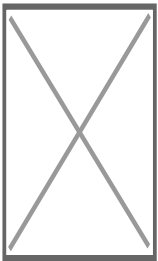


Others

Body Builder

by Terry Camsey, Major –



Many years ago, when I was a young aspiring cornetist and had just entered the senior band, I was greatly inspired by a couple of slightly older cornet players. One had graduated from a military school of music, was about to be discharged, and was—from my perspective—a brilliant soloist. I will never forget hearing him play a solo for the first time; his technique was scintillating.

I cannot remember the exact circumstances, but my sense was that there had been some problems that caused the bandmaster to come up with a set of rules to govern the band; these in addition to quite a thorough set of formal regulations in force that embraced both band and songster brigades. My two “idols” did not see any need for further regulations and, in fact, left the Army over the issue. I was devastated.

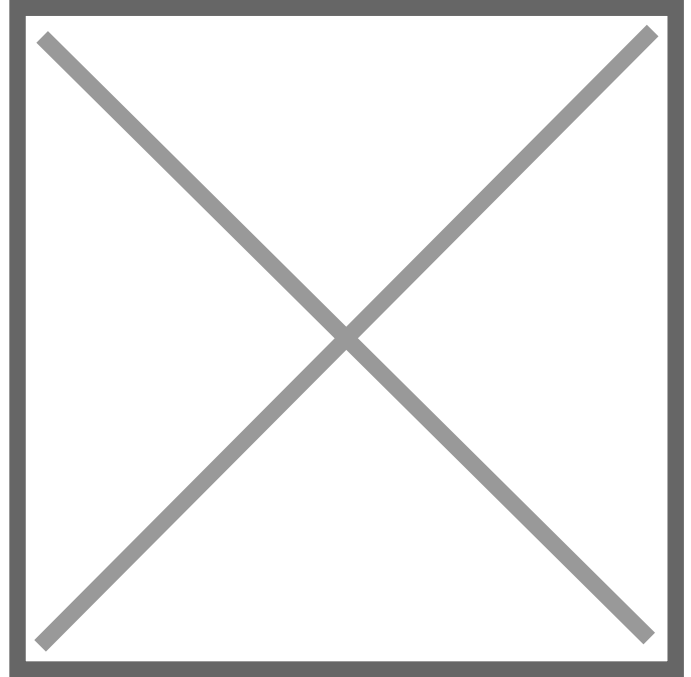
A few years ago, a Salvationist in this territory took to task a Latino attendee at an Army event, telling her that, in the Army, we do not clap on the verses, only the choruses!

Just last week I read this in the letters column of *Salvationist* (published in the United Kingdom):

I have seen new people attend worship at the Army and applaud all music contributions. When they have been told not to clap for devotional pieces it has caused friction and discouraged them from attending. Surely we don't want to sit in silent congregations.

In yet another incident, I was present when a leader (who had been raised in a territory run on British Salvation Army lines) told the officers that “the Army way” was to announce verses of songs as “stanzas!”

In all these instances, it seems that, regardless of the fact that we are regulated up to the hilt, some people still take it upon themselves to add their own not-so-subtle finesse to official positions held by the Army.



It reminded me of some comments made by Joe S. Ellis in his book, *The Church On Purpose*, in which he suggests that:

Traditionalism elevates expedient forms or practices to a sacrosanct position and insists on their perpetuation.

Traditions frequently outlive any semblance of reason.

Tradition may become a handicap. Some programs and practices in today's congregations may be irrelevant to committed discipleship. Some may be out and out hindrances.

Traditions may blind us to opportunities and shut out improvements.

Catherine Booth made remarkably similar statements in a speech given many, many years ago in defense of the Army's "non-traditional-church" methodology and tactics.

She suggested that man is prone to confuse his traditions with the will of God and to be unable to distinguish between expedients (methods) developed during the history of the church and principles laid down in Scripture.

Recently I heard of a retired officer who, on finding a visitor in "his" seat one Sunday morning, brought it to the attention of the inadvertent trespasser, causing him to move elsewhere.

I ask again a question that we should constantly be asking ourselves of everything we do:

For whose benefit do we do this, this way—for the benefit of those we wish to attract and fold into the congregation, or for our own benefit?

William Booth would answer in a single word—"Others!"