

The Salvation Army

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The Salvation Army may be defined as an international religious and philanthropic organization founded by William Booth in 1878 for the primary purpose of carrying "the Blood of Christ and of spreading the Fire of the Holy Ghost to the uttermost parts of the earth."

One who firmly believes that Christ personally established His own Church, promising it perpetuity and the protection of the Holy Ghost till the end of time, reads this definition with no little astonishment. He cannot help wondering why another organization should be set up almost in our own times to fulfil precisely the same mission as that which Christ entrusted to the Church He Himself instituted.

To understand how this came about we must glance briefly at the life-story of William Booth who, with the best of intentions, took it upon himself to present the world with the Salvation Army. It is a remarkable and fascinating story.

WILLIAM BOOTH

William Booth was born in Nottingham, England, on April 10th, 1829, and was baptized in the Church of England a day or two later. That seems to have been the full extent of his association with the Anglican Church. As for the Catholic Church, that played no part at all in the world in which he was reared.

At the age of fifteen, having experienced a "religious conversion" and decided that "God will have all there is of William Booth," he attached himself to the Wesleyan Methodists and was consumed with the desire to become a revivalist preacher, bringing a similar experience of conversion into the lives of others.

His childhood was one of extreme poverty. At the age of twelve he was apprenticed to a pawnbroker in Nottingham and there for the next seven years he came into contact with the abject misery of those seeking loans to tide them over periods of dire distress. He loathed the work and was filled with an overwhelming determination to labour for the spiritual and temporal rehabilitation of the poverty-stricken and underprivileged masses.

Even as a pawnbroker's assistant, young as he was, he became a Methodist lay-preacher, profoundly impressing those who heard him with his faith and fire and energy. He preached a simple gospel of salvation by faith, demanding conversion of life together with a definite decision for Christ. Never at any time did he acquire the learning and culture of a John Wesley; but if he had little knowledge, he had a consuming zeal and in those early sermons followed as best as could be expected of a lad in his teens the traditional lines of Methodist revivalism. At no time did he lay claims to having received any special and eccentric revelations such as those proclaimed by his American contemporaries Joseph Smith, with his "Book of Mormon," or Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, foundress of

"Christian Science," or Mrs. Ellen G. White, of the Seventh Day Adventists. And that, among so many other things, must be set down to his credit.

In 1849, at the age of nineteen, he left Nottingham for London with only a few shillings to his name. There he again obtained a position with a pawnbroker, the only occupation of which he had any experience, and devoted all his spare time to outdoor preaching, often in the face of hostility and ridicule. But Booth was nothing if not a brave man.

METHODIST EVANGELIST

In April, 1852, he achieved his great ambition by becoming a full-time evangelist in the sect of the "Methodist Reformers" at the princely wage of one pound weekly. He had asked only for twelve and sixpence! But after eighteen months he tired of the "Reformers," and joined the "Methodist New Connexion."

The new sect decided that he should train for the ministry, and he commenced a course of studies at Camberwell. But within twelve months, on June 16th, 1855, he married Catherine Mumford, herself a first-rate speaker, and abandoned further formal training. Instead, he and Catherine at once began to devote themselves to the conducting of revivalist campaigns, adopting methods which were by no means everywhere approved.

Their advance publicity at this time was designed to shock people into attention, their coming being heralded by advertisements and placards such as this:

"Mr. and Mrs. BOOTH at WALSALL

A United Monster Camp Meeting will be held on a field near Malberton Lake on Sabbath, June 28th. Addresses will be given by the Revs. William Booth, Thomas Whitehouse, and other Ministers of the neighbourhood; and also by converted pugilists, horse-racers, poachers and others from Birmingham, Liverpool and Nottingham.

Mrs. Booth will preach at Whetters Street Chapel in the evening at six o'clock. Services to commence at 9 a.m."

In 1858, William Booth was formally ordained as a Methodist Minister in the New Connexion; but after three years he resigned from that body, declaring its way to be altogether too narrow and restrictive for him. He and Catherine then devoted themselves to freelance evangelism, travelling throughout England and working for whatever non-conformist Churches would have them. More and more, however, they found conditions imposed on them by any of the Churches too irksome, and they took to running their own independent revival in public halls.

In 1865, the Booths settled in East London and decided to work for the poorest and most degraded dwellers in the East End slums. They defied church-traditions by preaching on street-corners and, to the still greater disgust of the orthodox, held religious meetings at the very doors of the public houses or taverns.

At first they had no idea of founding a new and separate sect, but advised their converts to attend any Church they pleased. The converted drunkards, gamblers, thieves and prostitutes, however, either refused to go to any Church, or were shown that they were not welcome if they did. In 1868, therefore, William Booth established the "East London Christian Mission," organizing it under the rule of a "Conference" on Methodist lines, with himself as "General Superintendent." This was

abbreviated to "General," though as yet without any "military" significance. In 1877, "Conference" rule was abolished, and General Booth assumed full and sole command of the "Christian Mission."

FOUNDING OF "THE SALVATION ARMY"

In the following year, 1878, he convened a "War Congress," in which he and his followers adopted the name "Salvation Army," with the purpose of carrying the Blood of Christ and the Fire of the Holy Ghost into every part of the world."

The new organization was modelled on the British Army. Halls were to be called "Citadels"; converts were "recruits"; trainees "cadets," then "officers." There were "adjutants," "captains," "majors," and "commissioners," all under the "Commander-in-Chief" or "General," William Booth himself.

Evangelistic undertakings were described as "campaigns." A uniform was devised, a doctrinal code was imposed, and the characteristic methods of the "Army" were developed. There were to be outdoor meetings and processions, with the use of brass bands, tambourines and cymbals to attract the crowds. Religious themes were to be adapted to popular song tunes. Rowland Hill's complaint: "Why should the Devil have all the good tunes?" certainly expressed the mind of General Booth! Preaching was to be informal and colloquial, right down to the level of the unchurched masses; and the utmost importance was attached to public testimonies on the part of converts as witnesses for Christ and an inspiration to other sinners in the crowd. Personal contacts were also to be made by visits to prison, saloons, theatres, factories and other unusual places.

