

The History of Salvation Army Doctrine

Earl Robinson

The Doctrines of The Salvation Army

From the beginnings of The Salvation Army in 1865 as the East London Revival Society to the present, there has always been a definite creed to which the movement's members have subscribed. The first printed document of this kind was issued by the East London Christian Revival Society in 1866 or 1867 (the precise date is not known). This included seven articles of faith and a five-point bond of agreement: a "creed" to believe and a "code of conduct" to follow.

East London Christian Revival Society

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10

"ALL FOR CHRIST, AND ALWAYS FOR CHRIST"

Articles of Faith	Bond of Agreement
1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by	1 st We engage from henceforth to strive earnestly

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inspiration of God, and are the only rule of Christian faith and practice.

2. We believe that there is one only living and true God; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—three persons in one God—equal in power and glory; and the only proper object of religious worship.

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

4. We believe that all mankind, in consequence of the disobedience of Adam are sinners, destitute of holiness, and justly exposed to the penalty of the divine law.

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

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

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

to depart from all iniquity, and to aim at the highest degree of personal devotedness to God.

2nd We agree to set our hearts upon the salvation of souls, and to put forth constant personal effort to secure the conversion of sinners.

3rd We engage, so far as we have opportunity, to attend the meetings held by the Society, both indoors and in the open air, and to cooperate to the utmost of our ability, in every effort put forth by the Society to bring souls to Christ.

4th We will strive to cultivate a spirit of brotherly affection towards the members of the Society, and manifest this by seeking, so far as we have opportunity, each other's temporal and spiritual welfare.

5th We will contribute according to our ability weekly offerings to assist the Society in its operations.

When William Booth began his work in the East End of London he was responding to a request to accept the leadership of an evangelistic mission. The mission was unsectarian. Its creed was the Bible. Its work was to preach the gospel. All were welcomed as co-workers who, as William Booth said in an appeal for Christians to join him, “hold the word of God as the statement of faith and practice, and whose hearts are in sympathy with revival work.” This appeal was published in the mission’s annual report for 1867. It was to serve this unsectarian mission—the East London Revival Society—that the 1866/67 statement was issued.

At this time William Booth had no wish to establish a separate organization. He wanted rather to form a link between the unchurched masses he longed to reach with the gospel and the existing churches. He wrote later, reflecting on this, “We have no definite plans for the future. From the first I was strongly opposed to forming any separate organization ... My first idea was to get the people saved and send them to the churches.”

Many of Booth’s co-workers were in committed membership of some section of the Christian Church. They therefore held differing theological views, and could continue to do so within the broad terms of the words in the 1867 “appeal.” Working within William Booth’s society meant no cancellation of existing connections with churches. It was an extra dimension of commitment, providing evangelically minded Christians with an outlet for soul-saving work they could not find within their own denomination. They were invited to give one, two or three days a week to the work of the society as they had opportunity.

The statement of doctrine provided common ground on which members of different sections of the Church could unite. The seven articles were designed as a statement of evangelical truths to be held by those wishing to preach the gospel of salvation, and nothing more.

In 1870 the original statement was revised and extended to ten statements in a constitution adopted by the first Conference of the Christian Mission. This was necessary to meet a changed situation. Since William Booth’s intention to send the converts to the churches was not realized, the mission developed into a denomination. That happened because, as he said of new converts, “First, they would not go when sent. Second, they were not wanted. And third, we wanted some of them at least to help us in the business of saving others. We were drawn to providing for the converts ourselves.” Part of that provision was an enlarged statement of faith from seven to ten and then to 11 points. The original seven-point statement was concerned

with bringing people to Christ; the new need was for a document adequate to provide guidance for Christian life and development subsequent to conversion.

By the time of the Mission's Deed Poll of 1875 there were eleven doctrines, all of which also appeared in an undated leaflet, "Rules of the Christian Mission," possibly going back to 1873. The last statement to be added was what is now number nine, having to do with continued obedient faith in Christ. This extended statement was, with minor amendments, included in the Foundation Deed Poll of The Salvation Army in 1878 and since then has remained unchanged and today are the doctrines of The Salvation Army and the 11 statements of belief.

