

As a result both technologists and idealists attack human problems with the same facile optimism. The incarnation of man is a stumbling block for both.

I find Thibon both easy to accept in short doses and also a stimulus to fruitful contradiction. *Notre regard qui manque à la lumière* is composed of short pieces which lead one inexorably to acknowledgments some of which are as hard to take as Simone Weil's harsh and uncompromising picture of the remote necessity of God. But he also has some interesting things to say about the impact of the (undoubtedly desirable) overthrow of pharisaism which is one of the current triumphs of the Church, and which the French associate, naturally enough, with Mauriac and Graham Greene:

That faith and love triumph over law is an elementary Christian truth which only pharisees fail to acknowledge. What disturbs me is not the truth itself, but the indiscreet way in which it is displayed to the masses: God's secret divulged, love naked and stammering, vulnerable to the footlights and the barkers at the fair. Raised by their culture and inner life above social conformity, great minds seriously underestimate the danger of this. The mass of mankind is made up of a majority of mediocre beings. To prevent themselves being dissolved in nothingness, they need an unbreakable code of external observances. . . .

You proclaim that sloth, drunkenness, adultery are not absolute obstacles between the soul and God, so long as they are accompanied by charity and humility. Of course you are right, but when you reveal that *inner* truth in the glaring light of day, you run the risk of justifying the slothful, the drunkard, the adulterer, and fixing them solidly in their sin. Without giving them either charity or humility. Worse: you run the risk of sterilizing in them the germ of those virtues by inspiring in them a new kind of pride, subtler and more impure than that of the virtuous pharisees: the pride of the sinner who feels that he is saved no matter what he does, the complacent conceit in his own inner disorder. . . . The man who is *too* well aware that you can remain pure and humble and yet break the law is no longer either pure or humble. . . .

Are we all Scobies nowadays?

Religion and Social Work: Diocesan Rescue Societies as a Case Example by Noel Timms

The subject of this article¹ invites (and has received) discussion at a high level of abstraction, but the basic question can be posed quite simply: are religious social work organizations (such as the Diocesan Rescue Societies) religious organizations that undertake social work

¹The material was collected during the author's recent survey undertaken at the invitation of the Catholic Child Welfare Council. The opinions of Administrators of Rescue Societies are taken from an early phase of the enquiry conducted by Fr S. Sellar.

or social work organizations that are religious? To some this will appear an unhelpful contrast, but I hope to show that analysis in these terms yields fruitful results. Clearly, the question is based on certain assumptions, the most important of which lies in the discontinuity between religion and social work. Such an assumption runs counter to some commonly held ideas concerning the relationship between these two. These ideas are, I believe, mistaken, but I cannot at this juncture do more than make a brief outline of some of the main themes in what I would consider an adequate history of the relationship between social work and religion.

Such a history would have to deal with at least three important themes. *Firstly*, the practice of religious protectionism and denominational exclusiveness, which is difficult to reconcile with the universalism implicit in social work, will require consideration. Historically there have been strong traditions, not only that particular religious groups ought to care for their own, but that their members would suffer penalties if they received help from 'non-believers'. Thus, in 1677 the York meeting of the Society of Friends refused help to a member who had applied to the Lord Mayor, whilst in ancient Jewry a Jew living publicly on non-Jewish charities was considered to be like a pork eater and was disqualified from testifying in court. *Secondly*, an adequate history of the relationship between social work and religion must question the compatibility of the goals of social work and religion. Obviously these goals could be made to seem identical. We can—and do—talk of the goal of 'the good life' or 'service to the whole man', but agreement at this level of generality has no reference to concrete activity or to the intentions of individuals. We can see something of the differences between the goals of social work and of religion when we recall that many of the pioneers of social work took up their work to avoid doctrinal difficulties. *Finally*, we must question the close relationship often assumed to exist between the activities of social work (or charity) and the personnel and activity of the Church. It is all too frequently assumed, for example, that the Church has been in the vanguard of social service: '... it may be said without exaggeration that the history of the Church is coincident with the history of social service.'¹ But a recent comment by a committed Christian suggests an equally convincing view: 'modern welfare was in fact born of the Church's failure.'²

It is for reasons such as these that I would be prepared to defend the assumption of a discontinuity between religion and social work. However, these arguments are not essential to the analysis I propose. I wish to suggest that in considering any religious organization offering social work we are discussing not one organization but two—

¹Siedenberg, F., 'The Religious Value of Social Work'. *American Journal of Sociology* XXVII, No. 3, March 1922.