The early campaigns of the Salvation Army met with violent opposition. Mobs broke up their meetings, brutally assaulting both men and women members. General Booth's "Soldiers" were themselves arrested by the police and fined or imprisoned as disturbers of the peace.

But the Army rapidly expanded in spite of persecution and within ten years the disorders had practically disappeared, social welfare work gaining immense popularity for the organization, including the patronage of the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, to whose coronation General Booth was officially invited.

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

The primary object of the Salvation Army is to convert sinners to Christ, not necessarily to gain further membership for itself. Sinners are urged to repent, and either to resume the practice of the religion they already profess, if any, or else to enrol for active service in the Army.

But conditions for enrolment in the Army are so exacting that many, if not most, of those converted prefer to return to their own Churches rather than don the uniform. Failing that, they may attend Salvation Army meetings on Sundays for worship, but merely as "adherents," not as "members." The Salvation Army does not regard such inactive and nominal adherents as "enlisted soldiers," however virtuous may be their lives after their conversion.

To become an acknowledged "Soldier," and be entitled to wear the Army's uniform, one must have proved his faith, the sincerity of his conversion, and his willingness to devote all his spare time, energy, money and influence in Army work. If accepted, after due probation, he must sign a document entitled "Articles of War," professing the basic doctrines of the organization, promising to renounce forever all intoxicating drink and worldliness in all its forms, and to aim always at the highest standards of every civic and religious virtue. It is a formidable programme; and

undoubtedly the Army could treble its membership if it would accept passive adherence, not making such heavy demands on the time and lives of those who actually enlist in its ranks.

The head of each "Corps," equivalent to the parochial unit of ordinary Churches, is a commissioned "Officer," who receives a very modest weekly salary and is wholly under Army authority in full-time service. The Soldier who desires to become an Officer is trained at an "Army Garrison" for nine months, studying the Bible, the doctrines and discipline of the Army, first aid for social work, bookkeeping, and a variety of other and lesser subjects.

One fundamental principle of the Army is the absolute equality of women with men in privilege, position and dignity. This was probably due to the influence of Catherine Booth who worked side by side with her husband, and conducted revival meetings in her own right with superb oratory and outstanding success. At any rate, there is no rank in the Army which is not as accessible to women as to men; and in 1934 the highest office of all, that of General, was entrusted to Evangeline Booth, the daughter of the founder, in succession to General Higgins.

But constitutional procedure had undergone a great change by then.

CHARACTER OF WILLIAM BOOTH

We must pause here for a few moments to devote some brief thoughts to the character of William Booth.

We have already seen how he had been irked by ecclesiastical "institutionalism," finding it impossible from the very beginning of his career as an evangelist to work under the orders and according to the directions of others. He was a thorough-going individualist, although he explained his spirit of independence by saying that he merely wanted freedom to do God's will as guided by prayer. One could surely be forgiven for adopting another interpretation and suggesting that his dominant personality insisted on having its own way, his will being for him "God's will."

He soon found, however, that he could make little headway without an organization of some kind; so he, who could not fit himself into any religious community, created one of his own. The inevitable happened. An individualist with power soon becomes an autocrat; and Booth's Army, so long as he was alive, was nothing less than an absolute religious dictatorship.

The effect upon his own character cannot be denied. Lord Acton has said that "all power corrupts." To a certain extent this was true in the case of William Booth. The humility of the young pawnbroker's assistant was not proof against success; and as fame came his way, he became proud, arrogant and intolerant; rude and inconsiderate towards those around him. He delighted in being the guest of wealthy people; and advance letters would inform his hosts and hostesses of the "General's" requirements as in the case of the Royal Family when making foreign visits!

But it cannot be said that he ever lost his intense religious conviction, his passion for the conversion of men, and his persuasion that the outcast can be restored to society if only he can be made to feel that he is wanted and that society does care what becomes of him. Nor can anyone accuse General Booth of not having worked hard in the light of these ideals till the very end of his days in 1912.

It was not a member of the Salvation Army, but an Anglican Bishop, Hensley Henson, of Durham, who wrote of him after his death:

"When we have given due allowance to the shadows on his career, no just man will question its essential greatness. Viewed as a whole, William Booth's life disclosed an extraordinary character

which gives its possessor a secure place among the benefactors of mankind. His courage, persistence, endurance and self-dedication to his cause mark him out as belonging to the heroic type. If he may not be numbered with the Saints, none can dispute his right to a place among the Martyrs. He had many faults; he made many blunders; he was neither chivalrous nor consistent; but his passionate love for souls, which was the governing motive of his life from boyhood to old age, was unselfish and sincere; and in his redemptive crusade he never flinched before opposition. The record of his labours almost exceeds belief, and when it is remembered that all through his life he was handicapped by illness and financial worry, that record becomes almost sublime." ("Retrospect of an Unimportant Life," Vol. I, p. 41.)

ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE

The fact remains, however, that Booth was an autocrat, and within the Army his rule was absolute. He would brook no criticism, even less anything savouring of opposition. And he arranged by deed poll in 1878 that each General should be empowered to appoint his successor under seal, the name to be divulged at the time of succession.

It was said that this unconditional supremacy might work well enough so long as Mr. Booth was alive and able for his duties, but that history gave little hope of its working equally well after his death. At a matter of fact, it was not altogether successful during Booth's lifetime, and in 1896 his own son, Ballington Booth, seceded from the Army in U.S.A., founding the semi-military and democratically managed "Volunteers of America," which engages in similar work and today has some 500 service units with over 30,000 members. This defection had repercussions in the Salvation Army, and in 1904, a second deed poll provided for the removal of a General and the election of a successor by a High Council should a General exhibit mental incapacity or other unfitness.

