Fiske Hall Graduate Seminar Paper Award

Booth's Army: The Salvation Army in Nineteenth Century Britain

Joel T. Schaefer

The religious landscape of nineteenth-century Great Britain was one that reflected the social and economic diversity and changes occurring. As the Church of England dominated the lives of most of Britain's populous at the opening of the century, its influence would be challenged by numerous missionary and evangelical groups in the latter half of the century. In 1851, the British Government conducted a religious census for the first (and last) time which examined church attendance. The Census of Religious Worship recorded where public worship occurred, how often they met, and the number of people involved in the parish. The attendance figures for England and Wales were: Church of England, 5,292,551; main Nonconformist Churches, 4,536,264; Roman Catholics, 383,000. The total population of England and Wales was 17,927,609. Over 34,000 places of worship were registered and millions of religious pamphlets were distributed and yet over five million people stayed away from the church census when it was given on March 30, 1851.[1] One of the many conclusions that these statistics reveal, or fail to reveal, was the changing social structure of British society. The social make-up of society became more subtle as a new industrial working class and a new commercial and industrial bourgeoisie emerged. With the creation of entirely new industrial communities, new religious sects formed and new tactics were employed to attempt to reach out to the urban poor. The Church of England continued its focus on the upper and middle class parishioners, neglecting the growing urban populace. In a meager attempt to address the lower classes the Church set out to create a Christian social climate which would by 'osmosis' influence the lives of the workers. This trickle-down religious philosophy of the Church never took root with the working classes of Britain, though.

One of the most successful sects was established by William and Catherine Booth in the 1860s in London. Known eventually as the Salvation Army, the Booths' mission group was targeting specifically London's inner city. "We have organized a Salvation Army to carry the blood of Christ and the fire of the Holy Ghost into every corner of the world." [2] By the end of the century, the Booths established the Army as a worldwide missionary organization which they based on the British military model. The Salvation Army became one of the formidable challengers to the Church of England's influence on Britain's urban population. For about a decade, the Salvation Army's growth was as striking as that of any post-apostolic missionary movement as it manufactured and sent out "officers" in an age of Christian imperialism.

The religious climate of the era was shaken by the evolving social and economic shift in British society. Upon visiting the new cotton textile factories in Manchester, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, "These vast palaces of industry shut out the air and light from the human dwellings they overhang; they envelop them in a perpetual fog; here is the slave, there the master;

---

[1] Anthony Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* (Rowan and Littlefield, 1973), 159.
[2] E.H. McKinley, "The Salvation Army: A Missionary Crusade." *Christian History* vol. 9 (2) 1982, 18.

there the riches of a few, here the misery of the vast number."[3] As industrialization emerged in Britain, the Church of England would be called to minister to a new demographic of people- the destitute who lived and worked in the urban environment. Drunkenness, prostitution, and crime became serious issues within these communities. Threats of violence and riots among the urban masses in Victorian England posed a serious challenge to institutions attempting to maintain the status quo. William Booth later wrote to the privileged classes about these squalid conditions stating, "The overcrowded homes of the poor compel the children to witness everything. Sexual morality often comes to have no meaning to them. Incest is so familiar as hardly to call for a remark. The bitter poverty of the poor compels them to leave their children half fed. There are few more grotesque pictures in the history of civilization than that of the compulsory attendance of children at school, faint with hunger because they had no breakfast, and not sure whether they would even secure a dry crust for dinner when their morning's quantum of education had been duly imparted. Children thus hungered, thus housed, and thus left to grow up as best they can without being fathered or mothered, are not, educate them as you will, exactly the most promising material for the making of future citizens and rulers of the Empire."[4] How was the Church of England to respond to such changes in the people they were supposed to minister to? In separate studies, De Tocqueville and Friederich Engels noted that while there may have been a "decreasing faith," surprisingly there was no fierce anti-religious bias which was found in continental radicalism during the same period.[5] Yet, at the same time, people were showing less interest in the Church of England- a church they associated with the middle and upper classes. As early as 1800, a report from Wolds county concluded that out of a population of 15,000, approximately 5,000 had no affiliation with the Church of England or any established religious institution.[6]

