Catherine Booth, The Salvation Army, and the Purity Crusade of 1885
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Introduction

The Salvation Army began rather inconspicuously in the East End of London in 1865. William Booth, an itinerant Methodist minister, had moved to London with his wife, Catherine, and their family so that Catherine would be enabled to conduct a preaching mission there. While preferring the provinces rather than London for his ministry, William nevertheless accepted an invitation to minister in London’s East End, and there he began a ministry eventually known as The Christian Mission. As the numbers of converts grew, William and Catherine Booth organized that mission into an Army—a Salvation Army, taking advantage of the military imagery so common in nineteenth-century England with all the pageantry that such imagery afforded. The Army grew rapidly in Great Britain, and its ministers (officers) and laypersons (soldiers) became common sights on the streets of cities and towns. By the early 1880s, the Army began to expand as a missionary organization to such places as Canada, America, France, and India.

Although the Army eventually evolved to include an extensive social ministry throughout the world, by the time of the Purity Crusade in 1885, the organized social ministry of The Salvation Army had not yet begun. The Christian Mission was marked by various local ministries, but the only organized ministry was a “Food for the Millions” program established in each Christian Mission station. This program, however, lasted only from 1870 to 1874.

Catherine Mumford Booth was not reared in poverty, but became well acquainted with the plight and conditions of the poor as she ministered with her husband during his time as a minister with New Connexion Methodism. She first began to minister to alcoholics and their families during William’s appointment at Gateshead and continued that ministry on a large scale after the founding of The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army. After the establishment of the Army, many officers and soldiers of the corps (Salvation Army churches) found themselves attending to the physical as well as the spiritual needs of the people. Such work was understood as being a natural consequence of their salvation in Christ, their involvement in every aspect of the lives of people, and their faithful witness to such biblical passages as Matthew 5. This ministry had many faces, depending on local need—from the establishment of a halfway home for released prisoners in Melbourne, Australia, in December 1883, to an institution for alcoholic women in Toronto, Canada, in 1886. Frederick Coutts has rightly stated, “The Army’s social services were not born out of any doctrinaire theory but out of the involvement of the Salvationist himself in situations of human need.”

Meeting human need

It was the Army’s work with prostitutes in London that captured Catherine’s heart and set her on a fighting crusade from which she refused to retreat until she had won. This part of her story is a complicated one, involving many characters—some noble and some scandalous. It begins with one of the most remarkable women of early Salvation Army history, Mrs. Elizabeth Cottrill.

Prostitution was common in Victorian society, and many girls as young as twelve years of age were sold into that trade by poor parents in need of money. Salvationists were accustomed to dealing with prostitutes in their street as well as indoor meetings. But an organized attempt to help these girls did not begin until the early 1880s at the instigation of Mrs. Cottrill, the Converts’ Sergeant at the Whitechapel Corps in the East End. During an indoor meeting at the corps, a young girl from the country knelt at the Army’s mercy seat, a place of prayer for the confession of sins. She divulged her story: she had come to London in search of work and, “lured by a false address, found herself in a brothel.” Mrs. Cottrill was determined not to send her back to the brothel. She took her into her own home located near the corps at 102 Christian Street. “Already three families of sixteen people lived under the roof . . . but room was found for yet another. In this way began the rescue work of Booth’s Army, and many a girl found refuge in Christian Street.” Where there was one girl in such trouble, there were bound to be others. Mrs. Cottrill continued to make room in her house until other quarters could be found. The War Cry reported her endeavors three years later:

Some years ago a devoted soldier of the Whitechapel corps became very interested in the poor, fallen girls who sometimes came to the penitent form there. When she found they often had no home she took them to her own house and, although mother of a large family, shared her food with them, and toiled all her spare time to get them into situations, sometimes walking many miles a day. She would often give them her own clothes in order to start them respectively. The Lord has blessed her efforts, and many of the girls she thus sheltered are today in superior situations, gaining the respect of all around them. One, after being two years in a situation, is now an officer in The Salvation Army.

