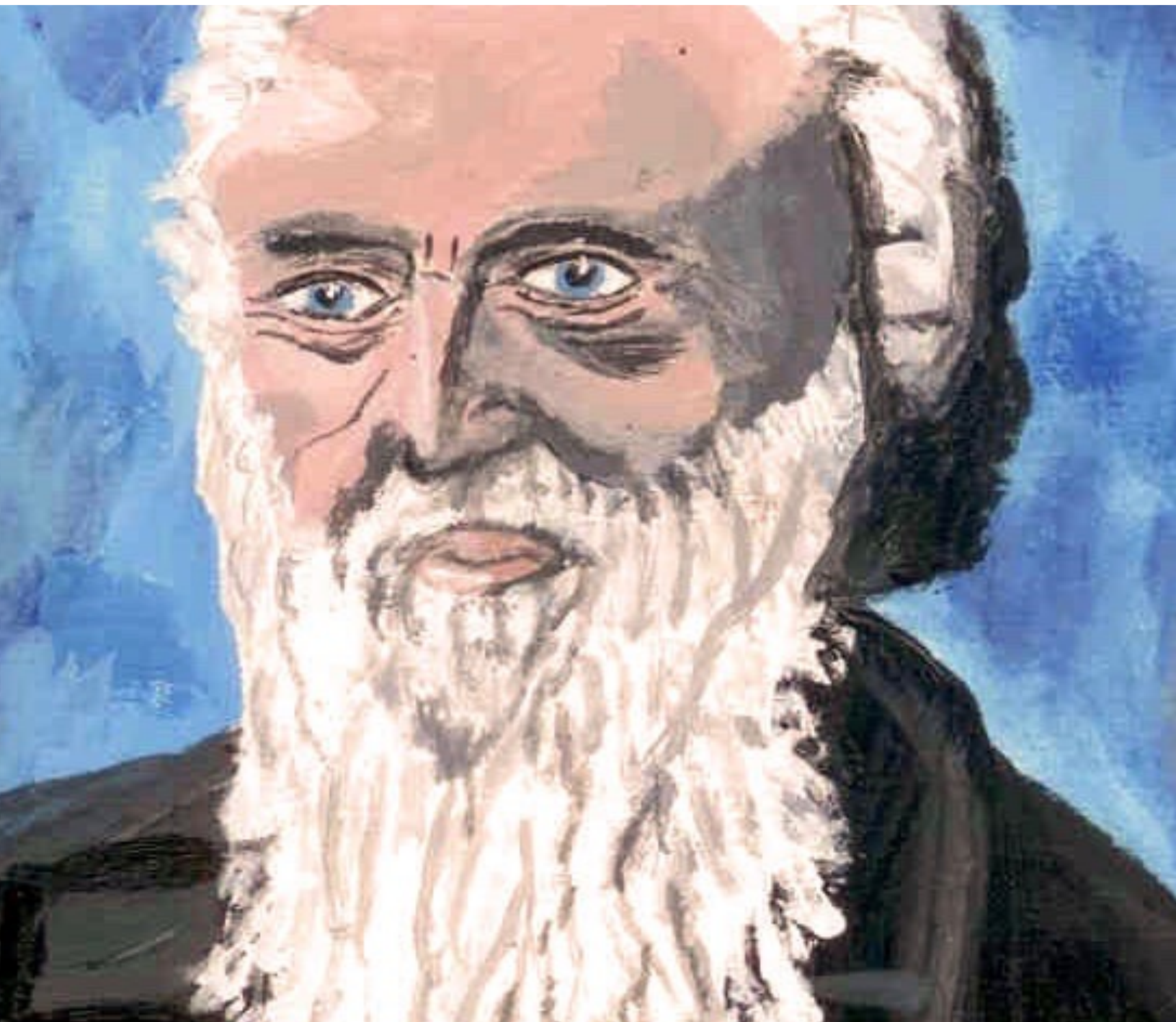




# THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE

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**They called him “The General.” William Booth had a dream to rescue England’s struggling poor and see them come to Christ. God bless you as you read his dream.**

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## WHEN THE GENERAL'S DREAM COMES TRUE – PART ONE

*Oh, the General's dream, that noble scheme, Gives John Jones work to do. He'll have a bed and be well fed When the General's dream comes true. For the hungry starving homeless wrecks Abounding everywhere, The scheme allows that either sex Shall have a cab horse fare. A cab horse has work you'll find, With food and shelter too. Man shall no longer be behind When the General's dreams come true. 1*

He was called “The General.” General William Booth was a man on a mission, a mission of salvation. He had a vision for both the spiritual and temporal salvation of nineteenth-century England's poorest citizens. There were many who stood with him, fully embracing his vision, and bearing the name he chose for them, “The Salvation Army.” How was Booth's vision expressed? It was expressed in many ways, but one very significant way that his heart and mission were revealed was in the publication of his book, “In Darkest England and The Way Out” (published in 1890).

