

CHALLENGING EVIL



Dispatches from
the frontlines of
Radical Justice

**with Chapter
Discussion Guides**

S. Carvosso Gauntlett

and

Cpt. Danielle Strickland

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INTRODUCTION

I was born into a Salvation Army family. Both my parents were ‘rescued’ by The Salvation Army from poverty and exploitation as young kids. Their salvation meant that my life was a very different experience from theirs. It meant ‘redemption and lift’. Because of that intervention, I wasn’t raised in poverty, I have no memory of a want that left me empty, or a hopeless word. There was a new future and a new hope in our family that extended to me.

Multiply this by generations and you have a glimpse of the living history of The Salvation Army. These are the effects of the transforming power of Salvation; not only for one person, but for generations of families, communities, villages, and nations. The ‘boundless’ message of Salvation is that God’s kingdom of hope and new life has come and is coming still. Hopeless, dark, horrible places can be changed by Good News. Salvationists agree with their lives. From our history to the current daily struggle in the streets, our experience is that the message of justice is for today.

The efforts of the early campaigns outlined in this book are as relevant today as ever. I dusted off an old copy and read every story with wide-eyed wonder as our history emerged with contemporary importance. The fight for social justice is increasing in intensity around the globe. Every issue covered in this small book suggests a current application. I believe God is breathing social justice energy into the current day

Salvation Army and this book can be a catalyst for action.

In some instances, redemption and lift separates from roots and calling. Many movements with incredibly rich historical realities become comfortable with the status quo. But I believe God is restoring The Salvation Army as a force against evil and sending us to be bearers of good news by confronting injustice in our day.

Please read this book for inspiration - not the kind of inspiration that allows us to sit around patting each other on the back for what we have done in 'our' history, but the sort that ignites a fire of discontent with the status quo; a sort that lets the early pioneers set the pace for social reform and emblazes us to catch up and finish the good work they started. Human trafficking, unjust trade practises, child labour and exploitation, vulnerable people groups, women and children's rights and prison reform remain current evils in today's world. Where are we? Where are you?

William Booth went out with fighting words; "While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight; 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!"

We are called to continue the fight, not just in rhetoric but in reality. Here's believing that these stories, along with the contemporary application and discussion guides, will fill you with hope for this generation to hold the standard and extend the fight against social evils. As Jesus' taught us to pray, "God's Kingdom come, God's will be done. On earth, as it is in heaven."

Cpt Danielle Strickland
Director Social Justice Unit
The Salvation Army

FOREWORD

GENERAL GEORGE CARPENTER

SOCIAL reformers and statesmen of many lands have paid tribute to The Salvation Army's great influence on social legislation during the past fifty years or more. This modest volume places on record some of the outstanding and more spectacular attacks The Army has made on conditions which degraded men and women materially or morally.

Though William Booth and his early helpers had undertaken social work-from the provision of cheap food and shelter for the poor to the care of discharged prisoners and fallen women-long before 1890, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, published at the end of that year, is the classic charter of The Salvation Army's vast and almost infinitely varied social operations all over the world.

Of that notable survey and the great redemptive scheme the book outlines, something is said in the following

. pages. It is worth emphasizing, however, that William Booth was by no means opposed to, in fact welcomed, the plans for social improvement based on Education, Trade Unions, Co-operation, Socialism and so on;

in fact, almost anything short of *violent* revolution.

But Utopia was too remote for the Founder of The Salvation Army. He wished to provide 'a present help for the actual need.' He declared that the need demanded a scheme immediately practicable; on a scale commensurate with the evil to be dealt with; permanent; not seriously interfering with the just rights of any other class of the community, nor injuring, indirectly, the persons it sought to benefit.

To change the nature of the individual (he wrote), to get at the heart, to save his soul is the only real, lasting method of doing him any good. In many modern schemes of social regeneration it is forgotten that 'it takes a soul to move a body, e'en to a cleaner sty,' and, at the risk of being misunderstood and misrepresented, I must assert in the most unqualified way that it is primarily and mainly for the sake of saving the soul that I seek the salvation of the body.

