

Sacrament Articles



The Salvation Army, and Its Relation to the Churches

Cannon Street Hotel, March 20th, 1883

To those who were with us last week it will not be necessary to repeat the harrowing details of the condition of the masses, but only to beg of you to bear those facts in mind in considering our relation to the Churches. Let me add also the terrible fact, ascertained by carefully taken statistics, that prior to the commencement of our operations, ninety per cent of these masses never entered church, chapel, or mission hall! Surely everybody who believes in any kind of religion, must see the awful necessity for some extraneous and irregular agency, adapted to reach this continent of dark, indifferent, infidel souls!

First. We are not antagonistic to the Churches. Anyone would suppose we were, from the adverse criticisms we get from Christian papers. This is quite a mistake; it is not so in reality. They do give us credit for having a great deal of the charity which endures all things, or else they must have expected we should have been driven into open opposition; but we do not intend to be. As the General said to the present Archbishop of Canterbury, when speaking to him about the Salvation Army: "We think that we have a claim upon your sympathy, because we do not seek to justify our existence, by finding fault with you." No; we do not attack either organizations or individuals. All we find fault with, is SIN; but if some people in the Churches find that the cap fits, we cannot help it. It is not with the Church, or the good and godly people in it, that we find fault. It is one of our most emphatic instructions to our officers: "It is not your business to go and find fault with other people. Rejoice in all the good done, by whomsoever it is done. Be glad whenever you find a good man or woman at work for God, and for the salvation of the people. Never try to find a hole in their coat or pull them to pieces. Mind your own business, which is seeking and saving the lost." We have acted upon this ourselves from the beginning.

Secondly. Neither are we indifferent to the opinion or sympathy of the Churches. We desire and value, as I think all workers for humanity must, the sympathy and prayer and assistance of all good men. We care very little about creeds. God has shown us that all forms are very much alike, when the spirit has gone out of them.

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We believe that God cares very little about our sectarian differences and divisions. The great main thing is the love of God and the service of humanity; and when we find people actuated by this motive, we love them by whatever name they are called. We do not set at naught their opinions. Friends would little imagine how carefully we have considered their suggestions. It is not very long since a minister said he had found out that "we were only playing at soldiering." These things of course are very painful to us, after my dear husband's thirty-five years' toil for the masses, and very much anxious thought, study, and prayer as to the best way to advance the Master's kingdom. We have done the very best we could, and we must leave such criticisms to rectify themselves, or rather for God and time to rectify them.

People think that we have adopted these plans and measures because of some personal predilection. They forget that we had to fight our way out of traditionalism and conventionalism just the same as they would have had to do if they had been laid under the same painful necessity. We were resolved on reaching the people, and therefore we have accepted the only conditions possible under the circumstances.

Thirdly. Neither are we diverse from the Churches in the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity. We have not adopted any of the new gospels of these times. We have not given up any of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as the Fall, the universal Call to Repentance, Justification by Faith through Jesus Christ, a life of obedience, Heaven and Hell.

Then you say, Wherein is the difference? Well, the main difference is in our aggressiveness. This is manifested in several ways. The Bishop of Durham, the learned Dr. Lightfoot, says: "The Salvation Army has at least recalled us to the lost ideal of the work of the Church, – the universal compulsion of the souls of men." Yes, we have been teaching our own people first, and through their influence others, that by the help and grace of God such measure of influence and power may be brought to bear upon men as may lead them to salvation. We teach them that we are to compel men to come in, that we are to seek by our own individual power and by the power of the Holy Ghost in us to persuade men, that the Gospel idea of preaching is not merely laying the truth before men, for the exercise of their intellectual faculties; but that a teacher and savior

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has something more to do than this — that he ought to be possessed of sufficient Divine influence to thrust his message in upon the heart, to make the soul realize and feel his message. This is our great characteristic — pressing the Gospel upon the attention of men.