What was “Darkest England?” Nineteenth-century Englishmen had a fascination with the continent of Africa. This fascination was fed by the well-known book, “Darkest Africa,” written by

Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904). This book captured the intrigue and sense of mystery which surrounded the largely unexplored dark continent of Africa. Stanley described in vivid language his journeys into the untamed forests, jungles and rolling plains of this adventure-rich land. Africa was considered to be “dark” because it was so under-explored, underdeveloped and dangerous. Ironically, England, which was in so many ways progressive, had its own dark corners. It is these dark corners that General Booth spent his life shedding light into. To Booth, Darkest England was the desperate world of England's slums. His book not only drew attention to this desperate world, but proposed a way out.

Booth's burden for England's poor, his efforts to draw attention to their desperate plight, and his optimism and hope for their deliverance is encapsulated in these gripping words taken from the preface to his book: *When but a mere child the degradation and helpless misery of the poor Stockingers of my native town, wandering gaunt and hunger-stricken through the streets droning out their melancholy ditties, crowding the Union or toiling like galley slaves on reliefworks for a bare subsistence, kindled in my heart yearnings to help*

*the poor which have continued to this day and which have had a powerful influence on my whole life. At last I may be going to see my longings to help the workless realized. I think I am. The commiseration then awakened by the misery of this class has been an impelling force which has never ceased to make itself felt during forty years of active service in the salvation of men. During this time I am thankful that I have been able, by the good hand of God upon me, to do something in mitigation of the miseries of this class, and to bring not only heavenly hopes and earthly gladness to the hearts of multitudes of these wretched crowds, but also many material blessings, including such commonplace things as food, raiment, home, and work, the parent of so many other temporal benefits. ... I have boldly asserted that whatever his peculiar character or circumstances might be, if the prodigal would come home to his Heavenly Father, he would find enough and to spare in the Father's house to supply all his need both for this world and the next, and I have known thousands, nay, I can say tens of thousands, who have literally proved this to be true, having, with little or no temporal assistance, come out of the darkest depths of destitution, vice and crime, to be happy and honest citizens and true sons and servants of God. And yet all the way*

*through my career I have keenly felt the remedial measures usually enunciated in Christian programs and ordinarily employed by Christian philanthropy to be lamentably inadequate for any effectual dealing with the despairing miseries of these outcast classes. The rescued are appallingly few – a ghastly minority compared with the multitudes who struggle and sink in the open-mouthed abyss. Alike, therefore, my humanity and my Christianity, if I may speak of them in any way as separate one from the other, have cried out for some more comprehensive method of reaching and saving the perishing crowds. No doubt it is good for men to climb unaided out of the whirlpool on to the rock of deliverance in the very presence of the temptations which have hitherto mastered them, and to maintain a footing there with the same billows of temptation washing over them. But, alas! with many this seems to be literally impossible. That decisiveness of character, that moral nerve which takes hold of the rope thrown for the rescue and keeps its hold amidst all the resistances that have to be encountered, is wanting. It is gone. The general wreck has shattered and disorganized the whole man. Alas, what multitudes there are around us everywhere, many known to my readers personally, and any*

number who may be known to them by a very short walk from their own dwellings, who are in this very plight! Their vicious habits and destitute circumstances make it certain that, without some kind of extraordinary help, they must hunger and sin, and sin and hunger, until, having multiplied their kind, and filled up the measure of their miseries, the gaunt fingers of death will close upon them and terminate their wretchedness. And all this will happen this very winter in the midst of the unparalleled wealth, and civilization, and philanthropy of this professedly most Christian land. Now, I propose to go straight for these sinking classes, and in doing so shall continue to aim at the heart. ... My only hope for the permanent deliverance of mankind from misery, either in this world or the next, is the regeneration or remaking of the individual by the power of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ. But in providing for the relief of temporal misery I reckon that I am only making it easy where it is now difficult, and possible where it is now all but impossible, for men and women to find their way to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That I have confidence in my proposals goes without saying. I believe they will work. In miniature many of them are working already. But I do not claim that my Scheme is either perfect in its details or complete in the sense of

being adequate to combat all forms of the gigantic evils against which it is in the main directed. Like other human things it must be perfected through suffering. But it is a sincere endeavor to do something, and to do it on principles which can be instantly applied and universally developed. 2 So, in trudging, foraging and bushwhacking his way through the social jungle of Darkest England, Booth did so, with a hopeful heart that expected to see God's victory. In writing his book, he explained his optimism in these words: *But this book is no mere lamentation of despair. For Darkest England, as for Darkest Africa, there is a light beyond. I think I see my way out, a way by which these wretched ones may escape from the gloom of their miserable existence into a higher and happier life. Long wandering in the Forest of the Shadow of Death at our doors, has familiarized me with its horrors; but while the realization is a vigorous spur to action it has never been so oppressive as to extinguish hope. Mr. Stanley never succumbed to the terrors which oppressed his followers. He had lived in a larger life, and knew that the forest, though long, was not interminable. Every step forward brought him nearer his destined goal, nearer to the light of the sun, the clear sky, and the rolling*

