

NOTE ON THE RELIGION OF THE SALVATION ARMY

The religious faith of the Salvation Army, as I have observed and understand it (for little has been said to me on this matter), is extremely simple. It believes in an eternal Heaven for the righteous and--a sad doctrine this, some of us may think--in a Hell, equally eternal, for the wicked.[8] Its bedrock is the Bible, especially the New Testament, which it accepts as true without qualification, from the first word to the last, troubling itself with no doubts or criticisms. Especially does it believe in the dual nature of the Saviour, in Christ as God, and in Christ as man, and in the possibility of forgiveness and redemption for even the most degraded and defiled of human beings. Love is its watchword, the spirit of love is its spirit, love arrayed in the garments of charity.

In essentials, with one exception, its doctrines much resemble those of the Church of England, and of various dissenting Protestant bodies. The exception is, that it does not make use of the Sacraments, even of that of Communion, although, on the other hand, it does not deny the efficacy of those Sacraments, or object to others, even if they be members of the Army, availing themselves of them. Thus, I have known an Army Officer to join in the Communion Service. The reason for this exception is, I believe, that in the view of General Booth, the Sacraments complicate matters, are open to argument and attack, and

are not understood by the majority of the classes with which the Army deals. How their omission is reconciled with certain prominent passages and directions laid down in the New Testament I do not know. To me, I confess, this disregard of them seems illogical.

The motto of the Army is 'Salvation for all,' and, as I have hinted in these pages, it has a sure conviction of the essential persistence of miracle in these modern days. It holds that when a man kneels at the Penitent-Form and 'gets converted,' a miracle takes place within him, if his repentance is true, and that thenceforward some Grace from on High will give him the power to overcome the evil in his heart and blood.

It believes, too, in the instant efficacy of earnest prayer, and in the possibility of direct communication by this means between man and his Maker.

Here is an instance of this statement. While inspecting the Shelters in one of the provincial cities, I was shown a certain building which had recently passed into the possession of the Army. The Officer who was conducting me said that the negotiations preliminary to the acquisition of the lease of this building had been long and difficult. I remarked that these must have caused him anxiety. 'Oh, no,' he answered, simply. 'You see I had talked with the Lord about it, and I knew that we should get the place in the end.'

This reply may cause some to smile, but I confess I find such childlike faith touching and even beautiful.

There is small doubt that consciously or unconsciously, the Salvation Army has followed St. Paul's example of being all things to all men, if 'by all means' it may save some. This is the reason of its methods which to many seem so vulgar and offensive. Once I spoke to an Officer high up in the Army of this matter, instancing, amongst other things, its brass bands and loud-voiced preaching at street corners.

'My dear sir,' he replied, 'if we came to convert you, we should not bring a brass band or send a missionary who shouted out sacred names every minute. Possibly, if we thought that you were open to the influences of music, we might send a first-rate violinist to play pieces from the classical masters, and we should certainly send a man whom we knew to be your intellectual equal, and who could therefore appeal to your reason. But our mission at present is not so much to you and your class, as to the dregs of humanity. The folk we deal with live in a state of noise of which you have no conception, and if we want to force them to listen to us, we must begin by making a greater noise in order to attract their attention at all. In the same way it is of no use wasting subtleties on them; we have to go straight to the main points, which are clear and sharp enough to pierce their drink-besotted intelligences, or to reach any fragment of conscience they may have remaining in them.'

I thought the argument sound and well put, and results have proved its force, since the Salvation Army undoubtedly gets a hold of people that few other forms of religious effort seem able to grasp, at least to any considerable extent.

I wish to make it clear, however, that I hold no particular brief for the Army, its theology, and its methods. I recognize fully, as I know it does, the splendid work that is being done in the religious and social fields by other Organizations of the same class, especially by Dr. Barnardo's Homes, by the Waifs and Strays Society, by the Church Army, and, above all, perhaps, by another Society, with which I have had the honour to be connected in a humble capacity for many years, that for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Still it remains true that the Salvation Army is unique, if only on account of the colossal scale of its operations. Its fertilizing stream flows on steadily from land to land, till it bids fair to irrigate the whole earth. What I have written about is but one little segment of a work which flourishes everywhere, and even lifts its head in Roman Catholic countries, although in these, as yet, it makes no very great progress.