We have not only to a large extent resuscitated this idea, but by the power of God (we claim nothing of ourselves) we have also raised a force of men and women who are now WORKING IT OUT, to an extent that no people preceding us, so far as Church history shows, have ever comprehensive idea of their responsibility, both as individuals and as an organization, than ever existed in the world before. There have existed exceptional men, many, thank God; but as an organization there is no record since the days of Apostles of a body that has so compassed the Divine idea, all its members being taught to make all the other objects and aims of life subservient to the one grand purpose of preaching the Gospel to every creature, and striving to win every soul with whom they come in contact to its salvation.

The same Spirit also that has awakened us to this continued and persistent activity, has also directed us as to the course in which it was to be directed. This same Divine Spirit has directed our attention to the moral cesspools of the country. We need not have gone to them. It was our own free choice. Many people do not know this; but we had no more necessity to do it than any minister in this room. Our path embraced all the comforts and prospects of a successful ministerial career; but as by miracle (I cannot account for it in any other way) we were led into this particular description of work. The General was led in the first instance, more especially, to contemplate these waste masses, this continent of souls, it seemed, without any light, life, or power, left untouched, confessedly by our bishops, clergy, ministers, and philanthropists, without any humanizing, much less to say Christianizing influences. My dear husband was led especially to contemplate these masses, and commenced in the East of London without any idea beyond that of a local work. God showed him that between the Churches and the working classes, as a rule, there was a great gap; he saw that there was needed some instrumentality that would come between the two, and take hold of this lower stratum, which, in the great majority of cases, was uncared-for and unthought-of; and he set himself to do it in the East of London. God so wonderfully blessed him that the work soon began to grow of its own aggressive and expansive force. Some of the greatest reprobates in London got converted in the East London Mission.

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They came for seven, ten, and fifteen miles to those services, to look at “Bill,” “Bob,” or “Jack,” some fighting, dog-fancying, or pigeon-flying companion, who was reported to have been saved on the previous Sunday, — and some of these got caught also. They were changed, transformed, and put into their right minds; and immediately became anxious for the salvation of their fellows. Some of these came to my husband and said there were whole streets of working men in their neighbourhoods who never went to a place of worship — could they not do something for them? Could they not open little mission rooms and set to work to try to save them?

In these early days we had no funds or helpers except a few voluntary working men, the richest of them not earning more than thirty shillings a week. My husband would say: “I have no funds, and I have nobody to be responsible; but if you can get anybody’s kitchen or an old dancing saloon or penny gaff, I will get some of my working men to come and help you on Sundays, and you must do the rest yourselves.” Thus, little Missions at Poplar, Canning-Town, and other places were opened; and in this way the Christian Mission has grown into the Salvation Army!

It grew because of the Divine life that was in it. We could not help it, even if we had desired to do so. All life must grow and develop; if you cramp it — shut it in — it will die. If it is to become powerful, you must let it have room to express itself. The Salvation Army has grown so fast because it has been allowed to have free course! God has helped us to raise a gigantic spiritual force in the land, which is

CARRYING OUT THE IDEA OF THE “COMPULSION OF SOULS,”

And we have, today, something like 1,200 officers of the Salvation Army, or what you would call evangelists — paid officers; and when I say paid, I only mean supported. We do not reckon to pay anybody, not even our staff officers. We have officers on our staff who a little while ago held positions worth from £200 to £800 a year, only receiving enough to keep themselves and their families in a moderate degree of comfort, who have made all sorts of pecuniary sacrifices in order to become Salvation Army officers; and we have many others waiting, who are ready at this moment to renounce lucrative businesses and situations to come and throw themselves into this work. We had, some months ago, 20,000 voluntary public speakers unpaid, that is, men and

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women whom their captain could call upon at a moment's notice for any kind of service: ready to spring into the gap, tell their experience, pray, march, go to prison, or anything else necessary for the salvation of their fellow-men.