One measure taken by the Church of England in response to the growing urban population was to erect thousands of new churches throughout the cities. Despite the religious show of force, the Church offered no social outreach programs. It was the Church's belief that it was the people's duty to attend if a church was made available. The urban classes felt no connection with the high doctrines and rituals offered. Simultaneously, in the midst of urban development, English clergy sought rural parishes to free themselves from the new dilemmas encountered by clergy. This flight to the countryside seemed to represent revulsion for the new industrial society. "Churchmen were concerned with the possibility of internal upheaval. From them all came the view that the Church was the appointed instrument for securing social cohesion, for maintaining existing ranks and degrees, for ensuring happiness in the next world if not in this."[7] As problems of drunkenness, crime, and prostitution mounted, the task was seemingly overwhelming for the clergy.

Out of this desire to retain the status quo arose other evangelical groups who represented a sort of rejection of the high church. Most prominent among the early sects was John Wesley and his followers known later as the Methodists. In the late eighteenth century, Wesley traveled tirelessly from village to town on horseback preaching to great crowds. Formal theology and ritual aside, he pleaded with the listeners to seek personal salvation. Many turned away from the Church of England to follow Wesley's belief in faith, repentance, and individual

---

[3] Desmond Bowen, *The Idea of the Victorian Church: A Study of the Church of England 1833-1889* (McGill University Press Montreal, 1968), 251.
[4] William Booth, *In darkest England and the Way Out* (Carlyle Press, 1890), 65-66.
[5] Bowen, 254.
[6] Armstrong, 178.
[7] Ibid., 177.

redemption. Later, as Methodism spread to the United States, such reformers as James Caughey, Charles G. Finney, and Phoebe Palmer took up Wesley's mantle as passionate speakers and ignited a religious fervor that they brought with them back to England in the 1840s. Through such methods as door-to-door visits in the slums and preaching at night, these revivalists caught the attention of a young William Booth. Booth was mesmerized by their abilities to bring sinners to open confession, train converts to win over others, and their fiery preaching abilities. Booth believed where the Church of England failed was because of its inaction.[8] While Booth was baptized in the Church of England tradition, to him the Church seemed to center more on ritual than on practical Christian activity. Methodism was a faith of action and this intrigued Booth to the point of giving his personal testimony, and then first public sermon, at age seventeen in Nottingham. Listeners were so moved by Booth's ability to articulate his personal experiences that he was invited back and encouraged to speak at local Bible clubs.[9] In 1852, Booth met Catherine Mumford, a deeply religious young woman with social reforms notions that sparked an immediate interest between the two. William and Catherine corresponded for eighteen months before they were married in what would be one of the most influential marriages in religious history.

With Catherine now by his side, William Booth became a Methodist minister in 1859 and remained an avid student to Wesley's Arminian theology which was based on the ideas of "free salvation for all men and full salvation from sin."[10] Booth had a distrust of education in religion because he felt it took away the spirit of one's convictions and was distorted into formal dogma that did not appeal to the uneducated masses who, Booth believed, was in need of salvation. Embracing the tenants of conversion as a remedy for basic human sinfulness and using this empowering experience to change one's behavior, Booth became a tireless preacher in Gateshead. He would go to the streets, speak with the poor, bring them into church, and have them take part in his services. These techniques often made other parishioners uncomfortable as they were forced to sit next to these undesirable elements of the community. Booth had his first clash with the church structure because of such innovative tactics.

Another challenge to the institution of the Church came from Catherine. She would become associated with feminism and an advocate of women's suffrage in the latter part of the century. Josephine Butler, a feminist writer of the age, argued alongside Catherine that a woman's "training from babyhood even in this highly favoured land, has hitherto been such as to cramp and paralyze rather than to develop and strengthen her energies, and calculated to crush and wither her aspirations after mental greatness rather than to excite and stimulate them."[11] Catherine also spoke out and worked to convince others, including William, that women should have the same opportunities as men in the ministry. In 1859, she composed a pamphlet entitled "Female Ministry: Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel." Booth responded to his wife's pleas by stating, "I would not stop a woman preaching on any account. I would not encourage one to begin. You should preach if you felt moved thereto; felt equal to the task ... I am for the world's salvation; I will quarrel with no means that promises help."[12] Catherine preached for the first

---

[8] Harry Edward Neal, *The Hallelujah Army* (Chilton Company, 1961), 2. William Booth, born into poverty himself, was baptized into the Church of England but rejected its high doctrines and converted to Methodism as a young man.