William Booth died in 1912, and his eldest son, William Bramwell Booth, succeeded. He had been Chief of Staff from the very beginning and had manifested great organizing ability. Having assumed office at fifty-six years of age, he showed signs of decline seventeen years later and, in 1929, the High Council voted for his removal. Bramwell Booth took the issue to the courts; but the courts merely ordered a reconsideration of the case by the high Council. The resultant vote was the same, and on February 13th, 1929, Bramwell Booth was deposed and Edward J. Higgins elected in his place.

The new General promised that, whilst the objectives of the Salvation Army would remain the same, certain constitutional changes would be made because "methods proper in 1878 were inadequate for conditions prevailing in 1929." Since then the Generalship has been elective, the outgoing General having no right of nomination as to who will be his successor.

Whoever is General, however, still retains absolute authority, although he is assisted by his Chief of Staff, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor and other Consultors. Unquestioning obedience is required of all ranks. Thus Commissioner Donald McMillan writes: "Unity of thought, method and purpose is an outstanding characteristic of the Salvation Army throughout the world... largely it is due to the element of military discipline as the controlling force in an ingeniously devised plan of organization and administration." ("Religion in the 20th Century," Philosophical Library, N.Y., 1948, p. 344.)

In the "Articles of War" every Soldier must declare: "I will always obey the lawful orders of my Officers, and carry out to the utmost of my power all the Orders and Regulations of the Army."

Above all, discipline and loyalty are exacted of every Officer who, before his appointment, must undergo a searching examination of more than eighty questions.

RELIGIOUS ZEAL

Of the good intentions, fervour and devotedness animating the members of the Salvation Army it would be impossible to speak too highly.

At all times the spiritual purpose has been supreme - to lead souls to repentance of their sins and back to the love and friendship of God through Christ. Humanitarian social services were not part of the founder's original plan. His intentions were exclusively evangelical, to take the Gospel as he conceived it to those who would not seek it in the Churches, to go out into the highways and byways, preaching to the spiritually blind, to the erring, and to the underprivileged poor.

In their personal lives members are characterized by intense earnestness and fervour. The Army is essentially a "Holiness" movement. The uniform symbolizes the main condition of soldiership, conversion from sin of any kind, separation from the world and consecration to God. The highest standard of behaviour is exacted in every department of life. All Salvationists must be total abstainers from alcoholic drink, whilst those holding any kind of office must be non-smokers. Definite guidance is given for all in the "Orders and Regulations." Officers must be content with relative poverty, their salaries providing no more than is sufficient for the simplest needs. There are many lapsed Salvationists who have found the standards too severe; but those who have persevered and still wear the uniform have a deep sense of vocation to which they constantly strive to be faithful.

Devotedness is the keynote of the Army, for it inculcates as the supreme duty self-sacrifice for the salvation of others. Children are "dedicated" that they may become Soldiers in the "War." Officers pledge at least nine hours daily. The work is always one of aggressive evangelism, winning souls by various forms of service, visiting from door to door, praying in homes, and selling the Army paper, "The War Cry," in the streets and even in the bar-rooms of public houses or taverns.

ARDENT REVIVALISM

Each Corps is expected to hold a standard number of meetings weekly, most of which are preceded by open-air meetings intended to carry the Gospel to those who need it where they are. After these meetings, under the "Blood and Fire Flag" of the Army, the street-corner congregation is invited to join in the march to the Citadel or Salvation Army Hall where the service of preaching, hymns and prayer, along the lines of the Methodist tradition to which Booth had become accustomed in the first years following his conversion, is continued.

Each Corps is expected to form a brass band to brighten up the services. The preaching, as we have seen, was to be practical and direct, the theme being that of a simple evangelical piety, urging the seeking of salvation from sin by the power of God through faith in Christ and recourse to His Precious Blood.

At times, more frequently in the beginning although rarely in later years, speakers have attacked the Churches, and above all the Catholic Church which many simple, ignorant yet zealous would-be fishers of men, labouring under an ingrained Protestant prejudice against the Papacy, regarded almost as if it were the "Antichrist."

General Booth himself, however, strongly reprehended that, and certainly cannot be said to have left any legacy of bigotry to his Salvation Army. As a matter of fact, long before the Army became generally esteemed, Booth found one of his strongest sympathizers in Cardinal Manning, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster. When, in 1890, the General published his book, "In Darkest England and the Way Out," the Cardinal had commented: "Who shall forbid him? If sheep are lost, it is the shepherd's fault." He could appreciate the zeal of General Booth, whose slogan, "Go for souls, and go for the worst," was a challenge to organized Christianity in all its forms; and he wrote to the General, on October 20th, 1890: "You have gone down into the depths. Every living soul cost the Most Precious Blood, and we ought to save it, even the worthless and the worst. After the Trafalgar Square miseries I wrote a 'pleading for the Worthless,' which probably you never saw. It would show up how completely my heart is in your book. No doubt you remember the Poor Laws of Queen Elizabeth compelled parishes to provide work for the able-bodied unemployed, and to lay in stores of raw material for work."

The two men met in 1890, the religious chasm between the extreme Protestantism of the General and the Catholicism of the Cardinal in no way lessening the great bond of sympathy which united them in zeal for souls and in all that concerned social welfare work.

THE ARMY'S SOCIAL SERVICES

The social welfare work of the Salvation Army has indeed won the admiration of the whole world. Even those who do not approve of Booth's religious ideas appreciate the Army's philanthropic activities so highly that they generously subscribe towards them.