*uplands of the grazing land. Therefore he did not despair. The Equatorial Forest was, after all, a mere corner of one quarter of the world. In the knowledge of the light outside, in the confidence begotten by past experience of successful endeavor, he pressed forward; and when the hundred and sixty days' struggle was over, he and his men came out into a pleasant place where the land smiled with peace and plenty, and their hardships and hunger were forgotten in the joy of a great deliverance. So I venture to believe it will be with us. 3*

Having declared his optimism for change, Booth reminded his readers that they had not yet achieved the victory. They were still in the spot where the jungle was densest and the scene was darkest. Booth was not writing with light-heartedness but, instead, would use every word he knew to communicate the pain of England's poor and to communicate the call to action on their behalf. "Is it not time?" Booth asked and "can nothing be done?" For those who considered the plight of the poor to be hopeless, they would accept as fate the condition of England's poor. However, for Booth, and others like him, who saw the hope of help to be bright, they would act on this belief and lead a "revolt against the fatalism of despair." They would call fatalism for what it was, an

unacceptable excuse. They would declare that "it is time, and high time, that the question were faced in no mere dilettante spirit, but with a resolute determination to make an end of the crying scandal of our age."<sup>4</sup>

Booth was calling for immediate action. To all who would listen, Booth gave the illustration of a London cab horse who, while pulling a coach-load of passengers down a busy street, all of a sudden stumbles and collapses onto the hard road. The cab horse represented broken-down humanity which needed thorough, complete and practical aid. Booth said, "If you put him on his feet without altering his conditions, it would only be to give him another dose of agony; but first of all you'll have to pick him up again. It may have been through overwork or underfeeding, or it may have been all his own fault that he has broken his knees and smashed the shaft, but that does not matter."<sup>5</sup> How is the horse helped? Booth said, "The load is taken off, the harness is unbuckled, or, if need be, cut, and everything is done to help him up."<sup>6</sup> Then, the horse can return to his round of work. Again, the horse represented the struggling poor. A literal cab horse had the provision of "a shelter for the night, food for its stomach, and work allotted to it by which it can earn its

corn.”<sup>7</sup> Not all of England’s poor had these necessities.

While they didn’t have these basic necessities, they did have a friend in William Booth who was doing everything he could to make their plight known. According to Booth, Darkest England, this shunned sub-culture within larger England, was numbered at three million persons. Booth describes them as “men, women, and children, a vast despairing multitude in a condition nominally free, but really enslaved.”<sup>8</sup> Booth pictured Darkest England as three circles, one within the other. The outer and widest circle represented the starving and homeless poor who lived honest, law-respecting lives. The second, smaller circle represented those who survived by adopting sinful practices. The third, and smallest, circle represented those who survived by out-and-out criminal activities. Booth maintained that “the borders of this great lost land are not sharply defined. They are continually expanding or contracting.”<sup>9</sup> In times of depression, the borders of the dark forest of Darkest England would expand, pulling into the outer circle many who previously led self-sufficient lives. There was no class of persons that could not fall into this situation. Booth cautioned:

*So far as individuals are concerned, there are none among the hundreds of thousands who live upon the outskirts of*

*the dark forest who can truly say that they or their children are secure from being hopelessly entangled in its labyrinth. The death of the breadwinner, along illness, a failure in the city, or any one of a thousand other causes which might be named, will bring within the first circle those who at present imagine themselves free from all danger of actual want.”* <sup>10</sup>

Want and need were not only a danger, but a reality for multitudes in England. Booth was a loud voice on their behalf. He declared that:

*There is hardly any more pathetic figure than that of the strong, able worker crying plaintively in the midst of our palaces and churches, not for charity, but for work, asking only to be allowed the privilege of perpetual hard labor that, thereby he may earn wherewith to fill his empty belly and silence the cry of his children for food. Crying for it and not getting it, seeking for labor as lost treasure and finding it not, until at last, all spirit and vigor worn out in the weary quest, the once willing worker becomes a broken-down drudge, sodden with wretchedness and despairing of all help in this world or in that which is to come.* <sup>11</sup>

They could not be ignored; their situation was too desperate and their plight too serious. Again, Booth said of them; “They die and make no sign,

or, worse still, they continue to exist, carrying about with them, year after year, the bitter ashes of a life from which the furnace of misfortune has burnt away all joy, and hope, and strength.”<sup>12</sup>

William Booth simply had a tremendous heart for the poor. He was the General who would sound the charge into the battle of saving England’s poor. They were to him the sinking ones who were reaching for help. They needed help to rescue them from impossible situations which were pulling them deeper and deeper into poverty and also into crime as many desperately tried anything they could to survive. Booth wrote a book to trumpet their needs to all who would hear and to extend to them the message that there is a way out.