[9] Ibid., 11.

[10] Norman Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army* (University of Tennessee Press/Knoxville, 1994), 26/

[11] Josephine Butler, "Catherine Booth." *Contemporary Review* (1890) vol. 58, 649

[12] Norman Murdoch, "Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth." *Church History* vol. 53 (3) 1984, 351

time in 1860 when she gave her testimony at William's Methodist New Connexion Bethesda Chapel in Gateshead. She spoke of her struggle over a public ministry leading up to that moment. Many wept throughout her testimony and William immediately announced that she would speak again that evening. Over the course of the next three years "many agree, no man exceeded her in popularity or results." "You far exceed me in the influence you can command in a service. You heard how they pitched into my writing and praised yours. There, as elsewhere, I must decrease and you increase," wrote William upon Catherine's ministerial success.[13]

Thereafter, William and Catherine threw a tireless energy into making revivalism a practical solution to the spiritual poverty they witnessed among Gateshead's poor. Since the poor were not made to feel welcome into churches, Booth believed that they should not feel uncomfortable in such a setting so he sought other locations. The Booths went from town to town holding revival meetings in dance halls, theaters, vacant stores or other secular locations. William Booth became so popular in his ministry in Gateshead that other town ministers became upset at his evangelism because he was absorbing hundreds of converts from local congregations. Despite his influential ministry, Booth was denied by the Methodists New Connexion to continue his "unorthodox" evangelical methods. William had reached a crossroads. His personal conflict seemed to place him between his love of freedom for winning converts, and his love of the structure and discipline the church offered. But by 1865, it was Catherine Booth who was invited by the Free Church Methodists to conduct a mission in Rotherhithe, a suburb of southeast London. Catherine had desperately wanted to go back to London to be near her parents and so William agreed to resign from his ministry as he had ambitions for creating a mission in east London to continue his ministry to the urban poor.[14] Thus, these events set the stage for a missionary that would soon spread throughout the country and eventually the world.

When the Booths arrived in London in 1865, William opened the Christian Revival Association, a mission financed by two East London extra denominational evangelical groups who had heard Booth preach in Gateshead. Catherine became the breadwinner of the family as she preached throughout west London and sold her writings. William focused on his missions which he would accept no salary for initially. William wanted his mission to combine evangelism with an urban revival mission to save the unconverted masses in rapidly growing cities. He sought a plan that would reproduce aggressive first-century Christianity which relied on the public speaking of laymen (and laywomen). Laypersons would go out into the streets, offer his/her testimony, and invite the nonconverted to meetings. However, Booth faced difficulties during these initial years in London sustaining regular meeting sites and winning over converts. "We can't get at the masses in the chapels. They are so awefully prejudiced against all connected with the sects that they will not come unless under some mighty excitement."[15]

By 1870, as Catherine Booth had settled into the care of their children which would last the next twelve years, William had grown tired on continually trying to find accommodations for his meetings so he began to shift his tactics for his mission.

Using his Methodist background, Booth established a Methodist-style government in 1870 which he ran as a general superintendent. He laid out an organization which provided for district superintendents and lay speakers who ran mission stations throughout London. Lay speakers would preach, sing, make house visits to the nonconverted, distribute pamphlets, and enter pubs to offer temperance pledging. Booth instilled in the lay speakers a revivalist vigor. Booth

---

[13] ibid, 354

[14] St. John Ervine, *God's Soldier: General William Booth vol. I,* (The MacMillan Company: New York), 247.