But what is the use of preaching the Gospel to men whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad, desperate struggle to keep themselves alive? You might as well give a tract to a shipwrecked sailor who is battling with the surf which has drowned his comrades and threatens to drown him. He will not listen to you. Nay, he *cannot* hear you, any more than a man whose head is under water can listen to a sermon. The first thing to do is to get him at least a footing on firm ground, and to give him room to live. Then you may have a chance. At present you have none. And you will have all the better opportunity to find a way to his heart, if he comes to know that it was you who pulled him out of the horrible pit and the miry clay in which he was sinking to perdition.

Most of the 'challenges' described in these pages sought to change conditions beyond the control of their unfortunate victims; yet even then the final triumph was won when these were not only delivered from outward thralldom, but helped to gain the supernatural power offered them in Jesus Christ.

Actually, every proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a challenge to social and every other kind of evil. Every time a group of Salvationists lift up their voices at a street corner, they contribute something to the betterment of the world. Their very witness is a rebuke to all whose evil-doing harms themselves and others, as well as an invitation to find personal and social Salvation in the One who, by dying on the Cross and rising from the tomb, most effectively conquered the powers of evil.

1

BRITAIN'S 'MAIDEN TRIBUTE'

FROM time to time newspapers carry a paragraph headed, say, BRITAIN'S YOUNGEST BRIDE, conveying the news that a girl has been married on her sixteenth birthday.

Sixteen is, in all truth, early enough for any girl to enter upon so important an undertaking. But it is due to The Salvation Army, and one of the ablest and staunchest friends it has had, that under British law no girl can marry *before* she is sixteen years of age, and that special legal protection is extended to those who have not reached that age.

Behind that fact lies a story which forms a dramatic chapter in Britain's social history and in the records of The Army.

To begin right at the beginning would take us back too far; but one cannot write of The Army's part without referring to one of the noblest and most heroic of Englishwomen, Josephine Butler. Wife of a scholarly Anglican clergyman, Mrs. Butler had - in defiance of every convention of her time, and in the face of almost incredibly vile and brutal opposition - for years carried on a vigorous crusade for a change

of laws which were grossly unfair to women. The whole long story is far from creditable to the public and the leaders of Britain; but all the more gloriously shine the example and ultimate victory of this gracious lady and her band of helpers.

When, in the early eighteen-eighties, The Salvation Army began its battle on behalf of the younger section of the country's womanhood, Mrs. Josephine Butler wrote to Mrs. Bramwell Booth - the pioneer leader of The Army's Social Work for women - that she regarded as 'an approaching answer to many prayers' The Army's 'assault against the most hideous stronghold of Satan, against which God twenty years ago led me to make war.'

This fact (she continued) makes me once more breathe freely ... for I have often feared the work would go back. I and my old trusted workers ... are dying out, and our enemies know it and are watching their opportunity ...

Nothing but a mighty spiritual power permeating a well-considered, wisely organized scheme will prevail against this passion in men to subdue armies of women for the service of lust; and in The Salvation Army is that wonderful spiritual power.

At the time when Mrs. Bramwell Booth - then only twenty three years of age - first met Mrs. Butler, she had already gained a terrifying insight into the moral evil which the older woman knew so well.

Now and again, already in Christian Mission¹ days, a girl from the streets had come to the Penitent Form, and some kindly sister had taken her home for the night. A Mrs. Cottrill, Converts' Sergeant of the Whitechapel Corps, gave up a room to such girls.

After several moves and extensions, a first small Rescue Home was opened, and in six months no fewer than eighty four girls had been received in the small cottage in Hanbury Street, London, E.

It was while speaking to these girls that the young wife of The Army's Chief of the Staff first glimpsed something of the horrors of the underworld in which they had been ruined. An organized traffic existed which secured mere children for immoral purposes in their own country and on the Continent; and 'if they were thirteen years of age...the men who destroyed them could not be punished...!'

Her husband was the only one to whom Mrs. Booth could speak of the terrible revelations made to her. Bramwell Booth himself, in disguise, wandered about certain neighbourhoods, 'wading,' as he expressed it in a most moving letter, 'through a sea of sin and defilement.' Fresh from these investigations, so hideous to his sensitive spirit, he consulted Josephine Butler and the Chamberlain of the City of London, Benjamin Scott, who was associated with Mrs. Butler's campaign.