²Keith Lucas, A., *The Church and Social Welfare*, p. 15.

a religious organization and a social work organization. I hope to illustrate this argument by using the Diocesan Rescue Societies as a case example.

There are seventeen Catholic Rescue (or Children's) Societies founded at different times since Vaughan's Crusade in the second half of the last century. Each is in charge of a priest appointed by the bishop. The Societies vary in size from one diocese with a parish priest in a part-time capacity working with volunteers to another with a full-time administrator, two priest assistants and a large full-time staff. Societies also vary in the service they offer. Take, for example, the variation between Societies in the proportion of children in their care boarded-out with foster parents. Boarding-out rates in December 1967 were calculated with the following results:

Westminster 40%, Birmingham 15.6%, Cardiff 7.4%, Clifton 5.5%, Hexham 12.5%, Lancaster 36.3%, Leeds 58.5%, Liverpool 71%, Menevia and Plymouth nil, Middlesbrough 12.7%, Northampton 16.4%, Nottingham 50%, Portsmouth 66.7%, Salford 93.2%, Shrewsbury 27.6%, Southwark 22.9%.

Despite these and other variations it is possible to generalize about the Societies in terms of the two kinds of organization already mentioned. Now there are many ways in which kinds of organization can be studied, but in this exploratory article I will use the three simple categories of resources, activities and objectives. In terms of each of these categories there are important differences between a religious organization and a social work organization working within the field of child care. We can summarize these distinctions as follows:

<p>Religious Organization</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Objective</i></p> <p>To rescue children. To co-operate with statutory authorities to ensure 'religious' ends. To exercise jurisdiction.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Activities</i></p> <p>Concerned with deprivation in a weak sense. Religious practices.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Resources</i></p> <p>Religiously motivated personnel and religious headship. Resources 'unlimited' because providential.</p>	<p>Social Work Organization</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Objective</i></p> <p>To provide 'good' child care. To develop preventive work. To offer service.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Activities</i></p> <p>Concerned with deprivation in a strong sense. Professional activities.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Resources</i></p> <p>Professional personnel and teamwork. Resources scarce.</p>
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This expresses in summary form two 'model' organizations which, I believe, are present to varying degrees in each Rescue Society. In

the following discussion I shall attempt to develop the argument by considering the most important elements in the above scheme. I shall be concentrating on a discussion of the religious organization.

I. Objectives: The Rescue Principle

Catholics seem devoted to the enunciation of principles especially when considering social questions. So it is not surprising that the 'Rescue Principle' figures largely in the discussion, formal and informal, of Rescue Society Administrators. Is there any agreement about what it implies?

'Rescue' has two important historical associations; it has in the past applied to a kind of evangelical work amongst 'fallen' men or women or to an approach to child care which emphasized the urgent removal of children from an unhealthy environment. Thus, in the preface to *Haste to Rescue* by Mrs Wightman the objective of the book is seen as 'to stir up every heart to more earnest and prayerful effort to rescue those who are placed by God in a less favourable position'.¹ Whilst Barnardo rejoiced 'in the knowledge that hundreds of his children, many of whom had been rescued from the most sordid surroundings, were running free in the country, romping in the fields, gathering wild flowers . . .'.²

Associations of this kind with the term 'Rescue' appear to have something of an antiquarian interest, and some Administrators argue that the present application of 'the Rescue Principle' is based on entirely different considerations. As one annual report states, 'Rescue refers to the children's souls and not to the mother's morals'. It would be true to say that most if not all Rescue Societies have attempted some re-interpretation of 'Rescue', but elements of previous meanings still adhere to contemporary reformulations and the reformulations sometimes create new problems. These two points will now be separately considered.

It is true to say that Rescue Societies no longer emphasize the exclusive value of specifically Catholic institutional forms. It is clear, for example, that the following extract from a Crusade of Rescue Annual Report (1931) speaks for an approach that no longer has validity: 'Those who go to relatives are watched over by our after-care visitors who, in association with the priests of the parish, endeavour in every way to provide these children with Catholic companionship through the clubs and sodalities of their parishes and by means of reunions in Crusade Homes.' Similarly, we do not judge that *a priori* a Catholic Children's Home is preferable to a non-Catholic foster home. But traces of a belief in the almost automatically beneficial effects of a religious institution remain. As one annual report stated with regard to unmarried mothers, 'a religious setting is of major importance'. Whilst another expressed the view

¹Quoted in Heasman, K., *Evangelicals in Action*, Bles, 1962, p. 25.