[15] Ibid., 275.

described the work of the lay speakers as "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, perfected by the full salvation without, on the other side of the river."[16] Despite being constantly bombarded with eggs, stones, and tomatoes, Booth and his lay speakers continued to proclaim the Gospel. Through constant pleading by converted thieves and prostitutes, gradually Booth's Christian Mission made an impression upon other wayward souls.[17]

The late nineteenth century witnessed a rise in the prestige of the British Army between the Crimean War of the 1850s and the Boer War at the turn of the twentieth century. "We may not be a military nation, but without doubt we are the most warlike people on earth," wrote General Garnet Woseley.[18] So popular had the Army become that a Volunteer's Army was created in 1859 which comprised over 600,000 volunteers from the middle class. While the upper classes would join as officers in the Army for an easy social and sporting life, the middle class enlisted "for want of work, pecuniary embarrassment, family quarrels, etc."[19] The Army constituted a kind of club where gentlemen could enjoy good fellowship, hunting, and a life of leisure, with a minimum amount of attention to the tiresome military routine. However, the pomp, glory, and leisure of the military-life eluded the working and poor classes of Britain. A London Recruiting officer noted that there was no incentive for tradesmen or skilled workers to enlist because aside from the care of horses, no useful trade could be learned by them.

Even though the British Regular Army did not enlist the working class, by 1877, William Booth had gathered that this love of military could be adapted to a "muscular Christianity" which might serve as an inroad into the tough lives of the working classes he was ministering among. "Booth wanted to merge the ideas of evangelism, lay enterprise, Methodist polity, and love for the military to produce a new sect with a sectarian polity, dogma, and discipline."[20] Booth thus drew up "Orders and Regulations" which were modeled upon the military orders of the regular British Army. In 1877 at the annual Christian Mission Conference, Booth made it clear that he was creating a system modeled after Queen Victoria's imperial command. As England was fascinated by militarism, Booth wanted to capitalize on the new mood by "invading the slums" and win over the souls of the urban masses. In order to bring a rebellious world to God, Booth believed that it required military tactics uncommon in churches. "The strong should help the weak and fresh troops should constantly join in."[21] Booth would weave military jargon into the same mission activity and lay speakers who had been working for the Christian Mission since 1870. In fact, if one ignores the military speech and terminology, there is not much difference from Booth's organization than from the Methodist structure.

The military aspects of what became known as the Salvation Army began in 1877 and it started with the autocratic leadership set up by William Booth. "Confidence in God and in me are absolutely indispensable!"[22] From 1873 until his death in 1912, Booth would control all property and funds of the Army. And while he created efficient management, many lay speakers in the Army were upset that Booth had so much control. Booth felt it necessary to maintain the

---

[16] Murdoch, Origins of the Salvation Army, 86

[17] Neal, 15. After the Booths moved to London, the Christian Mission was initially known as The East London Christian Revival Society then The East London Christian Mission and finally the Christian Mission.

[18] Brian Bond, "The Late Victorian Army." *History Today* (Great Britain) vol. 11 (9) 1961, 616.

[19] Ibid., 623.

[20] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 117

[21] St. John Ervine, *God's Soldier: General William Booth vol. 2* (The MacMillan Company: New York), 623.

[22] Ibid., 635

rigid discipline of the Army because of the difficulties of their ministry. When Booth held the annual conference, its purpose was not intended for debating and legislation but to gather those who "are in perfect harmony with us in purpose and in design." Booth would allow no controversy in army councils. He believed voting and committees to be wasteful. Thus, in an era of rising democracy, Booth's autocratic approach, while initially successful for the organization, would allow for a rapid decline if members did not adhere to his ideas and practices. In the 1880s, ex-officers would voice their frustrations publicly indicating Booth's domineering style of leadership within the Army. "People who are not with me in purpose and plan must not complain if they do not have my confidence. If they keep secrets from me, they may be sure I get to know it; little birds come to me in the midnight hour with such secrets, and they will be found out."[23] The same year, Booth founded *The War Cry*, the official newspaper of the Salvation Army which allowed the now titled "General Booth" to communicate with his "officers." Such militant terminology was immediately infused into the Army's vernacular: "field officers" replaced evangelist, "corps" replaced stations. When Booth was asked why he put out a weekly newspaper, he responded, "Because our Army means more war! Because millions cry to our inmost souls to arise and fight more furiously than ever for the salvation of our fellows! We shall conquer! To that end, let *The War Cry* go everywhere. Quick!"[24]