Then, early one morning, the housekeeper of the Headquarters in Queen Victoria Street, into which The Army had moved two or three years before, found a decent-looking girl of about seventeen years outside the front gate. Coming up from the country in answer to an advertisement for help in housework, she had found herself entrapped in a brothel.

She had been given a beautiful silk dress and compelled to attend a music hall show with her 'mistress.' Escape seemed out of the question, though, when one man in the house approached her in a particularly objectionable fashion, the poor girl had managed to barricade herself in a kitchen. Left there for the night, in her distress she had suddenly remembered The Salvation Army. She had been to some of its Meetings in her home town, and on a Song Book she found among her belongings when she was able to creep upstairs was General Booth's address. At 4 a.m. she had escaped from the brothel and at last found her way to Queen Victoria Street.

Her story, and that of girls in the Whitechapel Home, led Bramwell Booth to determine to do all he could 'to stop these abominations, to rouse public opinion, to agitate for the improvement of the law.'

The law as it stood declared that any girl of thirteen was legally competent to consent to her own seduction. It refused to allow little girls of eight to give evidence against the monsters who had outraged them, on the ground that the victims were too young to understand the nature of an oath. The law against abduction was criminally lax.

A short time previously, W. T. Stead - a Darlington man who was to become one of the greatest figures in British journalism - had been appointed editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a newspaper of dignity and influence. Stead was a Christian man, an admirer of The Army and

¹ It was in 1878 that The Christian Mission, founded in 1865, became The Salvation Army.

particularly of Mrs. Catherine Booth, and a personal friend of Bramwell Booth. To him the latter related the facts he had ascertained concerning child enslavement and prostitution.’

Stead in turn made careful investigations, interviewed a number of girls and, in disguise, visited the worst haunts of criminal vice. He gained overwhelming evidence of the wide extent of the evils Bramwell”, Booth had told him about. Like his friends, he was horrified to find that, in , Christian England,’ girls from twelve and thirteen and up to fifteen years and more were bought and sold for the use of rich roués, big profits being raked in by procuresses and their agents who lived in luxury.

Stead’s findings were published daily for a week in July, 1885, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, under the title, ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon.’ The paper’s high reputation for exactitude increased the sensation aroused. One wonders whether anything in the history of British journalism can compare with the tremendous impression made by these articles. In the evening of the first day of publication, the few remaining copies of the paper were being snatched up in the City for half a crown each!

Throughout the country, Salvationists backed up Stead’s efforts in various ways. The Army Mother, in particular, addressed a number of great gatherings-in the West End, where Mrs. Josephine Butler and others supported her, and elsewhere. Catherine Booth also addressed letters to Queen Victoria and to the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, urging that the law should be drastically changed.

William Booth himself organized a monster petition to the House of Commons, for which within seventeen days 340,000 signatures were obtained.

Coiled up in an immense roll, measuring in length two miles (says Commissioner Booth-Tucker in his biography of Catherine Booth), ... the petition was placed upon a large, open wagon and ... driven to the entrance of the Parliament, where it was carried by eight uniformed Salvationists and deposited upon the floor of the House of Commons.

Bills with amendments of the existing law-the main point being the raising of the ‘age of consent’ from thirteen to fifteen years-had three times been passed by the House of Lords, but each time the Commons

had blocked them. A Committee of the Upper Chamber had inquired for ten months into the evils reported; Lord Shaftesbury had declared that nothing more horrible or wicked than these infamies could be imagined; yet for years the Lower House had held up any legislation.

The new agitation, however - which had so stirred public opinion - also aroused the Government. The Home Secretary sought the counsel of Bramwell Booth and of W. T. Stead, and early in August - a month after the *Pall Mall Gazette* articles appeared - a strengthened Bill was passed into law. By 179 votes to 71, the age of consent was raised - not to fifteen, but to *sixteen* years! ‘Children up to that age were henceforth to be protected so far as law could protect.’