Shawn Stevens

## ENDNOTES

1. *Hell No! : The Birth of a Mighty Army*, Roberts Liardon Ministries, Audiocassette A0063.  
William Booth, *In Darkest England and The Way Out* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army, 1984), Preface.
2. Ibid., 21-22.
3. Ibid., 22-23.
4. Ibid., 26
5. Ibid., 27.
6. Ibid., 27.
7. Ibid., 31.
8. Ibid., 32.
9. Ibid., 32.
10. Ibid., 40.
11. Ibid., 50.

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Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing, 1982.
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## WHEN THE GENERAL'S DREAM COMES TRUE – PART TWO

What could be done for those in 19th century England who had lost all joy, hope and strength in their struggle to survive? William Booth maintained that we must not only preach to them the gospel, but we must do something to relieve their intense, immediate pain so that they could even hear the gospel that we preach. He argued that it was useless to preach to those “whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad, desperate struggle to keep themselves alive.”<sup>1</sup> Booth argued that such a one won't listen to our preaching because he is like a drowning man whose head is being held under water. It is not until he is brought to the surface, and receives air in his lungs, that he can calm himself enough to hear what we are saying.<sup>2</sup>

Could the plight and misery of England's poor be paralleled to the desperate struggle of a drowning man? Booth made known the shocking truth that, in the metropolitan district, over four hundred persons every year were actually arrested for trying to commit suicide. To them, life had become an unbearable burden.<sup>3</sup> Booth boldly declared; “But we who call ourselves by the name of Christ are not worthy to profess to be his disciples until we have set an open door before

the least and worst of these who are now apparently in prison for life in a horrible dungeon of misery and despair.”<sup>4</sup> Booth was committed to seeing them released from this terrible prison.

As well as being a voice for those who were out of work, Booth cried out on behalf of working families which could barely function as families because of their poverty. He said, “The home is largely destroyed where the mother follows the father into the factory, and where the hours of labor are so long that they have no time to see their children.”<sup>5</sup> He put forward the question; “How can a man who is on his omnibus from fourteen to sixteen hours a day have time to be a father to his children in any sense of the word?”<sup>6</sup> Booth pointed out that technology did not necessarily better the condition of the working poor but, sometimes, made it possible to extract more work out of them. He said, “In the town gas and the electric light enable the employer to rob the children of the whole of their father's waking hours, and in some cases he takes the mothers also. Under some of the conditions of modern industry, children are not so much as born into a home as they are spawned into the world like fish, with the result which we see.”<sup>7</sup>

Suicide, unemployment and the

stealing away of family time were all problems plaguing Darkest England. Were the problems that Darkest England faced being tackled by other organizations and institutions? Were there other answers to the dilemma outside of the spiritual, Christian help that Booth was, both living out and, calling for? The government of England did have a program of poor houses in operation. However, Booth saw shortcomings in the help that they provided. Recipients of this help came to the poor houses, or casual wards, weak and undernourished. Here, they would receive shelter and a meagre amount of food. Having received help, they were required to stay at the casual ward for a couple of days, in which time they would be given hard, physically exhausting work. Some would be given the task of picking oakum<sup>[1]</sup> and others engaged in stone-breaking. Booth protested that even criminals in jail were not worked as hard as casual ward recipients. He said, "These tasks are expected from all corners, starved, ill-clad, half-fed, creatures from the streets, foot-sore and worn out, ..." <sup>8</sup> Even from women recipients, onerous work was required. They would put in long hours picking oakum. They were expected to get up at 5:45 A.M. and retire for bed at 7:00 P.M. If they had not finished picking by this time, they would stay up until their work was

completed. They were also under the close watch of inspectors who gave them very little privacy. Once they had agreed to receive the help offered, they would be required to stay a couple of nights. <sup>9</sup>