To add to the military dimension of the newly formed Army, Catherine Booth suggested that members of the Army should wear uniforms. Believing many of the lay speakers dressed too fashionably for the slums of the cities, Catherine and her daughters set out to design a uniform that could be worn with the pride of Christ's followers. The colors eventually adopted were blue and red, which also became the colors of the official Salvation Army flag, designed by Catherine as well. The flag was constantly used in leading processions as it prominently displayed the mission's new militancy as William declared that the flag stood for their spiritual victory. Emblematically, its crimson symbolized the redeeming blood of Christ and its blue represented purity. The motto placed on the flag was "Blood and Fire" for the blood of Christ and the fire of the Holy Ghost. Catherine Booth even presented the Army's colors to newly formed corps — a function Queen Victoria handled in the British imperial system. As their influence spread, the Booths felt the stinging criticism of the crown. The Booths' adoption of military uniforms and titles evidently disturbed Queen Victoria, believing her army was supposed to be the only army in Britain and she as its royal commander. The Queen let it be known that William's "generalship" was not warranted as this sentiment spread to the upper and middle classes. As the 1880s progressed, more upper-class people moved away from financially supporting the Army in part because of Victoria's disapproval.

Despite the Queen's response to the Army, the Booths continued to incorporate more pomp and spectacle to the Salvation Army to win over the urban poor. Another tactic adopted by the Salvation Army to rouse the souls of the nonconverted and influenced by the spirit of militarism during the late Victorian era was the implementation of brass bands and music at the meetings. Booth was himself an organist and a singer but he initially shunned the idea of music at his services because he believed they encouraged immoral behavior. Encouraged by his administrative executive, George Railton, Booth eventually changed his tune, stating, "Let us rescue this precious instrument from the clutches of the devil, and make it, as it may be made, a

---

[23] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 54.

[24] Neal, 14. . *The War Cry* was originally called the *Christian Mission Magazine*. Later it will take the name *The Salvationist* and it is still an international published newsletter today.

bright and lively power for God."[25] The Salvation Army acquired its first brass band by accident in 1878 when the Salisbury Corps were attempting to minister but were being heckled and mobbed by the people. Charlie Fry, who led the local Methodist choir, offered to come and play to drown out the hecklers. Fry was accompanied by his three sons Fred, Ernest and Bert who played the cornet, trombone, and euphonium respectively. Once they began to play, their music not only silenced the interruption, it attracted far more people than ever before. The demand became so great for the Frys to play at the meetings that by 1880, Fry and his sons gave up their building business and became the first staff band for the Salvation Army.[26] Booth made an appeal in the March 1880 edition of *The War Cry* to officers to take up playing whatever instruments they could including, "violins, bass violas, concertinas, cornets, or any other brass instrument, drums, or anything else that will make a pleasant sound for the Lord." The first official Salvation Army hymn was composed by W.J. Pearson in January of 1879:

Come Join Our Army, to battle we go,
Jesus will help us to conquer the foe;
Defending the right and opposing the wrong,
The Salvation Army is marching along[27]

Booth wanted to incorporate hymns that had themes of "blood that cleanses, the spirit that empowers, ... victories and triumphs that await" the soul.[28] Salvation Army bands began to be comprised of former drunkards, prostitutes and prizefighters who now led music hall revivals. Eventually, the "Salvation Army Soldier's Song Book" was issued in 1884, and in 1899, over 15,000 bandsmen from all over the world gathered in London for the first Salvation Army bandsmen's council.

