

What Is The Salvation Army?

Intro: We need something from the store, so we get in the car and head down to the local Wal-Mart. As we get out of the car, we begin hearing the ringing of the bell. As we get closer to the door, the bell grows louder and then we see the person standing by the door, ringing the bell next to the red kettle. Based upon the sign above the red kettle, we know it is the Salvation Army.

To many, about the only thing they know about the Salvation Army comes from what they see around Christmas time as they make their push for contributions. The other aspect of people's knowledge of the Salvation Army is their charitable work. It seems most view the Salvation Army as nothing more than a charitable organization.

As a result of this view, many Christians will contribute money (put some money into the kettle) to them. However, this is a total misunderstanding of the Salvation Army. This organization is a religious organization or denomination just as much as the Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, et al.

I. ITS ORIGIN

A. William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army.

1. He was born in Nottingham on April 10, 1829, and grew up in poverty.
2. He was *baptized* when he was two days old at Sneinton Church.
3. When he was thirteen (1842), his father sent him to be a pawnbrokers assistant in the poorest part of Nottingham.

B. His time as a Methodist

1. During 1844, he began attending the Broad Street Wesley Chapel (a Methodist Church) and had his conversion experience saying, "It was in the open street [of Nottingham] that this great change passed over me."
2. In 1846, he joined others in preaching in the streets delivering his first sermon on Kid Street.
3. In 1849, he moved to London to find work but continued his preaching.
4. Edward Rabbits after hearing him preach agreed to sponsor him till he could find a preaching position in the Methodist Church.
5. Later he was asked by a group of Reformers from Spalding in the Midlands to take charge of their Methodist circuit in Lincolnshire."
 - a. To prepare for this on February 14, 1854 he entered Dr. William Cooke's training college for prospective New Connexion Methodist Ministers in London although he found his studies difficult.
 - b. He was ordained in 1858.
6. On July 18, 1861, he wrote his official resignation letter that was accepted in 1862.

C. Evangelistic Campaigns

1. He held evangelistic campaigns in Cornwall and Cardiff and was supported through private sponsorship.
2. His first such campaign was held July 2, 1865 at the old Quaker burial ground on Mile End waste in Whitechapel (London).
3. "It was noted that 'the breath of many reeked with the fumes of gin or beer which drove from the already heavy air within those canvas walls the last vestige of wholesomeness.'"

D. People's Mission Hall and The Christian Mission

1. "In 1870 he founded the People's Mission Hall in Whitechapel. He moved out of London to Croydon the same year and changed the name to the Christian Mission" (Gassner 4:831).
2. The Salvation Army website says "in 1869 The Christian Mission received its name with Booth as its leader and in November 1870 the First Annual Conference was held" (Booth).
3. No doubt because of his upbringing and those with whom he had worked as a pawnbrokers assistant, "His work focused on areas of the city with the poorest people, whom other churches were not reaching" (Gassner 4:831).
4. Also in 1870, he established a "Food-for-the-Millions" program "which provided cheap meals for the poor. It ran until 1874 and was administered by his young son, Bramwell" (Booth).

E. The Salvation Army

1. It was not until 1878 that The Christian Mission was renamed The Salvation Army.
2. William Booth was named "General" which was a shortened form of General Superintendent that he had as head of The Christian Mission. "A 'Deed of Constitution' outlining his duties and responsibilities, which included the power to appoint a successor, was drawn up. Mission station preachers were given the rank of Captain and uniforms suitable to the ranks followed. A military discipline governed the lives of the officers" (Booth).
3. At the same time the first brass band was founded to counter hostile mockery.
4. "The language of Christian warfare and a military style of leadership predominated: uniforms, banners, and military titles were introduced, and the members were called 'soldiers of salvation.'" (Gassner 4:831).
5. Writing in 'The Salvationist' in 1879 Booth summed up the purpose of the Army in the following simple but striking way: 'We are a salvation people—this is our speciality [sic]—getting saved and keeping saved, and then getting somebody else saved, and then getting saved ourselves more and more until full salvation on earth makes the heaven within, which is finally perfected by the full salvation without, on the other side of the river'" (Booth).

F. Its spread to the United States

1. In 1879 The Salvation Army came to the United States starting in Philadelphia, however a previous effort in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1869 had been aborted.
2. "By the end of the 19th century, still largely under the command of various members of the Booth family, the Salvation Army was well established almost everywhere where there were North Atlantic commercial interests. It currently has corps in some two-thirds of the world's countries" (Bassett 2:574).

G. The Generals

1. William Booth died in 1912 and was succeeded by his oldest son Bramwell Booth.
2. "Edward J. Higgins served as the first elected general, beginning in 1929. The first female general was Booth's daughter, the dynamic Evangeline Booth, serving from 1934 to 1939. The Army's fifth general was George Carpenter, succeeded in 1946 by Albert Orsborn. General Wilfred Kitching was elected in 1954, succeeded by Frederick Coutts in 1963. Erik Wickberg followed in 1969; Clarence Wiseman in 1974; Arnold Brown in 1977;

Jarl Wahlstrom in 1981; and Eva Burrows, the second female general, in 1986. General Bramwell Tillsley was elected in 1993 and was succeeded by General Paul Rader in 1994, followed by General John Gowans in 1999, General John Larsson in 2002, and General Shaw Clifton in 2006. General Linda Bond was elected the 19th General of The Salvation Army in January 2011, the third female to serve in this capacity” (History).