²Williams, A. E., *Barnardo of Stepney*, 1943, p. 123.

that 'the fact the girls can spend about twelve weeks in the atmosphere of the home with all the help, sympathy and guidance that the Sisters can give them undoubtedly has a lastingly beneficial effect on them. . . .' A similar approach is to be found in those in charge of children's homes who stressed religious instruction and practice as the chief benefit for the children. As one of them stated, 'We have our own chapel and children are free to use it any time'.

These represent active survivals of aspects of the Rescue Principle in so far as they suggest the religious character of the institutions to which, as it were, the person is rescued. Survivals are also to be found in certain characterizations of what the person is to be rescued from. Thus, one Society in an annual report says, 'We exist, as all Rescue Societies do, to provide help where the danger to Faith or *Morals* involves a special demand on the Catholic Community, and there exists no other means by which the child can be provided for, without danger to its Faith' (italics not original). Another Administrator saw the Rescue Principle at work in the preventive approach which sought to keep children out of care, but it was the parents who were being 'rescued' from statutory social workers who would influence Catholics to resort to birth control, separation and divorce.

On the whole, however, it would be true to say that most Administrators attempt a re-interpretation of 'Rescue'. This is not to suggest that the residues of the old interpretation we have just considered can be dismissed as unimportant, or that the re-interpretations are successful. The first re-interpretation is to be found in an emphasis on the duty falling on the Catholic community. In this perspective Administrators are to be seen as helping the Catholic community to carry out its duty rather than aiding the 'official Church' in claiming her subjects. 'We Catholics', states a recent annual report, 'are bound to rally to the support of the weaker brethren and those most under pressure.' The report continues, however, by stating that 'Our motive is to rescue children whose Catholic Faith is likely to be lost'. Whilst another diocesan report speaks of the work of a Catholic voluntary society, 'to save the souls of children whose faith and morals are in danger'. In other words, it is possible to stress the community aspects of 'rescue work' without questioning the older language of saving souls or preserving the Faith. The social work organization model would suggest that we are now much less sure how 'to save souls', and that our aim should be seen not as preserving the Faith (as an abstract, almost once and for all operation) but as helping to develop people who may one day be able to believe.

A second re-interpretation turns our attention away from the child (who might but for Catholic intervention not have become a Catholic) towards the parents, and particularly the mother. In this perspective a Catholic Social Service is justified in terms of con-

scientious rights. 'As the social services function at present they need the help of the Church if the rights of a mother's conscience in this context are to be respected.' Or in the stronger terminology of another diocesan report, 'We only provide facilities to clients who have a difficulty in conscience'. This seems an attractive line of argument, but it is not without its difficulties. Are we sure, for example, that the people with whom the Rescue Societies deal are expressing more than a preference when they indicate that they would like their child to be brought up with Catholics? How much help is given to clients to make a properly conscientious decision as opposed to simply reacting to feelings of guilt? It is sometimes said that our Children's Societies exist to save unmarried mothers from guilt, but how much care do we take to distinguish pathological from normal guilt?

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II. *Activities*

In this section three general points will be made concerning: the standards by which the work should be judged, the special character of Catholic social work, and the non-psychological character of some of our work.

Standards. It is possible to find three kinds of statement made about the standards to be applied to Catholic social work on behalf of children. It can be expected that because such social work is carried on under Christian auspices it should aim at and attain excellence. 'The supernatural motive underlying Catholic charity', stated an American Conference in 1923, 'demands that in the care of her children the Church not only keep up with advancing standards of health, education, recreation and social life, but be in the vanguard with all genuine improvements.'¹

Alternatively, we can judge our activity by the highest standards, but mainly because this then gives us the right to a separate existence. One annual report, for example, calls attention to the very 'urgent problem of providing this care at sufficiently high standard to enable us to claim the right to have these children in our care while we try to teach them the way of salvation'. The same approach is evident in another report which sees that if the society is helpful to the local authority, the authority is more likely to carry out public policy with regard to religious safeguards.

