicitly that in “the Army’s officer ranks, all of whom are trained as evangelists, the social-wing has always played second chair to soul saving.”<sup>220</sup> This comes in direct opposition to the external image of the movement, which celebrates its social work while largely ignoring its spiritual work. Making the same point that Linsell raised at the beginning of this chapter, Murdoch notes that “the Army, as Salvationists have seen it, contrasted remarkably with its public image ‘as others saw it’.”<sup>221</sup>

In the 1970s and 80s, there were a few officers who were dedicated to a distinct social work stream, who gained significant experience and who, alongside their staff, pursued relevant qualifications when the trend towards professionalisation became clear. Right from the beginning of their ministry, officers with the right aptitude could be directed into specialised training and appointments, as one interviewee explained: “A couple who were commissioned in my session went into social. They were one of the first officers who were treated as ‘we need to make sure you become professional at this’.” However, it was also noted that this couple were a very small minority in a large session of cadets, most of whom were directed towards corps ministry. (P5)

For those officers who were in corps ministry, even the appointment of officer colleagues to manage social programs did not guarantee to bridge the gap between the Army’s evangelical and social ministries. One officer described some of the social centres of the past, saying “there were oftentimes officers in charge of these places and you almost felt like you were stepping into their place and you weren’t allowed to come in. There was a stage where you felt like you were not qualified enough to step in and so you were held at arms’ length.” (P1)

The distinctions between corps and social officers were exacerbated by an appointment system in which it was generally thought that good officer leaders went to corps as the priority. “Corps appointments always ... got the best officers [because that was what was valued most]”(P5) and

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<sup>219</sup> Murdoch, "Frank Smith: Salvationist Socialist," 1-2.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

conversely “over the years, obviously we used the social appointments for a while as a bit of a dumping ground for officers [that were not good enough for corps appointments].” (P5)

One officer spoke of the legacy of this ‘dumping ground’ that continued to work against attempts to collaborate across corps and social services today:

You might hear stories of where we might not have placed the right people or we have these really well-meaning people within the corps that cross boundaries without realising that they’re crossing boundaries or they’re driven because they feel they have the license. They have the best intentions, maybe not the skills or they don’t understand the boundaries and their heart mission to take Jesus to all the world is so strong that it causes conflict. And so over that conflict, that history remains. So then you build this ethos within our professionals who say they’re not going to engage with the corps because they’re all do-gooders or they don’t listen or they’ve done it wrong and then you build at the corps this whole history of we can’t get our foot in the door because they don’t want us and that history continues and probably to a degree through our chaplaincy, that’s happened because historically we’ve tended to put our non-performing sick people into chaplaincy instead of putting our best people. (P7)

The gap created by placing some of the worst performing officers in an increasingly professionalised workforce exacerbated the problem of social program ownership by Salvation Army leadership. It was reported that instead of being “intentional enough in training officers in that stream [when] the need for professionalism has accelerated ... our capacity to put officers in those appointments dropped off quite radically, to today when we ask ourselves questions [like] how do we even get officers just back at base level again in our social programs?” (P5)

## **The hegemony of the corps**

Corps officership has become the default expectation for most officers now. An interviewee who reflected on when this started said that “there was a deliberate decision made that all officers would be appointed to corps, I reckon most probably in the early 1990s I think. There was a deliberate decision, let’s get them well rounded, I guess, so to speak, as corps officers.” (P5) However, the reality quickly became one that was difficult to shift afterwards. “Once you’re there, it’s extremely difficult to move them into another field as well because they become competent at that level”, they said, “We see we have a need in this corps over there and here’s a competent officer, let’s move them over there.” (P5) As a result, most of the training and development programs have become “geared to corps officership and corps upskilling rather than social” (P8), increasing feelings of marginalisation for those officers who do have social appointments.

Not only does the prioritisation of evangelical activities above social service have practical consequences that restrict the areas of mission in which Salvation Army officers are engaged; it also acts to skew other organisational elements disproportionately. Most officers are appointed to corps

ministries and those that do find their way into social programs usually now do so through frontline chaplaincy work. Consequently, leadership development opportunities are limited for social officers and leadership is almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of those with a strong emphasis on evangelical work in corps.

In 2015, just one week of the whole year was dedicated to the teaching of social and community services amongst cadets at The Salvation Army's College for Officer Training. Social outplacements are shorter than corps outplacements and many of them now happen in corps environments, rather than dedicated social programs. In many ways, the training scheme for Salvation Army officers reflects the pre-secularised world in which functional differentiation and professional specialisation had not yet emerged. Newly commissioned officers will emerge from the College prepared for a world in which religion has overarching authority across a range of social fields, only to discover that this world ceased to exist in the last century.

The expectation for the Army's religious professionals to be aligned with church/corps work highlights the alignment of this as the dominant religious category. This is confirmed by the pattern in which social program chaplains were those officers who were deemed unsuitable for corps ministry, those who had failed in their religious duty, were relegated to more earthly responsibilities. Harold Hill's doctoral thesis, which traces the Army's evolution from Christian mission to church denomination focussing on the clericalisation of officers, illustrates this pattern. Once Salvation Army officers became ordained ministers, their primary role was assumed to be that of a church pastor rather than a social worker.<sup>222</sup>

There is, however, some indication of a changing attitude in the area of social program chaplaincy. An officer chaplain spoke of the challenge "to become a professionalised team of people." (P14) Referring to their own experience, they put it this way: "The more we professionalise ourselves, the more ready our social sector workers will engage with us. When I did my [sector training], the acceptance at the [social program] changed incredibly, overnight, when I said, I'm going to do this course. And I'm on their turf. I think that's what it was." (P14) Having seen the credibility and improved relationships that came with a genuine commitment to equivalent training as the rest of the staff team, this chaplain was convinced that such investments were a critical factor. However, this would take "a good understanding" and "a real concentrated effort" by leadership and the same person lamented that "I don't even see that happening in my lifetime at this current rate." (P14) Another

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<sup>222</sup> Hill, "Officership in The Salvation Army: A Case Study in Clericalisation."

officer, in a Divisional role, noted that “probably, to a degree, we’re getting better people in chaplaincy; but we’re still not getting our best.” (P7)

A few of the officers who had been involved in The Salvation Army’s social programs had committed to additional studies including specialist certificates (such as drug and alcohol studies), social work degrees and even some post-graduate qualifications in social policy. Although rare, the commitment that this showed invariably raised the assessment of these officers by social program staff. Their social qualification did not replace their religious expertise; it gave them a multidisciplinary, more holistic perspective. These officers did not see their dedication to the Army’s social services as contrary to their religious vocation but, in most cases, this had required a reinterpretation of the dominant theological and missiological concepts within the Army. For these officers, the social service context required a more expansive view of mission that enabled cooperation with, but not co-option by, the secular world.

Furthermore, there was an awareness amongst these officers that the very things that made them effective in social programs could have an opposite effect in the rest of the organisation. The choice for an officer to prioritise social work as a vocation goes against the organisational grain, which is strongly oriented towards evangelical ministries. The existence of broad tribal boundaries between social and corps means that these officers are also seen to have suspect loyalties – choosing the ‘other’ above the dominating internal forces of the organisation. Later in this chapter it will also be seen that a direct consequence of these officers having to adapt their theological positions to match their experience in social programs alienates them from the worshipping paradigms of most corps.

The gap in expertise, which has been described above, appears to have created a sense of loss within the Army. There is a reluctance about the necessity to employ ‘outsiders’ to do the work that was once done by Salvationists. However, for some there is an even deeper missional problem with the professionalisation of social services. Has it lost its distinctively Christian character?

## **Employment in the Christian mission**

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A consequence of the belief discussed in the last chapter that social programs are unable to completely fulfil the mission of The Salvation Army unless they include an evangelical component is the belief that the organisation should only employ Christians. Historically the social work of the Army began with its own converts, many of whom were saved from the very evils out of which they later sought to save others. For Salvationist blogger, James Thompson, understanding this historical linkage puts The Salvation Army’s current social work into perspective. He writes:

I believe our mission wasn't to help people, I believe it was to get people saved. Because these early Salvationists were so passionate, so zealous, so committed to Jesus and holiness and evangelising that in their hearts grew a deep love for people. And out of that love came our amazing social work.<sup>223</sup>

General Clifton is a strong advocate for connecting the Army's values with its program through explicit Christian content and agency. According to Clifton:

When we allow our doctrine to determine the shape, style and emphasis of everything, including our pragmatic social programming... we find that we come face-to-face with certain inescapable outcomes... A prime example is seen in our counseling services. What sort of counseling do we offer? Because we are a church... we have no mandate other than to undertake and offer to our clients counseling that is unambiguously and unashamedly Christian in ethos and content.<sup>224</sup>

John Norton agrees that the Army's programming needs to be designed to deliver on the full mission of The Salvation Army, which he understands as framed by the organisational slogan as "save souls, grow saints, and serve suffering humanity." Norton suggests that:

authentic Salvation Army happens only when we fulfil our mission holistically ... A unit that does not contain the whole mission is not a valid expression of Salvation Army ... In other words, I would offer that a facility that is able to feed a thousand people a day but does not offer Christ as savior to its clients, is not a valid expression of Salvation Army.<sup>225</sup>

As a consequence of this understanding, employment practices come into consideration:

If we hope to prevent a slide into secularization we need to begin looking more seriously at the purpose of our ministries. It follows that if we are to provide Christian ministries, we will need Christians to do the ministry. Only people who know the whole gospel will be able to see how the whole gospel applies to the practical questions of ministry in a secular reality.<sup>226</sup>

The lack of Salvationists within social programs was a theme that also came through in the interviews for this research. One officer said "When I look through social programs in my Division, the only ones involved in social programs from the Salvation Army would be those that are involved in corps based

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<sup>223</sup> Thompson, "Salvo Mission".

<sup>224</sup> Clifton, *Who are these Salvationists? An analysis for the 21st Century*: 149.

<sup>225</sup> John Norton Jr., "Christians Only Need Apply: The Salvation Army and its Employee Hiring Practices," *Journal of Aggressive Christianity* 16(2002).

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

ER.<sup>227</sup> In the [social] network, there would not be one Salvo, which is, to me, very sad.” (P19) Another officer noted that the time had come “where no longer do we have officers in social program, leading social program as once we did and we now have non-Christian staff.” Although these staff might share some of the Army’s mission values, it was felt that the absence of a “Christological foundation” left something vital missing, which officers would have previously supplied. (P18)

It seems clear from this series of quotations that what is missing in the eyes of these officers is the capacity to evangelise directly through social work. This is the missing component that can only be supplied by Christian staff and its necessity is brought about by the belief that social service should be employed only as a means to evangelical ends. The evangelical view here closely aligns identity and mission: if you are a Christian, then you can carry out the whole mission; if you are not a Christian, then your work is incomplete because it lacks the evangelical component.

It is not surprising that some people have taken offence at the suggestion that the value of their work is lessened because it does not have an evangelical focus or comes from non-Christian motives. This officer reflected on one such debate:

I can remember getting castigated by a guy, a non-Salvationist ... for suggesting that soul saving should be the best work that we can do. That is, we can do good work by helping people, we can help them get off drugs, we can provide for them materially, we can support their family through crisis, we can help them deal with emotional pain. That’s good work but we’ve not done our best work until we’ve introduced them to Jesus. (P18)

The logic of this is unassailable for the evangelical Christian, who sees conversion as the ultimate purpose of The Salvation Army’s mission. Everything else that might be done to help or nurture human potential will always be subordinate to this overriding goal. According to this perspective, social work might be a morally good exercise but when it lacks an explicitly spiritual dimension, it exists outside the category of religious service. The inescapable conclusion for the non-Christian social worker is that their work is devalued by this understanding.

This topic also divided opinions, with several officers strongly defending the sacrifices made by non-Christian staff. One interviewee said:

I love the [social network] staff and I would do anything I could to support them because they love what they do and they don’t have to love what they do – I do; I have to. I’m mandated to love everybody, but they’re not, if they’re not Christian.

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<sup>227</sup> Emergency Relief (ER) is the most common form of community service work undertaken by corps. It typically involves assisting people in financial crisis with a food voucher or food parcel.

They're just doing it out of the goodness of their heart and their job is far more complicated than mine, I think. So I just want to support them because I think what they do is amazing and they identify themselves as [being part of] The Salvation Army so I want to support them in that. If that's how they identify themselves then, yes, you are. Absolutely. (P9)

An officer who referred to staff being “maligned because they're not Christians” said that such talk “always disgusted me because I saw more sacrifice out of [a long-term employee who is not a Christian] than I saw in most corps. So I think you're kidding yourself if you're making those assessments about staff who are on the frontline of chaotic lifestyles as opposed to those who sit back in the comfort of middle class existence.” (P3) Another officer also picked up on the contrast between the Christian critic and the dedication of staff, saying “whatever the program is, we probably have many branded Christians who let us down more than we do our non-Christian partners who walk the walk and really put it into their action.” (P7) For this group of officers, the commitment to service at the frontlines of Salvation Army social programs was more important than a nominal nod to faith and those who had not shared in this service had little right to criticise. “It's often social workers and social services that get it”, said an interviewee, “People in leadership, you hear them say sometimes, Christians aren't working there, we should just pack up and go. Some people have no idea of what our social services do and the difference they make.” (P20)

The call to only employ Christians emphatically reinforces social messages about belonging and exclusion. If Christians are the only ones that are seen to be able to fully deliver on the whole mission of The Salvation Army, then non-Christians receive the message that they are second-rate substitutes; only a pragmatic necessity in the absence of more preferable alternatives. Whilst some Salvation Army Territories have established preferential hiring practices for Christians in social service management roles, this has not occurred within the Australia Southern Territory. Even if this were a desired outcome, the practical application of such a policy would be highly problematic given the extensive scope of social service delivery and the increasing secularisation of the population. Essentially, there are not enough qualified and capable Christians to do the number of jobs required.

A working compromise has been to reserve the most senior positions for Salvation Army officers. However, this has recently been challenged by the diminishing lack of expertise in social program management amongst this group. Consequently, in the absence of specialist experience and qualifications, decision making processes have turned towards bureaucracy rather than sector-specific knowledge and understanding.

This is a clear example where a theological understanding about mission has concrete outworkings that serve to marginalise and exclude people from organisational identification. As evangelism has taken on greater priority within the organisation, social action has ceased to count *independently* as

a legitimate Christian enterprise. In this organisational climate, it is not surprising that Salvationists might eschew the pursuit of social work as a vocation. Those that did choose to pursue studies in this area would be taught in a secular environment, including ethical frameworks that forbid proselytising practices. Thus the gap between the training and development of social workers and the intentions of evangelical Salvationists exacerbates the missional divide and the sense of belonging to separate groups.

Because identity and mission are so closely linked, the question of what gets counted as religious or spiritual is not merely theoretical; rather, it is embodied in human lives. Officers who defended the sacrifice and contribution of non-Christian social workers do not see themselves as becoming more secular. They have adapted to an expanded and evolving sense of Christian mission that is more inclusive, both in its partnerships and its intent, but is still resolutely framed by religious ideas. However, this move towards greater inclusiveness is not indicative of all parts of The Salvation Army. In some cases, there are clear demarcation points between who belongs and who does not.

## **The battle to belong**

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Another consequence of the often incompatible cultural gaps between corps and social expressions of Salvation Army mission is that clients of social programs struggle to fit into most corps environments. This situation somewhat mirrors that faced by a young William Booth, who struggled to get Methodist congregations to accept the converts from his evangelical ministry over 150 years ago. The Salvation Army, which was never originally meant to function as a church, only took on this role because, as Richard Collier notes, “since Wesley’s day, Methodism had become ‘respectable’.”<sup>228</sup> It appears that Salvationism has also now become ‘respectable’ and there are only limited options for those who do not fit in socially to find a belonging community in Salvation Army corps.

A corps officer told this story about how difficult it can be for someone who comes into a corps “looking different”:

There was a girl and her mum was a Salvo in Sydney so she contacted us and we got to know her really well. She was 16, living in Melbourne by herself, she was a heroin addict. I can remember taking her to a Sunday service and she was just a real mess, hair was everywhere and there were people that just didn’t cope. You could see on their faces and some of them verbalised it. I think that’s just part and parcel of

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<sup>228</sup> Richard Collier, *The general next to God: the story of William Booth and the Salvation Army* (London: Collins, 1965). 25.

the way we've compartmentalised it – you have to come in and look and smell and dress and worship just like us. (P20)

Another senior officer talked about the dangers of 'catching' unhealthy attitudes, which were could be strongly inculturated:

Last Sunday there was a lady at the corps who has been there for a long time, a soldier, who chucked an absolute wobbly because there's a man who occasionally comes to [this] corps, who can be disruptive. He's got some alcohol related brain damage and she was most upset that the officer would not ban him from attending the corps. So we've got this soldier who's been there for 40 years, who's chucking a wobbly because there's a man coming who doesn't fit what we call normal. And on the other hand we've got two new soldiers who are busting their necks to reach out to the marginalised. So somehow we've got to protect these ones from this lady. (P19)

In another interview, the person described how a change of corps officer shifted a previously accepting corps to being one where social program clients were increasingly marginalised. Instead of being welcomed, this group of people were now seen as a hindrance to Sunday worship, "there was this rejection of the people that stood at the front door and smoked and you had to walk past them to get into the building." (P7) The challenges associated with difference and diversity in community overcame the corps members' desire for greater integration. "It's not because they didn't want to", another officer explained, "they actually want to see these people come to faith, but on [their own] terms." (P17) There's an impression that where people "didn't act and operate as we do, it upset the balance of how our church should look and as a consequence, they get squeezed back out again." (P17) Acceptance within the corps environment was painted as highly conditional based upon a person's ability to conform to established social norms: "If you're like me, then you will be acceptable coming to church but if you're going to come in with all your problems and all your noise and all the rest of it, then you're probably not welcome." (P17)

In addition to pressure to conform on outward appearances, there are established standards for certain behaviours that also function to separate 'outsiders' from 'insiders'. Speaking on this theme, an officer identified a kind of hypocrisy in such judgements, saying:

I think that we've lost the plot on all that sort of stuff. So there are goodies and baddies in The Salvation Army world and the baddies drink and smoke and do naughty things and the goodies don't drink and smoke and do naughty things – at least [not] the same naughty things. I think that issues of what I would call the lower end of the morality scale, like not drinking and not smoking and not swearing and things like that have become so big in the Army that they've clouded the real issues like not loving people and lying and betraying people, living selfishly and living a consumerist lifestyle. They're not sins in The Salvation Army. We want to say "Look that guy, he's done well. He's got a Mercedes. Beauty!" (P3)

There were also those that pointed out double standards that took into account people's connections over their behaviours. In one case, it was stated that "we will tolerate, in some cases, certainly in corps that we've had, bad behaviours because they [ie. Salvationists] belong. But we won't tolerate it in somebody down here that doesn't belong to that. The insiders are untouchable." (P17)

Apart from the tribalism and 'othering' practices evident in these statements, there is an affirmation of the divergent missional goals laid out in the dual structures of denominations framework explained earlier. According to this framework, it is expected that religious authority structures (eg. corps) will be primarily oriented towards 'insiders' and specialist agencies (eg. social programs) will be primarily oriented towards 'outsiders'. Although the 'other'-orientation is precisely what The Salvation Army's public reputation in Australia is built upon, it does not appear to have the same value inside the organisation, which is much more internally focussed. Despite a notional commitment to evangelism, many corps still do not want people who are different or who challenge the status quo. There is a strong drive for homogeneity against diversity, reflected in tribal allegiances and behaviours that foster in-group protection. Evangelical efforts are either directed at bringing into the corps more people who already fit the mould, or at changing those who do not conform so that they fit in.

Of course, not all corps harbour these kinds of negative perspectives. Some officers spoke of the value of a more inclusive community, despite the challenges that this raised. A critical step towards achieving this kind of inclusion lay in a willingness to listen to the other person's story. An officer who had come from a relatively comfortable, middle-class corps background talked about the difficulty adapting to chaplaincy work, but also how once the cultural barriers were understood, the importance of acceptance and belonging within a community environment was truly appreciated. They put it this way:

The weirdest thing about going into chaplaincy for me was that every day I thought I heard the worst story I've ever heard in my life and the next day someone else would come in and again I'd hear the worst story I'd ever heard. It was getting your head around that in the first three to six months and understanding that I'd grown up in the Salvos and there was this whole side of the community that we didn't see, didn't really engage with in a real way. Once I'd gotten my head around the fact that people's lives were unbelievably messy and full on, then when there were arguments about the morning service at the corps and they didn't give a stuff about what you sang and the way you sang it. They cared about whether you'd say hello at morning tea afterwards. (P20)

These contrasting approaches to inclusivity highlight varying conceptions of religion. Where a corps' focus is on its own members, then it may have reason to avoid the disruption that can come with greater diversity in class, culture, beliefs or behaviours. In the social program context, the external focus means that this disruption is an accepted part of daily life and diversity can be understood as

enriching. Some officers learned to embrace this as something that enhanced their spirituality rather than impeding it, but this created a greater gap in understanding between them and their more evangelical peers.

