

GENERAL BOOTH

One of the greatest religious leaders and reformers of all time was General William Booth, founder and head of the Salvation Army. The discipline of the Salvation Army is so rigorous, its standards so high, and its methods so strenuous, it probably never will attract the great mass of professing Christians. But, like the Friends Church, the Salvation Army has had a tremendous influence in the deepening of spiritual life, and in opening up new channels of Christian service and blessing. Israel was a small nation, but to that people God gave the adoption, the covenants, the oracles, and the law. He made Israel the 'husbandmen' or teachers of the world. In like manner He has taught the world many great lessons through the Salvation Army.

Perhaps all other denominations of Christians have been more one-sided than has the Salvation Army. The Roman Catholic Church placed too much stress on outward works, forms and ceremonies. The Protestant Churches probably went to the other extreme, and emphasized the act of faith to the neglect of insisting on good works and holy living. But the Salvation Army has given the world a new and greater vision of how saving faith should lead to a life of consecration and service. No other denomination of Christians seems to have realized so fully the duty of going out into the highways and byways to minister to the lost and suffering. The Army is 'The church of the 'black sheep '''

The Salvation Army has given the world a new conception of Christianity, and has won the confidence of the masses. They have not spent their time in discussing creeds and theories, but have clothed the naked, fed the hungry, and visited the sick and in prison, and have thus won the people for Christ. On the great day of judgment the sheep are separated from the goats not by an examination of their theories, but by an examination as to whether or not they have really loved their neighbors and ministered to the sick, suffering, and needy as did the divine Master when here on earth. The Salvation Army will probably measure up to this real test of love better than others who bear the name of Christ. Their creed is a brief one. It has been summed up in three words — Soap, Soup, and Salvation. They believe in soap to clean men outwardly and better their physical condition; in soup to satisfy their hunger and prepare them to receive the message of Salvation; and in a full and free salvation for all mankind who meet the conditions.

While "less creed and more deed" is the fundamental basis of the Salvation Army, they do not neglect the great essential doctrines of repentance, faith, and the necessity of holy living. To them repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, but a real turning away from sin. Faith is not a mere intellectual act completed in a few seconds; but is a real reliance of the soul upon Christ, beginning instantly but continuing through time and eternity. In every Salvation Army corps throughout the world a Holiness Meeting is held every week to lead Christians into an experience of holiness, sanctification, or the filling of the Spirit. With them holiness is not "imputed" only, but is really imparted by the indwelling Spirit. Without the real power of the Holy Spirit it would be difficult for them to hold open air meetings every night and two or three times on Sundays, summer and winter, rain or shine. Without the Spirit's power it would be difficult for every soldier to take part in both the outdoor and indoor meetings every day in the year, and yet every Salvation Army soldier is expected to be at his post and to take part in every meeting if possible. This is a strenuous life and requires spiritual strength. General Booth realized this fact, and made sanctification, or the filling of the Spirit, a fundamental doctrine of the Salvation Army. Not only

the Salvation Army, but most of the workers in mission halls and open-air meetings have learned the necessity of being filled with the Spirit in order to carry on an effectual work for Christ.

Few persons have so emphasized and experienced the Holy Spirit's power as did General Booth and Mrs. Catherine Booth, the "Father" and "Mother" of the Salvation Army. Before her death Mrs. Booth was universally regarded as one of the saintliest and most spiritual of women. Her influence both within and without the Salvation Army was tremendous. Thousands and tens of thousands have been won for Christ or led into a deeper spiritual experience through the influence of her life. It was no unusual sight to see scores and scores, and sometimes hundreds of persons seeking salvation or sanctification at the close of one of General Booth's addresses, so manifest was the power of the Spirit in his meetings. He probably visited more countries and spoke more frequently, and won more souls for Christ, and rescued more fallen men and women than did any other person. Already the Salvation Army is at work in fifty-five different countries, and their shelters, rescue homes, farm colonies, and emigration bureaus, are doing more to reclaim the fallen than is any other agency, and we might perhaps truthfully say, that they are doing more to rescue the fallen than are all other agencies combined.

William Booth, destined to become the founder of the Salvation Army and one of the greatest of social reformers, was born at Sneinton, a suburb of Nottingham, England, April 10 1829. His parents were members of the Established Church, and his mother was a very devout Christian. His father made considerable money, but had the misfortune to lose it. William was brought up in poverty and realized much of the sorrow and suffering which afterwards made his heart bleed for the poor. At an early age his father died, and William was left to struggle on in poverty with his widowed mother. He was thus deprived of the advantages of a good common school education.

As a boy of thirteen William was a social reformer, and longed to do something to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. At an early age he deserted the Church of England and became a regular attendant at the Wesleyan Chapel. At the age of thirteen he yielded his heart and life to God. Describing this event, he says: "The Holy Spirit had continually shown me that my real welfare for time and eternity depended upon the surrender of myself to the services of God. After a long controversy I made this submission, cast myself on His mercy, received the assurance of His pardon, and gave myself up to His service with all my heart. The hour, the place, and many other particulars of this glorious transaction are recorded indelibly on my memory.