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

In keeping with the Salvation Army Act 1980, the Doctrine Council constituted in 1992 asked if changes could be recommended to the doctrines to correct omissions, the most significant of which is that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such permission was initially granted. Later, on the advice of the Advisory Council to the General, the General instructed the Doctrine Council to make no changes to the Religious Doctrines schedule of the 1980 Act.

The Doctrine Council did however cover significant omissions in the exposition of the doctrines in *Salvation Story*, such as that having to do with a Salvation Army doctrine of the Church in chapter ten, "People of God." The council was also allowed to conclude all chapters with summary statements which deal with doctrinal omissions in the 11 statements of belief:

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of Mary, in whom humanity and deity are united. He lived a perfect life, died an atoning death, was raised from the dead and lives at the right hand of the Father; he intercedes for his people and will return in power and glory.

Future generations of The Salvation Army may look upon these statements as important contributions to the theological education and development of the movement.

The eleven-point statement of faith adopted in 1878 and affirmed in 1980 is

as follows (recorded in this article for immediate comparison with the seven-point statement):

Salvation Army Doctrines

As set out in Schedule 1 of The Salvation Army Act 1980

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The differences between the seven-point statement and the eleven-point statement particularly reflect The Salvation Army's Wesleyan doctrinal position. As a

former Methodist New Connexion minister, William Booth was strongly Wesleyan. If anyone had asked William Booth who were his heroes of the faith, John Wesley is one he would have named. Speaking about his youth, Booth said: “I worshipped everything that bore the name of Methodist. To me there was one God, and John Wesley was his prophet. I had devoured the story of his life. No human compositions seemed to me to be comparable to his writings ...” The differences between the seven–point statement and the eleven–point statement can be seen at a glance:

- a) The original second article became two articles, now articles two and three, with additional words added to each section.
- b) Three new articles were introduced, now numbered eight, nine and 10.
 - i) The first of the new articles (number eight) underlines the doctrine of justification by faith and the doctrine of assurance. It was evidently felt that the original article six was insufficient, and more needed to be added. Article eight provided what was missing, focusing particularly on the Wesleyan emphasis on assurance.
 - ii) Article nine is an affirmation of John Wesley’s concern about the teaching of eternal security or “once saved always saved” as it is sometimes summarized. William Booth believed in the possibility of Christians backsliding, that they were *kept* in a state of grace on the same terms on which they were first saved. Hence, Booth stressed the necessity for “*continued* obedient faith in Christ.”
 - iii) The doctrine of entire sanctification was also prominent in the teaching of John Wesley on which William Booth was nurtured, and Article 10 indicates that The Salvation Army follows that teaching and is a holiness movement.
- c) Articles one and four in the 1866/67 document were given additional wording, and four becomes five in the new document.
- d) The articles now numbered four, six, seven and 11 remained unaltered except for the change of numbers.

The three new articles (referred to under b above) were not new in the sense that they were being brought into the movement’s teaching for the first time. They had been held and taught by William Booth from the beginning. In fact, the eleven statements of belief bear a striking similarity in words and content to the doctrines of the Methodist New Connexion of which William Booth was an ordained minister. Those doctrines can be traced back at least to 1838 (see appendix 12 of *Salvation*

Story, pages 131–132). It was the changed status and purposes of the mission that required their inclusion into the statements of faith of 1878.

Handbooks of Doctrine: 1881–1969

A document entitled “The Doctrines and Discipline of The Salvation Army” was prepared under the authority of General William Booth for use at the Training Homes for Salvation Army officers in 1881. Initially it was not published for wider use, but there was some criticism that cadets were being taught from a “secret book.” In response to this criticism, a public edition was put on sale in 1883. The sections relating to discipline were later omitted and covered separately in the “Articles of War” and “Orders and Regulations”.

Twelve editions of the handbook *The Doctrines of The Salvation Army* were published between 1885 and 1917. They were initially sub-titled *Prepared for the Training Homes*, but from 1900 onwards they were sub-titled *Prepared for the Use of Cadets in Training for Officership*.

A new *Handbook of Salvation Army Doctrine* was prepared under the direction of General Bramwell Booth and published in 1922 as a “Training Garrison Edition.” The full sale edition was published in January 1923, and there were subsequently new editions in 1925, 1927, 1935 and reprints or new impressions in 1940, 1955, 1960, 1961 and 1964. From the third edition (1927) on, the title of the book was changed to *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*.