At an Exeter Hall meeting not long ago, my husband had called upon what was once a poor rag-picker, a woman who was rescued from drink and depravity, though a woman of good natural ability, and a woman who, when her husband was worsted in a fight, he used to hand over his opponent to her, and she could manage him. This woman got converted, and when she reached home at ten o'clock at night, she dragged her three little children out of bed, and setting them on their knees round a chair, said: "Your mother never prayed with you before, but she will do it now." After such a beginning it is not surprising she succeeded in getting them converted, and in inspiring them with the love of God and of souls, so that they have become perfect heroines in this Army. My husband called upon this woman on Exeter Hall platform, without a moment's notice, to speak, and she did so. An influential clergyman said to me afterwards in the committee-room: "It is perfectly astonishing. There is not one in a hundred of us could do as well as that woman did if we were called upon at a minute's notice." Oh, yes; it is astonishing what, by the power of God in these people, they can accomplish. We had months ago 20,000 people of that type, and now near double that number, of course not all so gifted as that one, who speak nightly, and two or three times on a Sabbath in the open air, who have literally to fight with wild beasts, and to encounter the biggest rowdies and cut-throats in the country. They button-hole these men, and talk to them with tears in their eyes. They often kneel down in the snow or mud and pray and plead with them, in their way; and it suits them much better than ours would, because it matches their nature better. You must not think, however, that these trained speakers represent our troops. Oh, no; we have thousands of soldiers, who are most of them occasional speakers. These only represent our reliable open-air troops; but we are raising a mightier force than these, and God is showing us by circumstances the want of other kinds of officers. We have a new order of officers called "Sergeants," who come between the corps and the paid officers; and we hope soon to have a force of these who will systematically visit every public-house in the country, and scavenge houses of worse repute still, who will make it their duty to scavenge the back alleys, and worst places of resort in the nation, irrespective of abuse or ill-usage.

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WE ARE RAISING SUCH PEOPLE.

God is doing it through our instrumentality.

Is this any more than NEEDS to be done? Nay, will anything less than this determined hand-to-hand fight with evil, serve to stem the tide of sin and demoralization which threatens our national life? What a long time the Church has been singing — I don't want to reflect on anybody — but how long has the Church been singing: —

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus
Going on before"?

How long have we been singing: —

"Am I a soldier of the Cross?"

And yet how little hand-to-hand fighting with sin and the devil! God has, however, taught us better, and we are determined to carry the battle into the very strongest fortresses of the enemy.

A further difference between us and the majority of the Churches is, the resuscitation of the SUPERNATURAL, of the DIVINE. Here, I think, is our real power. We do not under-estimate intellect. God forbid. We have developed, as somebody said the other day, a large amount of intellectual power amongst the masses; because, you see, God's gifts are far more generously and impartially distributed than we are apt to imagine. Polish is not power; education is not intellect. We have found that out in the Salvation Army, if we had not done so before. Nevertheless, our is not a religion of intellect, of culture, of refinement, of creeds, or of ceremony or forms. We attach very little importance to any of these in themselves. We gladly take hold of some of these, and use them as mediums through which to convey the living energy of the Spirit; but the POWER IS IN THE LIFE, not in the form. Where there is no life you can only get death.

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You may get it in beautiful forms, in beautiful ceremonies and symbols; but if there is no life you cannot beget life. The vital point is the life — the spirit. We have resuscitated this old-fashioned religion. We defy infidels to account on natural principles for the results we have to show. We do not pretend that the presenting certain truths to a man's intellect, even if he accepts those truths, will change his moral nature. We recognize the SOUL as the reigning power in man, and we know that the only power that can really affect and transform the soul is the Spirit of God, therefore we do not attach much importance to people merely receiving the truth! Herein we differ very materially from most other evangelistic agencies. I receive many letters from people after reading our books, congratulating us that we do not teach the Antinomian doctrines of a great deal of the evangelistic teaching of this day, that we don't preach the "only believe gospel," but that we preach repentance towards God, as well as faith in Jesus Christ, and a life of OBEDIENCE TO GOD, and that, without this, mere theories, creeds, and beliefs will only sink people lower into perdition. Our religion is not a religion of mere enjoyment, nor of faith only, but we recognize the power of God, transforming and keeping the soul of man.