After its official formation in 1877, the Salvation Army's initial years as a missionary organization were quite successful. In October of 1879, William wrote to his officers that God was using his Army "to mightily shake this whole land and to gather out of it a multitude of people to serve Him in the still mightier task of shaking the nations of the earth."[29] Much of the growth of the Army can be attributed to the efforts of lay persons who pushed the mission beyond its home base and financial resources. The individual "corps" led services which consisted of singing, short prayers, exhortations to be saved, personal interviews and personal testimonies to confirm one's faith. Members of the Army were given titles such as "Salvationists," "Bleeding Lambs," "Jesus," "Ranters," and "Shakers" by the communities. Between the years 1878-1886 the Salvation Army experienced phenomenal growth. In August of 1877, the Army maintained thirty-six stations and thirty-one evangelists. By 1879, the Army had increased to 122 stations, over 200 evangelists, and 4,000 lay speakers who were giving their testimonies to over two million in the street every week. The Salvation Army reached its pinnacle in terms of numbers serving in 1886 when there were 1,006 stations (now titled corps) registered and 2,260 evangelists (now titled officers) leading the mission.[30]

---

[25] Ian Bradley, "Blowing for the Lord." *History Today* (Great Britain) vol. 27 (3) 1977, 192. Booth heard a lively rendition of "Bless His Name, He Set Me Free" at Worcester Theater in 1862 to the tune of "Champagne Charlie is My Name" and commented on the audience's response to the religious tune to secular music.

[26] Ibid., 194. Today there are over 41,000 men and women involved in Salvation Army bands worldwide.

[27] W.J. Pearson. "Come Join Our Army." *The Salvationist.* 1 Feb. 1879, 33.

[28] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 108.

[29] McKinley, 19.

[30] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 140.

William continued to borrow from the British military structure by establishing training homes for men and women cadets in 1880. Basing his ideas on General Wolesly, the British Army General-in-Chief who himself modeled his training schools from the Prussian example for the members of its Volunteer Army, Booth was able to manufacture officers from the working class in three months from these training grounds. Booth's Army was especially strong with the working class because they were left out of the British Army and membership gave them an opportunity to be a part of a military club. With working hours decreasing, people had more leisure time to pursue religious, recreational and patriotic diversions. The Salvation Army offered all of the outlets through its organization. Additionally, the urban, like many others in the late Victorian period, were enamored by the military and this militant spirit spread throughout society. Such groups as the Boys Brigade (1883), Church Lads Brigade (1890), and the Boys Life Brigade (1899) were established to protect the young from moral contamination.[31] However, with society's newfound militancy came "combat" or violence against the Salvationists. Coupled with the fact that the Queen disapproved of the Army, many felt this gave them a degree of legitimacy in persecuting the members. The Salvationists were trained to face the rough crowds of people who resented the Army because so many of the converts were former co-workers and pub mates of the people they were now trying to convert. In 1882, roughs assaulted 669 Army workers.[32]

Yet during the same period, the Salvation Army saw its organization spreading rapidly throughout the country and even throughout the world. In 1880, William Booth had devised an imperial plan and he moved to bring the United States, Europe, India and Africa under his flag. It was his dream to create a worldwide disciplined society obedient to God. In a sense, Booth was merging revivalism and imperialism, again another parallel with the British military structure. "My business is to get the world saved; if this involves the standing still of the looms and the shutting up of the factories and the staying of the sailing of the ships, let them all stand still. When we have got everybody converted they can go on again."[33] Booth's mission would spread faster than he ever imagined. By 1886, the Army had invaded thirty-four countries and placed 743 corps with 1,932 officers overseas.[34] The overseas expansion efforts of the Salvation Army made it the world's fastest growing Christian sect in an age of missions.

For all of the masculine military rhetoric that the Salvation Army perpetuated, it was women who brought the most converts into the organization. Initially, Catherine had trouble with male Methodists who were so upset by the "unscriptural appearance" of a woman at the pulpit that they wrote letters to newspapers denouncing her. Traditionally, the ministry had excluded women from its ranks. But witnessing the success of his wife, William was determined to introduce thousands of working-class women into the ranks of ordained clergy. With the formation of the Salvation Army, Catherine turned her attention to the recruitment of young women. These young women realized that evangelism was not the first solution to the poverty they were encountering in the slum houses. They pressed William for an improvement in social conditions as well. Thus, soap and water brigades marched into poor homes to help mothers, talk with drunken fathers and attempt to save their souls. Even those in the Army recognized the importance of women at the time. The April edition of the *Christian Mission Magazine* (before it became *The Salvationist*) stated, "It has sometimes been said the female preachers would be the

---

[31] Neal, 17.