## Officers on the outside

A surprising theme that came through in several interviews was that Salvation Army officers, particularly those who had spent significant time in social programs, sometimes felt uncomfortable in corps environments. One chaplain described the differences they perceived and the consequences:

I don't even fit the church scene. I feel an outsider because of the language and language is, I think pretty basically and very generalised. Church language is about you're a sinner, you've done wrong, come to God, he'll make it alright. Whereas what I've picked up through the social sector is you've got a problem, you've got strengths and together we'll sort the problem out. (P8)

Another officer, who described a sense of personal and spiritual growth through chaplaincy, also said that consequently, "the mainstream church aspect of The Salvation Army in terms of its worship doesn't really grab me at all now." (P16) One of the reasons for this change was an appreciation for social services orientation towards the community, which was contrasted with corps' more internal and individualised approach. They went on to say that when they went to corps meetings, "I'm always conscious about what the message is saying about the local community and how geared it is to this individual idea about salvation as well." (P16)

An officer with more than three decades of experience said that they now "endure church rather than enjoying church" because "evangelically, we've lost the art of communicating with people, which was [once] a strength of the organisation." (P3) Despite some notable exceptions, it was thought that too many corps were largely catering to their own needs, rather than the needs of the communities in which they existed. One interviewee described their first impressions of being appointed to one of these more traditional corps:

I went into what I would say was an established church and I just found that there was little to no mission happening whatsoever and the work we were doing was done without any compassion or grace or love and I wanted to shut the whole place down pretty quickly. Because it's not the programs themselves, because we were running welfare and we were helping people and we had church - but it was just lifeless and people were nasty and everything was locked in the building and nothing was shared and it was just this poor expression of what the Kingdom was supposed to be. (P9)

Another officer referred to the particular difficulties of being a Salvationist convert. Since the first generation, the proportion of outside converts has been consistently dwindling in favour of those who

have been born into the Army. The internalisation of the Army's gene pool has become so common that when meeting another Salvationist, a frequent line of questioning is around who you might be related to.

In a sense, I've never felt like I entirely belong in TSA. I used to not like that. When you don't grow up in it and you're not associated with all the people and everyone always wants to place you and so on and I never quite fit into that. And when I came into training, I think I was one of two in a session of 35 that had come from an unchurched background ... so I started behind the eight ball in that sense. (P12)

For this officer, there appeared to be a strong correlation between belonging and obedience. They had a sense that those brought up within The Salvation Army showed loyalty through conformity or respect for authority. However, that was not necessarily the case for newcomers. They put it this way:

I find that I think differently. I don't just accept things because that's how I was brought up. I don't just accept Bible stories because I was taught them in Sunday School. So there's a sense in which I've always challenged everything about the movement. I've always asked why a lot, which is part of who I am, not just part of my faith journey and there's a sense in which even today, I tend to stand out a little bit from the crowd. (P12)

It was even noted that a greater sense of belonging could be attained by marrying into a more established Salvation Army family. It was stated that having become "connected with a nice Army family, there's a sense in which I've earned a right to a voice at their table even though they still think I'm a little bit different." (P12)

This idea of family is important within The Salvation Army, both literally and metaphorically. It speaks of belonging and exclusion, who fits and who does not. This is another area in which theology has clear consequences: saints are divided from sinners, the sacred from the profane. While social work practices are increasingly oriented towards strengths-based approaches that value the potential of individuals, families and communities, The Salvation Army's dominant theology is that all human beings are "sinners, totally depraved and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God" (doctrine 5). Within the corps environment, this condition is understood to be ameliorated by Christian conversion and subsequent behaviour modifications that conform to particular social expectations, such as not drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes or having sexual relations outside of heterosexual marriage.

The contrast between this culture and that of social programs is striking. The social worker's relationship to their clients has no conditions of belief or behaviour, apart from restrictions on violence because of its impact upon others in the community. In fact, challenging behaviours are to be

expected amongst people who have been traumatised and socially marginalised, as many who come to seek assistance from The Salvation Army have been. While social program staff must be equipped to deal with these challenges, they be disruptive and unwelcome in some corps settings.

For an organisation that was built upon rowdy religious meetings and members that were deemed unsuitable for proper congregations, the domestication of The Salvation Army's religious worship marks a profound change. What was previously counted as acceptable practice has been lost and other criteria are being applied that reflect current ways of viewing missional priorities.

## **Measuring what matters most**

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One of the questions asked of the officers interviewed for this research inquired about how they measured success. How do they know when they have 'got it right'? Not surprisingly, there were significant differences in views from officers who were appointed to corps compared to those who were in social appointments. There were also some distinctions between those who thought that some longstanding measures continued to be relevant and those who thought changing these was necessary. The simplest and most common example of this was in the traditional evangelical viewpoint: "From leadership, I think it's still very much about that individualised, soul-winning practice", said one officer. (P16) This was backed up by a Divisional officer stating plainly that "success is seeing people brought into relationship with Christ and if that ain't happening then something's going wrong." (P1)

A corps officer gave some more detail on the challenges associated with taking traditional measures and applying them to the present day. In this example, they use attendance at Sunday meetings as a key difference:

The people who sit in authority and are calling the shots are all people from 30 years ago who were using old measures. It's the only ones they know and it's the only ones historically we know. The world's changed dramatically. As an aside, absenteeism in terms of meeting attendance. In your early days, I'm sure it was twice on Sunday, if not three times, and everything else went around that – you had the "youth crush" afterwards. You lived at the Army and that was it. We've now got folks, we've probably got around a 40 and 50 per cent absentee rate on a Sunday. We've got three meetings and some people do 'make ups' but if you only had a ten o'clock meeting, they wouldn't come at all. (P18)

The new social context appears to demand different ways of measuring but the transition seems to be a difficult one. Another officer described contested views within congregations about what counts:

Sunday worship is a dangerous measure nowadays. For some the community lunch on Friday is their worship services. We need to realise that this corps is just as much the spiritual home of these people who come on a Friday lunchtime, as it is people on

Sunday. How we embrace that, I'm not too sure because we were at [a large corps] when the 9:30 service was planned and that Sunday service was looked down upon by the 11:00 [congregation] and I think there can still be a bit of that 'the Friday people don't really count'. They're not [seen as] the real church. (P19)

Experiences within social services reshaped officers' ideas of success, moving away from absolute or universal measures in order to acknowledge relative achievements. "Sometimes a measure of success is maintenance", said one chaplain. "If someone can hold where they're at, rather than slipping back down, then that's a success. You think of an addict as a classic example ... certainly with program staff that I've had over the years, I've said to them that sometimes the measure of success is somebody that can front up the next day and they're still with us." (P17) In a similar vein, another officer said that "for some people, it's little things. For [one guy] if he came and he wasn't in a [bad] mood and [hadn't] stormed off, well that was a good thing. For some people, it might be just a better awareness of others. For other people, it might be ... praying when you open up for prayer and you never would have thought they would have said that." (P20)

Officers with social experience were much more likely to describe success as movement along a continuum, recognising that such movement does not always happen in a linear fashion. They were also clear that success could be found outside the 'spiritual' realm, in relatively simple, everyday interventions. The following quotation demonstrates both elements:

I see it very much as progress along a journey. Now whether that's progress and someone growing in faith, if someone has moved further on or deepened their spiritual experience then that's success. If, on the other side of things, if you have met human need in a way that meets the need of the person, is done respectfully, done with dignity and represents a move towards wellbeing, whether that's emotional, psychological, physical mental, all the practical wellbeing of someone. If you have done something that's contributed to that and they've moved along, to me that's a measure of success. And it's as hard to pin down as that and it can be something as simple as some second-hand furniture or clothing for someone that's really desperate through to major, long-term case management of a complex client with every issue you could think of from legal to mental and family and all things in between. (P4)

As has been noted previously, this extension of missional success beyond evangelism is not seen as a rejection of religion but rather its expansion towards a more holistic and less dualistic understanding of spirituality. While this was a more common perspective among social officers, it was represented among some corps officers as well.

Despite the impression that leadership primarily valued 'soul-saving' results, the recognition that what was measured needed to change was fairly widespread. An officer who was quite passionate about this subject said unequivocally that "absolutely the way we view success has to be altered. Full stop. I think we have a fairly prehistoric way of evaluating success – and probably in every area ... We need to just completely relook at our concept of expectations." (P6) This officer also made

explicit their reasoning behind this, saying that “what you count is what you value and we need to qualify what we care about.” (P6)

The emphasis on measuring evangelical outcomes, even in social programs, is a strong demonstration of organisational values and also, therefore, of alignment to the dominant organisational identity. If The Salvation Army is primarily a church with the goal of increasing organisational membership by religious conversion, then this kind of measurement consistently reflects those values. An organisation that equally valued its social work would not only place a far greater emphasis on reporting social outcomes from its specialist programs but would also measure these more in the corps context. As it is, corps with the widest range of programs, including social and community services, only report on the same few criteria as those most narrowly oriented towards exclusively evangelical goals. Social programs provide much more detailed reporting on their activities, clients and outcomes to governments, who are their main funding bodies, than they do within the organisation. Consequently the message received by social programs is that their work is valued more by governments and other funders than it is by their own organisation. This further contributes towards the polarisation of missional goals and the marginalisation of social work from organisational identity.

## **Summary**

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In this chapter we have explored a range of tangible indicators of The Salvation Army’s struggle to hold its two missional streams together. The tensions experienced through engagement in a divided mission play out in a variety of negative and often harmful ways, which has been attested to by those officers interviewed for this research. The depth of these divisions themselves problematise the discovery of easy solutions, for just as the separation cannot continue indefinitely without greater cost, for one side to ‘win’ over the other would be seen to compromise the historic identity of the movement, which has tried to hold together both the social and evangelical as parts of the whole.

The testimony of officers, especially chaplains, has been that they have had to adapt their previous religious understanding when moving from corps into a social program environment. Whilst this had been challenging, because for the most part they had not been given the theological foundations that would have aided such a transition; they had experienced the shift as an expansion of their spiritual horizons rather than a contraction towards secularisation. However, this expanded religious perspective also put greater distance between themselves and their more conservative evangelical counterparts, including the leadership of The Salvation Army.

In trying to understand 'what counts as religious' within The Salvation Army, it seems that there are competing views that are grounded in varying experiences and theological perspectives. Because The Salvation Army is historically, and still by self-definition, a religious movement, the categorisation of religious activity is critical to organisational identity. Narrower designations may be used to exclude while wider and more inclusive characterisations of religion and spirituality can be seen to blur the boundaries between The Salvation Army and society.

# Chapter Seven: Marking Boundaries with Theology

## Introduction: The role of theology in social change

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Theology plays a significant role in the intraorganisational debates about identity and mission that are taking place within The Salvation Army. The definitive reference to Salvationist theology is the organisation's "Handbook of Doctrine", which was revised just a few years ago.<sup>229</sup> This manual, which was first published in 1881, acts as an authorised source for teaching, for 'reinforcing' the faith and 'undergirding' the creed of Salvationists.<sup>230</sup> However, as the many revisions of the Handbook of Doctrine illustrate,<sup>231</sup> theological understandings are frequently reinterpreted as new generations discover spiritual truths for themselves.

An example of the relevance of theology is that those Salvationists who believe in a literal Hell are much more likely to support an evangelistic emphasis in mission over social action. For this group, the relief of earthly suffering might still be considered a worthy or even noble endeavour, but the priority must always be placed on the eternal destiny of the soul. This belief is supported by the Handbook of Doctrine, which states that "to believe in judgement is to accept the reality of Hell and Heaven. Biblical pictures of Hell are terrifying and vivid and remind us that to choose to reject the grace of God must issue in a separation from him that reaches into eternity."<sup>232</sup> Whether one believes in Hell, identifying who is going there and why, are theological notions that have very real consequences for the ways in which different parts of The Salvation Army's mission are either elevated or relegated to the periphery of organisational life.

However, the role of theological beliefs in the social dynamics of religious groups is also balanced by a range of other factors. Longstanding organisational conflicts are frequently multidimensional in nature. Careful not to place too much emphasis on theology, Chaves claims that intradenominational struggles may be masked as theological disputes, when they are actually over power and resources.<sup>233</sup> Theology should neither be dismissed nor immediately accorded greater significance than the evidence allows. The sociological problem, according to Chaves, "is not what is or is not in the heads or practices of isolated individuals; it is in the ways in which ideas and practices become

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<sup>229</sup> Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>231</sup> There have been at least 18 editions of the Handbook since 1881. *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>233</sup> Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures: An Organizational Analysis," 165.

mobilized or institutionalized in concrete social structures."<sup>234</sup> In most aspects, religious organisations behave in the same ways as non-religious organisations. Theological thinking is a particular way of communicating organisational values and linking them to personal beliefs, something not unknown outside of religious circles, but with much greater influence if understood to be linked to, or backed up by, divine authority.

The theoretical lens for this chapter is how what counts as religious can be used to define both the centre and the margins of faith-based organisations. This is demonstrated in the following comment from Andrew Bale, which not only excludes the Army's social operations from the concept of salvation but also discounts them as acts that may be motivated by love of neighbour:

The Salvation Army in the UK remains the biggest provider of social welfare after the government ... But what about Salvation? Are we the biggest winner of souls bar none? Are we the most effective evangelistic force within the modern church? Let us be honest, The Salvation Army in the western territories is no longer the cutting edge of the militant church – is this because the love has leaked out?<sup>235</sup>

The quotation illustrates a narrow vision of salvation, framed as the product of evangelistic, soul-winning activity. Even the challenge about the absence of love suggests that love is the domain of the church and that an Army full of social programs may still be empty of love. While such views from individuals like Bale are disruptive to organisational harmony, when held by the Army's leadership they are likely to be even more destructive.

In both its literature and organisational life, The Salvation Army authorises specific theological understandings to which its members are expected to conform, such as those given in the Handbook of Doctrine. Officers who stray beyond the movement's accepted version of orthodoxy risk dismissal. Yet, it is evident from both the interviews done for this research and other sources quoted in this chapter that major variations in theology exist among Salvationists. As will become clear throughout this chapter, these differences have practical ramifications, which contribute towards conflict within the organisation.

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<sup>234</sup> Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," 770.

<sup>235</sup> Andrew Bale, "Stillborn or Still Glorious?," <http://www.armybarmy.com/JAC/article12b-42.html>. (Note the final phrase is taken from Brengle's 1929 quote given earlier)

## How important is theology?

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If the significance of theology was to be measured by the degree of theological education amongst a denomination's clergy, The Salvation Army would rate comparatively low. One officer interviewee characterised the Army's reputation as "sleeves rolled up, get in there and sort out a problem, don't get all carried away with philosophy and theology, just do the job." (P3) Compared to many other Australian denominations, The Salvation Army's requirements for theological training as a prerequisite for ordination are minimal. Salvation Army officers spend only two years in training, including practical ministry placements, and are commissioned without the requirement of having to complete a bachelor degree. In fact, the International Certificate for Officership can be awarded without any corresponding academic qualifications at all.<sup>236</sup> For most of the officers interviewed, the distinctive character that The Salvation Army brought to the wider church was in its missional practice rather than its theology. This led to the notion that some theological beliefs were interchangeable, so "we flirt with Pentecostalism or charismatic expression because we think it's tangible." (P3)

However, any sense of disinterest in academic theology does not mean that beliefs about God and what Christians are meant to do in the world are unimportant to Salvationists. A number of interviewees indicated that they thought the Army needed to review its theology in light of twenty-first century understandings of science, ethics and spirituality. Even The Salvation Army's doctrines were not exempt from re-examination. "I think we need to look at the doctrines", one officer said, "I can see in a lot of the doctrines [that there is] an element of truth for people's lives, if I take a rational, some might say liberal, reading of it. But I don't think you can just keep tossing up to kids who are going to accept soldiership, the same old doctrines with the same old interpretation of them." (P3)

The need for refreshed theological concepts and language was particularly important amongst those who had experience in social programs. While corps officers appeared to be more content with maintaining traditional religious views, because they worked primarily with churchgoers who had already accepted the same ideas, social officers were confronted on a daily basis by people from all walks of life, many of whom had no religious upbringing or background. Here is the story of a newly appointed chaplain that shows their recognition of the need for different words and concepts than they had used previously in corps work:

So for me, I think most of my work in that first 18 months was about reflection and thinking ... I know I need to change, but how do I do it? And I made lots of phone calls

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<sup>236</sup> Catherine Booth College, "Theological Studies," The Salvation Army, <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/Find-Us/Victoria/Catherine-Booth-College/School-for-Officer-Training/Training-Programme/Theological-Studies/>.

to different chaplains saying “What language do you use? How do you change the language? How do you describe salvation? How do you describe that gospel story?” How do you explain the death and resurrection story in a very meaningful way to people who don’t know church language and we use church language as shortcuts in communicating with each other but they don’t work with clients ... So that was really the catalyst for me to really think about it. (P14)

The desire to change theology and language came out of an acknowledgement that the religious frames that had been handed down from previous generations no longer functioned in the same way that they once did. “I think we’ve just got such a chasm in language that we’ve got to address. We’re speaking a language that people don’t understand anymore”, said one officer, “I know that’s clichéd but it’s just true. But I think we think about life in a way that people don’t think about life anymore.” (P3)

Similar issues around the use of traditional religious language were raised at the 2016 Uniting Church “Recapturing Our Soul” conference where key challenges listed by participants included “the language challenge”, “the word ‘church’ doesn’t have clear meaning anymore” and significantly, “congregations and agencies don’t speak the same language anymore.”<sup>237</sup> Common language is critical to effective communication but coded language can also be used by insiders to reinforce tribal boundaries. The military jargon still widely used within The Salvation Army is an example of language that comes naturally to those who have grown up within the organisation but is puzzling to outsiders. One officer said that “I find even though I’ve grown up in The Salvation Army with all the language that’s come with it, I find myself kicking back a bit against language like ‘saving people’s souls’.” (P15) Another characterised the language within corps as “nineteenth century evangelical language in a twenty-first century frame”, going on to say that “the quicker we rid ourselves of nineteenth century evangelistic concepts, the better.” (P3)

However, not all officers are convinced that there is a problem with the way that evangelical concepts are being communicated. One chaplain described a meeting with their line manager, a senior officer, who did not appear to understand the need for change: “I was trying to tell them about the difference in culture between where my clients are and where the church is and I was saying the language is different and you could see this quizzical look on their face.” (P14) In Chapter Eight, some of the reasons for resistance to change within The Salvation Army will be discussed further, including the institutionalisation of tradition and the legacy of a rigid military culture. One of the points of resistance

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<sup>237</sup> Feedback wall at Recapturing Our Soul conference, September 2016.

is against internal secularisation, which may not be surprising in a religious organisation but which does have direct implications when directed specifically at its own social services.

## **Removing theology - The secularisation of The Salvation Army**

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In the face of declining church attendances,<sup>238</sup> some Salvationists fear that instead of disappearing altogether, The Salvation Army is at risk of becoming something that it was never intended to be – a secular vehicle for social work. This fear was first memorably expressed in 1929 by Samuel Logan Brengle, who said:

The Army is so thoroughly organized and disciplined, so wrought into the life of nations, so fortified with valuable properties, and on such a sound financial basis, that it is not likely to perish as an organization, but it will become a spiritually dead thing if love leaks out. Love is the life of The Army. 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.' But if love leaks out we shall lose our crown, we shall have a name to live and yet be dead. We may still house the homeless, dole out food to the hungry, punctiliously perform our routine work, but the mighty ministry of the Spirit will no longer be our glory. Our musicians will play meticulously, our Songsters will revel in the artistry of song that tickles the ear, but leaves the heart cold and hard. Our Officers will make broad their phylacteries and hob-nob with mayors and councilmen and be greeted in the market-place, but God will not be among us. We shall still recruit our ranks and supply our Training Garrisons with Cadets from among our own Young People, but we shall cease to be saviours of the lost sheep that have no shepherd.<sup>239</sup>

Bale sees the fulfilment of Brengle's prediction already taking place. He describes the Army's social services as becoming "isolated from the corps programme and [relying] heavily on funding from outside agencies. The restrictions placed on them by funding will sound the death knell of any remaining evangelistic enterprise."<sup>240</sup> These concerns reflect a perspective in which the legitimacy of social programs is dependent upon their ability to facilitate evangelism. Social programs that house the homeless and feed the hungry are not seen to save but instead are equated with spiritual death and the absence of God.

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<sup>238</sup> See Chapter Nine for further details about these declining numbers.

<sup>239</sup> Samuel Logan Brengle, *Ancient prophets : with a series of occasional papers on modern problems* (London: Salvationist Publishing, 1929).

<sup>240</sup> Andrew Bale, "20/20 Vision," <http://beyondthebrook.blogspot.com.au/2010/07/2020-vision.html>.

An officer spoke about the seeming inevitability of this outcome in an interview, saying “I think that, for me, the further apart corps and social become, the less that we’ll become The Salvation Army.” (P6) The source of this crisis in identity and mission is described here as the separation of corps and social services. The suggestion is that without the influence of corps, any religious dimension of The Salvation Army’s social ministries will disappear. The same officer went on to say “we’ve only got 20 years until the church aspect of The Salvation Army is all but disappeared and we will be an NGO rather than an FBO, regardless of where we land now. That for me would be the end of The Salvation Army.” (P6) For this interviewee, it appears to be the relationship to churches that put the faith in a Faith-Based Organisation (FBO). In the absence of an explicit church presence, the faith component of the Army’s mission is removed and the organisation seems bound to become a secular Non-Government Organisation (NGO).

These examples show that the dual mission of The Salvation Army is not necessarily expected to be evenly balanced. The exponential growth of the Army’s human service activities prompted Salvation Army officer and writer Henry Gariepy to voice his fear that this presents not only “administrative and financial challenges, but also maintaining the primacy of the spiritual, less we become morphed into a social service agency devoid of our spiritual birthright and mission.”<sup>241</sup> Once more, the message comes through that social services are not seen to be part of the Army’s spiritual mission. Unless the evangelical and church aspect of the Army is not only retained but given ‘primacy’, the expected outcome is for the organisation to become a secular agency.

The most common example given of this slippery slide into secularism is that of the YMCA. Stephen Court demonstrates how this fear is frequently articulated in the context of another organisation changing its name:

So Campus Crusade for Christ International is changing its name to CRU<sup>242</sup> (sic) ... some people are up in arms that CCC is bailing on Jesus. They think CRU is the next in a long line of Christian ministries that lose their salvation, the classic example being YMCA ... The danger, of course, is that it declines into a politically correct, trend-hugging shadow of itself, a YMCA (which, after a noble history, recently removed 'CHRISTIAN' from its name). We are hopeful, from early reports, that they are resisting the slide.