In the beginning General Booth thought only of the salvation of souls. But he soon realized that street-preaching was not enough to reach the ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed "submerged tenth" of the population. Words alone were not enough. It was necessary to rehabilitate these poor people socially. In any case, he had a profound pity for the outcast, an intense sympathy for those enduring any kind of suffering, and a hatred of dirt and squalor. And for him no man was past saving.

He, therefore, embarked on social work to assist him in his evangelistic apostolate, providing night-shelters for the homeless, free breakfasts, and clothing, etc., for "down-and-outs," soon finding that this had much to do with their willingness to listen to his message of salvation. His new methods naturally brought criticism and ridicule. He became known as the "Soap, Soup and Salvation Preacher." But, whatever might be said of his theology, his psychology was sound; and he courageously persevered with his social programme.

It was H. M. Stanley's book, "In Darkest Africa," which inspired Booth, with the assistance of W. T. Stead, to write a parallel book, "In Darkest England and the Way Out." This book was a ruthless exposure of social evils in England itself. He proposed to remedy pauperism and vice by ten expedients: (1) City Colonies; (2) Farm Colonies in England; (3) Overseas Colonies in Canada, Australia and South Africa; (4) Household Salvage brigades; (5) Rescue Homes for Fallen Women; (6) Campaigns for the Reform of Drunkards; (7) Prison Brigades; (8) Poor Man's Bank; (9) Poor Man's Lawyers; (10) A Convalescent Home called Whitechapel-by-the-Sea.

To carry out his plans he boldly appealed to the public for a million pounds, and soon he had more than 100,000 pounds in hand with which he made an energetic beginning of the work. Charged with being a racketeer, he gladly accepted a public inquiry into his affairs, the appointed Committee completely exonerating him. Not a penny had been diverted from the purpose for which it had been given into his own pocket. Respect replaced criticism and ridicule, and to Cardinal Manning's

sympathetic support was added, as we have already seen, the active encouragement of the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII.

Today the Salvation Army carries on an extensive system of charitable works, nurseries, hostels for young people, old people's homes, orphanages, settlements and social centres of every kind. During the two World Wars it provided recreational, welfare and religious help for soldiers on active duty at the various fronts, and comforts for their families at home.

For many people these activities constitute the Army's chief claim to honour. They see it primarily as a humanitarian organization rather than as a religious body. But General Booth himself certainly never thought of it in such a way, nor do his disciples. The Army regards itself first and foremost as an evangelical organization, its social services being but a humane expression of the religion of Christ, putting His precepts into practice and preparing the way for the conversion of souls by rehabilitating the underprivileged by all possible temporal assistance.

THE ARMY'S CREED

We must now turn to the very vital question of the doctrines members of the Salvation Army are expected to profess and believe.

The teachings General Booth prescribed for his Army were the only ones he knew, those of Methodism. Neither a scholar nor a theologian, he simply took these for granted, little concerned with the verification of them.

Recall his history. He had been baptized in the Church of England, but really knew nothing of Anglicanism. From the time of his conversion, at the age of fifteen, he had been associated with the Methodists; and with a woefully deficient training had assumed the role of an evangelist, intent only on soul-saving. In no sense could erudition of any kind be attributed to him. He disliked books and had no sense of history. He just found himself, as it were, burning with religious fervour and believing absolutely in the Authorized Version of the Bible. The Bible he took at its face value, understanding it in the literalist and Protestant fundamentalist way, indifferent to all scientific rules of interpretation and the findings of critical [but still orthodox] scholarship. He could not understand what bearing the Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages had on the preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

Nor was he interested that others who came after him should attain to a scholarship and learning that had never been his own. His idea for the training of Officers was that they should be given only that degree of practical knowledge which was absolutely essential for their evangelizing work, without burdening their minds with a scholarship which he did not think to have any direct bearing upon the apostolate, and which might create a barrier of separation between them and the ill-educated people they were to reach.

Theological speculations are of little interest or importance to the Salvationist, who is to be more at home in singing with joyous fervour:

"We have no other argument; We want no other plea; It is enough that Jesus died, And that He died for me."

Still, some definite teachings there must be, and in the "Foundation Deed" of 1878, General Booth imposed upon his followers eleven cardinal doctrines of evangelical Protestantism which may be briefly set forth as follows:

(1). The Bible is the inspired Word of God and the only divinely-given Rule of Faith. (2). There is but one God, Creator of all things. (3). There are three co-equal Persons in the undivided Godhead. (4). Jesus Christ is true God and true Man. (5). Through the Fall of our first parents all men become "sinners totally depraved and justly exposed to the wrath of God." (6). Jesus Christ by His sufferings and death made atonement for all so that whosoever will may be saved. (7). Salvation is by repentance, faith in Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. (8). Justification is by grace through faith in Christ, he that believes having the witness in himself. (9). Continuance in the state of salvation depends on continued obedient faith in Christ. (10). It is the privilege of all believers to be "wholly sanctified," i.e., having evil inclinations so entirely taken away by the Spirit of God that no actual sins of any kind will be committed. (11). Immortality of the soul, resurrection of the body, the general judgement at the end of the world, with eternal happiness for the righteous and endless punishment for the wicked, are to be unequivocally maintained.

INFALLIBLE TEACHING-AUTHORITY

These eleven basic "Articles of Faith" are imposed authoritatively by the Salvation Army upon all its members as a condition of their remaining members. Thus the official "Handbook of Doctrine," issued by "International Headquarters," (1955), is prefaced by the "General Order": "It is required of Officials of all ranks that their teaching, in public and in private, shall conform to our Doctrines as herein set forth," Again, the "Articles of War," to be signed by every Soldier, contain the declaration: "I am thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Army's teaching."