Fourth. We are ONE IN AIM with the Churches. Our object is the enlightenment and salvation and exaltation of the people. We have sacrificed all things for this. We have given, at any rate, the best proofs that human beings can give of our sincerity, in having made everything in our lives subservient to this one object. And surely this is the aim of all good and true men. Surely there is nobody professing to be the disciple of the Lord Jesus, who would say that their time, influence, position, and wealth ought to be consumed upon themselves! Surely men only actuated by philanthropy would say, "Of course these blessings must be used for the general good, for the exaltation and blessing of those who have not been so favoured by Providence." A member of Parliament said, a short time ago, "If it were only for the material benefits you are conferring by the reformation of all these drunkards and blackguards, bringing them back to useful occupations and to the position of reliable citizens, you deserve well of your generation." We think so too; but then we think that this can only be permanently accomplished in one way. Here is where we differ from merely philanthropic and temporal reformers — the power of the Holy Ghost. We have had a great deal of experience, and we find that drunkards who sign the pledge, if they do not get the grace of God, soon fall back again. They want this spiritual restoration, and it is being actually accomplished on tens of thousands of them.

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In conclusion, I think that these results ought to draw towards us the sympathy, prayer, and love of all really philanthropic, to say nothing of religious, men. If you think of this outlying continent of evil of which I have been speaking, — millions of these untaught, uncivilized masses, — if you just think that the Church, instead of aggressing on this territory of the enemy, is allowing that enemy to aggress upon her! What must be your conclusion? The Churches of this land, it is admitted, are not keeping pace by a long way with the increase of the population, much less overtaking the lapsed multitudes beyond. Then you have only to keep going on at this rate, and you see what will happen! If vice continues to aggress upon virtue, you see what is before us as a nation. You have all the elements of demoralization, disorganization, and destruction existing in your midst to-day. They are only waiting the development of circumstances, and then look out! I am sure of that. The conviction is burnt into my very soul, and yet we cannot get the respectable and well-to-do classes to awaken to the facts. "Oh!" as somebody said the other day, "the great want of this generation is public spirit." It is so difficult to get people to wake up to what is going on outside their own four walls. They separate themselves from these tumultuous elements and refuse to see them, and think themselves secure, when all the while they are sitting on the crater of a great volcano, which will, if they do not mind, burst and blow them up! What is to be done? Oh that God would awaken all really earnest and thoughtful men to ask this question! You must face this overwhelming torrent of evil with a direct **ANTAGONISTIC FORCE OF GOOD**, truth, righteousness, the fear and love of God, righteous living, and vigorous effort. You may educate; but don't you know, some of you, the state of the educated classes? Is it any better than that of the uneducated? Has not the education only increased the capacity for mischief? You know it is so. You know how fast we have been going back for the last fifty years in morality. It was time somebody tried to do something; and we have tried, and God has owned and blessed our efforts. We have never allowed any consideration of interest, or ease, or aggrandizement, or popularity to weigh with us for one moment. We have been satisfied to know we have been doing the will of God. We have only waited to be satisfied in our own minds with respect to the steps we have taken, and then we have gone forward in the face of the world, and shall continue to do so. We want you to do so. We do not say, "Do it in our way" only do it. Face the evil, and do something. Do not sit still in indifference and supineness. If you have any regard

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for your children, or for the future of this nation, or for the future destiny of the world, which so much hangs upon this nation, DO SOMETHING.

God only knows how deeply I desire that all godly men could present one common front to the foe, that we might be one in heart, one in purpose, and one in united effort. If this cannot be, let us all do our best. We intend to go on doing so, and we shall prepare the way for others. The Salvation Army is the friend of all and the enemy of none. We do not HINDER, but HELP the Churches. For whatever helps to humanize and civilize the people, must help the Churches. If there is a little noise and *éclat* about our work, never mind. If the masses are better for it, as some writer has said, you must paint with a BIG BRUSH for the million, there will be room for you to operate when we have gone along. As a rule, the Churches have been revived and helped by our operations in most of the towns to which we have gone. It is one of the disadvantages under which we have labored, that as our people get more refined and prosperous, many of them go off to the Churches, leaving us to struggle on with the masses beneath; and these are the people who could most help us with funds. Therefore we feel we have a double claim upon the sympathy of Christians. As they get so much help from us, they ought to help us to roll the chariot on ahead and do the pioneering and scavenging. We have the testimony of many of the bishops and clergy and ministers of all denominations to the stirring up of zeal and effort in their Churches attributable to the wide-spread influence of our movement; though, alas! On the whole, we get a poor return for it. I trust however, that better things are to come.