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<sup>241</sup> Henry Gariepy, "The Army's Holistic Ministry," <http://www.armybarmy.com/JAC/article3-59.html>.

<sup>242</sup> The name ‘Cru’ (an abbreviation of crusade) has only been adopted in the U.S.A. The international organisation retains the previous full title.

The Salvation Army faces a similar danger, with influential forces within, even today, wanting to remove 'salvation' and 'army' from our name and character, leaving us with the inoffensive, tolerance-saturated, impotent but pervasively-acceptable appellation, The Helping Group.<sup>243</sup>

The name '*The Helping Group*' is Court's own invention, a dramatic tool to demonstrate what he perceives as the ultimate compromise – a replacement of the Army's confrontational, evangelical mission with easier, more socially palatable social services. He notes two 'unexpected negatives' to this move:

1. a lot of people will be headed to hell because The Salvation Army folded its tent and stopped aggressively fighting for the souls of every lost and bound person.
2. then, within a generation, we'd be ymca-ish (sic), having lost our faith that birthed us.<sup>244</sup>

John Norton Jr agrees with Court that rediscovering the place of evangelism is critical to retaining the Army's original identity. He says that, "We need to confront the discomfort we may feel with our mission ... We might then become the YMCA of tomorrow, an organization ... that succumbed to a secularization process."<sup>245</sup> Once again, the YMCA is used as a warning symbol of what could happen should the Army 'lose its soul'. Court's explicit use of the concept of hell as the motivation for a continuing evangelistic ministry shows the theological driver for his argument. Organisations such as the YMCA, which have no evangelical purpose, are seen to be spiritually deficient, a slur that not only tarnishes the future Army that these Salvationists fear but also the social programs of the present.

However, not all Salvationists are concerned that the Army is in danger of losing its soul. One of the officers interviewed gave a more appreciative view of secularisation and its relationship to religion:

I don't divide the sacred and the secular. It's not the enemy ... it's not an antifaith thing. Secularisation isn't a war with Christianity, secularisation is the way society lives. So society lives in a particular way and it's Christians who need to figure out. Well, we live that way too or what's the difference in us? What is the salt and light that we are or we should be? I don't think that we do enough thinking on that one. (P3)

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<sup>243</sup> Stephen Court, "Campus Crusade for Christ becomes CRU; The Salvation Army became The Helping Group," [http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2011\\_07\\_01\\_archive.html](http://armybarmyblog.blogspot.com.au/2011_07_01_archive.html).

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Norton Jr., "Christians Only Need Apply: The Salvation Army and its Employee Hiring Practices."

Another interviewee similarly described the distinction between the sacred and the secular as being unhelpful. This separation, which was maintained by the church, led to churches being disconnected from the outside world:

I really have major concerns about a division between the sacred and the secular. I have major theological concerns about that division and I think that in many ways, if the church maintains a sacred and secular division, it enables us to create a distinction between public and private worlds and it enables us to remain within the private world because the public world is too difficult ... Let's not create distinctions between what's spiritual and what's not spiritual, what's sacred and what's secular ... Where would Jesus be on a Saturday night? He'd probably be at the footy, he wouldn't be at church. So let's not call it secular and let's not call the church sacred, because a lot of what happens in church isn't sacred. (P2)

There are other officers that want to affirm the work of non-Christian social workers under religious categories, such as salvation. Claire Emerton describes how a narrow evangelical focus on salvation acts to "disengage those involved in social programmes by perpetuating a Salvation Army culture that views the gospel-of-atonement as the only salvation of worth."<sup>246</sup> Social program staff may not be Christian but their work can be seen as furthering Christian goals and should be counted as such. According to Emerton, "measurement tools that fail to recognise this salvific work, disempower staff from engaging further in The Salvation Army's mission."<sup>247</sup> If social work can be counted as salvific, then it may be counted as part of the religious life of The Salvation Army. But how popular is this understanding?

## **Crossing the line of salvation**

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There is no theological concept more central to the identity and mission of The Salvation Army than that of salvation itself. What counts as salvation, counts as belonging to the Army's mission. Conversely, narrower views about salvation act to exclude a wider range of activities from their legitimate place within the movement. Here is a small selection of responses to the question "Can you describe your understanding of the mission of The Salvation Army?", which illustrate the connection clearly:

- I've always felt strongly that it's to save souls. To bring people into a relationship with Christ. (P1)

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<sup>246</sup> Claire Emerton, "Measuring Salvation: Faith, Action and Community," in *Thought Matters* (Melbourne: The Salvation Army, 2016), 5.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

- We are The Salvation Army, so I think this concept of salvation, as vague as it is, people would still identify with that, getting people saved, whatever that looks like, saved from their current situation, saved into heaven. (P9)
- It's a mission to bring a message of salvation to a lost and broken world ... People will come to us with varying degrees of brokenness and feelings of helplessness and we have a message of hope, we have a message of salvation to lead people to a place of wholeness. (P15)
- It's a group of Christ followers that are prepared ... to journey with you so that you might eventually find salvation in Christ (P17)
- I was converted as a teenager ... and I think at that early point it was all about me and my salvation. The purpose was to bring others to Christ. (P16)

The Salvation Army exists to 'save' people. But what does that mean? Evidence has begun to emerge that understandings of salvation, how people get to salvation and how we measure that are changing within The Salvation Army. Several of the officers interviewed talked about the idea that conversion used to mean "getting a person across that line. Here's the line of where a person's converted. When they say that prayer or come to the mercy seat and ask Jesus into their heart." (P14) However, many officers were beginning to realise the significance of all that comes before and after that line crossing. One officer described it this way: "The evangelical church that I grew up in, we tended to focus on when people crossed the line of salvation and that's all we celebrated; that's all we recognised. But there's an enormous journey that people go on to even get to that point." (P15)

The focus on salvation as an event at a single point in a person's life has also been recognised as problematic. Rachel Montgomery spoke at a Thought Matters conference about how a group of cadet peers at The Salvation Army's School for Officer Training had concluded that she was not saved because she had grown up always knowing Jesus and could not name the day on which she had been converted. They advised her "to say the sinner's prayer in order to be saved."<sup>248</sup>

The movement away from focussing on a single moment in time to a more gradual process came out in a number of interviews:

I think sometimes we look for the one off thing and salvation is done, whereas I think actually it's a longer process than we realise. It used to be come down to the mercy seat at the salvation meeting and you can tick it all off but now it's actually a really drawn out [process] ... and you're not always really quite sure where someone sits for a long time and that has to be ok. That has to be seen as a positive relationship building exercise with someone over a long period. So yeah, salvation is not necessarily what we've always viewed it as or measured it as either. (P13)

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<sup>248</sup> Rachel Montgomery, "Belonging before believing: a journey of salvation," in *Thought Matters* (Melbourne: The Salvation Army, 2016), 2.

Today, the question we ask ourselves at corps level when we're doing pastoral care meetings is when does someone become converted these days? Because for 99% it's a journey and they were here and now they're here and suddenly they realised that somewhere along the year I've actually started to believe all this and there hasn't been an 'aha' moment when the lights came on. But they'll talk to us now and say yeah, I believe this, I'm a Christian but I'm not sure when it happened. So even at a corps level, when do they get the tick and say this person's in or out? (P5)

Along with this understanding that the processes around salvation are changing came the recognition that the traditional measures are no longer valid:

The measures we've got aren't real measures, like 'bums on seats' that's not a measure of spiritual success. The number of converts in that column isn't a measure of spiritual success, so I'm blessed if you know how you measure it. I reckon that people are 'oozing' into faith and at some point, they will realise that it's 'we' and not 'you'. We believe. (P18)

It might be reasonable to ask whether the growing reticence to count church attendance is simply the result of consistently decreasing numbers. While this may be a factor, there is some evidence that a few corps are beginning to engage differently with their communities, so that attendance on a Sunday is only one of a variety of weekly activities aimed at people in the community, not just those who belong to the church. One officer described this as an intentional shift, rather than just an extension of the old ways of counting 'souls saved':

If I'm looking at a corps, I want to see how many people come through either their buildings or programs in a week. I don't want to see how many get saved because I don't know what that means. I'd be looking at the culture of the corps. I've seen small corps where officers get sensational results saving souls. What they're doing is manipulating people at risk as far as I'm concerned, in some cases. You can play with people's emotions. (P3)

Emerton suggests that "The Salvation Army's current measurement metrics reveal a narrow understanding of salvation ... when The Salvation Army uses first-time seekers for Christ as its primary measurement tool, it reflects an operant theology focused narrowly on the forgiveness of sins."<sup>249</sup> This is not merely a theological critique, because the breadth of theology directly impacts on the breadth of mission. Work that does not fit this framework, such as the Army's social work, is not counted because it does not fit the theological model. According to Emerton, "this results in the broader salvific work of The Salvation Army being perceived as less valued, and hence being

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<sup>249</sup> Emerton, "Measuring Salvation: Faith, Action and Community," 10, 3.

diminished.”<sup>250</sup> While the early signs of greater corps connection to their communities holds some promise for a more consistent approach between corps and social programs, until leadership adapt to this growing understanding and adjust their communicated expectations, both sides will struggle to measure the outcomes of their activities in a ways that makes sense to all stakeholders.

Another point of change that was identified related to ‘what’ was being saved. Some officers were clearly less comfortable with the idea that salvation was primarily about a place for the soul in the afterlife. Here is an example of this perspective, which came from a corps officer but reflected the understandings of many of the social officers that were interviewed as well:

I see salvation today as a holistic message that we embrace with the whole of life. I find even though I’ve grown up in The Salvation Army with all the language that’s come with it, I find myself kicking back a bit against language like ‘saving people’s souls’. Now please don’t misunderstand me, I’m all for the salvation of souls but Jesus saved people, not disembodied [souls]. So I guess I’m walking the line between a purely social gospel, where it’s just about meeting human need and a gospel that’s just about eternity ... If our faith doesn’t make a difference in the way people live their lives today, then there’s not a lot of substance to what we believe. (P15)

There was some suggestion that this theological shift may be spreading, as indicated by more recent generations of officers going through training:

So there’s definitely been a progression in the thinking of people that we’ve got coming into training, to the point where you really have to completely change some of your material. You don’t need to convince people for instance that caring for people’s physical needs and emotional needs is also salvation. Most of our cadets get that. Whereas even five years ago, if you’re not telling people they need to be saved, then you’re not preaching the gospel. So there’s been quite a progression which was really marked for me in this last year, that you no longer have to teach them this, they get it. (P12)

The signs of some level of transition from an understanding of salvation that prioritises the soul over the body has important implications for the relationship between The Salvation Army’s evangelical and social missions. If ministering to people’s physical needs is counted within the scope of salvific activity, then social work is not excluded as an activity separate from the primary missional purpose of the organisation. There are similar indicators of a more expansive theological frame in discussions about the concept of sin. If salvation is about more than an internal, spiritual and individual condition, is a concept of sin still necessary?

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 3.

## Sin – What are people being saved from?

The fifth doctrine of The Salvation Army states “We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.” The Army’s official theology sees salvation as the solution to the problem of sin and sin is usually cast as individual, moral transgressions, which separate humans from God. One officer talked about The Salvation Army, “along with perhaps a lot of the evangelical church, saw salvation very much in terms of forgiveness of sins and now you’re converted and you can go to heaven. That very much individualistic and very much forgiveness of sins, you know, that’s salvation.” (P4) Yet, some officers had begun to find the notion of sin to be an unhelpful starting point for talking about spirituality. One interviewee said plainly “This idea that I’m coming to Jesus so that he can rid me of my depravity is not an idea that people understand.” (P6) Another officer, quoting part of The Salvation Army’s doctrine, suggested that “I don’t think that words like ‘totally depraved’ and a whole lot of those concepts work and I don’t know that they’re theologically sound but that might just be my reading of the Bible.” (P3)

Emma Moore, in a paper entitled “Are there people for whom the traditional understandings of salvation are unhelpful?”, writes that “the language of sin is no longer taken seriously in our society.”<sup>251</sup> Moore explains that the doctrine of original sin, which gives a theological explanation for human brokenness, has been replaced by scientific understandings for most people. Instead of attributing human failings to Adam and Eve, it is understood that “the human condition and human behaviour are determined by a number of interdependent factors including genetic make-up, perinatal biology, development, hormones, environment and neurology.”<sup>252</sup> The challenges to these theological traditions within The Salvation Army have significant practical implications. The more that theological concepts such as sin and salvation are separated from exclusively ‘spiritualised’, non-material definitions, the greater their potential resonance with the Army’s social work.

Some of these theological changes are arising through theological reflection on The Salvation Army’s social work practice. For instance, it was recognised in interviews that some people who came in touch with The Salvation Army had already experienced such difficult lives that the last thing that

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<sup>251</sup> Emma Moore, “Are there people for whom the traditional understandings of salvation are unhelpful?,” in *Thought Matters* (Melbourne: The Salvation Army, 2016), 5.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

they needed was to be preached at about their own inadequacy. While this was important for social officers, it applied more broadly as well. With respect to younger generations, it was said that often young people “do not come to the cross of villains of their own sin but victims of someone else’s [sin].” (P6) It was thought that for those who had already suffered abuse and neglect in their lives, there was no need to add spiritual abuse to what they had already suffered. Instead, the call of the gospel was reimagined from otherworldly ‘turn or burn’ messaging, in which one had to respond in order to be saved from the eternal consequences of sin, to a more healing and present-oriented invitation, which said “come to Jesus to be healed of the sins of others in this life, for this now, be part of this new family that Jesus is creating.” (P6)

The communal aspect of this different message is another feature that distinguishes emerging understandings of the gospel from the more individualistic emphasis of the past. Another interviewee talked about this change and how “some have grown to understand that salvation is a wider thing, it’s holistic and it’s about community and a good look at the gospels perhaps shows that that narrow forgiveness thing is not the whole story. I think we have more a sense of the community and growing in the kingdom, and not so much of that individualistic sense of forgiveness of sins.” (P4) If the path to salvation is understood to be about the forgiveness of sin, then the role of the church can be seen to be primary and social services become marginal to salvific practice. As can be seen above, an alternative theological frame exists within The Salvation Army, which encompasses sin and salvation within the present, material world and which acts to affirm rather than marginalise social services. The conflict between these two visions of The Salvation Army’s missional purpose highlights a key question – should the focus be on this world or the next?

## **Eschatology**

Eschatology is the theological discipline that seeks to describe final things - not necessarily the end of the world, but the end goal of God’s ‘master plan’. While for many people, such quests are either impossible or only of marginal interest, for most evangelical Christians, eschatology is of ultimate importance. Put simply, if one believes that God’s design for humanity is that we end up in one of two destinations for eternity – heaven or hell – then eschatology must be taken very seriously indeed.

For Salvationists, the question of one’s eternal destiny is not just related to what happens after you die but also has critical importance for how you live. If you believe that people will suffer infinitely in hell unless they seek salvation in Jesus Christ, then you have a strong motivation for dedicating yourself towards evangelistic ministries. Salvation represents the dividing line between eternal suffering and endless happiness.

As noted with other theological subjects, despite some organisational pressures to conform to a party line, Salvationists are coming out with varying interpretations of eschatological meaning. In a paper for the Thought Matters conference, Quentin Castle writes that although many people think about salvation as “more about getting into heaven after death”, it has not always been this way. “In fact”, according to Castle, “the story of salvation has always been rooted in the redemption [of the] present world.”<sup>253</sup> Castle’s case for less emphasis on the next life is more in tune with social program’s priority in the present but also with the rest of society, most of whom have come to think differently about heaven and hell than the generation into which The Salvation Army was born.

In another work,<sup>254</sup> I have previously argued that a metaphysical and future-oriented interpretation of salvation consistently acts against Christian social engagement. This tension is at the heart of the identity crisis within The Salvation Army – what gets preached on a Sunday does not fit with the social work that happens throughout the rest of the week. Yet a deeper exploration of Christian scripture and tradition reveals a multitude of ways of understanding salvation that are in strong accord with social action and bear witness against an exclusively future-oriented, ethereal soteriology. The Salvation Army is involved every day in saving people from homelessness, family violence, addictions and many other forms of deprivation and disadvantage. However, these ‘salvations’ consistently take second place to more ‘spiritual’ activities, if they are even acknowledged as being in the same category.

Where dualistic beliefs prioritise the health of the soul over the life of the body, an eschatological emphasis on reward or punishment in the afterlife eschews action to change the present in favour of waiting for future bliss. The only important task for those who assume this theological mantle is the saving of souls, in order that as many as possible might make it to heaven. There is little room for social ministries in this worldview unless they directly facilitate evangelism, for it would be better to be homeless and have accepted Jesus than to be housed but ultimately destined for hell.

## Summary

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This chapter has explored some of the ways that theology is being used to determine what counts as religious and thereby what counts as mission in The Salvation Army today. The practical

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<sup>253</sup> Quentin Castle, "A Salvation for Now and Later: The need for a balanced concept of salvation that is about more than the afterlife," in *Thought Matters* (Melbourne: The Salvation Army, 2016), 4.

<sup>254</sup> Davies-Kildea, *What is the meaning of salvation in The Salvation Army today? Exploring a theology of social service and holistic mission*.

consequences of different theological views can be seen to have sociological consequences as they are used to justify the inclusion or exclusion of individuals, groups and missional activities. In terms of understanding some of the intraorganisational conflict occurring within The Salvation Army, a key issue seems to be that some Salvationists see the religious dimensions of the organisation as belonging primarily or even exclusively to corps environments. The corresponding implication of this belief is that social programs by themselves do not count as religious or spiritual activities, instead relying on the evangelical drive of corps to balance the organisation's dual mission.

Although this understanding has strong representation within The Salvation Army, there are alternatives that retain a religious premise but take on a different theological lens that is more compatible with the Army's social services. Because these alternative viewpoints include a theological justification, they cannot be quickly dismissed as taking a secular side against religion. As seen in the next chapter, these alternative understandings reflect a shift in the locus of authority from an emphasis on scripture and tradition towards experience and reason. However, this transition can also create moments of cognitive dissonance for those who have been brought up in The Salvation Army.

# Chapter Eight: Turning Inward – The Institutionalisation of a Religious Movement

## Introduction

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Religious movements like The Salvation Army, which had grown out of nineteenth century revivals, were particularly vulnerable to the social upheavals of the early twentieth century. The first generation was passing and the following ones found themselves dealing with two world wars and the Great Depression within a few decades. The post-millennial aspirations of the social gospellers who strived to build the Kingdom of God through social progress were seen to be naïvely optimistic and a renewed emphasis on human sinfulness found easy resonance in the lives of grieving churches.<sup>255</sup> In The Salvation Army, these changes set the scene for the gradual transformation of a radical movement that was fighting in the streets against sin and poverty to a more conservative and inward looking denomination.

This chapter focuses on the dimensions of this religious transformation in The Salvation Army. Interviews with Salvation Army officers highlighted an increasingly inward orientation that was attached to corps work and became embodied in the priorities set by leadership. This interview material, along with some written sources, will be interpreted through the lens of two of the theoretical perspectives that were outlined in Chapter Three. Firstly, the notion that in the dual structure of denominations, religious authorities prioritise internal goals and, secondly, the sectarian characteristics of religious groups that set themselves in opposition to their social context.

Because The Salvation Army is a large and complex organisation that is evolving on multiple fronts, exceptions can be found as quickly as broad patterns can be identified. Nevertheless, there are some strong indications that point to an organisation that has been going through religious and social change along recognisable pathways. A key idea here is that movements that begin as sects can take on the aspects of more established churches over time. This transition has a number of distinctive markers that will be discussed throughout this chapter.

One of these changes is the experience of social uplift, by which individuals, families and later generations find that the discipline and supportive community coming out of their religious involvement generates social and economic benefits. These benefits in turn impact upon the changing organisation, encouraging greater conservatism and less of the social conflict that is common to sects. As The Salvation Army's religion withdrew from the streets, its church communities

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<sup>255</sup> Gary J. Dorrien, *Social ethics in the making : interpreting an American tradition* (Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

became less familiar with poverty and its social work became institutionalised in parallel structures. These structures increasingly dealt with the 'other', rather than bringing people into a shared experience of community where problems were tackled together.

At the intersection of these changes, Salvation Army corps developed a powerful subculture that on the one hand gave a strong sense of identity to those who belonged and, on the other, resulted in increasing disengagement with the society in which it existed. Consequently, The Salvation Army has joined the ranks of ageing churches in Australia and is perceived by some of its own officers as being out of touch with both the social and spiritual needs of the twenty-first century.

## Social uplift

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In *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, H. Richard Niebuhr describes the typical sect as "the child of an outcast minority, taking its rise in the religious revolts of the poor, of those who were without effective representation in the church."<sup>256</sup> However, these characteristics only capture the essence of the sect's beginnings. They are not long term markers. According to Niebuhr, "by its very nature the sectarian type of organization is valid only for one generation."<sup>257</sup> In The Salvation Army, the 'outcast minority' moved from the margins to the respected middle ground of society, as the once poor prospered, and those who were once excluded from the church claimed to have become a church themselves.

If the characteristics of sect and church are measured respectively by opposition to or acceptance of society, then transition from the former to the latter may be seen by decreasing degrees of conflict with the surrounding environment. Whilst sects are born into and thrive on such conflict, the movement towards church reflects gradual accommodation to wider society.<sup>258</sup> In the early years of The Salvation Army, officers and soldiers were often arrested for disturbing the peace with their evangelical zeal. The arrest rates of Salvationists today are almost non-existent.<sup>259</sup> Unlike their earliest predecessors, The Salvation Army has become a widely respected movement in Australia.