Since it was General Booth himself who prescribed what was to be the Army's teaching, this can only mean that its members agree to have their beliefs dictated for them by him. Such blind and unthinking acceptance of the General's religious ideas moved Professor T. H. Huxley, an agnostic, to protest: "Harlotry and intemperance are sore evils, and starvation hard to bear; but the prostitution of the mind, the soddening of the conscience, the dwarfing of manhood are worse calamities... all at the mercy of a despot whose chief thought is to make fanaticism prevail."

Huxley was a rationalist, but he was not inhuman. He could appreciate General Booth's devoted efforts to remedy social evils. At the same time, as an unbeliever, he was biased against religion of any kind; and it was that bias which inspired his references to despotism and fanaticism in the General's regard.

We may dismiss those accordingly. But his charge of the degradation of reason and intelligence must be upheld, unless a solid and rational justification can be produced for accepting the infallible teaching-authority of the Army as a body, and of General Booth himself who prescribed its doctrines. There is no escape from this difficulty. Members must profess absolute faith in "the truth of the Army's teaching." To say: "I believe this or that because the Salvation Army thus believes and teaches," presupposes an act of faith in the infallibility of the Salvation Army itself.

In a booklet, "The Faith of a Salvationist," p 18, Alfred J. Gilliard seeks a way out by saying:

"These basic doctrines are accepted without theological speculation. The grand affirmations of Christian truth are the Salvationist's creed... The truths he is taught are self-evident."

But self-evident is just what they are not. Some of the official declarations are definitely false, as we shall see. Those of them which happen to be right are revealed mysteries of religion, to be accepted on the authority of Christ and of His Church by an act of faith, not because our natural reason can perceive them to be self-evidently true.

The crucial point for reason lies in the problem as to whether there is any rational justification for absolute confidence in the divine authority of Christ and of His Church. There is. But there is none for one's acceptance of the divine authority of the Salvation Army!

ORTHODOX DOCTRINES

Of the eleven articles of faith contained in the "Foundation Deed" proclamation the second, third, fourth, sixth and the eleventh contain what is undoubtedly the truth as contained in the New Testament, and what has been the constant and authoritative teaching of the Christian religion through all the ages.

And indeed it is good to meet with such evidence of loyalty to Christ as that contained in the 1925 circular letter of General Bramwell Booth, addressed to every Officer in the Salvation Army, condemning Freemasonry:

"No language of mine could be too strong in condemning any Officer's affiliation with any Society which shuts Him outside its Temples; and which in its religious ceremonies gives neither Him nor His Name any place... As for the future, the Army's views upon this matter will be made known to all who wish to become Officers, and acceptance of these views will be necessary before Candidates can be received for training; and further, from this time, it will be contrary to our Regulations for any Officer to join such a Society." ("The Menace of Freemasonry to the Christian Faith," by Rev. C. Penney Hunt, p. 67.)

All articles other than the ones mentioned, however, are but the restatement of erroneous doctrines dating only from the 16th century Protestant reformation.

PROTESTANT TRADITIONS

Thus the first repeats the usual Protestant theory that the "Bible only" is the one authoritative guide as to what Christians must believe. The Bible itself does not say that. Rather it says the opposite.

Also, inconsistently enough, subsequent articles in the Salvation Army list contain doctrines for which the authority of the Bible certainly cannot be claimed.

In the fifth article we are given the Calvinistic doctrine of the "total depravity" of man's nature as the result of original sin. But St. Paul wrote of the pagans (or of the "unsaved," to use the Army's own designation of them): "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves... They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness." (Rom. 9: 14-15.) And he goes on to say that, on the last day when the secrets of all men shall be revealed, God will judge them according to their natural conscience. The doctrine of man's total depravity as a result of the Fall of our first parents is not warranted by anything in Sacred Scripture. That we are all children of a guilty human race, and that all need redemption, yes; but that our nature has been wholly corrupted, no.

The seventh article, attributing salvation to repentance, faith in Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, is not wrong in requiring the three elements mentioned; but it is false to intend the exclusion of any need of the Sacrament of Baptism, as the Salvation Army does. Of that we shall see more later.

The eighth article, which tells us that justification is by grace through faith in Christ, reflects the Protestant denial of the necessity of good works, ignoring the warning of St. James that just "faith, if it have not works, is dead... by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2: 17, 24.)

And it further inculcates the doctrine of "assurance of salvation" despite the fact that without a special revelation from God no one can have more than reasons for trust that he is in a state of grace, hoping that such is the case. "I know nothing against myself," wrote St. Paul, "but I am not thereby justified; but He that judges me is the Lord," (1 Cor, 4: 4). He means that the witness of one's own conscience is not a sufficient motive for regarding one's justification in the sight of God as an absolute certainty.

St. Paul never admitted that "he was saved."

The ninth article rightly insists that if one is in God's favour, continued obedience to His will is necessary if one wishes to remain acceptable to Him. But to be in God's favour is to be in that state of grace which will result in one's salvation if it be the happy lot of the soul to be in such a state as it goes to God from this world. Until that supreme moment which will terminate one's sojourn in this world St. Paul's admonition must ever be kept in mind: "With fear and trembling work out your salvation." (Philipp. 2: 12.) One who is still working in order to attain to salvation cannot rightly be said to have already attained to it.

The "Perfectionism" of the tenth article is again an exaggeration not warranted by Scripture. St. James tells us that "in many things we all offend." (James 3: 2.) St. John writes: "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 Jn., 1: 8.) And Christ prescribed for all of us without exception the prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses." (Matt., 6: 12.)

If, however, in these matters the teaching of the Salvation Army is not in accordance with the Bible it professes to follow as the "only Rule of Faith," still more serious is the omission from its official creed of all references to the Church and to the Sacraments. The latter, indeed, in an appendix to its "Handbook of Doctrine," are expressly repudiated. But let us take first the question of the Church.

RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALISM

We have seen how General Booth, at the age of fifteen, had an intensely personal and individual experience of religious conversion; and how, from that moment, the young pawnbroker's assistant commenced his fervent apostolate of evangelism. He felt no need of any intellectual preparation for his ministry by a prolonged course of study. Although he had been baptized an Anglican, he felt more at home in the revivalist atmosphere of Methodism, and in the main adopted Methodist teachings.

But he was before all else an individualist, and he set out to convert and edify individuals, seeking to bring into their lives an entirely subjective religious experience similar to his own. Unable to conform to rules and regulations imposed on him by others, he tried one sect after another and finally broke with all sects to become an independent and freelance preacher. His message was one of almost entirely self-centered religion which found expression in the enthusiastic singing of such refrains as:

"Oh, that will be glory for me, Glory for me, glory for me; When by His grace I shall look on His face, That will be glory, be glory for me."

Of the Church as founded by Christ upon the Apostles, endowed with His divine authority, and existing through all subsequent ages, Booth seemed quite unaware. No reference to the Church in the New Testament seems ever to have caught his eye. And he had no sense of history. The influence of the Church throughout the centuries, if only in the making of Christendom, never entered his mind.

His "Handbook of Doctrine" contains no attack on the Church. The word "Church" is not so much as mentioned in its pages. It is completely ignored. On page 13 we are given merely the half-truth that "Jesus Christ's revelation dealt chiefly with the Kingdom of God, or the reign of God in human hearts and lives."

The full truth is that Christ established a visible Kingdom of God in this world which He called His "Church." True, God was to reign in the hearts and lives of its members; but it was the express will of Christ that all in whose hearts and lives God reigned should become members of His visible Church.

NEED OF ORGANIZATION

Baron Von Hugel, in his great book, "The Mystical Element of Religion," states as a principle that true religion must have three elements harmoniously blended; the mystical element of personal religious experience; the intellectual element of doctrinal truth for the mind; and the institutional element of Church, Sacraments and corporate Worship. This conclusion he based, not only on biblical grounds, but also on the psychological needs of men whose religion, if they are to practise it at all, must be adapted to the nature with which they have been endowed.

General Booth himself could not escape this threefold demand. In addition to his campaigning for personal conversion and an individual religion of the spirit, he soon found it necessary to prescribe a set of doctrines to be believed, ceremonies to be observed, and an authoritative organization in which converts must be incorporated and to which they had to render loyal obedience.

Not dreaming of the possibility that Christ Himself had provided for these needs, he took it upon himself to prescribe a creed, a ministry of Officers, religious forms and ceremonies, and a system of government. This provision of a man-made substitute for the Church was quite contrary to New Testament Christianity.

In his creed, as we have seen, he embodied the usual teachings of evangelical Protestantism. As for his creating a new religious organization, to justify that Catherine Booth wrote: "It is but to provide machinery through which the Spirit of Christ can operate... We must have forms and methods, and the more intelligently planned and the more wisely adapted the better they will succeed. Haphazard, fitful, unorganized, unreliable action fails everywhere, no matter how good the cause in which it is engaged." ("Catherine Booth," Booth-Tucker, Vol. II, p. 348.)

It is a wonder the Booths did not suspect that Christ Himself might have the wisdom to provide "machinery" through which His Spirit could operate, taking due precautions against "haphazard, fitful, unorganized and unreliable action!" It is a still greater wonder that they did not search the New Testament to make sure that He had not done so before taking it for granted that He did not, and proceeding to supply for His lack of foresight themselves!

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

In the New Testament they would have read Christ's own words to St. Peter: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt., 16: 18.) And they would have noticed how at once He went on to identify the Kingdom of God with this Church by saying: "And I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven."

The New Testament undoubtedly depicts the Church, not as a merely human organization evolved by the genius of men, but as of divine origin, instituted by Jesus Himself. And are we to say that, despite His prediction that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church, the forces of evil unfortunately did prevail against it? Are we to say that, in 1878, William and Catherine Booth had to reconstitute it for Him, to provide Him with "machinery" through which His Spirit could operate? Yet the members of the Salvation Army have to make an act of divine faith to that effect.

In the "Salvation Army Ceremonies" at the "Swearing-in of Soldiers" the Officers have to remind candidates that they have signed the "Articles of War," thereby declaring that "they believe God raised up the Army; that they are convinced of the truth of the Army's teaching." To declare the Bible to be the only rule of faith and then to exact the belief that "God raised up the Army," which is certainly not a truth to be found anywhere in the Bible, is a self-evident contradiction; whilst unwavering faith in "the Army's teaching" is justifiable only if the Army is endowed with an infallibility which is regarded as one of the impossible claims peculiar to the Catholic Church!

Little as they seem to have realized whither they were tending, the Booths ended by establishing a new religious society claiming, implicitly at least, to possess divine authority and infallibility, the will of the Army being the will of God, and its teaching the indisputable truth to be promulgated in the name of God. Of their God-given commission to do this they neither could, nor ever attempted to, produce any evidence whatsoever.

That the Army has produced many splendid examples of personal sanctity and devotion both to the Person of Christ and the cause of humanity no one could deny. But it is a negation of the Church established by Christ Himself, put before us insistently in the pages of the New Testament, and functioning throughout 2000 years of human history. When all is said and done, the Salvation Army is a breakaway from Methodism dating from 1868 under the name of "The Christian Mission" and from 1878 under its present title. Methodism was itself a breakaway from Anglicanism in 1738. Anglicanism in turn was a breakaway from the Catholic Church in 1534 at the dictation of Henry VIII of England for self-seeking and unchristian motives of which the less said the better. Apart from all else, history is the justification of the 453,000,000 people who still belong to the Catholic Church Henry then forsook. [These are 1958 figures. the 2005 figure for members of the Catholic Church in the world is 1.1 billion.]