If poor houses were insufficient, then what about trade unions? Booth acknowledged that trade unions had helped many people. However, Booth pointed out that only one-and-a-half million Englishmen were a part of their organizations. They only helped a fraction of the labouring classes and they could not assist those who were outside of their membership. In most cases, they were unhelpful to unskilled labor and they, in no way, could handle the breadth of the problem that Booth was expressing. He pointed out that women were also poorly represented in them. Respecting their contribution to society, Booth still wanted to know what would be done for those unassisted by trade unions. <sup>10</sup> While trade unions were insufficient to manage the problems of Darkest England, what about England's larger efforts of socialism in general? Again, Booth acknowledged socialism's good intentions but was skeptical that they could create the utopia that they seemed to claim. He said that the utopia "must be within range of my fingertips" if it is any use to me. <sup>11</sup> At

the same time, Booth maintained that his plan should not upset socialists unless those same socialists held anti-Christian sentiments against him and his work. He said:

*There is nothing in my scheme which will bring it into collision either with Socialists of the State, or Socialists of the Municipality, with Individualists or Nationalists, or any of the various schools of thought in the great field of social economics – except only those anti-Christian economists who hold that it is an offense against the doctrine of the survival of the fittest who try to save the weakest from going to the wall, ... 12*

Booth knew that not everyone would accept his Christian faith and mercy-for-the-weak based plan for assistance. There were many in England who wanted to see poverty come to an end but did not appreciate Booth's Christian stand and spiritual answers. Some of them were radicals, promoting revolution. Booth was clear that he was opposed to revolution which overturned institutions. He wanted to be a constructive, not destructive, force in society. Many revolutionaries hoped to see the discontentment and misery of the masses increase until it erupted to overthrow institutions and governments which did not share its ideology. Many

believed that things had to get worse before they could get better, and they hoped to see this process accelerate to this desired end.<sup>13</sup> Booth's hope was for the spiritual and temporal salvation of people and he was already living and seeing this hope slowly develop within the existing society of England.

Despite the fact that many of England's poor were finding spiritual and temporal salvation as they responded to Booth's ministry, many Englishmen were apathetic. Booth called to all who would hear him that we must recognize that we are our brother's keepers and that we must make this world more like home for our brothers.<sup>14</sup> How was this to come about? Booth maintained that, firstly, Darkest England had spiritual issues which must be resolved. He said:

*The first essential that must be borne in mind as governing every Scheme that may be put forward is that it must change the man when it is his character and conduct which constitute the reasons for his failure in the battle of life. No change in circumstances, no revolution in social conditions, can possibly transform the nature of man. Some of the worst men and women in the world, whose names are chronicled by history with a shudder of horror,*

*were those who had all the advantages that wealth, education and station could confer or ambition could attain. The supreme test of any scheme for benefiting humanity lies in the answer to the question, What does it make of the individual? Does it quicken his conscience, does it soften his heart, does it enlighten his mind, does it, in short, make more of a true man of him, because only by such influences can he be enabled to lead a human life? 15*

Desiring to see the nature of men change, Booth and his Salvation Army proclaimed the gospel and salvation that is found through faith in Christ. It is through this narrow way that both the inner and the outer life of a man or woman is transformed in a spiritual and victorious way. It is through living faith in Jesus Christ that men and women submit to God's rule and begin to experience an overcoming life which not only helps them in their situations, personally, but brightens and assists the lives of others. This spiritual provision is the most important provision in remedying the problems of Darkest England.

While spiritual provision was needed in tackling the problems of Darkest England, practical provisions were also important. Booth observed that the hard conditions of life in Darkest

England contributed to people moving from the outer circle of honest poverty to the inner circles of participating in sinful and even criminal activities in order to survive. He argued that practical support must be given to the struggling poor in order to stabilize their life enough so that they would be able to see that a good and godly life is possible for them through Jesus Christ. He said:

*It is no use standing on the firm bank of the quaking morass and anathematizing these poor wretches; if you are to do them any good, you must give them another chance to get on their feet, you must give them firm foothold upon which they can once more stand upright, and you must build stepping-stones across the bog to enable them safely to reach the other side. Favorable circumstances will not change a man's heart or transform his nature, but unpropitious circumstances may render it absolutely impossible for him to escape, no matter how he may desire to extricate himself. 16*

William Booth extended a hand to the struggling poor of his day. The help that he extended was both spiritual and practical. Booth preached salvation through Jesus

Christ to all who would hear. He also helped the struggling poor by advocating their cause and in many ways supplying their needs. He proposed solutions which trade unions and socialists could not match. He saw victories as God granted them. He pressed for the best.

Shawn Stevens

## ENDNOTES

1. William Booth, *In Darkest England and The Way Out* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army Supplies and Purchasing Department, 1984), 53.
2. Ibid., 53.
3. Ibid., 66.
4. Ibid., 44.
5. Ibid., 72.
6. Ibid., 72.
7. Ibid., 72.
8. Ibid., 77.
9. Ibid., 77-78.
10. Ibid., 85-86.
11. Ibid., 87.
12. Ibid., 25.
13. Ibid., 89.
14. Ibid., 91.
15. Ibid., 93.
16. Ibid., 94.