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<sup>256</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The social sources of denominationalism* (New York,: H. Holt and Company, 1929). 19.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The churching of America, 1776-2005 : winners and losers in our religious economy*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005). 63.

<sup>259</sup> Two Australian Salvation Army officers were arrested in 2015 and 2016 for engaging in protests against the detention of asylum seeker children as part of the Love Makes a Way movement.

In the absence of the conflicts that engaged their parents' generation, future generations become increasingly involved in wider social and economic pursuits, thereby building wealth and increasing professionalisation in their activities.<sup>260</sup> Only a generation after the death of William Booth, Niebuhr specifically names The Salvation Army as an illustration of the rise from sect to church. The Army's story follows the familiar pattern, it is "the story of the religiously neglected poor, who fashion a new type of Christianity which corresponds to their distinctive needs."<sup>261</sup> Like the Anabaptists, the Quakers and the Methodists before them, its followers are the ones who "rise in the economic scale under the influence of religious discipline, and who, in the midst of a freshly acquired cultural respectability, neglect the new poor succeeding them on the lower plane."<sup>262</sup> This theme also emerged in the interviews undertaken for this research:

I think, like the Quakers, we came to do good and did well. I think there are families I can point to in Melbourne, that five generations ago were drunks in the streets of Prahran or living difficult and complex lifestyles because of the chaos of their lifestyles. I think they got religion, they became more diligent in their family and work life. I think they saved their money, they bought a house, the next generation were a bit better off. They went into business, they got an education and all sorts of things happened. There's a natural move to protect your gains, if I'm being blunt. And I think that we used to be the people in the community that we lived with. So if that drunk in Prahran got saved, he was a notorious figure in Prahran for beating people up and doing this and doing that and being a lousy parent and he got saved and he changed his life and he lived his life differently and that impacted on his close circle and his wider circle.  
(P3)

In the early days of the Army, the powerful testimonies of radical conversions by notorious figures in the community were influential proofs of the life-changing potential of the movement. However, as time progressed, not only did the dark deeds that propelled such figures into notoriety fade from memory, but the individuals and their families frequently moved out of those communities themselves. A number of interviewees not only understood this social pattern but recognised it in their own family history. Here is one example:

What I understand from *In Darkest England* is that people would be rescued from the hell of their circumstances and they would eventually be made into this better person, onwards and upwards. So people would actually rise through the classes. So when enough generations become middle class, they form their own subculture within that. And that's what happens, so as the generations of the Army go through, you might have been one of those people, like my grandfather was one of those people. He was saved off the street, an alcoholic at fifteen, he was saved at the drum. He was all that.

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<sup>260</sup> Niebuhr, *The social sources of denominationalism*: 20-21.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

And then he got his life together and he worked and he owned his own home and he built his own home and he raised two sons and one of them went to university and so suddenly the family [didn't have to grow up with an alcoholic father] so life just gets better and better and [my family] gets better again. There's that whole thing of you get saved, you clean up your act, you get educated, you get a job and suddenly you move up through the culture and it's almost like you forget about where you came from in lots of ways – as the generations go on. If you become more and more removed from where you started and you don't spend your lifetime rubbing shoulders with those kinds of people any more, you become a subculture and I guess that's what happened in the Army. (P10)

The experience of social uplift creates disconnection from one's roots. Subsequent generations do not experience the social marginalisation and poverty in which their parents' radical conversions occurred because they grow up in increasingly different contexts. The following story further illustrates these themes of the consequences of radical conversion, both economically and in cultural change:

[My grandfather] was quite a wild character and an alcoholic. [He] met an officer in the pub and gave his life to the Lord and after 10 years of struggling became a clean and sober Christian and soldier of The Salvation Army. So The Salvation Army has a very strong narrative in my family around coming from a place of some pretty immoral behaviour and The Salvation Army steps in and everything gets good. ... I was born into The Salvation Army. Both my parents are Salvationists. ... Growing up at a very affluent corps that was probably obsessed with worship and music and Sunday ritual and presentation. ... My family benefits from a Salvation Army that is, I guess, positioning itself on margins, placing itself in areas of need and engaging with people. This is a missional shape, an incarnational going out. Yet I grew up in a very regimented [corps where] Sunday worship is the key feature. In fact, [that] the primary purpose of our community was to worship is definitely the theology that was communicated. (P6)

This juxtaposition of the changes experienced in family life and a change in the expressed purpose of church life reflects concurrent patterns that were happening more widely across the Army, particularly in the last half of the twentieth century. Niebuhr's observation about how those who have risen out of poverty then neglect the poor of the next generation seems to be playing out in this story. Furthermore, the story also introduces a missional redirection, not just shifting from an external focus to an internal one, but movement from gathering around meeting others' practical human needs towards addressing the religious needs of the congregation.

The same interviewee here fills in the historical gap between their grandfather's conversion and their own relatively comfortable upbringing:

The way my father tells the story is that after World War II, after several generations of World War, the desire for the good life was enormous and The Salvation Army provided this amazing model, which was very British and very wholesome and in many ways family orientated. He talks about this sort of boom in Salvation Army

loyalty that exists post World War II ... The Army he attended as a child was an Army that really [felt that] we've been through all this awful stuff, we just want the good life again. We want to settle down and have healthy society in the long term. We want to leave all that behind us and the Army was a really fantastic model for that. (P6)

This desire for 'the good life' may not have been entirely new but the social and economic circumstances of that era enabled its fruition and the fulfilment of Niebuhr's claim that "the churches of the poor all become middle-class churches sooner or later and, with their need, lose much of the idealism which grew out of their necessities."<sup>263</sup> This shift towards the middle class helps to explain the separation of some corps congregations from the plight of current social program clients, which was detailed in the previous chapter. It also suggests a form of accommodation to society, backing up the notion that The Salvation Army is leaving behind the separation of a sect. But how complete is this transition? Are there still sect-like characteristics within the Army?

## **An internalised subculture**

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If the sectarian nature of revival movements, like The Salvation Army, rarely outlasts the first generation,<sup>264</sup> what comes next? Whereas the sect is a voluntary association that must be intentionally joined, the second generation heralds the movement towards church, a natural social group into which members are born.<sup>265</sup> Of the officers interviewed for this research, 80 per cent (n=16) were either born into The Salvation Army or introduced in early childhood. The National Church Life Survey showed that in the Australia Southern Territory, The Salvation Army had the highest level of 'newcomers' (people who had not previously been part of another church) of any denomination. However, this rate was still only 11% and had decreased consistently over the past 10 years.<sup>266</sup> The Salvation Army's church membership, once built with converts from the streets, has become dominated by its own children.

For most Salvationists today, being part of Army life was not something that they chose – at least not until later in life: it was part of their family heritage. A few comments from officer interviews will help to illustrate the close ties between family and church:

I was born into [The Salvation Army]. My parents were soldiers and actually it goes back to about ... to my great, great grandparents. ... as I found out more about my

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 17; Max Weber, *The sociology of religion* (Boston,: Beacon Press, 1963).

<sup>266</sup> NCLS Research, "Regional Church Life Profile," (Strathfield NSW2012).

family in later life, I was related to probably 90% of the people who attended. In hindsight, it was a family church, although growing up I knew I had aunts and uncles and great aunts there and great uncles but you don't realise that when you're growing up. ... So my first entrance into The Salvation Army was at two weeks old, my mother tells me. (P14)

Born and bred into it – fifth generation. ... Very traditional corps, very staid in terms of it was really all about earning your right to passage being through your usual sections whether it be your band and songsters and those sorts of things. It was never really about faith for me, nor was that kind of modelled. [It was about belonging to a group] and in that you'll find your acceptance. (P17)

Grew up. Child of the regiment. My dad was CSM [Corps Sergeant Major]. Would have been a middle-sized traditional corps. 100-120 perhaps but brass band, songsters, etc. Number two corps in the Territory ... My dad was YPSM [Young People's Sergeant Major] for twenty years, CSM for twenty years, and then finished all that when he was under fifty, so he started his leadership really early. My grandfather was a Divisional Envoy so I've certainly got the colours running through me. (P5)

Family were Salvationists and grandparents were Salvationists. So born into the Army culture, grew up through the ranks. ... It's a fairly traditional setting, musical sections and expectations to take part in a musical section. Grew up, YP [Young People's] band, went into the Songsters and the Senior Band, obviously progressed through Junior Soldiership and did Senior Soldiership. (P8)

The strong association between church and family life comes in stark contrast to the early revivalist days of The Salvation Army, which were characterised by large numbers of converts rather than familial association. Niebuhr speaks to this transition from a sect made up of converts who choose to participate and a church, whose primary membership stems from its own birth rate:

The children born to the voluntary members of the first generation begin to make the sect a church ... For with their coming the sect must take on the character of an educational and disciplinary institution, with the purpose of bringing the new generation into conformity with ideals and customs which have become traditional.<sup>267</sup>

The twin elements of education and discipline that Niebuhr identifies are neatly summed up in this short quote from one participant who said this about growing up in The Salvation Army: "Did it all – Directory,<sup>268</sup> Junior Soldiers,<sup>269</sup> Corps Cadets,<sup>270</sup> yes sir, no sir." (P19) A range of educational

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<sup>267</sup> Niebuhr, *The social sources of denominationalism*: 19-20.

<sup>268</sup> A very early form of childhood education in Salvation Army distinctives for children up to 7 years of age

<sup>269</sup> A young person who from the age of 7 may make a commitment to Christian faith and who follows a course of education within The Salvation Army.

<sup>270</sup> Usually following on from Junior Soldiership, a Corps Cadet is high school age and makes a further commitment to studying the Bible, prayer and active participation in the life of a Salvation Army corps.

programs were developed to help young people learn and grow until they were ready for Senior Soldiership, the symbol of full active participation as a member of The Salvation Army. Army life began at birth, when you were entered onto the Cradle Roll, and transitioned through Primary (a pre-Sunday School group), Directory and Sunday School to Junior Soldiers and Corps Cadets. Apart from Directory, which no longer exists, all the others continue to play an active part in the development of children in the Army today through to at least their mid-teens.

In addition to these education programs, young people were often involved in musical groups – junior bands, singing groups and timbrels. The Army even has its own version of scouting type activities, SAGALA (Salvation Army Guarding and Legion Activities), which have separate groups for boys and girls across three age ranges: Explorers and Moonbeams; Adventurers and Sunbeams, Guards and Rangers.<sup>271</sup>

One of the outcomes of such a wide range of activities was that those involved in The Salvation Army rarely had much time to do anything outside the church. One officer describing the “47 things [the Army] had on in a week” suggested that, at the very least, it produced a good work ethic amongst those involved. (P3) However, all of this internally generated activity also produced and perpetuated an easily identifiable sub-culture that separated insiders from outsiders.

For young people in my day, The Salvation Army was a very strong culture. It was the culture I understood best and felt more comfortable in. So your Army mates were your real mates, your school mates were sort of peripheral mates. I suppose I only ever thought about the culture in relation to when I went to school on a Monday and other kids hadn't done all the things I'd done on weekend, other kids' parents had a drink, other kids had different experiences on a weekend for example. We soldiered in an inner city corps, it was the largest corps in Brisbane, so it was 'the' Salvation Army corps. The culture was something I never analysed as a child because it was just something that you were part of. So you got up on Sunday, you went to Sunday School, you went home and had lunch, you went back in for afternoon Sunday School and the band went to the park and then you went to Junior Soldiers after that and you stayed for the night meeting. Your mates and you would hoon around, so it was all lived in relation to a very stable friend group, which you had for the whole of your life. (P3)

Whilst the strength of the Army subculture was in its ability to reaffirm a sense of belonging for those on the inside, there were a few less helpful side effects. In some cases, this could be seen in a loss of perspective, such as the corps that “were embarrassed because we were Lieutenants and this was a Majors' appointment. They were still in high neck [uniform] and bonnets.” (P17) Sometimes it

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<sup>271</sup> <https://www.sarmy.org.au/Ministry/SAGALA/>

was a rigidity that alienated young people: “That was a culture where you bought your shoes off the band, you had to wear your cap in the car .... Not that any of us ever did that but I mean that was a very controlling ... there were two full brass bands and a very rigid corps system and some reasonably judgemental people.” (P3)

The message received within this subculture is that inclusion is about discipline and conformity. What remains of common values has become about what Salvationists do or do not do in a tightly controlled environment. The Salvationist is identifiable because they refrain from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, and because their worship has peculiar features such as brass bands and timbrels.

This strong internal focus is in stark contrast to wider Australian social patterns that value individual freedom, where the clear majority drink alcohol and very few listen to brass band music. Furthermore, the Army’s religious doctrines, its uniforms and military hierarchy no longer fit in today’s society the way they once did in the nineteenth century. To the degree that The Salvation Army’s corps subculture sets itself against Australian social trends, it may be considered to be retaining some sect-like qualities.

## **Corps and social service**

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This inward focus has had significant consequences for the social service activity of The Salvation Army. Some interview participants reported a strong focus on reaching out to and caring for outsiders. However, this nearly always originated in a particular family member’s social understanding, rather than being a natural outcome of involvement with the corps. Here are some examples:

Our neighbours started coming to the Salvos and became Christians and they had no church background. That was my mum and dad and it wasn’t uncommon for us, on the way to go to Sunday School, dad’s car would have eight or nine kids in it, we’d sit in the hatchback boot... (P20)

I remember when I was 7, 8, 9, we would pick up kids for Sunday School and for like YP practices from the Heidelberg flats and bring them and we always had heaps to do with our Sunday School and stuff always had heaps to do with kids who were in foster care. (P10)

Being that we were a city corps, we saw our fair share of people in need but it was not us going out to get them, it was them coming to us in need and there was a very small group of people who were maybe comfortable in dealing with that. One of those key people being my father. The minute someone arrived in need, my father was all over it. I think again, really understanding the purpose of it. (P6)

Some corps included people with mental health or addictions, though they seemed to remain on the periphery of corps life:

One thing about a central corps was despite it being very safe and middle class, there were always alcoholics in the meetings in those days. As kids you'd sit up the back because the drunks as we used to call them were the more interesting part of the Sunday night meeting because they had comments to make and it was different. (P3)  
My early memories, there were the 'odd' people, people with mental health we'd say now, they were part of the place and I can remember some funny things happening, like people getting up and talking about Jesus being their husband. (P20)

On the other hand, many of those involved in corps life were largely unaware of the Army's social ministries:

In my hometown, my home corps, I never saw a lot of the social. I'm sure we gave out food parcels but that was the limit of the social ministry at my home corps. So I didn't see a lot of the social stuff. It was just church ... It was a typical '50s, '60s era where the band is everything almost ... I went from a small country corps to a large city corps, again everything revolved around the band and the songsters. You talk to someone about how your corps is going and they'll say well we've got 20 in the band and 30 in the songsters. So that's how you measured everything. (P19)

Being in a country town, all you really see of the Army is the worship. Back in those days ... the social work or the helping the poor, as we probably saw it then, was basically all managed within the officer's time. The officer was the only one who visited. You didn't have pastoral carers or these other aspects that we see in corps these days. ... The only outreach you really knew about was the 'open airs' standing at the post office. You know the visiting was always done by the officer and if the officer didn't come, he wasn't doing his job and helping the poor was the job of the officer. (P7)

I really only saw it as a church, growing up, that's always what it's been to me. (P13)

As the Army's focus turned inward, the care and concern that previous generations of soldiers showed for the vulnerable and marginalised in their communities increasingly became directed towards the 'children of the regiment'. Programs designed for social transformation were replaced with programs that were instead aimed at indoctrination and enculturation. The development of a distinctive Salvation Army subculture encouraged a sense of group identity and separation from the world, both common features of sects, which were backed up by a disciplinary regime under which Salvationists who diverged from the espoused values of the group could be 'stood down'.

The reputation of the early Salvationists for rowdy and vulgar expressions of religious fervour was lost to succeeding generations that valued more order and regulation in church and with regard to social behaviours. This also created an environment that was less welcoming for people whose lives were more chaotic, such as those who sought help through the Army's social programs. However, it

is not just the outward form of Salvationist religiosity that has changed over time. As seen in Chapter Two, early engagement in social service challenged and changed the Army's theology, led by William Booth. There was a much more dynamic relationship between the Salvationist's existence alongside the poor and their understanding of Christian life and beliefs. As the relationship between those who expounded the Army's theology, who were mostly appointed to corps, and the movement's social service wing declined, there were accompanying shifts in the way that the Christian gospel was interpreted.

## **Doctrine becomes the measure of belonging**

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The transformation in social circumstances for the second generation of radical sects is frequently accompanied by a corresponding change in values. Donald Dayton notes the sociological pattern of "how movements that concentrate on ethics and religious experience in the first generation often shift to doctrine in succeeding generations."<sup>272</sup> This shift is particularly significant to understanding the separation of social work from the Salvationist identity. Whereas earlier generations of soldiers joined forces to tackle social evils, today's Salvationists are defined by their acceptance of theological doctrines.

As seen in the public clash between fundamentalists and modernists that preceded the Great Reversal, theology can either support or detract from Christian social involvement. Dayton claims that the shift in eschatological understanding that occurred in the early twentieth century has had repercussions in Evangelical life and thought that cannot be overestimated.<sup>273</sup> Consequently, Salvationists, along with many other Evangelical denominations, diminished the value of social work by defining membership along doctrinal lines. This change is in stark contrast to the practice of evangelists like Charles Finney, one of the inspirations for Army founders, William and Catherine Booth. When Finney held an evangelical campaign, those that responded to the altar call to follow Christ were also expected to sign up to the anti-slavery movement.<sup>274</sup> The removal of any expectation of social activism has not only diminished the once wider role of The Salvation Army's soldiery but it has also further marginalised social services. Once orthodox belief became the test of identification, those who partnered with the Army to address social ills became second-class citizens if they did

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<sup>272</sup> Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*: 133.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>274</sup> Cleary, "Boundless Salvation," 52.

not also adhere to shared doctrines. This was seen in Chapter Six where Salvationists expressed a desire to only hire Christians in their social work.

Over the past 150 years, shifts in the social circumstances of Salvationists can be seen to have changed the nature of The Salvation Army's religious expressions. One of the consequences of these shifts has been to create corps environments that don't connect well with the Army's social programs. Corps have focussed on their own children, often to the exclusion of local communities, presumably in an effort to retain Salvationist distinctives for the future. However, there are some signs that this is not working out.

## **An ageing institution**

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Officer interviewees from all ministry backgrounds identified the loss of young people to The Salvation Army as symptomatic of an organisation that is overly bound to tradition and resistant to change. One officer lamented the fact that "we're losing young people all over the place, so we've got this massive gap in age now. We tend to do ok until they're about 10 and then it all seems to drop off after that. Less in the teenage and then more [drop off] in the young adult tends to be how it goes. *As soon as people can start making their own decisions, they're basically gone.* So that's a massive challenge for us is that we just keep losing that young adult age group." (P13) The Salvation Army Year Book statistics show a 16 per cent drop in Junior Soldiers over the past decade, which is a lower rate of decline than other areas. However, the drop in adult members, which is almost double this number, suggests that they are not staying once they reach adulthood. As those young people who have grown up in The Salvation Army gradually establish independence from their parents, they are also taking leave of their parents' religion.

Another officer, noting the statistical decline in membership and an associated increase in the average age of Salvationists, said that "the danger for us is that we've got about 20 years before we're an NGO [Non-Government Organisation] ... that really only makes sense to old people, that really is only appealing to older generations." (P6) This statement is significant because it captures two important insights: firstly, that in the absence of its church functions, The Salvation Army's social work may still continue; and secondly, that the social work is also impacted by the ageing brand.

The ageing of the organisation is not new, for the past 50 years the average age of Salvationists has been growing progressively older than the average in the community around them (P6). The Salvation Army has a significantly greater proportion of people over 60 years of age than the Australian population in general. Although roughly a quarter of Australians fit into this age bracket, almost 40 per cent of those who identify with The Salvation Army in the Census do so, and 57 per

cent of its members.<sup>275</sup> The Salvation Army is not unique among Australian churches in this area. Ruth Powell and Kathy Jacka writing about '*Forty Years of Missing Generations*' claim that "the age gap between church and community is old news."<sup>276</sup> While the wider Australian population itself has been ageing over this period, the gap between the church and the rest of the community has increased at an even greater rate. The following table illustrates the proportional differences between age ranges within The Salvation Army, the larger mainstream churches and the Australian community as a whole. The largest groups, those with 15% or higher of the total, have been shaded to highlight comparisons:

**Table 2: Adult Age Profile<sup>277</sup>**

	15-19 yrs	20-29 yrs	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-59 yrs	60-69 yrs	70-79 yrs	80+ yrs
Australian Community	9%	16%	18%	18%	16%	11%	7%	5%
The Salvation Army	6%	11%	12%	13%	17%	20%	15%	7%
Anglican	5%	9%	9%	12%	16%	20%	19%	10%
Catholic	4%	5%	9%	16%	18%	21%	18%	7%
Uniting	3%	5%	6%	11%	15%	22%	24%	15%

One Divisional officer offered a number of reasons to explain the lack of organisational appeal to younger generations:

- "We're very structured and at that age they're not looking for structure, they're looking for experiences and we don't offer them a lot in terms of that really."
- "I think there's a lot of things going on for people at that age, jobs, committed relationships, study, travel, all of these things open up for them."
- "People are looking more for short term commitment ... at 18, or they can [become a soldier] as young as 14, they're not looking at that stage in their life to say yes, this is a lifetime

<sup>275</sup> Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures*: 92.

<sup>276</sup> Ruth Powell and Kathy Jacka, "Moving Beyond Forty Years of Missing Generations," (Sydney South: NCLS Research, 2008), 5.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

commitment that I'm going to make. They actually want to experience some other stuff before doing that – if they ever do, do that.”