Finally, it is possible to find, within Rescue Society thinking, an admission that the work may fall short of the professional expectation of the day, but it has other qualities which more than compensate. In other words, our work may not be very professional, but it is *very* Catholic. At least one society appears to consider that training of workers is something imposed from outside, and that their existing

¹A Program for Catholic Childcaring Homes', *National Conference of Catholic Charities*, 1923.

work 'is done all the more efficiently because it has this sound spiritual basis'.

The Special Character of Catholic Social Work. It is claimed and more often assumed that the activities of our Rescue Societies are special because the Societies are Catholic. The religious organization model (outlined earlier) assumes that this special character is fairly easily described whilst the social work organization model supports a more sceptical position. The following extract from an annual report (Salford, 1962/3) represents an unusually painstaking attempt to discern the 'distinct contribution that the Church has to make in the field of family casework, no less than in child care'. The report in question makes three points:

'In the first place, it is a particular concern, expressed within the casework relationship, for the "client's" human dignity and personal integrity as interpreted by Catholic philosophy. This concern for integrity and dignity may well include, yet goes far beyond, the accepted goals of human welfare and happiness. . . .

'Secondly, in her relationship with individual families the social worker strives to make a personal commitment that is altogether independent of results. One hopes for success always, but it cannot be expected as success is no part of the Divine promise. Failures, on the other hand, can be occasions for humility and compassion rather than despondency. The important thing is the commitment itself.

'Finally, the work—and, the very word—of Christian charity has in many ways fallen into disrepute. . . . Present-day ideals and methods of social work, with their insistence on unconditional acceptance rather than judgment, seem to represent not only a step forward, but a return to an earlier tradition of Christian charity when the poor, the sick and the outcast were succoured because of their needs. . . .'

This delineation of the special character of Catholic social service is of a fairly abstract kind and the unique features of such service remain, for me at least, hidden. Indeed, as the writer suggests, it is very difficult to distinguish social work from Christian social work. (Whether this is because of a contemporary 'return to an earlier tradition' or a secularization of this trend must await further historical research.) This difficulty can be further illustrated from other sources. 'Catholic social work is readily identifiable by its auspices, but to interpret it solely as a matter of sponsorship is to dilute its essential meaning. Besides its characteristic philosophy, Catholic social work aims to present a content of its own—a content of knowledge, methodology, and techniques which may constitute its definite contribution to social work. Substantial elements of these attitudes, methods and techniques are professedly common with contemporaneous social work. Yet distinctive elements of theory and practice are actually or potentially available to Catholic social work by reason of its heritage of religious truth, its insight into religious

experience, problems and aspirations, its access to Christian concepts and to the Sacramental System of such vital importance to its clientele. Added to this is the tremendous advantage of a sociopsychological framework identical with that of a substantial segment of the community's social work clientele.¹ There are two major difficulties in this kind of formulation. Firstly, granted the adequacy of expression, it is very difficult to see what difference 'insight into religious experience' would make to the actual practice of social work. Secondly, the whole argument implies a monolithic Catholic worldview which no longer obtains. Simply because a social worker and a client are both Catholics and so share some things in common, it cannot be assumed that they use an *identical* sociopsychological framework. This has at any time been a questionable assumption; the social worker and the client might, for example, belong to different social classes.

Some Administrators attempt to describe the distinctive character of Catholic social work by more concrete reference to the interaction between social worker and client who share the same religion. As one annual report states, the 'fellow-feeling between Catholic client and social worker will be of very great significance'. Another Administrator was of the opinion that Catholic social workers were in a better position to influence clients by performing an apostolate rôle, for instance encouraging them to receive the Sacraments frequently. This kind of approach does not, of course, commend itself to those who rely on a social work organization model, since it seems to suggest an activist religious role for the social worker. But the more important comment perhaps would refer to our lack of knowledge of the clients' view of Catholic agencies, the extent to which they experience 'fellow-feeling' with Administrators and other workers, and the extent to which such feeling is of actual help.