[32] Cyril Barnes. "*Salvation Army*." *Christian History* vol. 5 (1) 1984, 87.

[33] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 141.

[34] McKinley, 19.

ruin of the Mission. But on the contrary, it turns out that the prosperity of the work in every respect just appears most preciously at the very time when female preachers are being allowed the fullest opportunity... taking a leading position in the work at no less than nine out of 36 station."[35] Catherine went so far as to call for women's suffrage in 1886 in Britain becoming one of the forerunners in the women's rights movement. Led by Catherine, the women demonstrated an aggressive campaign for female ministry which many attribute the Army's worldwide success as it was recognized as a social reforming organization and an evangelizing agency.

At the height of the Salvation Army's influence in the early 1880s, some bishops in the Church of England began to court William Booth to join his ranks with their own. By the late nineteenth century, the Church of England was facing a decline in outward prestige as there were fewer registered communicants and fewer priests serving. Archbishop of York, William Thomson, told a workingman's meeting in 1878 that "The Church of England must either come into closer contact with the working classes of the country, or else her national position will suffer, and her leading position ultimately lost."[36] The Church of England needed some novelty in approaching the urban "heathen" and compared it to conducting a mission in Africa or Asia. The Church of England attempted to create more parochial schools for the betterment of "salvation, civilization, and subordination" but overall, the effort fell short.[37] Archbishop Longley remarked to Disraeli that the Church had lost the towns and Disraeli replied, "Your Grace is mistake. The Church never had the towns."[38] The Church of England began to replicate Booth's idea as they attempted a couple of urban missions which too possessed military jargon to them in hopes of reaching out the urban community. While Booth referred to these as "bogus armies," he was also willing to listen to the Church of England's offer. Recognizing the Salvation Army was increasingly shunned by the upper classes, Booth faced a conflict in his desire to be accepted by respectable Christianity and yet maintain the power and authority he possessed within the ranks of his own army.

In 1882, the Church Congress authorized a committee to approach the Salvation Army to discuss terms in which they would be used as an urban mission of the Church of England to attract the poor masses the Church felt unable to reach. Yet many in the church considered the Army's methods vulgar and demeaning to the high doctrines of Christianity. Randall Davison, the archbishop of Canterbury, expressed his concern with the Church of England's pursuit of the Army when he described the manner in which the Salvationists conducted themselves, stating, "When an excited and illiterate young man or woman is put forward to declare in the loudest tone 'what Jesus has done for me and what He will do for you,' there must be, here and there at least, the grossest irreverence. The risk, which is a grave one indeed, is inherent in the system pursued. And, again, in the excitement of a great meeting, when the rough audience has caught the enthusiasm of the speakers, and is joining vociferously in doggerel hymns or songs, to the noisy accompaniment of a great band, irreverence- gross irreverence in the view of every thoughtful Christian man- is, to say the very least, perilously imminent."[39] Issues of the sacraments, ordination of women, noisy worship, vulgar singing, and the exploitation of adult

---

[35] Norman Murdoch, "Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth," *Church History* vol. 53 (3) 1984, 354.

[36] Norman Murdoch, "The Salvation Army and the Church of England." *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, vol. 55 (1) 1986, 33.

[37] Ibid., 37.

[38] Ibid., 38.

[39] Ibid., 42.

and children converts' deep emotional experiences all bothered elders in the Church of England as well. But the principle sticking point in negotiations between Booth and the Church of England was the structure of the Church. Booth continued his autocratic-style of government within the Army and it was too much for him to sacrifice this authority to the hierarchy of the Church of England. Both sides retreated and never found common ground on which to unite. Relations gradually deteriorated between the Army and the Church of England in the later 1880s when the Church of England circulated charges that the Army promoted "hysteria" and "sexual immorality" in its meetings.[40] Thus, the merger between the Salvation Army and the Church of England never took place and the Army continued to function as an autonomous mission led by the Booth family.