Soon after young Booth's conversion, James Caughey, the famous Spirit-filled American evangelist, visited Nottingham. Caughey was a Methodist and preached the Wesleyan theory of sanctification with great unction and power. His preaching made a deep impression on William Booth and kindled in his heart a great desire to win souls for Christ. But for a long time he was too timid to venture to hold religious meetings. Finally, after much time spent in prayer and the study of the Scriptures, he ventured to read the Bible and deliver some comments on the street corners of Nottingham. He was jeered at, ridiculed, and even bricks were thrown at him; but this did not discourage him. Later he joined some Christian companions in holding meetings in cottages and in the open air. William's early efforts to speak in public were often very discouraging, but they laid the foundation of his future usefulness. He was apprenticed to a firm where he had to work hard until 8 o'clock in the evening, and then he hurried to the cottage meetings which lasted until 10 o'clock, after which he was sometimes called to visit the sick or dying.

Young Booth soon became the leader of his companions in these religious services, and then he began to conduct meetings in country places, stumbling home in the dark, late at night, after holding the

meetings. At seventeen years of age he was made a local preacher. Two years later his Superintendent wanted him to become a regular minister, but the doctor advised him that his health was so poor that he was totally unfit for the strain of the life of a Methodist minister.

In 1849, when twenty years of age, Mr. Booth removed to London. Here he was without a friend and almost without money. He found work as a clerk, and spent most of his leisure time working among the poor. Finally, he devoted all his time to preaching, and preached in many parts of London with varying success. Sometimes he was severely criticised for his style of preaching, but frequently souls were brought to Christ in his meetings. He thought of offering himself for the regular ministry, but his Superintendent discouraged him. In 1851 a controversy arose in the Wesleyan Church over the question of lay representation, and a large number of ministers who favored lay representation and other reform movements either seceded or were expelled from the conference, and formed a new movement and became known as Reformers. Because of his supposed sympathy with the Reformers — although he took no part in the controversy — Booth's name was dropped by the minister in charge of his circuit. The Reformers then offered him a position as pastor of one of their chapels in London. This he accepted, and here he met Catherine Mumford, the talented and consecrated young woman who several years afterward became his wife.

For two or three years Booth preached in London and various other cities of England, and in many places met with great success. Many souls were won for Christ in his meetings. But his life was unsettled. The Reformers had no settled policy or organization, and they had many differences of opinion among themselves. Booth tried to induce them to unite with the Methodist New Connexion, which believed in lay representation and most of the reforms they advocated. Finally he and a number of other Reformers joined the New Connexion. He now met with great success in many cities, and his fame as a revivalist began to spread all over England. Hundreds of persons now professed conversion to Christ in almost every series of meetings held by him. At last his financial prospects were such as to enable him to marry Catherine Mumford, who had advised and helped him in so many ways. Their courtship and marriage was an ideal one, and few persons have been so fully joined in heart and life.

For four years, or until he was thirty-two years of age, Booth preached for the Methodist New Connexion in a number of leading cities, and many thousands of persons professed conversion to Christ. Nearly two thousand persons claimed conversion in his meetings in less than four months' time, and so they continued to flock to the altar for prayer everywhere he went. He repeatedly urged the Conference to allow him to leave the regular circuit work and devote all his time to evangelistic work, but this they refused to do.

In 1861 he and Mrs. Booth decided to launch out into evangelistic work and trust the Lord for their support. Mr. Booth therefore sent in his resignation.

It was shortly before launching out on an independent course that Mr. Booth was led into a deeper Christian experience. Both he and Mrs. Booth were diligent students of the writings of John Wesley, and they accepted his views on sanctification, or holiness, as well as on other theological questions. General Booth has written much on the question of sanctification, heart purity, and so on, but has written little concerning his own experience of sanctification. In a letter written by Mrs. Catherine Booth, she briefly describes how Mr. Booth and herself were led into the experience of holiness. Writing to her parents, she says: "My soul has been much called out of late on the doctrine of holiness. I feel that hitherto we have not put it in a sufficiently definite and tangible manner before the people — I mean as a specific and attainable experience. Oh, that I had entered into the fulness of the enjoyment of it myself. I intend

to struggle after it. In the mean time we have commenced already to bring it specifically before our dear people." In another letter, speaking concerning the doctrine of sanctification, she says : "William has preached on it twice, and there is a glorious quickening amongst the people. I am to speak again next Friday night and on Sunday afternoon. Pray for me. I only want perfect consecration and Christ as my all, and then I might be very useful, to the glory, not of myself, the most unworthy of all who e'er His grace received, but of His great and boundless love. May the Lord enable me to give my wanderings o'er and to find in Christ perfect peace and full salvation!

" I have much to be thankful for in my dearest husband. The Lord has been dealing very graciously with him for some time past. His soul has been growing in grace, and its outward developments have been proportionate. He is now on full stretch for holiness. You would be amazed at the change in him. It would take me all night to detail all the circumstances and convergings of Providence and Grace which have led up to this experience, but I assure you it is a glorious reality, and I know you will rejoice in it."