- “Our views are quite old fashioned in a lot of ways. Our practice is quite old fashioned in a lot of ways.” (P13)

Hugh Mackay's social research backs this up. He says that in the changing social dynamics of the twenty-first century:

There's no shortage of people to sign up for short-term projects ... but there's a growing reluctance to make a long-term commitment to formally 'join' an organisation that might demand attendance at weekly or monthly meetings stretching into eternity ... the rising generation of adults under forty who have been shaped by a society undergoing rapid and accelerating change ... have grown up with the idea of impermanence; change is the air they breathe. As a result, they have learnt to keep their options open.<sup>278</sup>

Another theme that came through in several interviews was the lack of young people in leadership. “One of the regrets that we should have as an organisation is that we don't use young people”, said one officer, going on to explain that “we treat them as future leaders, not as current participants.” (P3) Another Divisional officer acknowledged that the organisation's reticence to change was a product of its ageing leadership:

I think we're very slow to change and I also think that our current hierarchical structure, where you're rewarded to some degree for length of service could be a downside. I think we need to push younger people to top leadership quicker because they're more adaptable and willing to change and my generation, I don't mind telling you, find it very hard to change. It's not that sometimes we don't see the need but it's just too hard at our stage in life. (P19)

This theme drew broad agreement. An officer approaching retirement age said, “I don't hold much hope for my generation and the next generation back from it. I think that they've built a Salvation Army in their own image.” (P3) Another interviewee pointed to ageing leadership as a factor that worked against innovation, saying “We have these Territorial Commanders who are appointed at, probably the youngest would usually be 55ish, and they've got a limited lifespan and there's no one in their 30s and 40s that are actually doing, almost the prophetic look at what we're supposed to be doing.” (P18)

Those officers who are coming into leadership within The Salvation Army today grew up through this time of a powerful internally-focussed subculture where most of their week revolved around corps

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<sup>278</sup> Hugh Mackay, *The Art of Belonging* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2014). 80.

activities. However, their children and grandchildren appear to have little interest in inheriting the institution built by their forebears. These younger generations have grown up in a different world. Where their parents valued stability and homogeneity, they embrace change and diversity – a shift to which the Army is struggling to adapt.

## **Barriers to change – tradition and militarism**

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There was a frequent association in the interviews between young people and doing things differently. However, this was almost always qualified by the claim that The Salvation Army, at least in its church activities, no longer seems to be very interested in doing things differently. This officer talked about ‘missing the boat’, saying “every time kids have come up with a new vision of how to do things or ... there’s been a movement in the world somewhere that has been about young people or others asserting themselves to transform the world, it’s passed us by.” (P3) Another suggested that young people seeking innovation are better off looking elsewhere, “there is maybe the idea that if you want something different, there are plenty of other places that offer something different, go there. This is what we do. That kind of mentality – that we’re The Salvation Army and we do it this way.” (P13)

Even those officers that conceded that new ideas occasionally did get a hearing suggested that they did not last long. “I think we give up on things too quickly”, said one interviewee, “we’ll give something a year, when really you need it to have five or six years to get established and figure out whether it’s worked or not. So, I think we lack some patience in that respect.” (P13) Another gave the assessment that “we adopt new ideas until they challenge what we think is our fundamental core.” (P15)

When asked about why the Army was so slow to change, a senior officer said “It’s tradition isn’t it? It’s just the way it’s always been done so from that point of view it’s hard to move. I think leadership, as well, come from that age where that’s what’s happened, that’s what you did. So the expectation is that that’s just what will happen [forever].” (P13) With some further reflection, the same officer also identified that the military culture may also be a contributor to institutionalisation, “I think as well the idea that we’re an Army in some senses is maybe not helpful because there’s ... that idea of that regimented schedule and all of that and this is what we do, in this order and we have all our policies and procedures and it’s so ... it’s such a slow process to try and move any of them or to change any of them ... If it’s in the regulations, then that’s what we do.” (P13)

The bonds of The Salvation Army’s tradition might be holding its older soldiers but the corresponding inability to adapt to a changing world, including emerging expressions of spirituality and religion, seems to be alienating most of the organisation’s young people. Most of the current leadership

became officers in the 1970s, having witnessed The Salvation Army's rejection of the social revolution in the previous decade in favour of a more conservative, traditional church subculture. For many, officership was their first or second job and they have stayed in it for 30-40 years or more, a rarity now in times of much greater vocational fluidity. This sense of lifelong organisational loyalty that longs for stability and persistence is anathema to more recent generations who have learned to embrace change and to 'keep their options open'.

For much of the twentieth century, the inward focus of Salvation Army corps helped to feed its own children. Now this focus appears to be concentrated on maintaining dying traditions, in opposition to the interests of emerging generations. The institutionalisation of corps and the maintenance of sect-like conditions that demanded total loyalty and monopolised Salvationists' time seemed to have functioned in a limited way when there was less competition for their attention. However, as soon as one took a few steps outside the walls of The Salvation Army, new knowledge and experiences challenged many of things that had been taught in the Army world.

## **Dissonance and growth**

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One of the themes that came through consistently in the interviews was that people's understanding of mission was often challenged by an experience of dissonance – when they began to perceive that the reality of missional engagement did not match the rhetoric that they had been taught. These moments of dissonance occurred in two ways: the first was noticing that the Army's much lauded historical engagement in society no longer lined up with what was happening in corps; the second was a realisation that the prescribed methods of evangelism were neither attractive nor effective. The latter may be at least partially related to increasing secularisation in Western societies.

Here is an example of the first type of dissonance:

I think primarily there is moment of frustration, if you're actually listening to what we're being taught and if you look at what we're doing, there is this gigantic disconnect. I think there is a personal element of critical thinking in all of this and there is a real sense of the metanarrative that I'm presented as a child and the disconnect to the reality. Again, I think there is this element of critical thinking: we go to corps cadets and here's all this stuff about William Booth and yet, I feel like I'm taking crazy pills, is anyone else not noticing that this is not what we're doing? (P6)

Because most officers grow up in corps and then get sent to corps from the Training College, it is usually those who get appointed to the social work of the Army that experience this kind of 'wake up call'. Officers acknowledged that they rarely had any preparation for being involved in the social work of the Army. One of them reflected that "really it's not theology that teaches you so much, as it is

your sort of experience of life and your reflection on that experience.” (P2) Another officer tells the story of their first experience in social work and the change that happens through deep immersion:

I went and saw [an ex-officer] who was the State Social Secretary then and said “I’d like to work for The Salvation Army” and he said “What qualifications have you got?” and I said “None.” So, I got a job as the canteen manager at [a large homeless shelter], and with a mate, we used to stay and do night shift every night. Eventually I moved in and lived there for five days a week and then went home at weekends to eat good food and wash my clothes. But that was very transformative for a middle-class boy from the suburbs because the officers went home at five o’ clock and basically thugs ran the building at night. (P3)

The emphasis on experience as a source of theological understanding is not new. Along with Scripture, tradition and reason, it is part of John Wesley’s ‘quadrilateral’ framework for theology.<sup>279</sup> However, now rather than one of several possibilities, experience has become the dominant form of authority and a critical component of contemporary expressions of religion and spirituality.<sup>280</sup> The experiential emphasis within Pentecostalism has been a major driver for the growth of these churches in the last century. By contrast, The Salvation Army’s military structures emphasise traditional forms of authority which do not always give much room for diverse experiences. Theological orthodoxy is shaped by the International Theological Council and mediated through official organisational sources, such as the Handbook of Doctrine and the Officer magazine. If an individual’s theology is challenged or changed by their experience, there is no framework by which this can be validated. Thus, a shift in theology can result in marginalisation, which, as described in Chapter Six, is particularly important in relation to social officers.

The experience of discomfort and dissonance around evangelism was even more prominent in the interviews. People frequently pointed back to the start of their officership as a time of naivety, where up until that point they had accepted certain things because such conformity was expected within a hierarchical organisation. However, accepting an idea and putting that idea into practice turned out to be quite different things for some people. One officer noted that, “Going to [The Salvation Army Officer Training] College I was naïve in the sense that evangelism is about getting people converted ... in College you know [that] is all about the four spiritual laws.<sup>281</sup> And I remember right then cringing

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<sup>279</sup> Although Wesley himself never used the term ‘quadrilateral’, he is credited with the theological method that balances these four sources (though not equally) in the late eighteenth century.

<sup>280</sup> Gerald Rose, Philip Hughes, and Gary D. Bouma, *Re-imagining Church: Positive Ministry Responses to the Age of Experience* (Nunawading, Victoria: Christian Research Association, 2014). 23.

<sup>281</sup> The four spiritual laws are discussed further in Chapter Nine.

about that because it just wasn't me." (P5) However, personal discomfort was only one of the factors that prompted questions about the organisation's evangelical methods. For some, it just seemed that these ways of approaching people were simply not effective:

I struggled with the corps that I came from. Lovely people but they just did stuff that didn't make a lot of sense to me. It seemed to be largely a waste of time, you know spending your time on street corners running open airs and all that kind of stuff. And also confining the behaviour of people into a very narrow subcultural context. I had a deep suspicion that this wasn't as it should be. (P2)

There were things that I accepted in my early officership ... because I was told them but they actually didn't make all that much sense. So I guess it's more of a growing experience that gave context to some of the doubts. So the whole idea of cold calling evangelism never sat comfortably but we did it because that's what you did. In the absence of an alternative, how are you going to do this? We can no longer hold open airs down the street on a Saturday night because it's: 1) Too dangerous; and 2) People don't gather there anymore, so what's the point? So in the absence of some other contextual environment we do this. This doesn't feel all that good. And I can remember going one Saturday afternoon doing this four spiritual laws stuff and we got somebody engaged in conversation quite warmly, got to the last page and said do you want to pray the prayer? Yeah, I want to pray the prayer – never saw them. What did that mean? (P11)

Perhaps most seriously, even when the prescribed evangelistic methods did seem capable of delivering results, they generated ethical questions for some officers. The following story gives a good example of this:

I can also recall in College doing this door to door visitation stuff that drove me crazy and going through some kind of interview that we had that would lead people into faith and I did this stuff and I thought by the time I'd finished with the woman it seemed to work and I thought 'I think I abused that woman'. I think I don't feel good about this. You know I could ratchet it up and say you know I've won a soul for the Lord but I'm not sure that that's what I did there. I've got a sneaky feeling that I did something unpleasant here. In some way I didn't listen to her, in some way I didn't really engage with her, in some way I sort of imposed something upon her that wasn't right. And so I began to get some fairly strong misgivings about the sort of accepted wisdom of the organisation and thinking there are other things here, there are more important issues I need to be very careful about the way forward because I feel uncomfortable about lots of silly, simplistic stuff. (P2)

It is worth noting here that stepping aside from the "accepted wisdom of the organisation" is not always a particularly easy thing to do and may have a range of undesirable consequences. Because The Salvation Army values character traits like obedience and conformity, stepping outside the boundaries can test one's self-assurance and resilience. One officer reported that moving past this challenge was a difficult growth experience:

I think the biggest thing for me is getting to the point that you're comfortable with your own spirituality, your understanding of God and how it works and then working within

that realm. Insecurity was probably an issue for me for a long time. Insecurities about why do I believe that and why this and then you have strong characters sometimes within The Salvation Army that will tell you, no, it's like this. And then you start to second guess yourself and you think, he's really strong on that. I'm not like that so what am I ... so there's a process of maturity and growing up for me where I realised that what I do and the way I do it is actually valid and you can see fruit from what happens. So understanding that and accepting that has been a big thing for me. (P20)

In his doctoral thesis, *Are you one of us?*, Terry Grey has documented the difficulties of difference in a movement where the pressure to conform, particularly amongst officers, is so powerful. Grey describes how, in the formation of new officers, conformity is rewarded and resistance is seen as a character flaw that needs to be dealt with.<sup>282</sup> For Grey himself, it was his own educational pursuits that awakened a sense of difference. He says, "I came to detect an increasing dissonance between how the organisation required me to act, think, perceive and how I was experiencing the world, principally through ongoing study."<sup>283</sup> Several of the officers that were interviewed for this project also identified external education opportunities as catalysts to seeing the organisation differently. Those Salvationists with an interest in maintaining the status quo may have good reason to be wary of the pursuit of further education beyond the movement's own institutional borders.

## **Approach to further education**

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Echoing a phrase from evangelical scholar Mark Noll, Canadian Salvationist and former President of Booth University College, Donald Burke wonders if "the scandal of the Salvationist mind is that there is not much of a Salvationist mind."<sup>284</sup> The positive public reputation of Salvationists has always come from compassionate, practical responses to human need rather than intellectual endeavours. While these two activities are not mutually exclusive, the balance within The Salvation Army is overwhelmingly in favour of the former. Statistically, The Salvation Army has much lower rates of higher education attainment than the Australian population generally. While 20 per cent of the general population have a university degree, this figure drops to ten per cent when considering those who identify with The Salvation Army in the Census and only five per cent for those who actually attend Sunday meetings.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Terrence Grey, "Are You One of Us? An Exploration of Discursive Identity Formation in The Salvation Army" (Sydney University of Technology, 2011), 119.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>284</sup> Donald E. Burke, "The Scandal of the Salvationist Mind," *Word and Deed* 7, no. 2 (2005): 41.

<sup>285</sup> Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures*: 92.

Burke describes the typical Salvationist as having “an ambivalent attitude toward education” - at best. The consequence of this attitude is a dearth of intellectual capacity and contribution. According to Burke:

Even with our vast experience in areas of ministry and social service, we have not been engaged seriously in thoughtful, systematic reflection upon our endeavours. We have not prepared our own scholars who are able to engage in an informed, critical dialogue with the latest research and trends, who could make contributions to their fields of expertise, and who could therefore point us in the direction of even greater effectiveness.<sup>286</sup>

He also identifies the neglect of education as a contributing factor to “a crisis of identity for The Salvation Army and Salvationists”, something that has occurred because “the abdication of our responsibility to develop our minds ... has set us adrift in many of our ministries, subject to the whims and fads of others without a clearly articulated foundation from which to evaluate their compatibility with our ethos and identity.”<sup>287</sup>

The Salvation Army trains its own officers through a two-year residential program. Those who pass the requirements for the International Certificate for Officership can progress to commissioning and ordination as a Salvation Army officer. Though officer training has been taking place in Australia since 1883, it is only since 1995 that some of the units have been accredited under the Vocational Education and Training sector and in 2006 the transition was made to the Higher Education sector.<sup>288</sup> Students wishing to pursue full diploma or degree certification must take additional subjects beyond the standard curriculum set out for officers, which usually requires study beyond the prescribed two years of officer training. However, this can be complicated because once they have been commissioned, officers can be sent into ministry anywhere across the Territory, making follow through on studies difficult because of distance or incompatible academic structures in different areas. Due to the relatively recent transferral into the Higher Education sector, it is unusual for any officer with the rank of Major or higher (i.e. those that have completed at least 15 years of commissioned service) to have a degree level qualification, except where they have specifically sought this out prior to or following their commissioning as officers.

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<sup>286</sup> Burke, "The Scandal of the Salvationist Mind," 42.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>288</sup> The Salvation Army, "Catherine Booth College - About Us," The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory, <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/find-us/victoria/catherine-booth-college/about-us/>.

Differing attitudes to education were evident throughout the interviews for this research. Regardless of their own personal educational history, those officers with predominately corps backgrounds frequently identified their lack of learning as problematic. "I wished I'd studied earlier", said one officer, "I was theologically undercooked in my first years of officership. That puts you under a great deal of stress – especially in interchurch relationships. I always felt like the very poor cousin until I'd done some further study." (P18) Another interviewee spoke of the challenge of getting corps officers to engage in some wider reading, describing how they "discovered that we had a non-reading culture in The Salvation Army, in officers in particular." (P5) In response, they set a goal for a number of corps officers to "read a book every month. That was deliberate really about, not just the learning, but actually getting a reading culture happening again, a learning culture." (P5)

Burke points out that part of the Salvationist suspicion of academic engagement is the fear "that the open inquiry that is foundational to education will lead to a dampening of spiritual fervor."<sup>289</sup> This fear was articulated by one of the officers interviewed, who even offered evidence of its veracity:

I think the other thing that by educating, we have the capacity to lose passion. Christian Schwarz in his NCD research indicated that the higher the degree, the level of academic qualification, theological qualification of the leader, the less the passionate spirituality is. It's a fascinating one. I'm looking at my own life and thinking well is that true. In my early days there was a single minded passion for Jesus but because we're theologically informed ... all that stuff that shapes and colours and we realise that it's not as black and white as I thought it was but it robs us of passion. It's moved but it's to do with the quality characteristic in a healthy church of 'passionate spirituality'. This is a global study, now 50-60,000 churches around the world. It's not been disproved thus far. (P18)

Though the specific reference to this NCD research is unclear, Schwarz did find that "formal theological training has a negative correlation to both church growth and the overall quality of churches."<sup>290</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible that the idea of 'passionate spirituality' mentioned above might be narrowly associated with more conservative forms of religion and that other measurements of spiritual maturity, such as James Fowler's 'Stages of Faith',<sup>291</sup> could correlate differently with higher levels of educational attainment. However, even in the absence of more definitive research

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<sup>289</sup> Burke, "The Scandal of the Salvationist Mind," 42.

<sup>290</sup> Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream, IL: Churchsmart Resources, 1996). 23.

<sup>291</sup> James W. Fowler, *Stages of faith : the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

on this subject, both Burke's assertion and the interview data do suggest that the belief that education may not be conducive to spirituality exists within The Salvation Army today.

Those officers interviewed who worked in social programs generally had a different attitude to education. Some felt a greater expectation upon them to get relevant qualifications, because they were working alongside professional staff who already had them. One officer, who seemed uncertain from the beginning that The Salvation Army Training College was going to offer all they needed, decided to also pick up courses in psychology and sociology at degree level at La Trobe University. They described how much this external view "impacts upon your thinking." (P2) Another interviewee, also feeling unprepared for the social role they had been given, described the difference some expanded learning and thinking made:

I ended up going and doing the AOD Cert IV because there was really nothing much around. I couldn't get enough sense about what training there was for chaplaincy. I figured I know the Christian stuff, so I need to know the client stuff. And again, that was a life changing experience for me because I had tutors and fellow students affirming my thoughts, my concepts and ideas and I'd never ever had that. (P14)

Education was consistently identified as important because it opened people up to new ideas but also because, in some cases, it gave people a foothold outside of The Salvation Army's own strong internal subculture and this enabled them to see the Army, if not more objectively, at least differently. The possibility of external critique might be threatening to the status quo but it also invigorated those ready for change. The theme of education opening up wider perspectives came through a number of times in interviews. A younger officer described with enthusiasm the opportunity they'd had "to go to Uni to study social work, theology and earlier on the arts and I think that's helped me to be exposed to the wider world and to think critically about it and to look at some of the realities that are going on in Australia and beyond. So, I think that's been a key thing." (P16) An older officer talked about being part of a students' group in their early officership. The group, which saw themselves as "a radical movement within The Salvation Army" resulted in these young Salvationists "mixing on an intellectual level that we'd never engaged in before and analysing the Army." (P3)

A review of chaplaincy within The Salvation Army highlighted the gap being experienced between relatively unprepared chaplains and the professional social workers that they worked alongside:

Most professionals working within social care and health care contexts would clearly indicate that they gained their expertise from college or university and thereafter through professional association registration or the equivalent. The chaplaincy focus group however indicated a wide spectrum of learning that ranged from (on the one hand) the completely informal and unstructured (e.g., 'On the go', 'Life experience'), and the semi-formal environmental learning (e.g., 'Role Models' and 'Growing up in The Salvation Army'), to the more (on the other hand) formal and structured training

(e.g., The Salvation Army Training College), but even this formal training was noted by one chaplain to be predominantly theological and virtually devoid of contemporary social training.<sup>292</sup>

As a result, this review recommended to The Salvation Army for their chaplains to be engaged in accredited graduate and post-graduate training courses, which have been approved by professional associations, such as Spiritual Care Australia.<sup>293</sup> At this point, it is too early to say whether the pressure on chaplains to become qualified will result in significantly higher levels of education amongst officers serving in social programs than corps. The move into the Higher Education sector by the College for Officer Training will increase the number of officers with a tertiary qualification across the board. However, if the trends in chaplaincy follow that of officer managers in social programs, the pattern will be 'get qualified or get out'. In the absence of appropriate level of qualifications in the increasingly professionalised world of social work, the presence of officers as managers has already diminished to negligible levels across Australia.

To the degree that it challenges an internal focus and embraces wider social trends, further education can be seen to play a disruptive role to the sectarian elements within The Salvation Army. This is why the extensive efforts to create and deliver its own educational curriculum within The Salvation Army were successful for a time in developing and maintaining a strong subculture. However, with generational changes and greater exposure more broadly to tertiary education, these influences appear to have become much more difficult to resist.

## Summary

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This chapter has explored a series of organisational changes that have helped to shape The Salvation Army as it stands today. As early as the movement's second generation, patterns of consolidation and social accommodation were appearing that heralded a recognisable shift from sect to church that had implications for the Army's evangelical and social missions. However, some sect-like qualities remained. As the religious impulse turned inward, a strong subculture developed that both affirmed a sense of identity and belonging for Salvationists but also acted to separate social services and their clientele from the Army's spiritual life.

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<sup>292</sup> Lindsay B. Carey and Bruce Rumbold, "Good Practice Chaplaincy: An exploratory study identifying skills, attitudes and practice of chaplains for selection, training and utilisation," (Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2014), 12-13.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

The institutionalisation of this ageing denomination has been fuelled by a strong sense of tradition, setting itself apart from the world, and a quasi-military structure that is resistant to change. However, there is also a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo, especially amongst younger generations, and a feeling that it serves neither the evangelical nor social goals of the organisation.