In March 1958 General Wilfred Kitching issued a directive to commence the work of revision for a new handbook stating that:

As the 11 Articles of our doctrine are established, I think this must of necessity be used as the framework of the handbook. The duty of the handbook is:

1. to take each Article of Faith as the text of a chapter
2. to make clear its meaning
3. to support its statements
4. to show its significance to the rest of the doctrine

And revision (continued the General) must:

1. preserve our fundamental doctrines unimpaired
2. strengthen their teaching by officers of all ranks
3. do something to lead to the possession by our own people of the experience taught in the handbook.

Lt. Commissioner Reginald Woods had been appointed Chairman of that Doctrine Council, and the other members present at a meeting in April 1958 when the Gen-

eral's directive was first considered included Colonel Gordon Mitchell, Lt. Colonel Olive Gatrall, Captain Cyril Boyden (Secretary) and five others.

In April 1960 General Kitching asked Commissioner Robert Hoggard to bring his experience to bear upon the work of revision. Arising out of this, the General addressed a personal inquiry to selected officers in all parts of the Army world asking for their observations on the nature and scope of the proposed revision and set up a world panel to aid the work in an advisory capacity.

The then Lt. Commissioner Clarence Wiseman took over the chairmanship of the Doctrine Council on November 6, 1962, and the members considered afresh General Kitching's original directive. By the time Commissioner Herbert Westcott succeeded to the chairmanship in June 1967, the final typescript had been completed with Colonel Gordon Mitchell being responsible for much of the actual writing. On January 10, 1969, the Doctrine Council held its final meeting on the handbook, and printing followed.

In introducing that handbook, General Frederick Coutts said this of the publication:

It does not set out to be a study book for the divinity student taking a PhD. What this new handbook does is deal with those truths which are essential to our salvation and sanctification, resting its explanatory material, strengthened by scriptural support, upon the bony structure formed by our 11 Articles of Faith.

There will be those who will dismiss the handbook as prosaic. Some of the more erudite among us may think they could have done it better themselves. Well, a handbook of doctrine is not a work of romantic fiction; it is a plain statement of the things most surely believed among us. And if it helps to make these more easily understood by the cadet entering training, by the young officer anxious that his teaching ministry shall be more than a succession of stories gained from a cyclopedia of religious anecdotes, or by the soldier who wants to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him, then I shall be more than satisfied that the directive of March 24, 1958 has been fully met.

The Handbook of Doctrine of 1998

The 1979 international conference of leaders gave consideration to the development of a new *Handbook of Doctrine*. Various territories were asked to present study documents for that conference on attitudes to the Doctrines. Arising from that conference of leaders a new Doctrine Council was constituted primarily of United Kingdom officers. That Council met for a period of seven years and did some prepa-

ration for a new handbook that dealt with the first eight statements of belief. This had to do with a page-by-page revision of the 1969 handbook.

Shortly after General Eva Burrows came to office in 1986, she decided that a new Doctrine Council should be set up with more international representation and with a mandate to produce an entirely new handbook of doctrine rather than a revision of the 1969 edition. The council was set up for its first meeting on Thursday, 2 July 1992 under the leadership of Colonel David Guy (from the United Kingdom) who served as Chair of the Doctrine Council until his retirement in 1996. The following press release explained something of the council's purpose:

On Founder's Day, at International Headquarters, General Eva Burrows inaugurated the re-constituted Doctrine Council with an important new dimension. The General who addressed the council in the Advisory Council Room, expressed "great joy in starting" this new initiative. Earlier she had publicly welcomed the members during "101" Family Prayers in the Bramwell Booth Hall.

The council, unlike previous doctrine councils, is especially constituted to reflect the international interests and complexion of the Army. Colonel David Guy, Secretary for International External Relationships, who has wide ecumenical experience, is chairman of a council which has been given an open and generous mandate to consider all doctrinal matters, including such contemporary issues as related to the Army's service in the gospel.

The production of a new handbook of doctrine is also to be considered and commissioned.

The council's initial terms of reference were stated as follows:

An International Doctrine Council will serve The Salvation Army by considering doctrinal issues in accordance with the basic truths contained in the Eleven Articles of Faith, allowing for differences of viewpoint due to cultural background but upholding the unchanging concepts derived from Scripture and expressed in the historic creeds. It will encourage Salvationists to view doctrinal awareness and orthodoxy as a vital part of their equipment for preaching, teaching and worship and, through a clearer understanding of the gospel, a help to deeper devotion.

