I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral.

This particular paragraph of the Soldier’s Covenant links with a few doctrines of the Salvation Army, for instance, articles 9 and 10:

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

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

The above doctrine is derived from the apostle Paul’s letter to the people of the church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Paul’s prayer for the Early Church was that they be made holy in all aspects of their lives and that their whole being (spirit, soul and body) may be free from every fault.

UPHOLDING CHRISTIAN INTEGRITY

For Paul and the early Christians, a holy life was a life in which Christ dwelt through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul declared in Galatians 2:20: ‘The life I now live... , I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’

Later on, in Galatians 5:22-23, he gives the qualities that should be seen in the life of a Christian which are the fruit of the Spirit. Christian integrity is upheld when a soldier demonstrates these in his/her daily life. We can be holy by continuously living a life of obedience to God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are entrusted with the
responsibility of living the life of Christ in this present age; a life focused on Jesus and his perfection – for he is our example. We have all been called to be holy (1 Peter 1:13-16) and to serve God in purity. This life of holiness comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. Essentially, it is God’s presence in our lives that makes holy living or Christlikeness both a possibility and a reality (Philippians 2:12-13).

To be directed by the love of God is the way in which man can be like God, not in power or authority but in character (Matthew 5:48). The greatest concern of a Christian should be to preserve the immunity of the Church and safeguard its existence. Every day brings many hours in which he/she will be alone in an unchristian environment. These are the times of testing as for Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Does the test make the individual free, strong and mature or weak and dependent? Jesus Christ, our example and teacher, remained obedient to his Father.

CALL TO SANCTIFICATION
A believer’s life should be wholly sanctified since it is a privilege that God gives! The revelation of God’s will and the provision in Christ of the means for his people’s sanctification call us to make a response in faith and consecration. The act of consecration includes the acceptance of the implications of living a holy life and expresses a believer’s trust in God’s sanctifying power and his/her willingness to be sanctified. This involves personal devotions, prayer, Bible reading, fasting, denying oneself and taking up one’s cross. By the help of the Holy Spirit, God is cultivating in us the desire to do his will and to put his Word into practice (James 2:14-26).

When we live a life of continued obedient faith in Christ, we will not fall from grace and be eternally lost.

‘Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure’ (1 John 3:2-3).
In his study of The Salvation Army doctrines (*This we believe*), John Coutts outlined the conditions for a sanctified life:

- **Conviction**: I realise that, though I am a follower of Christ, bad attitudes still remain within me and at times lead me into acts of sin.

- **Renunciation**: I must be willing to give up completely and for ever, things that I know to be wrong. Augustine once prayed, ‘Give me chastity – but not yet’, a prayer that led him nowhere on the road to holiness! Likewise I may have to renounce habits or possessions which, while not wrong in themselves, prevent me doing the work to which God has called me.

- **Consecration**: In which we dedicate to God ourselves and all we possess, to live only to please him and do his will.

- **Faith**: The act of simple heart-trust by which the soul commits itself to God and believes that he does now sanctify according to his promise.

Sanctification is a divine work of God. He sanctifies and preserves in sanctification.

**BEING PRESERVED BLAMELESS**

To be blameless is to be free from fault. Before signing the Soldier’s Covenant, the recruit publicly declares that he/she will not allow anything in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral to invade his life. Man cannot be blameless unless he is delivered from sin. Sin is not only the power which moves men to do evil things, but also the cause of the moral corruption invading the hearts and minds of those who commit sin.

‘*There is nothing that goes into you from the outside which can make you ritually unclean. Rather, it is what comes out of you that makes you unclean*’ (*Mark 7:15* Good News Translation).
Sanctification does not give freedom from bodily and mental infirmities. It does, however, enable God’s people to glorify him in their afflictions and, in some instances, to exercise faith for deliverance from them.

Salvationists commit themselves to a life of continued obedient faith as disciples of Christ. It is the responsibility of every believer to know the will of God, prayerfully depend on him (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) and live a life that is consistent with his known will (Romans 12:1-2).

However, disobedience to God’s will and lack of faith in Jesus Christ leads to backsliding. Even a true Christian can cease to obey Christ and forfeit hope of eternal life. It happens when one deliberately rejects Christ, drifts away from discipleship or neglects the means of grace (Hebrews 2:1-3) and then fails to uphold Christian values in life. Backsliding may result in the loss of fellowship with God, which has lasting consequences. We should keep close to God, risk our lives if necessary, challenge sin and dare to live a Christlike life in all its fullness. Once tempted or fallen short of God’s grace, we should return to God by the conviction of the Holy Spirit and seek his forgiveness and restoration.

In 1849, at the age of 20, William Booth made these resolutions:

*I will...*

1. **Rise every morning sufficiently early ... have a few minutes, not less than five, in private prayer.**
2. **Avoid all the babbling and idle talking in which I have lately so sinfully indulged.**
3. **Endeavour ...to conduct myself as a humble, meek and zealous follower of the bleeding Lamb, and by serious conversation and warning endeavour to lead (others) to think of their immortal souls.**
4. **Read no less than four chapters in God’s Word every day.**
5. Strive to live closer to God and to seek after holiness of heart, and leave providential events with God.

Then he prayed, 'God help me, enable me to cultivate a spirit of self-denial and to yield myself a prisoner of love to the Redeemer of the world.'

God’s purpose for salvation is to make us holy like Christ. For a Christian, continued obedient faith is an ongoing commitment and a way of life. If we remain in him and maintain Christlikeness, we are assured of the blessings of salvation. This includes justification, regeneration, assurance, adoption and sanctification, leading us to eternal life with our Lord Jesus Christ. When we trust and obey God’s will, the Holy Spirit of God will direct all our steps and we shall be preserved blameless!

'It was only right that God, who creates and preserves all things, should make Jesus perfect through suffering, in order to bring many children to share his glory. For Jesus is the one who leads them to salvation. He purifies people from their sins, and both he and those who are made pure all have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his family' (Hebrews 2:10-11 GNT).

FOR REFLECTION

➢ How can a believer ensure that his integrity as a Christian is not questionable?
➢ What does God expect from us as Christian believers?
➢ What is God’s intention and purpose in saving humanity?
➢ What may lead a Christian to backslide?
➢ From your observation, how does the community you serve in view your soldiers in relation to the declaration they made concerning doctrines 9 and 10?

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