[1]“The substance of old ropes untwisted and pulled into loose hemp, used for calking the seams of ships, stopping leaks, etc.” *The Websters Unabridged International Dictionary of The English Language* (New York: The Publishers Guild, Inc. 1976), 1231.

## WHEN THE GENERAL'S DREAM COMES TRUE – PART THREE

William Booth and his Salvation Army did not shrink back from the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel and providing spiritual counsel to those within their continually expanding circle of influence. Neither did they shrink back from giving sacrificially towards tangible, practical aid to the needy. While courageously accepting responsibility for action, they also called the government of England to take responsibility and action. Booth's book, "In Darkest England and The Way Out," laid out a plan or, as he preferred to call it, a "Scheme," by which poverty could be eliminated in England through the work of the Salvation Army. Darkest England had spiritual, temporal and practical needs. The practical part of Booth's plan could be assisted by government support.

What was Booth proposing? He envisioned a three-component plan which would help lift the down-and-out into an environment where they could progressively advance themselves out of their poverty situation. He chose to call each component of the plan a "colony." The first component was the "city colony." The city colony was simply a set-up of institutions which would provide refuge for the struggling inner-city poor, providing for them immediate necessities such as food, shelter and

employment.<sup>1</sup> Booth's "Cheap Food Depot" had already been in operation for over two years and was expanding. By the time of the writing of his book, they had supplied more than three-and-a-half million meals. This program served as a model of what could be implemented on an even larger scale. For recipients of the program there would be a workshop, or labor yard, by which they could earn their bed and board.<sup>2</sup> Again, Booth already had a working model. The Salvation Army had erected an industrial factory at Whitechapel which, by the time of the writing of the book, was providing work for almost ninety men. Here, the men were occupied in work such as carpentry, bench making and mat making. Their rations were earned and earned within the reasonable framework of an eight-hour day. <sup>3</sup> What was Booth proposing to do on a larger scale for the out-of-work person who came to his doors? Booth explained:

*I propose to take that man, put a strong arm around him, and extricate him from the mire in which he is all but suffocated. As a first step we will say to him, 'You are hungry, here is food; you are homeless, here is shelter for your head; but remember you must work for your rations. This is not charity; it is work for the workless,*

*help for those who cannot help themselves. There is the labor shed, go and earn your fourpence, and then come in out of the cold and the wet into the warm shelter; here is your mug of coffee and your great chunk of bread, and after you have finished these there is a meeting going on in full swing with its joyful music and hearty human intercourse. There are those who pray for you and with you, and make you feel yourself a brother among men. There is your shake-down on the floor, where you will have your warm, quiet bed, undisturbed by the ribaldry and curses with which you have been familiar too long. Here's the washhouse, where you can have a thorough wash-up at last, after all these days of unwashedness. There is plenty of soap and warm water and clean towels; there, too, you can wash your shirt and have it dried while you sleep. In the morning when you get up there will be breakfast for you, and your shirt will be dry and clean. Then when you are washed and rested, and are no longer faint with hunger, you can go and seek a job, or go back to the labor shop until something better turns up. 4*

Once participants of the city colony were stabilized in their situation, they would be given the option of moving to the second component, the "farm colony." This would be a large area outside of the urban center, where

participants would be assisted and trained in agricultural life.<sup>5</sup> Booth had in mind the set-up of a farm estate which would be anywhere from 500 to 1,000 acres. The land would have to be suitable for market gardening with a variety of soil types. It would be freehold land and, ideally, would be close to a railway, the sea or to a river. Participants in the colony would be active in the construction of their own homes. Of prime importance, it would need to be a considerable distance away from any city which would have the allurements of bars and liquor. Booth's farm colony would be free of any intoxicating liquor. Booth argued against the opinion of some that the inner-city poor were not capable of such agricultural life. Many considered them to be worthless.<sup>6</sup> However, Booth said; "Worthless under the present conditions, exposed to constant temptations to intemperance no doubt they are, but some of the brightest men in London, with some of the smartest pairs of hands, and the cleverest brains, are at the present moment weltering helplessly in the sludge from which we propose to rescue them." <sup>7</sup> Again, once established in the farm colony, participants would have the option of continuing on to the third component, the "over-sea colony." For those who wanted it, provision would

be made to reestablish them in other colonies of the British Empire.<sup>8</sup> The over-sea colony would be similar to the farm colony. A large tract of land would be utilized for settlement and agricultural work. A competent body of workers, working under skilled supervision, would set up buildings, break up the land, plant crops and store adequate supplies for the future of the colony. A strong and efficient government would be set up to administer rules and discipline. Once established, the colony would become productive and revenues would be used to purchase from England machinery and other implements which could not be acquired locally. <sup>9</sup>