As indicated in the press release concerning its first meeting, one of the primary duties of the council was to prepare for the General and Chief of the Staff an outline for a new *Handbook of Doctrine*. From its inception the council met for two to four days at a time, two to four times a year and met with three different Generals for consultation: General Eva Burrows, General Bramwell Tillsley and General Paul Rader.

In the autumn of 1996 the first draft was completed of the new Salvationist handbook of doctrine under the title of *Salvation Story*. General Paul Rader then sent the draft to all territories and commands of The Salvation Army for comments and suggestions. There was a voluminous response to that request, and all comments and suggestions were considered by the Doctrine Council in producing a significantly revised draft for the Advisory Council to the General meetings in July 1997. Based on recommendations of the Advisory Council, General Rader instructed the Doctrine Council to make further changes and then approved the final draft of the handbook in the autumn of 1997 for printing. *Salvation Story* was published in February 1998 and was presented to the International Conference of Leaders in Melbourne Australia in March 1998. Subsequently it was released to all territories and commands for sale.

In his foreword to the new handbook, General Paul Rader said:

Salvation Story puts us all into the flow of what God has been doing across the centuries for the salvation of the world. It is our story. For we believe that God raised up The Salvation Army as part of his program, born of love from all eternity, to heal and restore a broken humanity and draw it back into fellowship with himself.

These chapters not only aid our understanding of our eleven doctrines that form the basis of belief for our evangelical mission, they draw out the contemporary relevance of these doctrinal statements and relate them effectively to our experience and calling as Salvationists today.

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

The International Doctrine Council at the conclusion of the writing of *Salvation Story* was comprised of the following members:

Colonel Earl Robinson, Chair (a Canadian officer at IHQ)

Colonel Benita Robinson, Secretary (a Canadian officer at IHQ)

Colonel John Amoah (a Ghanaian officer)

Colonel Philip Needham (a USA Southern officer at IHQ)

Lt. Colonel Ray Caddy (a United Kingdom officer, the council's first secretary)
Lt. Colonel Gudrun Lydholm (a Danish officer in Russia)
Major Christine Parkin (a United Kingdom officer).

Other members of the council during the production of the 1998 handbook of doctrine were Colonel David Guy (its first Chair, from the United Kingdom) and Lt. Colonel Rae Major (its second secretary, from New Zealand). Non-attending corresponding members included representatives from Australia (Colonel Douglas Davis and Major Graham Durston), Brazil (Lt. Colonel John Jones), India (Captain Wilson Macwan), Korea (Major James Kim, Joon chul), Switzerland (Lt. Colonel Georges Mailler), and the United Kingdom (Major William Green).

The Ongoing Mandate of the Doctrine Council

From its formation in 1992, the International Doctrine Council was given an ongoing mandate in dealing with theological issues other than those related to the development of a handbook of doctrine, issues which do however have a bearing on handbooks of doctrine. In response to a call from the International Leaders Conference of 1991, the council provided a fresh appraisal of The Salvation Army's relationship to the charismatic movement (some of the content of that appraisal is contained in appendix eight of *Salvation Story* on "The use and abuse of spiritual gifts"). It was also asked to comment on theological implications of the recommendations of the International Commission that was set up to deal with the subject of female ministry. At the request of one territorial commander it commented on the subject of spiritual warfare (some of the content of that comment is included in appendix 6 of *Salvation Story*). Another question had the council looking at the matter of divorce and Salvation Army officership from a theological perspective. Doctrine Council members have also contributed theologically to the discussions of The Spiritual Life Commission, The International Education Symposium and The Commission on Officership.

Salvation Story Study Guide

In 1998 the council began writing a *Salvation Story Study Guide*. This provides additional materials on each chapter of the 1998 handbook to aid leaders and teachers and study groups in understanding *Salvation Story* in greater depth. The guide is an instruction resource dealing with the biblical, historical and theological foundations of each doctrine. It is intended to serve as a teacher's manual for those who

teach Army doctrine at both the basic and the advanced level. A basic level setting might, for example, be a soldiership preparatory class of persons with little or no background in doctrine. An advanced level setting might be a doctrine class at an officer training college. Certain resource materials are suitable for basic, and others marked “for further discussion” are more suitable for advanced instruction.