Describing how she herself earnestly sought for and obtained the experience of holiness, she says: "I struggled through the day until a little after six in the evening, when William joined me in prayer. We had a blessed season. While he was saying, 'Lord, we open our hearts to receive Thee,' that word was spoken to my soul: ' Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open unto me, I will come in and sup with him.' I felt sure He had long been knocking, and oh, how I yearned to receive Him as a perfect Saviour! But oh, the inveterate habit of unbelief! How wonderful that God should have borne so long with me.

"When we got up from our knees I lay on the sofa, exhausted with the effort and excitement of the day. William said, ' Don't you lay all on the altar?' I replied, 'I am sure I do!' Then he said, 'And isn't the altar holy?' I replied in the language of the Holy Ghost, 'The altar is most holy, and whatsoever toucheth it is holy'. Then said he, 'Are you not holy?' I replied with my heart full of emotion and with some faith, 'Oh, I think I am'. Immediately the word was given me to confirm my faith, 'Now are ye clean through the word I have spoken unto you.' And I took hold — true, with a trembling hand, and not unmolested by the tempter, but I held fast the beginning of my confidence, and it grew stronger, and from that moment I have dared to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, my Lord."

It is evident from the above account of their deeper Christian experience that both Mr. and Mrs. Booth were led into this experience by means of the teaching that when our all is placed on the altar of consecration, the altar sanctifies the gift. They now became burning, shining lights for the Master.

After their decision to engage in evangelistic work they waited for some time before receiving a call, and their faith was sorely tried. They then received a call to Cornwall, where a great revival broke out under their labors. Here Mr. Booth introduced the " penitent form" or altar, in his meetings, which has always been a regular feature of Salvation Army warfare. Perhaps no Salvation Army meeting is held in which there is not a chancel-rail, bench, chair, drum-head, or some kind of "penitent form" where inquirers can kneel for prayer. In the Cornish meetings the people were so wrought upon that they exclaimed, "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" and so on, and such ejaculations have always been common in Salvation Army meetings. The crowds in Cornwall were too great to be accommodated in any building, and great open-air meetings were held. Open-air work has always been a leading feature of Salvation Army warfare.

After their Cornish campaign Mr. and Mrs. Booth held many other great evangelistic campaigns in which multitudes were won for Christ. In 1865 they began their work in East London which developed into the Salvation Army. A large tent was erected in a disused burying-ground belonging to the Friends, and meetings were held in it every night for two weeks. Open-air meetings were held on Mile End Waste, and the workers marched in procession from the open-air meetings to the tent where another service was held. The tent blew down and an old dancing hall was engaged for the meetings. From this small beginning a regular chain of missions was gradually formed, and this work was known as "The Christian Mission." In 1877 Mr. Booth changed the name to "The Salvation Army" and the work was gradually organized on the plan of a well-disciplined army, with uniform, officers, and regulations resembling those of a regular army. Mrs. Booth designed the "hallelujah bonnet" so well known today.

In the early days of the Salvation Army, when it was known as "The Christian Mission," the power of God was wonderfully manifest in the meetings. According to Commissioner Booth-Tucker, one of the ablest officers of the Salvation Army, persons were frequently stricken down in the meetings, overwhelmed with a sense of the presence and power of God. After the Salvation Army name, uniform, and discipline was adopted the work grew by leaps and bounds, and in little more than a quarter of a century its flag was unfurled in no less than fifty-five different countries, embracing almost every corner of the earth, and hundreds of thousands of souls had professed conversion to Christ in the meetings.

In 1890 General Booth published his great book, "In darkest England," which produced a sensation throughout the world. It was the most far-reaching and practical scheme ever proposed for the uplift of fallen humanity, or the "down and-out" portion of mankind, or "the submerged tenth" as General Booth calls them. He proposed three things — the erection of shelters and industrial homes in the cities, the establishing of farm colonies in the country, and the emigration of the poor to more promising parts of the world. The industrial homes and shelters would give immediate relief to the destitute, the farm colonies would provide temporary employment, and emigration would provide a permanent home. In this way the people would be sent "back to the land" and the congestion in the cities would be relieved. Already these schemes have been carried out on a gigantic scale. Salvation Army shelters are found in most great cities of the world and have saved multitudes from despair. Successful farm colonies have been established in several different countries, and tens of thousands of persons have been assisted to migrate to Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

General Booth believed in, "Going to the people with the message of salvation;" and this led to the many forms of open-air, factory, slum, and other work of the Salvation Army. He believed in, "Attracting the people," and this has led to the use of the many musical instruments, lively tunes, and striking notices employed by the Army. He believed in, "Saving the people," and this has led to the teaching of a victorious, conquering, sanctifying, cleansing religion that will really save the people from their sins. He also believes in, "Employing the people," and this has led to the many meetings, the testifying, singing, and praying on the part of every soldier ; and it has led to the different officers and also to all the varied social work of the Salvation Army.