Booth summed up his plan in these words:

*The Scheme, in its entirety, may aptly be compared to A Great Machine, foundationed in the lowest slums and purlieus of our great towns and cities, drawing up into its embrace the depraved and destitute of all classes; receiving thieves, harlots, paupers, drunkards, prodigals, all alike, on the simple conditions of their being willing to work and to conform to discipline. Drawing up these poor outcasts, reforming them, and creating in them habits of industry, honesty, and truth; teaching them methods by which alike the bread that perishes and that which endures to Everlasting Life can be won.*

*Forwarding them from the city to the country, and there continuing the process of regeneration, and then pouring them forth on to the virgin soils that await their coming in other lands, keeping hold of them with strong government, and yet making them free men and women; and so laying the foundations, perchance, of another Empire to swell to vast proportions in latter times. Why not? <sup>10</sup>*

In addition to Booth's plan of the three colonies, he had other ideas to improve the conditions of the inner-city poor. For one, he wanted to set up a "traveling hospital." This would involve pony-drawn carriages equipped with basic medical supplies, which would be administered by nurses. They would service many ailing inner-city recipients who otherwise would not make it to hospitals. <sup>11</sup>

As well as traveling hospitals, Booth wanted a program set up to reform prisoners who had completed their sentences. First, he wanted permission for the Salvation Army to have access to the prisons to work with inmates. Next, recognizing that the transition from prison to society was very difficult, he proposed setting up homes which would serve as an intermediate step in this process. Immediately upon discharge from



prison, the men or women would be met at the prison gates and invited to participate in the homes. Here, men and women would have not only shelter but work provided by means of workshops.

12

Booth not only planned the set-up of homes for released prisoners, but he also planned homes for women trying to escape the life-style of a prostitute.

Booth had set up thirteen homes in England for this purpose. These homes were helping 307 women make the transition to a better life. The houses were run by 132 Salvation Army officers. Booth wanted to greatly increase the number of these homes and provide for these women the options of factory training, domestic training or admittance into the farm colony. 13 Booth wanted to “cheer these girls forward” and give them options by which he hoped “they will be much more likely to fight their way through seasons of darkness and temptation than as at present.” 14

In addition to the set-up of more homes, Booth was running an inquiry office for lost people. Thousands of persons every year went missing in England. Those who were poor could not afford the services of a private detective. All too often, their separation from family would be permanent. At the inquiry office, family members could come and report the absence of their kin and

receive help in locating them. 15

While England’s poor needed missing-persons search services, they also needed accessible legal aid. One initiative that Booth wanted to create was a court of counsel where anyone whose rights of liberty, property, or otherwise, had been violated could receive legal assistance. Booth was especially concerned that poor widows would have access to this service. 16

In addition to accessible legal aid, Booth even wished to set up an ocean-side recreation area where those struggling in the harsh environment of England’s inner cities could escape for a few days of rest. Here, they and their children would have a brief rest from the crowded cities, sunless alleys and grim streets.

17

Booth concludes his book with the firm assertion that this can all be accomplished. He said; “I believe that it can be done by the Salvation Army, because it has ready to hand an organization of men and women, numerous enough and zealous enough to grapple with the enormous undertaking.” 18 By the time of the printing of his book, the Salvation Army had been in operation for twenty-five years. It was the largest home and foreign missionary society in the Protestant world. It had close to

10,000 officers, 4,600 of whom were in Great Britain. 19 What would Booth's proposed program cost? He was asking the British government for 100,000 pounds to set up the program and an annual funding of 30,000 pounds.

These figures were the result of intense research. Booth felt that this experiment would not only be realistic but would be worthy to undertake. He pointed out how every year the government spent tens of thousands of pounds on economic ventures, such as boring for coal, searching for minerals and sinking for water. How much more worthy a goal was the elimination of poverty in Britain? Booth had already spent his life in the service of England's suffering poor and he had done so with tremendous success. With this appeal he pointed out that:

*I am now sixty-one years of age. ... I feel already something of the pressure which led the dying Emperor of Germany to say, 'I have no time to be weary.' If I am to see the accomplishment in any considerable degree of these life-long hopes, I must be enabled to embark upon the enterprise without delay, and with the worldwide burden constantly upon me in connection with the universal mission of our Army I cannot be expected to struggle in this matter alone. 20*

The British government responded to Booth's request and implemented the

plan. The first stage continued late into the 20th century and the final two stages were in operation until 1906. By 1906, as a result of the program, 188,684 people had found employment. 21

Dr. Wilbur Chapman, in an interview with Booth, asked him what was the secret of his success. With tears in his eyes, Booth answered:

*I will tell you the secret. God has had all there was of me. There have been men with greater opportunities; but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with the poor of London, I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth that there was. And if there is anything of power in The Salvation Army of today, it is because God has all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will, and all the influence of my life. 22*

Reflecting on this, Chapman concluded; "I learned from William Booth that the greatness of a man's power is in the measure of his surrender. It is not a question of who you are or of what you are, but of whether God controls you." 23

Under the control of God, the humble and large-hearted life of General William Booth rushed into Darkest England on a mission to bring salvation, both spiritual and temporal,

to the poorest of England's poor. Darkest England was a fearful place but there was a way out. Booth brought to them the message of life and hope through faith in Jesus Christ, and the practical help which would get the "cab horse" of struggling humanity again to its feet. The desperate man, the desperate woman, the desperate child, the desperate prostitute and the desperate one who has been separated from his family were all embraced and aided by Booth and his Army. The desperate ones, whose struggle was like that of a man who's head has been held under water, were lifted to a secure place of care where a strong arm was put around them and they were fed, sheltered and loved. You are hungry; here is food. You are homeless; here is shelter for your head. A mug of coffee, a great chunk of bread, a washhouse, clean clothing, a warm and dry bed, and lastly, a meeting place where the love and gospel of Jesus Christ was shared, were all gifts from the General to the destitute ones who populated England's slums. Darkest England was a despairing jungle of horror and pain. However, Booth and his Army trudged through the thick of it, seeing a light beyond. No set-backs could extinguish their hope. Every hardship became a vigorous spur to faith and further action. Their eyes were on the deliverance just ahead of them. Oh, the General's

dream, that noble scheme, gives John Jones work to do. He'll have a bed and be well-fed when the General's dream comes true. What began as a dream in the heart of Booth became for many the concrete deliverance from Darkest England's doom. With every caring act, Darkest England was lighted bright. Those who in despair found themselves on England's lowest bottom had hope generously handed to them. The love that they were showered with was the same love that sent Jesus Christ from heaven to earth. The acceptance that they were embraced with was the same acceptance that Jesus Christ showed to the ones who came to Him for prayer and teaching. The salvation that they found was the salvation that was paid for by the bleeding Savior on the Cross. The rescue that they experienced was one that put their life on a solid rock where they now could move forward, and upward too, for man shall no longer be behind when the General's dream comes true.

Shawn Stevens

## ENDNOTES

1. William Booth, *In Darkest England and The Way Out* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army, 1984), 99-100.
2. Ibid., 102, 113.
3. Ibid., 115.
4. Ibid., 114.
5. Ibid., 100.
6. Ibid., 136-137, 140.
7. Ibid., 136-137.
8. Ibid., 101.
9. Ibid., 153-154.
10. Ibid., 101.
11. Ibid., 178.
12. Ibid., 181, 183.
13. Ibid., 196-197.
14. Ibid., 198.
15. Ibid., 202-203.
16. Ibid., 229.
17. Ibid., 245.
18. Ibid., 249.
19. Ibid., 250-251.
20. Ibid., 293.
21. Cyril Barnes, *God's Army* (Illinois: David Cook Publishing Co., 1978), 73.
22. William Booth, quoted in Helen K. Hosier, *William and Catherine Booth : Founders of The Salvation Army* (Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing, 1982), 201.
23. Dr. Wilbur Chapman, quoted in Helen K. Hosier, *William and Catherine Booth : Founders of The Salvation Army*, 202.

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Art by Ramona Stevens

For this piece of art I was inspired by two which can be found at the following:  
[http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://www.bilerico.com/2010/11/salvation-army.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.bilerico.com/2010/11/why\\_you\\_shouldnt\\_give\\_to\\_the\\_salvation\\_army.php&h=527&w=570&sz=100&tbnid=wIG5BYs4Er7hAM:&tbnh=88&tbnw=95&zoom=1&sg=\\_\\_BXWDnakeIMjMSfudas\\_ehusSI4o=&docid=O1ol7H3bMYt-5M&sa=X&ei=zPhtUZCjKqvOigKik4H4Aw&ved=0CFsQ9QEwDQ&dur=576](http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://www.bilerico.com/2010/11/salvation-army.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.bilerico.com/2010/11/why_you_shouldnt_give_to_the_salvation_army.php&h=527&w=570&sz=100&tbnid=wIG5BYs4Er7hAM:&tbnh=88&tbnw=95&zoom=1&sg=__BXWDnakeIMjMSfudas_ehusSI4o=&docid=O1ol7H3bMYt-5M&sa=X&ei=zPhtUZCjKqvOigKik4H4Aw&ved=0CFsQ9QEwDQ&dur=576)  
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