The study guide also provides study questions and discussion suggestions associated with the new Salvationist handbook of doctrine, and applies the doctrines to lifestyle and ethics, the mission of the Church and personal ministry. It also includes suggestions for worship (corporate and private) focusing on particular aspects of doctrine, and even has a section containing examples of contemporary Salvationist creeds or affirmations of faith for worship.

After samples from the proposed guide had been vetted by all commissioners, territorial commanders, commanding officers and approved by the General, the *Salvation Story Study Guide* was published in November 1999. General John Gowans provided a complimentary copy to all international leaders at the beginning of 2000. He encouraged them to secure copies through the United Kingdom Territory Salvationist Publishing and Supplies Department for dissemination to doctrine teachers, cadets and others who would find this theological study aid of help in faith education. Two thousand copies were also purchased by the USA Southern Territory’s Supplies and Purchasing Department to be offered for sale at The International Millennial Congress in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Doctrine Council responsible for the production of the *Study Guide* was comprised of:

Colonel Earl Robinson, Chair

Colonel Benita Robinson, Secretary

Lt. Colonel Ray Caddy

Colonel Gudrun Lydholm

Colonel Phil Needham

Major Christine Parkin

The International Doctrine Council 2000

In 1999 Lt. Colonel Ray Caddy retired from the International Doctrine Council and Colonel Phil Needham became a corresponding member due to the demands of a new appointment. Upon the recommendation of the Doctrine Council and with the

approval of General Paul Rader, the first non-officer Salvationist was accepted as a member of the Council. General John Gowans at the commencement of the year 2000 welcomed Dr. Roger Green, co-editor of *Word and Deed*, to the council. It is anticipated that other appointments will be made to the Council to include members from other parts of the world not represented on the Council at the beginning of 2000.

Entering the new millennium, the Doctrine Council is working on two major projects that may have an impact on future handbooks of doctrine when new editions may be needed. The first of these is an expansion of a paper written at the request of the International Leader's Conference of 1995 entitled "Towards a Salvationist Theology of Spiritual Leadership." Renamed as "A Salvationist Theology of the Ministry of the Whole People of God," this paper will provide an additional resource to chapter ten of *Salvation Story* by focusing on all members of the Body of Christ being involved in ministry.

The second major project which has been approved for sponsorship by the International Doctrine Council in consultation with the Canada and Bermuda Territory Ethics Centre is that of an "International Theology and Ethics Symposium" to be held May 23–27, 2001 at the William and Catherine Booth College in Winnipeg, Canada. The rationale for holding this symposium reflects on the publication of *Salvation Story* and the *Salvation Story Study Guide* and includes the following statement:

Both of these publications provide a foundation for understanding current Salvationist theological and ethical thinking. The study guide particularly links theology with practical moral and social issues under the heading of "Lifestyle and ethics." The time is therefore ripe to call together Salvationist thinkers, officer and lay-people, as well as Salvationists who have great promise, to join them, to interact with one another, dialogue over the issues raised in the new handbook and study guide and other issues of crucial importance for our future, and submit papers for possible publication.

These two projects will hopefully contribute further writings that, in a broad sense, might be considered as handbooks of doctrine.

Because this historical sketch has so greatly reflected on writings associated with the development of Salvation Army doctrine, it may be appropriate to conclude by quoting a section of the "Introduction" to *Salvation Story*:

Some may wonder why Salvationists place such emphasis upon a written statement of faith. After all, they are people who rightly maintain that a Christian is one who enters trustfully into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and is born again of the Holy Spirit. They emphasize that faith is a personal

affair, often springing from an experience of God's grace that is beyond the reach of definition or analysis. They may well be suspicious of any attempt to reduce this life-changing encounter to a form of words on a page.

Yet without words, the experience fails to be named, clarified or shared. Faith is not only personal: it has a public face. The earliest Christians acknowledged one another in the simple confession: "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:3). This was their creed. As they shared it, they grounded their personal experience in the risen Christ, verified one another's experience and called upon the world to acknowledge the lordship of Christ. It was from these biblical beginnings that the creeds of the Church grew to be authoritative statements of the Christian faith.

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