The goodness of so many members of the Salvation Army is not necessarily an indication of its truth as a religion. People can have the wrong religion yet live good lives, even as they can have the right religion and live bad lives. Obviously, those with the right religion yet living bad lives should reform their conduct and begin to serve God as they know they should. On the other hand, those who have the wrong religion, whether they are living good or bad lives, should get the right religion and lead better lives. And the right religion is to be found in that One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which Christ Himself established and left as His perpetual representative in this world.

REJECTION OF THE SACRAMENTS

If anything, besides his attitude towards the Church, General Booth's complete rejection of the Sacraments is a still more astonishing phenomenon.

For some years at the "Christian Mission" which he had founded in London in 1868 he continued to follow the Protestant tradition of two Sacraments with the symbolical interpretation of them only, continuing to baptize infants and also having the "Lord's Supper" administered monthly. Many adult recruits, however, had never been baptized, and he did not require them to receive baptism.

By 1878, when he established the Salvation Army, he had come to believe that the Sacraments were not only not vital, but even a mistake. At best he had regarded them merely as symbols of spiritual truth; at worst as a hindrance to the religious experience they were - as he thought - meant to symbolize. He wanted to preach "conversion," the one thing he believed to be essential. He called this the "substance" rather than the "shadow," and, therefore, in his "Foundation Deed" for the Salvation Army he abolished Sacraments altogether.

One cannot but regard his decision in this matter as one of amazing presumption. He was not a well-educated man. He lacked scholarship, whether in history or philosophy, in theology or in Scriptural interpretation. Yet he was prepared to pit his judgement in this matter against the teachings of all the Fathers and theologians, and the concerted witness of the Christian Church during nineteen centuries to the necessity of the sacramental life in the religion given to mankind by Christ Himself.

Christ adapted His religion to the nature of man; and man is not a disembodied spirit. He is made up of soul and body, spirit and flesh. A religion which appeals only to the spirit and disregards man's material aspect would be quite inadequate. The Christian religion begins, therefore, with a first "Great Sacrament," the Incarnation in which God Himself, purely spiritual in His Divine Nature, gave Himself to mankind on mankind's own level in the outward material form of the human nature born of the Virgin Mary. During His lifetime in this world Christ, true God and true Man, founded a "sacramental" Church, a visible organization of which He guaranteed the perpetuity, and the soul of which would be the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Sanctification. As part of the very nature of His Church Christ instituted the Sacraments, external rites effecting what they symbolize, firmly uniting individuals within the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God on earth, conveying to them the merits of the atoning Sacrifice on Calvary and the graces necessary for the living of a truly Christian life.

No one can emphasize too much the necessity of an intensely fervent personal religion and the practice of Christian virtue; but to ignore the Sacraments is to miss a most essential element of historic Christianity.

ATTITUDE TO BAPTISM

As regards baptism, General Booth had inherited, and accepted unthinkingly, the Methodist doctrine that the "New Birth" consisted in the "experience of conversion." So he saw the Sacrament of Baptism, not as effecting regeneration, but merely as a symbol of an inward experience of conversion which had already occurred independently of the baptismal rite.

But Christ said expressly to Nicodemus, and in the most solemn form He reserved for His more important utterances: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (Jn., 3: 5.) The new birth was indeed inward and spiritual, effected by divine grace; but the allusion to the water-baptism of John the Baptist which Christ made His own, annexing to it the conferring of the Holy Spirit for the interior renewal of souls, is obvious. Christ thus raised water-baptism to its full sacramental significance in the Christian religion. The passage constitutes the promulgation of a rite of universal, perpetual and necessary observance.

General Booth would not have that. Quoting the words of John the Baptist: "I indeed baptize you in water... but He that comes after Me shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire" (Matt., 3: 11), he argued that spirit baptism is more important than water-baptism. But the contrast intended by the

Gospels is that between the water-baptism of John and the truly sacramental water-baptism which by the will of Christ had annexed to it the conferring of the Holy Spirit.

To escape any form of water-baptism General Booth even went on to declare that the word "water" in Jn., 3: 5, had only a figurative sense and did not mean actual water at all! But there can be no room for doubt that when, as we are told in Jn. 4: 1, the Pharisees heard that Jesus was making more disciples than John and baptizing more, it was the external rite of baptizing with actual water which had been reported to them. And it is in this sense only that it is lawful to interpret both Our Lord's statement: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," (Mk., 16: 16), and His great final commission: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt., 28: 19). [Footnote: in Jn 4:1-2, it is the disciples, not Jesus, who are doing the actual baptisms. Many of the Fathers of the Church, and Bible scholars, maintain that this was not yet Christian Baptism as seen on the day of Pentecost and in Acts, but still only a baptism of repentance like John's.]

The history of the practice of baptism in the Church from Pentecost onwards manifest an imperative insistence on water-baptism as a means to salvation. It was of actual water, not of "figurative" water, that the Eunuch spoke when he said to Philip beside the Jordan: "See, here is water; what does hinder me from being baptized?" (Acts 8: 36.) It was of those who had already received what General Booth would call "Spirit-baptism" that St. Peter, insisting on water-baptism also, said: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 11: 47.) To Titus St. Paul wrote that we are saved "by the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3: 5.)

In spite of all this, General Booth took it on himself to repudiate the Sacrament of Baptism, assuring his followers that it was enough to remember during their ordinary daily ablutions that it was only through the Blood of Christ shed for them on Calvary that they were cleansed. Yet even he could not escape the need for an external ritual of some kind. So he instituted ceremonies of his own, appointing for the dedication of infants that an Officer, standing under the "Blood and Fire Flag" of the Salvation Army, should take the child in his arms and pray: "Loving Heavenly Father, take this child...(naming the child) to be Thine own." For adults, the "Swearing-in Ceremony for Soldiers" was to be enough.

