



The
William Booth
Collection

Chapter XI

THE BIBLE

I

Comrades and Friends, — The British and Foreign Bible Society, which is an Association existing for the spread of the Bible all over the world, recently celebrated its One Hundredth Anniversary, at a great Meeting in the Royal Albert Hall, London. On that occasion the Society did The Salvation Army the honour of inviting your General, along with a number of bishops and other religious celebrities, to deliver an address. There was a magnificent gathering.

In that speech, among other things, I said something like the following:

'The Bible is one of God's greatest gifts to man. It contains not only the announcement of the sacrifice of His dear Son, but a revelation of His will as to the manner of life He wants men to live.'

The Bible has already worked saving wonders of great magnitude, and is closely associated with almost every important advance for the betterment of mankind which the human race has experienced.

The extent of the world's indebtedness to that Sacred Book for the privileges it enjoys will never be known, neither in this life nor the next.

What marvelous works of healing, alike to body, mind, and soul we Salvationists have witnessed through its wonderful words!

Still, we expect to see the Holy Spirit accomplish far greater miracles by means of the Blessed Book.

I. — To effect thee wonders can we not do something more than we are doing to secure for the Bible a wider circulation?



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There ought not to be a house in the wide, wide world, without a Bible; nor a man, woman, or child ignorant of its promises, or uninstructed in the value of its counsels and commands.

If I entertained the notions of some millionaires with respect to the Bible, and had the money at my disposal, I would place a copy of the Scriptures in every home in the world, with explanations that would bring its most important truths within the comprehension of every occupant.

II. – We want the Bible to be more carefully read.

I know that, with many, the Sacred Book is regularly read in a formal manner; but I want to see it more carefully and thoughtfully studied, and I want to make sure that all who read it understand its true meaning.

I am afraid that many of those Christians who profess to rest their every hope for earth and Heaven upon the Bible, and who make the loudest boast of its importance, only very imperfectly act out the practical principles it contains, and that only when such obedience is agreeable to their feelings.

III. – We want the Bible not only to be read and committed to memory, and repeated at all manner of times, and in all kind of places, but to be really understood.

For example, what strange mistakes are made with respect to its teaching. Only think of the error so commonly made in imagining that the favour of God can be enjoyed without obedience to His commands.

There are plenty of arguments designed to lessen the importance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, or to explain away its merit altogether, although the spirit of that sacrifice, and the blessings it brings, are the glory of the Bible.

There is plenty of interpretation of the Bible which vainly attempts to explain away the punishment of the wicked, so clearly announced in its pages.

Take away these things, and the Bible becomes not only an ordinary, but an uninteresting book, to be neither feared nor cared for.



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IV. – We want the Bible to be studied with a view to practical godliness.

You must read the Book, my Comrades, in order to learn how better to obey its commands and realize the blessings it offers. It is only in this way that you can discover the height, and length, and depth, and breadth of the religion of purity, and peace, and Divine communion, which are described and revealed in its pages.

I want my people to read the Bible with an eye on their obligation to follow Jesus Christ in that life of self-denying service which He led to seek and save the souls of men.

I want all who read the Bible to realize that the deliverance of men from the guilt, the power, and the indwelling of sin, and their being brought back to God, is the great object for which the book was written. That deliverance is the great purpose of the Word to-day.

It is for us, then as Salvationists, to give more heed to our 'Charter of Salvation.' We must see to it:

1. That not a single home with which we have to do is without a copy of God's Word.
2. That we read the Book of books more regularly, and urge others to do the same.
3. That we study the spirit as well as the words of the Holy Book, and that with a view to our realization of the blessings it offers, and the discharge of the duties it enjoins.

Your affectionate General,
William Booth.