After its initial success as an evangelical organization, the Salvation Army began to struggle by the late 1880s. The soul-saving methods of Booth's earlier years were no longer attracting the numbers of working class as once before. Despite its origins in east London, the Army failed to ever win over significant amounts of people there. Many in the Army blamed "respectable Christians" for not offering support, but the Army had concentrated its efforts on the Midlands and the North of England after too many difficult obstacles to overcome in London. "If anybody would like to try their hand with London, come along. There is a difference between London people and country people... You must not judge the Salvation Army by what you see in London. Go to Bristol, or Hull, or Rhonnda Valley, and you will find what it is capable of accomplishing."[41] By 1887, all but one of the East End corps were in serious debt.

Booth believed he was living in an ever-growing secular society and so by 1890 he turned to social salvation. He gathered material for "In darkest England and the Way Out" which he published in 1890 and sold over 50,000 copies in its first month.[42] Booth's plan was to end unemployment by moving the unemployed poor of the cities to the British colonies. The British government failed to fund any of his scheme which would allow working class people to go to British colonies to accept menial labor and assist others as well. Many within the Army were divided about social salvation as opposed to religious evangelism. Even Catherine Booth voiced her suspicion of her husband's plan stating, "Praise up humanitarianism as much as you like, but don't confuse it with Christianity, nor suppose that it will ultimately lead its followers to Christ."[43] Yet Booth persisted in his social salvation campaign as a means to win over souls to the Army. While addressing a crowd at the Royal Albert Hall in 1912, Booth stated, "While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while little children go hungry ... while men go to prison ... while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight — I'll fight to the very end."[44] Booth would die only three months later as a result of a failed eye surgery.

William and Catherine Booth came to London in 1865 and by 1880 they had created an imperial structure for evangelism. By capitalizing on people's love of military during the late Victorian era, the Booth's created an evangelical and social service ministry which administered

---

[40] Ibid., 49.

[41] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 151.

[42] Booth, *In darkest England*, iv. There have been six editions of *Darkest England* published since and it has served as a textbook for social workers in the late twentieth century in England and the United States.

[43] Neal, 208.

[44] Barnes, 89. One of Booth's last charges before he died on August 20, 1912 was to his son Bramwell pleading, "The homeless children. Oh, the children! Bramwell, look after the homeless. Promise me." Thus, Booth was indeed fighting to the end.

to millions of followers worldwide. To many, the Booths were the Salvation Army. Seven of the eight children graduated to leadership and produced a family dynasty possibly unmatched in church history. The Army's success lay in its social services to an urban population neglected by the Church of England. While evangelizing the masses did not always succeed, many of the social services created exist today.

Ultimately, Queen Victoria commended the Army's efforts recognizing it as a valuable social service to the lower classes. Once Edward became King in 1901, he openly gave his blessing and generous support to the Army. As the Army was recognized in a more positive light by royalty, Booth was welcomed into castles and courts in his later years. And the influence of the Army in Britain and the world continued well into the twentieth century as a social service and evangelical organization. In Royal Albert Hall, London, during the Army's Centenary celebration in 1965, a congregation of 7,000, including Queen Elizabeth II, heard Frederick Coutts, the Army General, declare, "If we ourselves, for want of a better way of speaking, refer to our evangelical work and also to our social work, it is not that they are two distinct entities which could operate the one without the other. They are but two activities of the one and the same salvation which is concerned with the total redemption of man."[45] While the Church of England remained the predominant religious institution of Britain in the nineteenth century, they failed to evolve and minister to the new urban classes. William Booth's conscious decision to replicate the military and imperial structure of the late Victorian Era to his urban missionary organization proved to impact those neglected working classes. Booth's Army would march beyond Britain and eventually invade over ninety countries throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[46]

---

[45] McKinley, 20.

[46] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, 164.