The abolition of the baptismal rite as instituted by Christ and the substitution of these alternative rites by General Booth are wholly without authority, and presuppose on the part of those who accept his decision a faith in the General which is truly astonishing.

NO EUCHARISTIC RITE

In a similar way, and quite gratuitously, General Booth declared that the "Lord's Supper" was never intended by Christ to be a permanent rite, universally observed. He, therefore, rejected the Sacrament of the Eucharist altogether, saying that there was no need for any special ceremony of such a nature, and that it was enough for his Soldiers to remember at every meal that Christ's Body was given and His Blood shed for their redemption. All that was needed was to maintain spiritual union with Christ and recognize that He was the Source of their every need.

But the fact is that Christ said precisely of the special rite He instituted at the Last Supper: "Do this in commemoration of Me." (Lk., 22: 19.) He did not say: "Whenever you have even your ordinary meals, the food will be My Body!" St. Paul, also, tells us, speaking precisely of the Eucharistic Rite: "As often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord

until He come." (1 Cor., 11: 26.) Clearly He intended that the rite was to be continued till the end of time. But General Booth knew better, and declared it quite unnecessary. One can only be astounded, as I have said, by his amazing presumption; and, it must be added, by the credulous acceptance of his decision on the part of his followers.

It is possible to have zeal without knowledge. Religiously inclined people may experience profound emotional and moral aspirations and have the highest spiritual ideals, yet have standards of belief which a trained intelligence recognizes as a travesty of the revealed Truth contained in Sacred Scripture. Yet Christ, besides being the Life, is also the Truth and the Way; and He wants us to have the full Truth He came to teach us, and all the means of grace He came to put at our disposal. The Salvation Army does not preach the full Gospel; and even such elements of Truth as it does teach are blended with the unhappy mistakes of General Booth.

THE SALVATION ARMY'S PROGRESS

Through the genius and energy of William and Catherine Booth the Salvation Army rapidly became an international movement at once profoundly evangelistic and at the same time practically concerned with the physical and social needs of humanity everywhere.

The Booths became indefatigable travellers, despite their growing family of children. Foundations were made in U.S.A. in 1880, in Australia in 1881, and also on the European Continent, in most Christian lands, in India, Africa and many other mission fields. Today the Army is working in over 100 different territories, preaching its message in as many different languages, whilst it has some 28,000 trained Officers together with over 5,000,000 adherents throughout the world.

There have not been wanting those who have predicted that the Salvation Army cannot survive as a religious denomination, and that its scope as a purely social service organization will be greatly curtailed.

For the Army is committed to the same evangelical and fundamentalist articles of belief imposed on it in the first place by General Booth. There is no need to say that the increasingly secularized world finds such teachings more and more unacceptable. But even among non-Catholics who still believe in the Christian religion a deeper and more impartial assessment of history is intensifying the conviction that the Protestant reformation, resulting in the multiplication of conflicting sects, was a disastrous mistake; whilst further study of Sacred Scripture confirms the Catholic religious outlook rather than any other; so much so that there is a growing tendency to reintroduce doctrines and forms of religious worship which were wrongly thrown away in the 16th century.

The scope for social work on behalf of the underprivileged is also becoming more limited with the emergence of the "Welfare State." There will never come a time, of course, when there will be no room at all for organized activities of such a nature; but these will not have the same sense of urgency nor call for so much time and effort. The Salvation Army will have to rely upon its purely religious appeal for survival as a distinct denomination. And herein lies its weakness.

Magnificent as has been the zeal of Salvationists for all good works, again it must be said that it has not been zeal according to knowledge; and, in the long run, as knowledge increases, the Army is bound to decrease in numbers and influence, taking its place eventually as a religious phenomenon belonging to the past history of mankind.

CONCLUSION

That God has bestowed many graces upon the members of the Salvation Army in view of their sincerity, and abundantly blessed their work in many ways, no one would wish to deny. But this is not a reason for indifference as to the true nature of the Church as established by Christ, nor evidence that it is not important to belong to that Church.

Scripture, history and reason more than justify the claims of the Catholic Church to be that Church - to be the normal source of truth and holiness; and it is in the Catholic Church, did they but realize it, that Salvationists will discern the real meaning of all that they have long desired and loved. Within that Church they would find themselves far more at home than they ever imagined they would be.

Already they believe, together with Catholics, in the unshakeable truth of the Bible, in the reality of God, in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in the Divinity of Christ, in the wretched legacy of sin and man's need of redemption from it.

Already they believe in those eternal truths which invest human life with such significance and responsibility, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgement of all mankind with its everlasting verdicts of happiness for those who have loved and served God, and of misery for the lost.

Already they are used to the idea of authoritative teachings, their choice until now having been to accept those of the humanly-devised Salvation Army rather than those of the Catholic Church which Christ commissioned to teach all nations in His name and with His authority.

The disciplinary laws of the Catholic Church would not press heavily upon those whose spirit of obedience has long been fostered by loyal acceptance of the "Orders and Regulations" of the Army; whilst the standards of personal Christian virtue and devotion to works of charity inculcated by Catholicism would be of supreme appeal to them.

But in the end it is all a question of doing God's will because it is His will; of realizing that acceptance of Him involves acceptance of the Catholic Church also as being the one true Church He established; of worshipping God in the way He ordained by means of the Sacrifice of the Mass; of being cleansed by the Precious Blood of Christ and being sanctified by the Holy Spirit in a loving and fervent reception of the Sacraments instituted for those purposes and so well adapted to human needs.

Faith is needed for the understanding of these truths; and prayer is needed to obtain such a gift from God. But he who receives the gift knows clearly, unmistakably, and irrevocably, that he has arrived at the true spiritual home God meant to be his for the duration of his pilgrimage in this world, and in which he can best prepare himself for a destiny of heavenly happiness in eternity.