# Chapter Nine: The Salvation Army and Australian Society

## Introduction

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The Salvation Army was born at a time of evangelical revival, focussed on calling the straying flocks of Victorian England back into the fold. At that time, travelling evangelists ventured out beyond the walls of churches, drawing large crowds in public places as they campaigned from one end of the country to another. William and Catherine Booth seized upon this model, using all means available to them to preach the gospel to as many people as possible. They embraced popular culture and adapted it to their own purposes. For example, William Booth encouraged giving Christian lyrics to popular secular tunes and songs from music halls, which he judged to be more appealing to the masses than the more refined styles of choral hymn singing.<sup>294</sup> Booth saw the cultural forms of his time as a means of attracting people to his ministry and so did not hesitate to adapt rowdy songs, brass bands, street marches and an array of quasi-military elements as recognisable social features of The Salvation Army.

Over time, some of these *forms*, such as brass bands, became institutionalised within The Salvation Army's own subculture, and *methods*, such as the adaptation of contemporary music, ceased to be used. These changes reflect a turning away from society, as Salvation Army corps became more like worshipping congregations and less like evangelical brigades. However, this retreat from society was not complete. The Salvation Army's social programs remained connected as they served the needs of their communities. Community respect for these social endeavours grew just as the programs' connection to corps was diminishing.

In 1997, Salvation Army officer Derek Linsell wrote: "The major issue I face is that I find The Salvation Army to be very credible in the public eye but this does not necessarily mean that people will attend and participate in Army activities and church. It does mean that most people will donate some money if asked. It would appear that The Salvation Army was an organisation in the late nineteenth century that many people were attracted to, now it is an organisation that people want to donate money to."<sup>295</sup> How can an organisation that appears to be so popular amongst the Australian public have so few active followers?

This chapter looks at The Salvation Army's relationship to Australian society. The material here is informed by the same theoretical perspectives used in the previous chapter. This time, the main

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<sup>294</sup> Gordon Cox, *The Musical Salvationist: The World of Richard Slater* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011). 26.

<sup>295</sup> Linsell, "'Thank God for the Salvos' an historical and contemporary assessment for the public acceptance of the Salvation Army in Australia," v.

focus is on the external goal orientation, which is a common feature of agency structures, and the varying ways in which corps and social programs can be seen to be accepting or rejecting their social context.

## **The rise and fall of church and social services**

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The Salvation Army in Australia is a denomination in decline. According to Census records, its followers as a proportion of the Australian population peaked at 0.82 per cent in 1903.<sup>296</sup> In raw numbers, the peak happened much later in 1986. There has, however, been significant decline since then. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of people identifying with The Salvation Army in the Australian Census declined by 15 per cent at the same time as the population grew by 15 per cent.<sup>297</sup> The number of those that actually attend church on a Sunday is much lower again than those who identify in the Census. The National Church Life Survey results suggest that only 39 per cent of those identifying made up the weekly attendance in 2001.<sup>298</sup> The International Social Survey Programme suggests that the monthly involvement of Salvationists is somewhat higher at 55 per cent.<sup>299</sup> The larger figure still only indicates the regular engagement of just over 27,000 adults, placing The Salvation Army twelfth on the list of Christian denominations, between the Churches of Christ and the Latter Day Saints.

In addition to officers, who work full time in the service of the movement, The Salvation Army records three tiers of membership. Junior Soldiers, aged between 7 and 18, are mostly 'children of the regiment', meaning their parents are Salvationists – though this is not a prerequisite. Senior Soldiers can be enrolled from the age of 14 upwards. In addition to committing to the doctrinal beliefs of The Salvation Army, Senior Soldiers also promise to abstain from a range of activities, including drinking alcohol, smoking, taking any non-medicinal drug, and participating in any form of gambling. Adherents are a less demanding form of adult membership, requiring only a general form of Christian commitment and without the proscribed activities.

The Salvation Army Year Books for the ten-year period 2005-2014 record a 27 per cent drop in soldiership and a 30 per cent drop in adherents across both Australian Territories. While the number of corps (churches) across the country has barely changed, the average membership has dropped 25 per cent, from 89 to 67.

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<sup>296</sup> John Cleary, *Salvo! : the Salvation Army in the 1990s* (Double Bay, N.S.W.: Focus Books, 1993). 18.

<sup>297</sup> Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures*: 90.

<sup>298</sup> John Bellamy and Keith Castle, "2001 Church Attendance Estimates," (Sydney South: NCLS Research, 2004), 10.

<sup>299</sup> Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures*: 8.

**Table 1: Salvation Army Year Book Statistics 2005-2014**

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	10-year change
<b>Corps</b>	345	340	335	339	339	344	330	341	340	335	-3%
<b>Senior Soldiers</b>	21629	21095	19185	18740	17731	17407	17038	16896	16278	15738	-27%
<b>Adherents</b>	7029	6610	5871	6041	5689	5486	5472	5335	5327	4886	-30%
<b>Junior Soldiers</b>	2129	2088	1950	1676	2408	1499	1678	1682	1965	1779	-16%

The Salvation Army is not the only church in Australia to be experiencing membership challenges, though others seem to have gained greater benefit from migration patterns.<sup>300</sup> In the last three decades of the twentieth century, one of the fastest growing groups in Australia were those who see themselves as having 'no religion'. Census figures show an increase of nearly four million Australians or 560 per cent in this category over the past four decades.<sup>301</sup> Not surprisingly, the statistics also show that those under 40 years of age are more likely to indicate 'no religion' than those over 40.<sup>302</sup>

The decline experienced by Salvation Army corps in recent decades coincides with a massive expansion of social programs. This expansion has been directly aided by changes in government policy that saw large scale outsourcing of social and community services. The Salvation Army's social program leadership could take advantage of these policy changes because their fundamentally external orientation put them more in tune with their environment and they were ready to adapt to new opportunities. In 1986, the Australia Southern Territory was reporting social expenditure of just under \$50 million, by 2005 it was more than \$357 million.<sup>303</sup> In the same period

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 4-5, 91.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>303</sup> The Salvation Army, "2005 Annual Report of the Australia Southern Territory," (Melbourne: The Salvation Army, 2006).

as the table above where adult corps membership declined by almost a third, the number of employees (now a measure almost entirely dedicated to social program and support staff) doubled, moving from just over 2,552 to 5,152.<sup>304</sup> At current rates, there will be more employees than Senior Soldiers in the Territory within five years. For those Salvationists who are already worried that the Army's public image is dominated by its social programs, this represents a concerning shift in the balance of power.

What is behind the diverging fortunes of The Salvation Army's evangelical and social missions? One possibility is that the Army's social programs have been more successful because they are more in tune with Australian society. This would fit the idea that agency structures are both more externally oriented and accepting of their social context. So where does this leave The Salvation Army's corps?

## **Out of touch with the community?**

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In several interviews, it was suggested that The Salvation Army's evangelical ministries have lost touch with the communities in which they exist. Perhaps the greatest negative impact of The Salvation Army's subcultural separation in the twentieth century was that it "lost its capacity to communicate with the world." (P3) Rather than continue to expose itself to new thinking, Corps became "very inward looking." (P5) One officer put it this way:

It fails to engage. It sort of goes back into a hole and tries to sort of shield itself or disconnect itself from the world and all these sort of internal machinations become much more important for the Army. We're probably in one of those periods at the moment, where we're spending much more time navel gazing rather than engaging courageously with a broader world. (P2)

Several officers pointed out that the Army's inability to connect with its own young people was symptomatic of a wider disconnection with society. One officer identified "how to be church to the community" as one of the biggest challenges for the movement. "I don't think we understand that", they said, "I don't think people in churches have an understanding of the average Mr and Mrs Joe Blow. My kids now, they're in their 30s, they wouldn't set foot in a church because they don't want to sit there and have stuff dumped on them. They want to be engaged in the conversation and I do too now." (P14) The Army's subculture, which helped to sustain a strong sense of organisational identity and connection for its first hundred years, now functions to disconnect its members from the rest of the community. As a result of this disconnection, one officer identified a further tension for those who tried to remain within the Army's ranks, "I think we are so removed from ... how people

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<sup>304</sup> The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Year Book* (London: The Salvation Army, 2005); The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Year Book* (London: The Salvation Army, 2014).

live their lives now and we place unrealistic expectations on people because of that in a lot of ways.” (P13) Linsell gave some examples of these ‘unrealistic expectations’ nearly 20 years ago, saying:

Basic beliefs in The Salvation Army such as strong commitment and loyalty are out of tune with the lack of commitment displayed in the post-modern world. If businesses get five years out of an employee today they are pleased. The Salvation Army expects not only lifetime service, but a lifetime commitment. Loyalty, to the traditional Salvationist is, in the least, attendance at services twice on Sunday and many other meetings during the week. Comparisons with people these days who believe attendance once a fortnight, or once a month is commitment is (sic) poignant.<sup>305</sup>

In one interview, an analogy was drawn with the sterile quarters once set apart for a person with immune deficiency. “I think we are in a bubble”, said the interviewee, noting that this applied “especially [to] the corps side of things.” (P13) The challenge put forward for the church arm of the organisation is that this disconnection from the community was rendering it increasingly irrelevant to those outside its own ranks. According to one officer, it is “not that the world doesn’t like the church, [it is] that the world just doesn’t care anymore. Like we are so irrelevant to them that they’re not sitting at home talking about how bad the church is, they just don’t [talk about us at all]. I just don’t think people care. We’re not even a blip on the radar anymore.” (P12) While The Salvation Army is not alone among Australian churches who are facing decline, the inward facing subculture highlights decreasing numbers, just as it does the failure of the movement’s evangelical efforts. There are fewer corps with bands and songster brigades, and generally less musicians in those musical sections that have survived. As older corps close down, new faith communities are still being opened but the overall patterns of identification and participation are continuing to trend downward.

The internal focus of Salvation Army corps and their disconnection from the community also acts as a protective mechanism against change. While the external environment has faced all kinds of social and cultural challenges, The Salvation Army’s subculture has proven to be reasonably effective in resisting many of these. For instance, the organisation’s leadership, which is drawn almost entirely from officers with strong corps experience, remains largely patriarchal: in 2015 seven out of ten cabinet members were men, as were six out of seven of its trustees.<sup>306</sup> In an increasingly multicultural community, The Salvation Army is one of the least multicultural churches in Australia. While just over half of Australians in the 2011 Census were both born in Australia and had Australian-born parents, the figure for those identifying with The Salvation Army was almost three quarters. Only 12% of those

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<sup>305</sup> Linsell, “‘Thank God for the Salvos’ an historical and contemporary assessment for the public acceptance of the Salvation Army in Australia,” 73.

<sup>306</sup> Salvation Army, “The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory 2016 Annual Report.”

representing The Salvation Army were first-generation Australians, compared to over 30% of the rest of the population.<sup>307</sup>

The dynamics of change within social programs is a completely different story. Social programs are continually at the whim of government funding directions, shifts and trends in community needs and so must demonstrate processes and progress that reflect principles of continuous quality improvement in order to maintain their accreditation – a requirement of most government funding agreements. Regular cycles of funding and changes in government policy encourage social programs to demonstrate innovation, effective strategies for engagement and intervention, and measurable outcomes in their field.

One example of the need for change in social programs challenging but ultimately pushing through the reluctance of Salvation Army leadership is around harm reduction. After more than 20 years of running one of the largest needle and syringe exchanges in the Southern Hemisphere, The Salvation Army's Crisis Services commissioned a report to capture the history of this important program. The report, *A Pragmatic Exchange: A Short History of the Health Information Exchange and the Reconciliation of Christian Faith and Harm Reduction*,<sup>308</sup> tells the story of a "courageous decision" made by the leadership of the Australia Southern Territory to open the Army's first needle exchange in the world. The report's author, Dr James Rowe, points out the tension between the movement's desire to respond to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of the community and its theological reticence to validate illegal drug taking behaviour instead of the established abstinence policy. Rowe makes explicit mention of the challenges involved in communicating the need for such a venture between seasoned social workers (including a few officers) and The Salvation Army's leadership, who primarily came from a more 'ecclesiastical' background. Despite a number of initial refusals, the proponents of the proposal persisted in arguing both the urgent health need for such a measure in a time of HIV/AIDS crisis, but also the alignment with the Army's mission to those who are most disadvantaged and in need.<sup>309</sup>

The conflict described here between social program staff pushing for innovation and the resistance by 'ecclesiastical' leadership highlights both the varying goal orientations and different sources of authority. The social programs' external orientation was focussed on the health crisis confronting their communities, while church leadership were largely unfamiliar with the patterns of injecting drug users, reflecting both their moral views and middle-class values. While for the social workers, the

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<sup>307</sup> Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures*.

<sup>308</sup> James Rowe, *A Pragmatic Exchange: A Short History of the Health Information Exchange and the Reconciliation of Christian Faith and Harm Reduction* (Melbourne: The Salvation Army Crisis Services, 2013). 37-80.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

public health argument was sufficient, they learned that they needed to frame their position differently for Army leadership. This meant using different kinds of authority including the Bible, The Salvation Army's innovative social history and getting their own officers to advocate internally.

There is one other factor to consider in this discussion about disconnection and change. If a predisposition for or against change is at least partially related to age, then another distinction between corps and social programs may have some relevance. Because the clear majority of social programs are run by paid employees, the workforce reflects the average working age of Australians. That is, the age of social program employees is much more reflective of the age of the community than those attending Salvation Army corps. Social programs are dominated by generations that have grown up with significant social and technological change, whereas corps memberships still reflect an age group that values stability, longevity and persistence.

For social programs then, it is not just their external orientation and general acceptance of their social environment that shapes their engagement: the composition of their staff is directly representative of Australian society. By contrast, most corps communities have directly facilitated the creation and maintenance of a distinctive subculture that, compared to the rest of Australia, is both older and less culturally diverse, in addition to their religious particularities. Furthermore, it seems that these religious characteristics of The Salvation Army, which were once either benign or positively attractive within the community, now act as barriers and symbols of social and spiritual disconnection.

## **Evangelism and the lost art of communication**

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One of the officers interviewed talked about the difficulty Salvationists had “to personally relate the Gospel in a way that connects with a current generation”, explaining that “for many they’ve either lost the story or they’ve lost the ability to tell it in a way that connects.” (P1) Another described the old paradigm as “taking the gospel out to the people”, “preaching” and “hand to hand combat evangelism”, saying that these methods are now “so disconnected from where people are in society.” “We still use religious language of the nineteenth century”, they went on to say. “We’ve lost the art of communicating with people, which was a strength of the organisation.” (P3)

Several officers referred to an evangelical device known as the ‘four spiritual laws’,<sup>310</sup> which was once the standard model for leading people into faith. “Certainly when we were in training”, said one officer, “we were taught to evangelise people in a certain way, which was about making them pray

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<sup>310</sup> The four spiritual laws outline a pattern for evangelical engagement. In brief they are: 1. God loves you; 2. Humans are sinful and therefore separated from God; 3. Jesus Christ overcomes both sin and separation; 4. Accepting Jesus as saviour is the way to reconnect to God.

certain prayers and going through the four spiritual laws.” (P12) However, even with a clear methodology, there were long term doubts about this kind of evangelical strategy. Despite their own personal commitment to evangelism, a number of officers named concerns about methods that put conversions before people and more genuine relationships. According to one interviewee:

In recent years I became quite suspicious of that form of evangelism because I've observed people do that in an offensive manner, who see their role as getting people saved, whatever that means, and that's it. And I don't believe that's what Jesus did at all, whatsoever. He got involved in people's lives and salvation meant a whole lot of things as he did that and so I've found that so offensive that I found myself withdrawing and retreating from evangelism because I didn't want people to be hurt like that. And if someone had come across to me like that I wouldn't have responded well. (P12)

Another warned about the dangers of opportunistic evangelism:

I can remember people saying when you've got people at a funeral service, you've got an evangelism opportunity and I always felt uncomfortable with that because people were there to honour and mourn. You can talk about the comfort and the love of God but to tell them that they need salvation? I'm not sure that's the right ... I think the church has given itself a bad name because it's used opportunities poorly. (P11)

The interviews with Salvation Army officers undertaken for this research revealed a range of reasons for dissatisfaction with old models of evangelism. One officer described an unintended consequence of enthusiastic evangelism as the inability to genuinely listen to another person's story. They said:

I don't think that we listen to the whole person very well. I don't think we hear the social story, I don't think that we necessarily hear the spiritual side of the story because too often we want to impose our own view of the world on that spiritual side ... and you 've got to take time to do that and it requires listening and it requires a decent pastoral response instead of a campaigning evangelical response, which will get you nowhere with people. (P2)

For the most part, these comments acknowledge that the problem lies primarily in The Salvation Army's withdrawal from social engagement as a church. However, in some cases the blame was seen to be at the other end – society had drifted from its religious commitment. Another officer spoke of the social distance that had been created between the church and the rest of the world. For this officer, the disinterest that most people showed in the message of the church was a major impediment to evangelism. They articulated the challenge as “convincing the world that we have a message of any relevance at all to share with them.” (P12)

The themes of distance and irrelevance to society came through on multiple occasions, resulting in the conclusion that “ministry is hard [and] it's getting harder, just because our world is becoming more distant from God.” (P5) The social transition from a wider acceptance of cultural Christendom to a more secular and pluralist society was seen to have hardened the ground for evangelism. “Yeah, we are a spiritual nation”, said one officer, “but I don't think that anyone's overly serious in exploring

what that means. I hear that a lot of commentators say that we're very spiritual but my experience is that there are not too many people hanging out to have a spiritual conversation." (P5)

It seems unlikely that the methods that worked for previous generations will continue to speak to those emerging now. One of the younger officers interviewed spoke of a reaction away from programmatic mission models, noting that "mission can't be reduced to preaching a form of the gospel that mattered pre-1950s and '60s." (P6) The Salvation Army 'open air' tradition where brass bands marching down the street would attract a crowd, who would then be subject to an evangelist preaching the gospel, persisted well into the 1980s despite having lost its effectiveness decades earlier. Although many Salvationists grew up with this tradition, there was little evidence that it was a successful evangelical tool. One officer, reflecting on the corps that they grew up in, said that "Of all of the years of all of the open airing, one person came to faith quite radically and I think that he's famous because he is the one person. And I think the attitude of all the guys was that we'd keep doing it for that one guy." (P6)

Part of the frustration of evangelical disconnection was attributed to the influence of North American models of evangelism, which appeared to have attractive results in their own context but which did not function the same way in Australia. The comparison was made in one interview between "the one on one American, knock on the door, cold case, sales pitch form of evangelism that emerges at the same time as the salesman model does" and "the European mode of evangelism, which is being inducted into an activist community." (P6) It was noted that The Salvation Army actually belonged to the latter of these two models, an approach much more consistent with an organisation heavily involved in social services than the more individualistic, first alternative. However, there is little evidence that the community-based approach to evangelism has much presence in The Salvation Army in Australia today. One officer acknowledged the challenge of movement in this direction, saying:

We're good at expressing kindly acts and we can do all the kindnesses but putting a language around that that explains why we're engaged in kindly acts, is a real stumbling block and people might talk about getting God or they might talk about, sometimes they invite people to the Army and that's a great thing to be doing. But for them to personally relate the Gospel in a way that connects with a current generation, I think that for many they've either lost the story or they've lost the ability to tell it in a way that connects with the current generation – and that's a major challenge for us in the way in which we engage with people. (P1)

Perhaps one of the difficulties of the activist community approach to evangelism is that Salvation Army corps no longer reflect this model. Although many corps are involved in delivering emergency relief and material aid services, these community programs are rarely connected in any substantial way to the worshipping congregation. For the most part, the corps focus is on Sundays and Salvationist involvement in political advocacy or direct social action is low. It is not surprising, then,

that the evangelical invitation from corps to their local communities emphasises Christian conversion into a belief system, rather than Christian values that drive a world-changing agenda.

The apparently widespread public disinterest in the spirituality of The Salvation Army comes in stark contrast to public opinion about its social program activity. Across the range of interviews, it was broadly agreed that the Salvos had earned a right to speak out in the Australian community because of the credibility that had been established through service to the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised. Some officers believed that this platform should be used to explicitly promote the Christian identity of The Salvation Army. However, such opinions fail to acknowledge the disconnection noted above between the primary forms of Salvationist spirituality, which emphasise beliefs and attendance at Sunday worship, and more socially oriented forms of Christianity, which are only relatively recently being reclaimed within parts of The Salvation Army. In order for the public to connect the Salvos' good works with their faith, the Army needs to do better at articulating the nature of the relationship between these two things. It is disingenuous to suggest that Christian faith drives the Army's social work when most of it is delivered by non-Christians and most of the Army's faithful are not involved in this work.

However, just because the content does not appear to be delivering a compelling narrative in one area does not mean there is not a story to be told. If the Red Shield Appeal, The Salvation Army's major annual fundraising and publicity effort, is an indicator of how well the organisation is communicating about its social programs, then the story is quite different to the evangelical tale. From 2005 to 2014, the Appeal went from \$24.9M to \$41.5M in the Australia Southern Territory. While this could be interpreted as an improvement only in fundraising capacity, the key message of that fundraising is about the effectiveness of Salvation Army social programs to help those in need. This message has a ready audience because it builds directly upon the Salvos' historic reputation for pragmatic charity in Australia. By comparison, the invitation to attend church goes against all Australian social trends.

If the organisation's public identity is dominated by its social programs, this may be due to the way it uses its promotional materials. For instance, the Annual Reports of both Australian Territories make little mention of the Army's spiritual activities, focussing almost exclusively on its social work, though this varies slightly between the Eastern and Southern Territories. Since 2005 when the word 'God' appeared a record 22 times in the Southern Territory's Annual Report, it has been relegated to only a handful of mentions each year since, usually in mission statements and the Territorial Commander's foreword. By comparison, in last year's report the word 'homeless' appeared more than 60 times. This could be seen as an example of internal secularisation; however, it may also be that The Salvation Army has learned to adapt its messaging to the intended audience, who are not looking for a religious message in the annual report of their favoured welfare organisation.