II. ITS BELIEFS

A. Many of their beliefs come from Methodism since William Booth was originally a Methodist.

B. 11 Permanent articles of faith.

1. Introduced in this way: “The Salvation Army’s eleven articles of faith reflect our determination to remain faithful to our standards and principles. All members of The Salvation Army are encouraged to review these principles from time to time and to reaffirm before God their dedication to Him and to His good works” (About).
2. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.
3. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.
4. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
5. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
6. We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience, they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall, all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.
7. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.
8. We believe that repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.
9. We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.
10. We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.
11. We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
12. We believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, in the general judgment at the end of the world, in the eternal happiness of the righteous, and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

C. We would agree with some of these “articles,” but not all.

D. We can observe the Wesleyanism views emanating from these “articles of faith.”

1. Wesleyanism or Wesleyan Theology finds its origin from John and Charles Wesley (the founder of the Methodist Church).

2. In the fifth article their view of man is clearly taught—man is totally depraved.
 - a. Total depravity and the doctrine of inherited sin go together.
 - b. One supposedly inherits the sin of Adam and since he is born with sin (inherited sin as opposed to actual sin—a distinction they make but not found in the Bible), he is totally depraved.
 - c. Calvinism and Wesleyanism agree regarding the nature of man:
 - (1) Calvinism also teaches the inability of man to do anything good.
 - (2) Calvinism takes away man’s free moral agency and man is predestined by God’s choosing.
 - (3) Wesleyanism separates itself at this point believing that man even in his totally depraved state retains his free moral agency.
3. Salvation Army’s belief in man’s free moral agency is seen in several of their articles.
 - a. Article six in the comment, “whosoever will may be saved.”
 - (1) This is in line with what the Bible teaches regarding man’s free moral agency.
 - (2) Rev. 22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
 - b. The ninth article:
 - (1) They place the responsibility upon man when they state that the continued state of salvation depends on his “continued obedient faith in Christ.”
 - (2) This shows they believe that once someone is saved, he has the ability to choose to live in continued obedience or he can choose not to continue to obey.

E. Their views as to how one is saved.

1. In article eight, they correctly point out the grace of God by which we are justified.
 - a. Tit. 2:11 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,”
 - b. Heb. 2:9 “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”
2. They also mention “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - a. This is a reference to Eph. 2:8 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:”
 - b. Faith in Christ is essential to one’s salvation:
 - (1) John 8:24 “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.”
 - (2) John 14:1 “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”
3. In article seven we learn their views that we are saved by faith only.
 - a. As others who believe in faith only salvation yet believing in the free moral agency of man, they place repentance prior to faith.
 - (1) They cannot escape that man must repent.
 - (a) Luke 13:3, 5 “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
 - (b) Acts 17:30 “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”
 - (2) By placing repentance prior to faith, they can admit repentance’s necessity yet retain their faith only views.
 - b. It is impossible for repentance from a Biblical definition to come prior to faith.
 - (1) Repentance is not simply saying, “I’m sorry,” nor is it simply regret.

- (2) There is a sorrow that is involved with repentance, but one can be sorry and not repent.
- (3) 2 Cor. 7:9-10 “Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. ¹⁰For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”
- (4) Repentance is primarily a change, but a change regarding what?
 - (a) Vine writes, “In the N.T. the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God” (2:281).
 - (b) I would add that the turning to God must be in God’s appointed way.
- (5) There is no way you can turn from sin and turn to God in God’s appointed way without first believing in God.
- c. The Salvation Army places repentance first so they can teach their false doctrine of salvation by faith only yet retain man’s free moral agency and repentance from sin.
- 4. They eliminated baptism from the salvation process.
 - a. Gassner writes, “In 1882 baptism and the Eucharist were dropped as not necessary to salvation” (4:831).
 - b. The process of baptism might not have set well with those who were struggling financially.
 - (1) The aim of the Salvation Army was to help the poor and baptism simply was not important along that line.
 - (2) It shows the Army’s lack of respect for the Word of God.
 - c. The Bible teaches the need for baptism
 - (1) Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
 - (2) Acts 2:37-38 “Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
 - d. Most religious groups retain baptism (not for the purpose God gave it or the method God established), the Salvation Army would not retain it for any purpose.