This ‘Purity Agitation’ and its tremendous victory had a dramatic sequel, of which an admirable record is given in Chapter XV of Bramwell Booth’s *Echoes and Memories*. Suffice it to say here that, in the secret inquiries which preceded the publication of Mr. Stead’s articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the gaining of one vital piece of evidence had involved the ‘agitators’ in what technically could be regarded as the ‘abduction’ of a girl of thirteen years. General Bramwell Booth says: ‘We were summoned under our own Act, which, of course, provided for much heavier sentences than had been possible under the old law!’ And Mr. Stead:

The very legal officer, the Attorney-General, who had been compelled by our agitation to carry the Amending Bill through the House of Commons (as a result of the agitation of opponents of the Bill) prosecuted me and three or four of my comrades

W. T. Stead, Bramwell Booth, Rebecca Jarrett² - a recently-converted ex-brothel-keeper - and a Mrs. Combe, who had played a part in the ‘abduction,’ were brought before the Bow Street (London) Police Court and then committed for trial at the Old Bailey.

Throughout, there were certain inconsistencies hard to reconcile with traditional British justice. Indeed, Booth-Tucker, in his *Life of Catherine Booth*, speaks of a ‘travesty of justice,’ of a ‘great legal comedy.’

During the Bow Street trial the street outside was crowded with ‘lewd fellows of the baser sort,’ who repeatedly mobbed Bramwell

² The extraordinary story of this woman’s life, before and after conversion, will be found, with much else of great historical value, in Madge Unsworth’s book, *Maiden Tribute*, soon to be published.

Booth, dragged him out of a cab and maltreated him; he was rescued by the police with some difficulty.

Incidentally, the youthfulness of the actors in this drama should be remembered. Stead was thirty-six, and Bramwell Booth twenty-nine years of age; while Mrs. Bramwell Booth spent her twenty-fourth birthday at the Bow Street Court, her second daughter - then four months old - in her arms.

The Old Bailey trial lasted twelve days, and was followed most excitedly by the whole country. One interesting piece of history is pointed out by Mrs. Bramwell Booth, who recalls that Rebecca Jarrett, Mr. Stead and her husband 'were actually the first prisoners in England to go into the witness box and speak on oath for themselves.' This was the result of counsel insisting that advantage should be taken of the opportunity newly provided by the law for prisoners to give evidence on their own behalf.

The jury gave a verdict of Not Guilty against Bramwell Booth and Mrs. Combe; Jarrett and Stead were sentenced, the latter to three months - though the jury had recommended him to 'mercy' and wished to put on record their high appreciation of the service he had rendered the nation by securing the passage of a much-needed law for the protection of young girls.

Ironical that such a man should be sent to jail! Though he himself later said that the experience was one of the most valuable lessons of his life.

For us it is difficult to imagine the effect of the trial on Salvationists of 1885. The Army was only slowly emerging from a long period of persecution; in 1882 considerably over 600 Officers and Soldiers had been brutally assaulted, and more than eighty had been imprisoned. Now the rougher elements were set against them with renewed violence. The late Sergeant-Major Joe Stanton, of Norland Castle, once gave me a vivid description of the opposition encountered. Marylebone Corps, to which this veteran belonged at the time, suffered particularly, as its marches frequently led through Charles Street, where lived Eliza Armstrong - the 'abducted' girl - and her drunken mother. Stanton himself was twice carried to hospital, his life despaired of.

The spectacle of their young Chief of the Staff, the Founder's eldest son - the great Holiness preacher! - in the dock of the Central Criminal Court must have been disconcerting even to those who knew all the circumstances. Many friends of The Army must have entertained grave doubts and apprehensions. A titled celebrity indeed declared that the Armstrong Case, as it was known, would 'smash The Salvation Army.'

But The Army was beyond smashing. It was God's Army.

And in the long run, as General Bramwell Booth says-

The trial did The Army a great deal of good. It made us known, and put us at one stroke in the very front rank of those who were contending for the better treatment of the lost and the poor...Our work for women was greatly furthered...We knew... that the Queen followed the proceedings with great concern and sympathy. The case opened doors for us also in the overseas Dominions and in the United States.

More than forty years later, General Bramwell Booth visited Hungary, where I was then stationed. As soon as the preliminary announcement was given to the press, a leading Budapest paper published a lengthy article about Bramwell Booth and the Purity Agitation. At the most *we* might have thought of mentioning the story as an episode in a crowded life; but in a land where The Army had not begun work till 1924 the memory of that drama was still alive in influential circles!

Salvationists of to-day should not forget the achievement of those young men and women of great conviction, compassion and courage.