However difficult reshaping the evangelical message appears to be for the Army today, there seems to be far less of a problem adapting communications regarding social service. This may be due to the fact that the community is more receptive to the latter message or that the organisation is more prepared to make changes in one area than the other. Either way, communicating clearly in language and via methods that are understood by your audience is vital to the survival of any organisation in an era of instant global connectivity. The perils of getting this wrong are described in the next section.

## **Changing attitudes to human sexuality**

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While the social significance of marriage has been shifting since the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s, The Salvation Army's official stance has been to reaffirm the traditional position of a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. When they sign the Articles of War, a commitment made by all Senior Soldiers and officers, Salvationists pledge to "uphold the sanctity of marriage." Sexual activity outside of these boundaries is strictly forbidden and any breach of these rules can result in a 'standing down', which removes that person from the Soldiers' Roll for period of time.

This commitment stands in contrast to Australian social trends, which have seen a decline in marriage rates, particularly religious ceremonies, for more than four decades.<sup>311</sup> This could be seen to reflect the sectarian pattern, which sets itself against society. However, most Australian churches take similar positions. Furthermore, beyond the organisational rhetoric, Salvationists divorce and live in de facto relationships at comparable rates to the rest of the population.<sup>312</sup> They also have the highest rates of any Australian denomination for de facto relationships, separation and divorce.<sup>313</sup>

Interviews with Salvation Army officers revealed that the gap between increasingly accepted social patterns and the Army's strict stance was a source of significant tension, particularly regarding same-sex relationships. "I think public opinion and views on traditional family are going to be huge for us in the next little while", one officer said, adding quickly "if they're not already." (P10) Another characterised the perceived stubbornness of Army leadership this way: "I think we've got our heads stuck, like the ostrich, in the sand. A classic example of that is the gay marriage issue and our refusal

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<sup>311</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies, "Family Facts and Figures: Marriage," Australian Institute of Family Studies, <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/info/charts/marriage/index.html#numbers>.

<sup>312</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, "4102.0 - Australian Social Trends," ABS, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/5bc01a9fba727452ca2570ec00787e6f!OpenDocument>.

<sup>313</sup> National Church Life Survey, "Marital status amongst attenders," NCLS Research, <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=140>.

to dialogue on it. I've been saying for ages, in fact I've stopped saying because they don't want to hear it, that we have to engage in that dialogue." (P5)

It was also suggested that much of the division around attitudes to sexuality was linked to generational differences. A younger officer who described The Salvation Army's character and message as primarily appealing to older people, noted that the Army's "gaffs around homosexuality" had "further estranged [the organisation] from young people." (P6) There was also a sense of denial about how significant these issues were. The same officer said "people tell you that it hasn't caused as big a problem as it could have but ... in my circles, if there was any question about us being a conservative group of rednecks, we crossed the line. [In the minds of young people], an intolerant, conservative, ageing organisation is certainly what we've become." (P6)

The 'gaffs' referred to here were a series of related incidents that occurred in 2012. They began when leadership in the Australia Southern Territory took a public stance in support of the conservative Australian Christian Lobby and against a growing national campaign for same-sex marriage. This was followed by an interview on Melbourne's gay and lesbian radio station, Joy FM, which gained international attention when an officer was reported to have said that "The Salvation Army believes gay people should die."<sup>314</sup> The Army followed up with an apology, clarifying the officer's views as a theological misunderstanding, however the incident revealed a stark contrast between the Army's social program practice and its church regulations.

While there is a strong stance against discrimination based upon a person's gender or sexuality in Salvation Army social services and many employees openly identify as gay or lesbian, the same is not true within the ranks of the Army's corps. The official position, which was removed from public records after the Joy FM interview, states that while people may not have total freedom to choose their sexual orientation, they are able to control their behaviours. Using the Bible as its justification for heterosexuality as the divine standard for humanity, the conclusion is made that same-sex attracted soldiers and officers must therefore embrace a lifetime of celibacy.

In August 2014, representatives from both Australian Territories and The Salvation Army's New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory gathered in Auckland for a theological conference on the subject "Honour God with Your Body: A Christian View of Human Sexuality." While views expressed by presenters at this conference are considered to be their own and not necessarily representative of The Salvation Army, the diversity of opinions offered and even the endorsement of the conference

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<sup>314</sup> Simon Lauder, "Salvo Major's comments outrage gay rights groups," ABC News, [www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2012/s3532209.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2012/s3532209.htm).

subject by each Territory's leaders signifies an acknowledgement of the growing importance of this debate.

Two speakers pointed out that the Army has a longstanding tradition of loosely interpreting certain biblical passages, for instance in order to unconditionally affirm the equality of women's ministry or to refrain from practicing the sacraments. Yet, when it comes to the acceptance of gay and lesbian people within the Army's ranks, it appears that a more strict interpretation of scripture is inviolable.<sup>315</sup> Stuart McGifford offered these thoughts:

The case against homosexuality often returns to a plain text reading of the scripture. When it comes to women in ministry, slavery, wealth, divorce, we have begun to see that a plain text reading is an inadequate theological and pastoral response. If the same, proper theological reflection was given to the issue of homosexuality that has been given to the aforementioned issues, then I think we as the Church would have either a different response or at least, a more grace-filled one.<sup>316</sup>

McGifford pleads for a more person-centred approach, saying that the problem with the current debate is that it places doctrine before people. "The debate is not just theoretical, theological discussion about beliefs. It is a debate about someone's son or daughter, someone's brother or sister, someone's husband or wife, someone's mother or father."<sup>317</sup>

Kris Halliday talked about his journey as a gay man who wanted to become a Salvation Army officer. Halliday, who was eventually accepted into officership on the condition of lifelong celibacy, spoke openly to those gathered at the conference about the pain of rejection and alienation that he had experienced within The Salvation Army because of his sexuality. He also directly addressed the organisation's troublesome public statements from a couple of years beforehand. On the Army's decision to join the campaign against same-sex marriage "as a defence of family and children", Halliday states that this "was without any thought for the mental health of gay or questioning *children* who see such material, pushing them further into the depths of self-loathing and shame ... Gay people don't deserve to read that they want to *destroy* marriage and we don't deserve to have

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<sup>315</sup> Kris Halliday, "Making sense of Scripture and The Salvation Army as a gay person called to Officership," in *Thought Matters: Honour God with Your Body - A Christian View of Human Sexuality* (Auckland, New Zealand: The Salvation Army, 2014), 11; Stuart McGifford, "My father was gay: A pastor's theological and pastoral reflection," in *Thought Matters: Honour God with Your Body - A Christian View of Human Sexuality* (Auckland, New Zealand: The Salvation Army, 2014), 8.

<sup>316</sup> McGifford, "My father was gay: A pastor's theological and pastoral reflection," 8.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

accusations thrown around that we are destroying the moral fabric of society.”<sup>318</sup> He went on to describe the Joy FM radio interview as “a moment of heart break” going on to explain that:

Some defended the debacle by suggesting the Officer was ambushed. This missed the issue – that there is a real problem with the position of The Salvation Army on homosexuality and the vacuum of genuine discourse and discovery left our spokesperson with nowhere to go ... Adding insult to injury was the deafening silence afterwards. There was talk of a conversation to follow but the conversation never came. This is as damaging to the soul of gay people as the vitriol in the debate can be. *The Salvation Army is so inherently invested in justice that it hurts all the more when the Army itself becomes the perpetrator of injustice and silencing.*<sup>319</sup> (Italics mine)

Several officer interviewees noted that any shift in the Army’s position on same-sex relationships would come very reluctantly. One said “My personal opinion would be that the organisation is just ‘sucking it up’ but they don’t want to ... They’re hard because people who hold a conservative view hold it dearly.” (P10) An example of this dearly held conservative view came from a corps officer who said that they were concerned about “the dramatic shift away from biblical authority... I think we’ve shifted dramatically on being prepared to stand on a solid platform of that revelation because of the variety of opinions and issues that are being floated around society ... whether that’s about homosexuality or whatever.” (P15) This officer’s concerns reveal a worldview that places absolute authority in a particular biblical and theological perspective against the relativism and pluralism that characterise postmodernity. They sensed that this perspective was being challenged within The Salvation Army, noting that “I think that there’s been a shift in The Salvation Army on our willingness to actually deal in absolutes, deal in truth.” (P15) In a discussion with a group of young people on “the homosexual subject”, when asked for their opinion, the officer responded “well actually, I don’t think my opinion counts on this. I actually don’t think my opinion really matters [because God’s view as revealed in the Bible is what matters] rather than what does [the CO] think or what does the media think or what does a gay advocates group think.” (P15)

Other interviewees also identified a generational shift occurring, though some were more willing to embrace this change. According to one officer, “I don’t think our leadership understand that our next generation coming through have a different philosophy.” (P5) Another (older officer) said:

The generations who are in control, who are in power in our territory, come out of a less accepting worldview of alternate cultures. But the younger officers that I mix with ... I’m hearing conversations about gay marriage and all of that stuff that I wouldn’t hear from my peers but I’m thinking these guys will be in leadership in a few years’

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<sup>318</sup> Halliday, "Making sense of Scripture and The Salvation Army as a gay person called to Officership," 12.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

time and these attitudes will be brought into [our movement] and it will be reflective of society. So I'm encouraged by that thought. (P18)

Even those that thought changing attitudes to issues like human sexuality would probably be inevitable, conceded that they wouldn't come easily. Those who have "come from a very strong evangelical upbringing ... just can't flip the switch overnight." (P5)

Another corps officer pointed out how personally the debate affected people, saying "we're stupid if we think that people in our own corps don't run up against those issues in their own lives ... I have two soldiers that have gay sons and I have two other families that also have gay and lesbian siblings, so that's all very real." (P10) The embodiment of the issue in people's lives was also taken up by a Divisional officer, who said that "the test for me is that if [a gay couple] came to me and [asked to if I'd do their wedding] well, if I've got a relationship with them, I most probably would. Cause I'd respect them as people more than I would the [institutional tradition]." (P5)

In response to the Joy FM interview, the Australia Southern Territory put out a public apology and a clarifying statement that focussed on the non-discriminatory practice of Salvation Army social services. This statement affirmed the following:

1. Provision of social services by The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in the delivery of its services. All Salvation Army social service programs embrace and work with people ONLY on the basis of need. Salvation Army social service centres around the nation have had multitudes of gay people stay and find acceptance, support and love in The Salvation Army's care.

2. Employment and volunteering with The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army does not consider sexuality a factor in deciding who we employ, or in the engagement of volunteers. Some of our best employees and volunteers are people who are openly gay.<sup>320</sup>

The Australia Eastern Territory, keen to distance itself from the remarks made by one of its Southern colleagues, also put out both an apology and a clarifying statement. Their statement included the following:

Our organisation also includes many gay and lesbian colleagues, as well as family members and friends, who have been distressed by what was implied about our position in the interview, and the subsequent debate. Please be assured that The Salvation Army believes every individual is of infinite value, and each life a gift from God to be cherished, nurtured and preserved. I want you to understand our clear position:

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<sup>320</sup> The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army position on human sexuality," The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory, <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/News-and-Media/news-and-media1/2012/Human-sexuality/>.

- All of The Salvation Army's social services operate without discrimination and a multitude of services are provided to people every day without concern or reference to a person's sexuality.
- No person is excluded from employment by The Salvation Army on the basis of sexuality.
- No person is excluded from volunteering with The Salvation Army on the basis of sexuality.<sup>321</sup>

While both Territories also stated that no person is excluded from joining in the worship and fellowship of Salvation Army corps, neither specifically mentioned that 'practicing' homosexuals are excluded from soldiership and officership.

The distinction between corps life and that within the Army's social programs in this area is particularly marked. Social programs are mandated to provide service 'without discrimination' and for many, part of their accreditation requirements includes having to demonstrate actively inclusive policies for staff and clients of varying gender identities and sexualities. At the same time, corps face restrictions both from leadership and conservative elements within their own congregations. Officers who step beyond the Army's official position on same-sex relationships by enrolling a soldier who is in a same-sex relationship or participating in same-sex commitment ceremony risk disciplinary action.

A key to understanding what is behind these distinct approaches is to look at the authorities that are influencing contrasting positions. The traditional evangelical view sees itself rooted in a particular way of understanding the authority of the Bible and of Christian tradition. Many evangelicals emphasise a literal reading of the scriptures and see Christianity through a relatively narrow lens of history and practices.<sup>322</sup> The affirmation of these sources of authority in the face of opposition from secular society can be seen to have some sectarian echoes, though this may be a question of degree given that similar views have been quoted from the larger, mainstream churches. Those holding this view are likely to appeal to the handful of passages in Scripture that appear to condemn homosexual practice and the church's position that marriage is traditionally a bond between one man and one woman. These sources of authority no longer hold weight in a society that instead prioritises experience and reason as its primary referents. In this case, for social programs to align with these

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<sup>321</sup> The Salvation Army, "Clarification re. Interview Comments About homosexuality," The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory, <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/News-and-Media/news-and-media1/2012/Clarification-re-Interview-Comments-About-Homosexuality/>.

<sup>322</sup> By comparison, Christians who support Marriage Equality and the full inclusion of LGBTI people within the life of the church do not necessarily dismiss the Bible and Christian tradition but usually interpret these sources and the application of their authority from a different perspective.

latter sources can be seen as an example of internal secularisation, in that it reflects 'declining religious authority' within the religious group itself.

Further complicating The Salvation Army's public views about human sexuality are recent revelations that some of its own officers have been guilty of sexual crimes against children. The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse brought to light more than 500 cases involving Salvation Army officers, soldiers and staff between the late 1950s and 2014.<sup>323</sup> These horrific transgressions, which have gained substantial media attention over the past five years, have not only diminished the organisation's public trust and fundraising capacity but have fundamentally compromised any authority by which the Army might hope to speak about sexual morality.

While most of the media and public attention on the Royal Commission has focussed on the Catholic church, The Salvation Army has attracted significant criticism, not only for the number and nature of the crimes committed but also for the organisation's responses. The Army's leadership have too often failed to hear and respond to victims of abuse and have erred in protecting perpetrators, along with the organisation's reputation. Previous research about the resilience of The Salvation Army's relationship with the Australian public in relation to similar issues showed that the Army's defining organisational narrative had created an impression of indispensability. Stakeholders understood that there was "a need for the Salvos based on their own imperatives for a functioning welfare system."<sup>324</sup> However, whether that will continue to be the case in light of the current, much larger and more prominent series of cases is yet to be fully determined.

There is another significant angle to this discussion which relates to identity and belonging within The Salvation Army. It is the problem raised by Halliday – a clash of authorities. What happens when one's experience does not line up with what they have been taught about the Bible and tradition? For the gay Salvationist, the end result is usually exclusion from the Christian community. The hurt caused by such exclusion has been known to create a corresponding anti-Christian feeling in the homosexual community; thus, for Halliday, "it was as shaming for me to be found out as a Christian

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<sup>323</sup> Peter McClellan, Helen Milroy, and Robert Fitzgerald, "Report of Case Study no. 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland," in *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (2015); Peter McClellan, Helen Milroy, and Robert Fitzgerald, "Report of Case Study no. 10: The Salvation Army's handling of claims of child sexual abuse 1989 to 2014," in *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (2015); Peter McClellan, Helen Milroy, and Robert Fitzgerald, "Report of Case Study no. 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated," in *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (2016).

<sup>324</sup> S. Middleton, "Reputation Management in the Salvation Army A Narrative Study," *J. Manage. Inq.* 18, no. 2 (2009): 147, 55.

by my new gay friends as it was to talk about being gay with my Church friends."<sup>325</sup> Because social programs prioritise different sources of authority and are more engaged with changing community attitudes, the acceptance of same-sex relationships does not create this kind of conflict – except when dealing with internal stakeholders who take an opposing position.

While contrasting approaches to human sexuality and relationships has been a topical and lively subject recently, it is not the only example where The Salvation Army's values differ from those emerging within the Australian community. As much of the nation has become more secularised, its religious elements have also increased in their diversity. Is this a change that should be welcomed, or is it apostasy that needs to be reversed?

## **Religious exclusivism in a pluralist age**

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It was mentioned in Chapter Five that some Salvationists protested at the Parliament of the World's Religions when it was held in Melbourne in 2009. At the same time, three Salvation Army officers were making presentations as part of the Parliament. I was one of these officers, presenting with Jewish and Muslim speakers whom I had invited to join me in a session about faith-based social services. My co-speakers were surprised at the contrasting presence of Salvationists inside and outside the event. Yet for those inside the organisation, such divergence of views is a familiar sign of the ways that individual beliefs and practices are shifting despite much more conservative organisational positions.

The most recent 'Guideline for Salvationists' in the Australia Southern Territory offers the following advice on multi-faith events:

In recent years there have been increased requests made by civic leaders and organisations for Christian Churches to participate in multi-faith worship services. Often those making the request are unaware of the problems of belief involved and may have more of a concern about multicultural inclusiveness than about the religious aspect of the event ... The term "worship" can be problematic and The Salvation Army advises against the use of such terminology in favour of multi-faith gathering, event or celebration. Of concern are the dangers of syncretism (thoughtless confusion of different faith traditions), indifferentism ("we all believe in the one god after all"), idolatry (giving worship to that which is not God), and pluralism (giving equal status and relevance to all faith traditions).<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Halliday, "Making sense of Scripture and The Salvation Army as a gay person called to Officership."

<sup>326</sup> The Salvation Army, "Guidelines for Salvationists on Multi-Faith Events," The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory, <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/Who-We-Are/vision-and-mission/Positional-Statements/Guidelines-for-Salvationists/Multi-Faith-Events/>.

The Guideline warns Salvationists of the need to maintain distinct Christian identity and practice, which should not be compromised, going on to say that “an event which blends items from a variety of Christian and non-Christian sources is not recommended. With this kind of event the problems of syncretism, indifferentism, idolatry and pluralism are particularly hard to avoid.”<sup>327</sup> This quotation demonstrates the significance that theology has in shaping Salvationist practice and a strong desire to maintain a traditional view of Christian orthodoxy. It also has a distinctly sectarian flavour, protecting the group’s own belief framework against the dangers of external social influences.

The protest at the Parliament of the World’s Religions and the reticence to engage with other faiths reflects The Salvation Army’s doctrinal commitment to Christianity as the exclusive path to salvation. Explicitly rejecting the increasingly pluralist values of Australian society, the official Salvationist position connects involvement with other religions, especially in spiritual practices, with apostasy. Such beliefs, which are founded upon special revelation and absolute truth claims, exist in stark contrast to increasingly relativistic approaches to religion and spirituality in Australia.

By contrast, social programs often work in an actively pluralist environment. When Salvation Army chaplains are placed in government run facilities, such as hospitals, prisons or airports, the expectation is that this chaplaincy will support people of varying religious and spiritual perspectives and, in many cases, the chaplain will be part of a multi-faith team. A joint research project with La Trobe University recently captured views of both Salvation Army chaplains and their managers, who come from a social work perspective and may not share the same faith convictions. This project revealed a trend in chaplaincy towards responding to people where they are at on their spiritual journey, rather than trying to impose a specific religious understanding on someone else. It was acknowledged that “a chaplain, as part of his or her pastoral care role, may willingly, or be required to, provide spiritual care to someone of a different religious faith or, indeed, to someone of no faith at all”<sup>328</sup> and therefore “both chaplains and managers recognised the importance of working ecumenically, not only with other Christian denominations but also in terms of interfaith collegiality.”<sup>329</sup>

One of the managers, who had not previously had a chaplain in their service, told of their concern about what introducing a chaplain might bring. “So I just had this image and expectation they’d be proselytising and that would be their job”, they said. Realising that this would create practical

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Carey and Rumbold, "Good Practice Chaplaincy: An exploratory study identifying skills, attitudes and practice of chaplains for selection, training and utilisation," 7.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 9.

problems, they continued “And I thought ... ‘There are Muslim clients ... how’s this going to work?’ And I resisted... [but] ... they gave me [Chaplain X], who’s a fantastic chaplain ... did wonderful things and was probably more of a pastoral carer ... and did great things with the staff. I changed my mind about chaplains.”<sup>330</sup> The recognition by this manager that social programs have clients from non-Christian backgrounds is a direct reflection of The Salvation Army’s mandate to “help those in need without discrimination.” This value, combined with the external orientation of Salvation Army social programs, ensures engagement with the whole variety of religious and spiritual beliefs that are now reflective of the wider Australian community.

On the other hand, the corps environment, which is intentionally focussed on Christian worship and discipleship, by nature is much more self-selecting and therefore has a much narrower exposure to different belief systems, even within Christianity. Because The Salvation Army’s leadership and theological voices primarily come out of corps settings, the internally-focussed, protective nature of the organisation’s official position is unsurprising. However, as practices within social programs change and those corps who do have a more outward focus begin to engage with other faith groups and interfaith forums in their communities, competing voices may be raised as they were at the Parliament of the World’s Religions.

The chaplains who were part of the research project suggested that a key attribute for the selection and training of future chaplains was an appreciation of multi-faith spirituality rather than just a monolithic view of religion.<sup>331</sup> They also identified “networking with local ecumenical and interfaith groups” as a key practice for chaplains.<sup>332</sup> One of the final recommendations of the report for Salvation Army leadership was to “ensure chaplaincy training is ‘spiritual care’ focussed, non-judgemental, non-proselytising, multi-faith affirming and inter-disciplinary teamwork orientated.”<sup>333</sup> This recommendation will rely upon Salvation Army leadership taking a more progressive view on interfaith relations than is currently seen in the Guideline on Multi-Faith Events.