The Weak Definition of Deprivation. The religious organization model tends to emphasize a non-psychological view of deprivation. By this I mean that those working on this model will tend to take into care children who would not have been seen as deprived by other child care agencies. Thus, one Administrator supporting this policy instanced the case where the Catholic partner in a mixed marriage died and the father was not very concerned about bringing up his children as Catholics. In such a situation the Rescue Society would consider taking the children into their care. Another Administrator stated that he accepted into care children from homes that would not always be considered unsatisfactory by the local authority. He gave as an example a home in which the parents had not been married in the Church. This would be an indication that the child was not going to be reared in a Catholic environment and was therefore suitable for reception into care. In this context it is appropriate to ask a question concerning the way we describe 'a Catholic environ-

¹Catholic Social Work', *Social Work Year Book*, 1951.

ment'. How satisfactory, for example, is the question asked in some Societies of adopters and foster parents, 'Is there a Catholic *atmosphere* in the home?' (*italics added*).

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III. Resources

My summary chart suggested that the religious organization model and that based on social work adopt different views on the definition and use of resources. This can best be seen through a discussion of the religious headship of the agency. On the social work organization model the priest heads the agency because he is a trained social worker or because he serves in a transitional capacity until such time as a layman can be accepted by the hierarchy or by the lay members of the Church. The religious organization model, on the other hand, places much more permanent value on religious headship. There seem to be a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, the priest serves a symbolic function. For example, one Administrator thought the main rôle of the priest Administrator was to give the agency a truly Catholic stamp; moreover, people expected to see a priest when they came to a Catholic agency. Secondly, the priest has at his disposal a range of special expertise. He is not a social worker, though some think his priestly training gives a good grounding in human relationships, but he has his own specific contribution. This seems to take a number of different forms. He is alleged to help the staff since they can consult him in the knowledge that they will receive a Catholic point of view. He can make special judgments on the 'Catholicity' of clients, and he is, so it is claimed, specially skilful in the frequent business that has to be transacted with religious, both men and women. In short, the distinguishing mark of Catholic social service is a certain spirituality and the sign of this spirituality is the headship of the priest.

This idea of religious headship has certain consequences which do not always appear to be beneficial to the Rescue Organizations. From the point of view of the bishop it must sometimes seem that 'religion' is satisfied if an appointment has been made—the man is there, something has been done. He does not require additional resources, on this view, in order to attain a high professional standard of work. From the Administrator's point of view emphasis on religious headship helps to maintain a situation in which trained professional staff are, on the whole, not recruited. This results in Administrators, on their own admission, having to devote a great deal of time to close staff supervision. Religious headship and work on a genuine team basis do not, on the evidence, go well together. This is partly the result of the way we view the historical development within Rescue Societies, where the 'charismatic' work of certain individual priests has been very much emphasized.

Summary

In this paper I have tried to delineate a picture of the Rescue Societies as organizations. I have argued that in order to understand them we need to think in terms of two ideal types of organization, a religious organization and a social work organization. No single Society, no one Administrator embodies fully and without qualification either model, but Societies and Administrators all tend more towards one rather than the other, and the future of the Societies will depend on which model becomes dominant. It is, of course, possible to elaborate and refine the two models I have outlined. Religious organizations, for example, can have a number of different goals: the maintenance and development of religious practice; the inculcation of moral principles; the attainment of the intellectual understanding of religious beliefs and the development of commitment to Christianity. These cannot always be achieved together. But the distinction even in its very simple form between a social work organization and a religious organization does generate some significant questions and, above all, helps to lower the tone of discussion from its usual useless heights of monotonous abstraction.

Group Prayer and Contemplation by Simon Tugwell, O.P.

For most Catholics, a prayer meeting is a new and perhaps disturbing experience. However, in recent years an increasing number of Catholics have been meeting to pray together, in silence or in spoken prayer as they feel led by the Spirit; so it may be useful, for both enthusiasts and critics, to consider in general terms the advantages, objectives and principles of prayer meetings, and to face frankly the dangers and possible errors to which they are liable.

The basic principle of group prayer is the teaching of our Lord, that 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst' (Matt. 18, 20), and that 'if two of you agree about anything on earth in prayer, it shall be granted' (18, 19). For we are together the Body of Christ, and as such 'members of one another' (Eph. 4, 25). As Christians, we belong together; it is therefore natural and proper that we should exercise our most specifically Christian privilege of prayer together. This is what much of the recent liturgical renewal has been about.

Group prayer obviously falls into two kinds: formal, liturgical prayer, and spontaneous, free prayer. Originally, of course, these