F. More Wesleyan Theology:

- 1. In the tenth article more of their Wesleyan Theology comes out.
- 2. They state, “it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified.”
- 3. This is part of Wesleyan Theology called a second working of grace or second blessing.
 - a. Paul Bassett describes this second blessing in this way: “Wesley taught that subsequent to justification and regeneration, the Holy Spirit perfects the believer in holiness in an instantaneously granted second work of grace, ‘entire sanctification,’ which purifies the heart so that we may ‘perfectly love [God] and worthily magnify [his] name’” (Bassett 2:567).
 - b. Brother Kent Bailey explains it by writing: “Wesley advocated that this second blessing was a higher level of salvation that completely purged the human soul from the desires of evil and only permitted perfect love to be present. This doctrine is referred to today as *Total Sanctification* and falsely affirms that, when such is

received, the recipient of such loses all desire to commit sin and develops the inability to sin” (Bailey 101).

4. When the Army speaks of being “wholly sanctified,” they mean this false idea of Wesley of a second blessing or entire sanctification.
5. It is what Booth himself meant: “We are a salvation people—this is our speciality [sic]—getting saved and keeping saved, and then getting somebody else saved, and then getting saved ourselves more and more until full salvation on earth makes the heaven within, which is finally perfected by the full salvation without, on the other side of the river.”
6. The aspect of “full salvation on earth” is the Wesleyan false doctrine of a second working of grace or second blessing.

III. ADDITIONAL BELIEFS

- A. **The Salvation Army’s official website also gives a list of their “position statements” which mainly deal with moral issues people face today.**
- B. **They have 12 “position statements”**
 1. Abortion
 2. Alcohol and Drugs
 3. Economic Justice
 4. Euthanasia
 5. Gambling
 6. Homosexuality
 7. Human Equality
 8. Human Trafficking
 9. Marriage
 10. Pornography
 11. Religious Persecution
 12. Suicide
- C. **We would completely agree with many of their statements.**
 1. They uphold the Biblical view of the sanctity of human life and thus are opposed to both abortion and euthanasia and suicide.
 2. They are opposed to the sinful lifestyle of homosexuality.
 - a. However, they recognize that it is an action in which one engages and therefore even though one might have the desires, he does not have to act upon those desires.
 - b. They advocate celibacy for those who have a homosexual orientation.
 - c. They are also opposed to same-sex unions.
 - d. They have a high view of marriage being God ordained but say nothing about the divorce and remarriage problems within our society.

IV. SOCIAL GOSPEL

- A. **In these position statements, we observe a major thrust of the Salvation Army.**
 1. It is a religious organization (Church or Denomination).
 2. Yet, it is socially oriented.
- B. **They do a social work and preach a social gospel.**
 1. Notice the social emphasis in their position statements:
 - a. Economic justice

- b. Human equality
- c. Human trafficking
2. It is evidenced by the way in which most people view them.
 - a. Few people even realize they are a religious organization.
 - b. Most view them as simply a social organization for the purpose of helping those in need.
 - c. When people see the red kettle outside of a store with a person ringing the bell to get donations, most people only see an organization that helps the poor.
3. William Booth's background along with its purpose leads the Army to this type of a social gospel.
 - a. He was born and grew up in poverty.
 - b. He was sent to be a pawnbrokers assistant in the poorest part of town.
 - c. Gassner observed, "His work focused on areas of the city with the poorest people, whom other churches were not reaching" (4:831).
 - d. He established a "Food-for-the-Millions" program to provide cheap meals for the poor.
4. While in helping people, the Salvation Army does include some religious statements
 - a. The thrust of its work is more social than spiritual.
 - b. The spiritual takes a backseat to the social.
5. Their homepage discusses poverty, their disaster relief efforts, and at the bottom of the page they list several "Programs that help."
 - a. "Programs that help"
 - (1) Rebuilding lives
 - (2) Community and Fellowship
 - (3) Comfort and Support
 - (4) Contact us
 - b. Under "Rebuilding lives" they list these programs:
 - (1) Missing Persons
 - (2) Disaster Relief
 - (3) Prisoner Rehabilitation
 - (4) Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation
 - (5) Fight Human Trafficking programs
 - c. Under "Community and Fellowship" they list:
 - (1) Youth Camps
 - (2) Krock Centers
 - (3) Music
 - d. Under "Comfort and Support" they list:
 - (1) Christmas Charity
 - (2) Elderly Services
 - (3) Loneliness (League of Mercy)
 - e. All that is discussed is social problems and issues. There is nothing from a spiritual nature on the home page of their website.

C. They (like many in the Lord's church) have forgotten the thrust of the church is spiritual and not physical.

1. John 18:36 "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
2. The Great Commission is to preach the Gospel for the saving of souls, not to right the wrongs of mankind.

Conclusion: While we will still hear the ringing of the bell and many organizations will join hands with the Salvation Army, the Christian should **never** support or aid in any way this organization, as it is a false religious organization. We must oppose it. We must never put money into their red kettle even though a great deal of the money will be used to help those in need; Eph. 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*." The Salvation Army is an unfruitful work of darkness and by placing money into their red kettles we fellowship them in their unfruitful work.

The Salvation Army brings a false doctrine that is not the doctrine of Christ; 2 John 9-11 "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." We must not bid them God speed by giving them financial support for in doing so we become a partaker of all their false damnable doctrines.

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