## Summary

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The Salvation Army has not responded to social change unilaterally; there have been contrasting approaches between those parts of The Salvation Army more strongly aligned with the evangelistic mission and those of its social programs. In general, the social programs are more strongly aligned with the Australian community, which is reflected in the way the organisation promotes itself in the

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<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

public arena. On the other hand, the explicitly Christian character of The Salvation Army's church life has seen some elements set themselves up directly against what they perceive as compromises in society, such as changing attitudes to sexuality and religious pluralism. The difference between these approaches and their varying results has contributed to intraorganisational conflict within The Salvation Army.

Some of these differences have been seen to be grounded in varying understandings of authority. While the evangelical approach prioritises a particular view of the Bible and Christian tradition, social programs are more in tune with Australian society, which is placing increasing emphasis on experience. Another key to these varying paths is looking at the essential orientations of each missional stream. While The Salvation Army's social programs are strongly externally oriented and demonstrate transformation by engagement with their clients and their social context, the Army's churches have functioned with a more internal focus, even seeing themselves in opposition to some social changes and thus valuing the idea of a more persistent tradition.

# Chapter Ten: Conclusions

## Introduction

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In this final chapter, I compare the findings of this research to other analyses of intradenominational conflict and evaluate the theoretical framework used here for understanding intraorganisational conflict within The Salvation Army. A key idea at the start of this research was the notion that denominations exist as dual structures. These structures have different boundaries, respond to different authorities, and pursue different goals.<sup>334</sup> The learnings from these themes and their limitations demonstrate that the dual structures approach is useful but also that it requires some adaptation. I conclude by reflecting on what lies beyond the conflict.

## Examining intradenominational conflict

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Previous research has shown that conflict within denominations can be prompted and shaped by pressures from the external environment.<sup>335</sup> The denomination's response to external changes may be to embrace or reject them depending on other factors, which include the group's general orientation to society, as well as the influence of other denominations and ecumenical bodies.<sup>336</sup> In some denominations, a more negative stance against social change is the product of a longstanding anti-modern, anti-liberal construct, which is bound up in the denomination's corporate identity.<sup>337</sup> This is particularly true of religious groups that self-identify as fundamentalist.<sup>338</sup>

While Mark Chaves and others have noted that the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, of which The Salvation Army is a part, has been at least ambivalent, if not in direct opposition, towards fundamentalism,<sup>339</sup> there are fundamentalist influences at play in The Salvation Army today. In Chapters Two and Six, I described how over the last century, as Salvationists became less involved

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<sup>334</sup> Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures: An Organizational Analysis," 147-55.

<sup>335</sup> Chaves, *Ordaining women : culture and conflict in religious organizations*: 12; Kniss, *Disquiet in the land : cultural conflict in American Mennonite communities*: 11.

<sup>336</sup> Chaves, *Ordaining women : culture and conflict in religious organizations*: 39.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 83, 91.

<sup>338</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist battles : social change and religious conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990). 125.

<sup>339</sup> Chaves, *Ordaining women : culture and conflict in religious organizations*: 113.

in their own social programs, many came to see the primary purpose of The Salvation Army more as a church with a message of salvation and less as a movement charged with making salvation a temporal reality. This shift brought them in line with, and into fellowship with, segments of the wider Christian church that were more fundamentalist and whose traditions turned them away from Christian social action and the social gospel. The growth of anti-liberal forces within The Salvation Army has not only set the movement against its external environment but has also exacerbated longstanding internal conflicts between proponents of the Army's evangelical and social missions.

The link between mission and identity makes these conflicts deeply entrenched. Fred Kniss has pointed out that in their analysis of social conflict, resource mobilisation theorists have been particularly focussed on material and political resources. While these are still a key factor in religious groups, ideas and symbols also play a critical role in religious conflict. This role can escalate tensions to an 'all or nothing' fight because unlike material goods, symbols are indivisible and not subject to compromise.<sup>340</sup> An example of this is the symbolic authority of the Bible, which the first doctrine of The Salvation Army claims is the only rule of Christian faith and practice. More traditional evangelicals interpret any challenge to this as a black and white decision - the Bible must be authoritative in everything or it has no authority at all. Others have a more nuanced position, a compromise that allows for other perspectives to inform biblical hermeneutics.

There are also recognisable structural elements that contribute to intradenominational conflict. Both Kniss and Chaves identify the centralisation of authority within a denomination as a key structural influence on conflict and change.<sup>341</sup> The greater the degree of centralisation, the more resistance can be gathered on the side of traditional forces and against progressives. In Chapter Nine, I have shown how different parts of the Army are responding differently to social changes such as attitudes to sexuality and other religions. While the military structure of The Salvation Army firmly points authority towards a central point, much of the everyday practice in both corps and social programs reflects a large degree of autonomy. This distinction between a notional organisational position generated and perpetuated at the top and a contrasting reality across other levels is what Chaves refers to as 'loose coupling'. While the symbolic stance against specific social developments may be important to leadership because it affirms a particular construction of organisational identity, frontline practice can evolve in very different directions due to more pragmatic concerns.<sup>342</sup> For example, at the time of writing, Salvation Army social programs in Victoria are pursuing 'Rainbow Tick'

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<sup>340</sup> Kniss, *Disquiet in the land : cultural conflict in American Mennonite communities*: 134-36.

<sup>341</sup> Chaves, *Ordaining women : culture and conflict in religious organizations*: 130-57; Kniss, *Disquiet in the land : cultural conflict in American Mennonite communities*: 86-87.

<sup>342</sup> Chaves, *Ordaining women : culture and conflict in religious organizations*: 7, 32.

accreditation, while leadership negotiate conversations with conservative forces in corps that are less convinced about LGBTIQ inclusion.

My research into The Salvation Army shows that it shares all of these elements of intradenominational conflict. However, it also highlights the importance of conflict beyond the walls of the church. By almost any measure, The Salvation Army's social programs are now much larger than its corps base. At the beginning of this research, it looked like the battle between evangelical and social missions was being played out between corps and social programs. The reality that has emerged is not quite so straightforward.

## **Boundaries**

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The dual structure approach applied in this research for investigating intraorganisational conflict within denominations has some clear benefits. It nuances the more blunt alternative, in which disparate elements are forced together to reflect all of a denomination's activities and resources. Although this might seem to be a more holistic way of looking at problems, the voices of denominational agencies tend to be silenced or only mentioned in passing. Previous sociological analyses of The Salvation Army reflect this weakness.<sup>343</sup> The dual structures approach is also immediately recognisable because it directly relates to tangible, known organisational structures. There appear to be few questions about what belongs in each category. Religious authorities intuitively indicate the church or corps side and the agency structures point to social programs. Finally, there seem to be plenty of examples pointing to intraorganisational conflict that falls along these boundary lines – corps versus social programs. However, as tempting as these apparently natural alignments are, they miss the mark at several points.

Firstly, not all corps fit a common pattern, just as there are many kinds of social programs. Some social programs have explicitly religious components attached to them, such as chaplaincy services. Not all corps activities share the same level of religious or spiritual content either. The coffee from a church café is not inherently holier than coffee at a social program. Certainly, there are some broad distinctions but the temptation to associate religion and spirituality with the church side of the ledger and to identify only the growing signs of secularisation in social programs is misleading. Social programs are not necessarily less spiritual but their spirituality is embodied in different ways. For instance, social program chaplains in public facilities such as hospitals, prisons and airports are more likely to interact with clients and clergy of other faith traditions. This does not mean that they are less

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<sup>343</sup> See for instance, Hazzard, "Marching on the Margins: An Analysis of the Salvation Army in the United States."; Power, "Towards a Sociology of Salvationism."

Christian but their understanding of Christianity is less likely to make exclusive claims about salvation than one might encounter in a typical corps environment.

The main problem with this structural divide lies with corps-based social programs. While many Salvation Army corps run some type of community service activity, usually an emergency relief program helping people in financial crisis, some corps operate large social program networks with lots of staff and volunteers, and multi-million dollar budgets linked to government contracts. Although these are still the exception amongst corps rather than the majority, they do complicate the idea of a straightforward line dividing corps and social programs.

The dual structures approach is still better than a monolithic conjunction but its full value relies on distinctions that are slightly different to the organisational divide between corps and social programs. I am proposing a different alignment that draws upon the insights developed through the theoretical lenses used in this research and expands upon them based on the interviews and other data sources used. This new approach applies the more recent developments in church/sect theory to reveal two fundamentally different – and often incompatible – group dynamics.

The main distinction is between an internally focussed group that rejects key elements of its surrounding social context and an externally focussed group that largely accepts its social context. The differences between these perspectives inform conflicts about group identity and missional purpose that go to the heart of organisational life. Because they do not fit neatly into church and social service boxes and neither does the church/sect language suffice to capture the social program elements, I refer to these two sides as the 'transmissional' and 'transformational' approaches to mission.

The 'transmissional' approach is centred in the more conservative and institutionalised segments of the church. Its name stems from the idea that the essential missional task is to transmit the faith of previous generations on to the following ones. The rise of this approach within The Salvation Army is documented in Chapter Eight. For about half of the twentieth century, the transmissional approach can be seen to have worked to stabilise and nurture young Salvationists in their parents' faith. The approach represents the more sectarian side of the church, emphasising separation and distinction from 'the world'. However, this has also acted to separate corps from social programs, that necessarily existed in the world.

However, not all churches fit this transmissional mould. While this is broadly true of many parts of The Salvation Army, there are key exceptions. Corps that run large social program networks, such

as Melbourne 614, Brunswick and Ingle Farm<sup>344</sup> share the externally oriented, professionalised environment of The Salvation Army's dedicated social program networks. Even smaller, emerging and innovative forms of faith communities in The Salvation Army, such as Footscray and Healesville,<sup>345</sup> have at least as much in common with their partner social programs, as they do with traditional corps.

The 'transformational' approach, on the other hand, reflects the focus on external stakeholders common to most social programs but it also exists within some faith communities, such as those listed above. This approach is more open to its social context and therefore can embrace social change. It locates itself in the world, with a view to making positive change, but is mutually changed by its own social circumstances. It accepts secularisation as a partner, rather than seeing it as the enemy. Its religious shape is more like that of the emerging church rather than more traditional models.

Although the transmissional approach is entirely composed of church communities, both corps and social programs exist under the transformational banner. Understanding the differences between these two approaches helps to see how much of the conflict that has been examined here appears to exist between corps and social programs but also how this assumption misses the mark. Because they share essential characteristics, transformational corps not only have less conflict with social programs but they are frequently engaged in active partnerships together.

## Authority

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Competing authority claims are a central feature of intradenominational conflict. Chaves made this explicit by drawing 'religious authority' in contrast to the secularising influence of agency structures. However, the problem with replacing a broader definition of religion with 'religious authority' is that it narrows the scope of religion to its most sectarian forms. In The Salvation Army, while the transmissional parts of the organisation do show some sectarian characteristics, the relationship between the corresponding transformational elements and secularisation is more complex than it may appear.

Like Chaves, Kniss notes that the introduction of denominational agencies and the accompanying rise of organisational formality and complexity coincided with a reduction in the power of religious

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<sup>344</sup> For further information on these corps-based social programs, see <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/melbourne614>; <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/brunswick>; and <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/inglefarm>.

<sup>345</sup> <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/healesville>

elites. However, Kniss does not assign this shift in power directly to secularisation. Rather, he describes it as a “relocation of religious authority.”<sup>346</sup> The forms and usage of religious authority may be different within the agency context but it is not absent just because it does not take a sectarian shape.

Secularisation in western societies has resulted in the reduction of the broad number of domains over which religion once had authority. The introduction of welfare states is a prime example of this trend, which has resulted in the transfer of social responsibility for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups from religious groups to governments. Even where religious groups continue to deliver services, where these services are funded by government they must be delivered according to specific guidelines. Furthermore, authority within these services has been transferred from the clergy to social work and health professionals. While transmissional groups continue to fight for this wider authority, transformational groups acknowledge secular claims to authority in non-religious domains. Because the transformative approach is more open to its social context, its claims to authority are more modest in light of the range of complementary specialisations and expertise.

The anachronistic overreach of religious authority in society and even in the church is one of the reasons that interviewees described The Salvation Army as being ‘out of touch’. Religious leaders can no longer expect to have authority in areas beyond their level of experience and expertise. Those who have spent their clerical careers in ‘transmissional’ ministry are more prone to being out of step with the outside world because their focus has been turned inward. Kniss found a similar pattern with the Mennonites whose leadership were unprepared for external shocks such as war “because their attentions and energies had been directed inward for most of their careers. They had neither the expertise nor the experience to deal adequately with the external institutions impinging on their community.”<sup>347</sup> He goes on to say that “this inexperience was painfully obvious in their dealings with the government.”<sup>348</sup> A similar gap in social service expertise was identified amongst Salvation Army officers due to the recent emphasis on corps ministry and a withdrawal from officer involvement in social program management.

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<sup>346</sup> Kniss, *Disquiet in the land : cultural conflict in American Mennonite communities*: 153.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*

## Goals

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The final source of distinction and potential cause for conflict are the differing goals being pursued by transmissional and transformational groups. The distinctions between these goals can be seen throughout Chapter Five. Chaves identifies these as essential orientations – either internal (religious authorities) or external (agencies).<sup>349</sup> In the Mennonite tradition, Kniss contrasts the separatist, sectarian stance of the traditionalists with the more activist and justice oriented communalists, who are seeking public good beyond their own group.<sup>350</sup> Of interest here is not just ‘what’ each group is after but ‘how’ they are seeking to achieve that. This additional dimension reintroduces the impact of secularisation upon changing patterns of religion and how religious groups relate to society.

A key characteristic of transmissional groups is that they see themselves as distinct from their social context and from those transformational elements that embrace social change. This can be seen clearly in the Army’s resistance to changing its stance on same-sex relationships, as well as its reticence to engage with the interfaith movement. Because the transmissional side wants to retain the purity of their religious group against the world, newcomers must conform to a series of rules about beliefs and behaviours. A dogmatic approach to faith with an emphasis on the supernatural and prohibitions on widely accepted social practices, such as drinking alcohol, highlight their sectarian stance against society.

If the transformational elements of faith-based organisations are showing signs of secular influence, it may not necessarily be that they are less religious but rather less sectarian in their religious beliefs and practices. Salvation Army Officers who had spent many years in social programs were still passionate about their ministry and mission but their language and theological models were different because they had been adapted in dialogue with external conversation partners. Their commitment to the gospel and an external focus also meant that they were not necessarily less evangelical than their more conservative colleagues but their approach to evangelism was entirely different. This was seen in the interviews where officers reflected on the learning curve that confronted them when they began working in social programs. Yet, these officers and the social ministries in which they were involved were not *counted* as central to the mission of The Salvation Army because they did not conform to the prescribed theological and practice models of conservative evangelicalism. The clash

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<sup>349</sup> Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures: An Organizational Analysis," 155.

<sup>350</sup> Kniss, *Disquiet in the land : cultural conflict in American Mennonite communities*: 6.

here is not between religious and secular viewpoints but instead, it is between more sectarian and more open, progressive forms of religion.

The shift away from an internal focus on the needs of the faith community towards a more externally focussed, socially accepting stance recalls Richard Niebuhr's description of the evolution from sect to church.<sup>351</sup> However, the result in twenty-first century Australia is nothing like the mainstream churches of the past. In a society with many and diverse religious expressions, individuals are developing their own bricolage of spirituality and faith expression rather than conforming to established religious catechisms and liturgical rites. Similar patterns have been reported in both the UK and USA, where research indicates that many of those who are exiting institutional religion continue to think about spirituality and engage in spiritual practices.<sup>352</sup> Because these changing patterns are no longer bound by traditional religious forms, such as prayer or attendance at worship services, they are easily missed and may be counted as secular.<sup>353</sup> These changes are challenging the institutional and transmissional models of church but transformational groups are finding ways to adapt to new and diverse spiritual frameworks.

In Chapter Three, I introduced the idea that secularisation may not simply be the death of religion but may actually be ushering in changes to the forms of religion. Some examples of these changes seen in the research interviews were directly comparable with those appearing in the emerging church movement: welcoming those who are different; changing from salespersons to servants; moving from changing beliefs to changing lives; moving from privatised faith to public faith; and, moving from evangelising to being evangelised.<sup>354</sup> These distinctions broadly describe the shift that officers reported when moving from being a more traditional corps officer to a social appointment, such as chaplaincy.

## **Beyond conflict**

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Amid the conflict that has dominated much of the discussion in this thesis, there are also points of cooperative engagement. Transformational mission is driven by authentic advocates who are culturally bilingual - speaking the languages of church and secular society. By positioning themselves

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<sup>351</sup> Niebuhr, *The social sources of denominationalism*: 19-28.

<sup>352</sup> Pew Research Center, "U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious," (2015), 26-28; Linda Woodhead, "The rise of 'no religion' in Britain: The emergence of a new cultural majority," *Journal of the British Academy* 4(2016): 250.

<sup>353</sup> Andrew Singleton, "Are religious 'nones' secular? The case of nones in Australia," *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education* 36, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>354</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*: 122-33.

in two worlds, transformational agents can facilitate changes in both. The transmissional mindset, on the other hand, is only interested in one-way change – for the world to conform to the pattern of the church. The hierarchical military structure of The Salvation Army is well suited to the transmissional approach, where the environment is shaped by internally focussed rules and regulations. However, the top-down command and control system appears to struggle with transformational mission, which needs to be driven by and in local communities. Adaptation to this mindset will require leadership to be willing to ‘loosen the reins’ that currently bind many frontline practitioners and the layers of middle management that support them.

There are, however, some positive emerging examples of transformational mission in both faith communities and social programs. While the transformational approach may mean stepping outside of the church walls to minister to people where they are, it does not require the abandonment of one's faith, either personally or corporately. Nevertheless, those who open themselves up to others in this way can expect to be changed, as many officers in this study realised.

In Chapter Seven, we saw that for Salvation Army officers to successfully transition from corps work into social programs required both the willingness and capability to embrace a different culture, including changing language and challenging theological constructs. They managed to retain, perhaps even rediscover, the faith tradition of the Army in ways that put them in touch with a world beyond the sectarian bubble that they had previously known. While many interviewees reflected on a religious institution that was slow to change and out of touch with society, chaplains at the frontline are continually adapting to meet the emerging needs and social context of the people they encounter.

The idea that chaplaincy might represent a more successful form of spiritual engagement with Australian society has been raised in successive reports on this subject. A report to the Australian Southern Territory said that:

As the Australian social and spiritual landscape continues to change, chaplains have the possibility of being on the cutting edge of ministry within our society ... It is possible that chaplains of the future will be the main contact that many will have with a spiritual guide. Chaplains will also have the potential to be the cultural voice that leads The Salvation Army organisation in the path of renewal, as well as relevant engagement with the population.<sup>355</sup>

This potential offered by chaplaincy was echoed in a brief piece of research into the practice and development of chaplains for the Melbourne Central Division:

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<sup>355</sup> Graeme Riley, "The Australia Southern Territory Research Report on Chaplaincy: Rethinking Chaplaincy in a Changing Culture," ((Unpublished internal report)2012), 63.

In light of changing social impact of secularisation and modernisation, chaplaincy has the potential to engage with people who otherwise have no contact with religion. Part of this potential comes from an alignment with wider social science trends, such as a focus on evidence-based practice, as opposed to the dogmatic paternalism of older forms of religion.<sup>356</sup>

Although both reports resonated with chaplains, so far they have had little impact upon the wider organisation. However, they do illustrate the potential for frontline engagement to raise its voice with leadership. They capture the external focus of transformational groups, as well as the openness to being informed by non-religious authorities, without abandoning their religious interest in the path of secularisation.

## Final comments

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In the first chapter of this thesis, I asked whether the tensions at the root of intraorganisational conflict within The Salvation Army could be resolved or if they might be considered a natural part of organisational life. Kniss describing conflict between 'traditionalist' and 'communalist' elements in the Mennonite church suggests that the history of that denomination could be described as "a dance between two ideological partners, with first one leading, then the other."<sup>357</sup> While the image of the dance probably portrays a more harmonious coexistence than organisational history suggests, the notion of mutual dependence and interrelationship, as opposed to domination and subjugation, may still be of some benefit. Beyond the most extreme positions, which point towards the removal of what is perceived as an opposing and detrimental missional stream, there can be some positive effects of internal competition and even conflict. The engagement with the 'other' can prompt self-critical reflection and challenge presuppositions in a helpful manner. These internal tensions generate a certain degree of life and vitality to the movement. However, it has also become clear that an overly internal focus is leading some segments of the church towards demise.

In The Salvation Army, where corps and social programs have developed along different pathways, incompatibilities have emerged because they are facing different problems and have different tools for finding solutions. The theology of corps officers has largely ceased to be shaped by the concrete experience of engagement with the poor and the marginalised of their communities. In social programs, while chaplains are adapting both their practice and theology to their social context, their voices do not yet appear to be influencing the wider denomination.

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<sup>356</sup> Carey and Rumbold, "Good Practice Chaplaincy: An exploratory study identifying skills, attitudes and practice of chaplains for selection, training and utilisation," 4.

<sup>357</sup> Kniss, *Disquiet in the land : cultural conflict in American Mennonite communities*: 138.

Australian social trends clearly point to a decline in institutional religion, especially among younger generations. The future of The Salvation Army, as it is with other denominations, will be determined by its ability to discern emerging spiritual patterns in the community and make meaningful connections to organisational history, identity and mission. This fundamentally challenges the transmissional mindset, which is being continually distanced from social changes both within and outside the movement. While these gaps, and the many others discussed here, remain then conflict will also be present. However, the presence of more transformational approaches within several corps holds some promise for a more cohesive future.

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