How potent then, and how generally suited to the needs of stained and suffering mankind, must be that religion which appeals both to the West and to the East, which is as much at home in Java and Korea as it is in Copenhagen or Glasgow. For it should be borne in mind that the basis of the Salvation Army is religious, that it aims, above everything, at the conversion of men to an active and lively faith in

the plain, uncomplicated tenets of Christianity to the benefit of their souls in some future state of existence and, incidentally, to the Reformation of their characters while on earth.

The social work of which I have been treating is a mere by-product or consequence of its main idea. Experience has shown, that it is of little use to talk about his soul to a man with an empty stomach. First, he must be fed and cleansed and given some other habitation than the street. Also the Army has learned that Christ still walks the earth in the shape of Charity; and that religion, after all, is best preached by putting its maxims into practice; that the poor are always with us; and that the first duty of the Christian is to bind their wounds and soothe their sorrows. Afterwards, he may hope to cure them of their sins, for he knows that unless such a cure is effected, temporal assistance avails but little. Except in cases of pure misfortune which stand upon another, and, so far as the Army work is concerned, upon an outside footing, the causes of the fall must be removed, or that fall will be repeated. The man or woman must be born again, must be regenerated. Such, as I understand it, is at once the belief of the Salvation Army and the object of all its efforts. Therefore, I give to this book its title of 'Regeneration.'

THE NEED IS GREAT!

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The principal items of the Salvation Army's expenditure for Social Work during the financial year ending September 30, 1911, are as follows, and help is earnestly asked to meet these, the work being entirely dependent upon Voluntary Gifts.

For Maintenance of Work amongst the Destitute
and Outcast Men and Women, including Shelters
for Homeless Men and Women, Homes for Children,
Rescue Homes, etc..... £15,000

For Maintenance of the Slum Sisterhood and Nurses
for the Sick Poor..... £3,000

For Prison Visitation Staff and Prison-Gate Work..... £5,000

For Work among Youths and Boys..... £2,000

For Special Relief and Distress Agencies..... £5,000

For Development of the Work and Agricultural
Departments of the Hadleigh Colony..... £3,000

For Assistance and Partial Maintenance of the
Unemployed and Inefficient..... £5,000

For Assisting suitable Men and Women to Emigrate..... £3,000

Towards the provision of New Institutions for Men
and Boys in London and various provincial Cities..... £10,000

For the General Management and Supervision of all
the above Operations..... £2,000

£53,000

Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to WILLIAM BOOTH,
crossed 'Bank of England, Law Courts Branch,' and sent to MRS. BOOTH,
101 Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C. Clothes for the poor and
articles for sale are always needed.

LEGACIES

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Ladies and Gentlemen are earnestly asked to remember the needs of the
Salvation Army's Social Work (the 'Darkest England' Social Scheme), in
connexion with the preparation of their wills.

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All kinds of property can now be legally bequeathed for charitable purposes, and the following form of legacy is recommended. Where a legacy does not consist of a certain amount of money, care should be taken to identify clearly the property, shares, stock, or whatever it may be intended to be bequeathed.

'I GIVE AND BEQUEATH TO WILLIAM BOOTH, or other the General for the time being of the Salvation Army, and Director of the "Darkest England" Social Scheme, the sum of £..... (or) MY TWO freehold houses known as Nos..... in the county of..... (or) my £..... ordinary stock of the London and North-Western Railway Company (or) my shares in.....Limited (or as the case may be) to be used or applied by him, at his discretion, for the general purposes of the "Darkest England" Social Scheme. And I direct the said last-mentioned Legacy to be paid within twelve months after my decease.'

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DIRECTIONS FOR EXECUTION OF WILL

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The Will must be executed by the Testator in the presence of two witnesses, who must sign their names, addresses, and occupations at the end of the Will in the presence of the Testator. The best method to adopt for a Testator to be quite sure that his Will is executed properly, is for him to take the Will and his two witnesses into a room, lock the door, and tell the witnesses that he wishes them to attest his Will. All three must sign in the room and nobody must go out until all have signed.

GENERAL BOOTH will always be pleased to procure further advice for any friends desiring to benefit the Salvation Army's work in any of its departments, by Will or otherwise, and will treat any communications made to him on the subject as strictly private and confidential. Letters dealing with the matter should be marked Private, and addressed to GENERAL BOOTH, 101 QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, E.C.