Eventually, in 1884, in nearby Hanbury Street, a house was rented for the purpose of providing for what Victorian England labeled “fallen women.” Florence Soper Booth, the wife of the eldest son of William Booth, opened an establishment for the same purpose. It was called Priscilla House after Priscilla Papers, the wife of the Apostle Paul. Now the Army was able to care for its newest converts, many of whom were young girls. Priscilla Papers felt that her work was the beginning of the work of the Army, and it was indeed.

Meeting human need
of William and Catherine Booth, was placed in charge of this home, although she was only twenty-two at the time. Ann R. Higginbotham has written:

Despite her youth and retiring nature . . . Florence Booth succeeded in establishing and expanding Salvationist rescue work. During the nearly thirty years that she headed the Women's Social Services, its operations grew from one rescue home in Whitechapel to 117 homes for women in Britain and around the world. Under the direction of Florence Booth and her assistant Adelaide Cox, a vicar's daughter who joined the Salvation Army in 1881, the Women's Social Services earned a reputation as one of the largest, most effective, and, to some extent, most innovative rescue organizations in Britain.6

Catherine herself took a great interest in the home on Hanbury Street and helped to furnish it.7

The age of consent, that is, "the age up to which it shall be an offence to have or attempt to have carnal knowledge of, or to indecently assault a girl,"8 was set at the age of thirteen in 1875, and, three times between 1875 and 1885, the House of Lords passed a bill recommending the raising of the age of consent, all three recommendations failing in the House of Commons. In the meantime, the stories the Army heard from the girls under their care, first at Christian Street and then at Hanbury Street, enraged the moral conscience of Catherine Booth and others, and they determined to enter the battle against vicious evils lurking on the streets of London, especially child prostitution and enforced prostitution. Many protested that these things happened on the Continent but not in England, but the Army knew firsthand that such practices were contaminating English life as well.

Catherine's primary allies in this war were three: Josephine Butler, W. T. Stead, and Bramwell Booth. Josephine Butler had long been a defender of children who were trapped in the European white slave market. Catherine Booth was well aware of her efforts in these matters, and the two of them would become collaborators in this cause, often speaking at the same rallies. W. T. Stead, whose affection for Catherine and The Salvation Army had begun in earlier years and continued still, had moved to London in 1880 as an associate editor of the Pall Mall Gazette and became the acting editor, succeeding John Morley in 1883. This son of a Congregationalist minister had been furious that Parliament did not pass the Criminal Law Amendment Act raising the age of consent. Bramwell Booth was particularly generous about Stead's motivations. He wrote, "Stead always impressed me in that early association as a man intensely anxious to seek the guidance of God. The deepest passion which moved him was for the victory of a righteous cause. He was a journalist, but he always subordinated his journalism to what he believed to be right. Religion with him was service. He set out, heart and soul, to serve his generation. The world was cleaner and sweeter for his elegant voice."9

Bramwell Booth was the third ally. He was, to say the least, shocked by what he heard from his wife in the course of her daily work at Hanbury Street. It was beyond question that a vicious white slave trade operated in England, that many victims were as young as twelve years of age, and that Victorian society refused to discuss sexual ethics openly while some of London's upstanding gentlemen were engaging in what was actually, if not legally, child prostitution without fear of legal or moral recrimination. Bramwell, while at first disbelieving the stories that came out of Hanbury Street, was finally and fully convinced of their truth.

He consulted with his mother, with Josephine Butler, and with his friend W. T. Stead. Stead was at first doubtful of the evidence Bramwell presented to him, believing it to be grossly exaggerated. But, finally, after meeting with Benjamin Scott, the City Chamberlain, "who was especially familiar with the details of one branch of this iniquity—the Continental traffic,"10 he was persuaded. Catherine was incensed by the mounting evidence of crimes against England's most defenseless victims. She corresponded with Josephine Butler and received a warm reply from her friend who had been fighting in this war for years. Catherine knew that it was time for this crime to be brought to the bar of public opinion—and she was determined to be the prosecutor.

Stead was also resolved to bring this to the attention of the Victorian public, the delicacy of the matter notwithstanding. It was time, he believed, for English gentlemen and ladies to face up to what was happening to some of the youngest and most vulnerable victims of English law and English hypocrisy. But a battle plan had to be set in place with which he could expose the white slave trade in his newspaper and thus force a change in the law through the tide of public opinion.

Bringing evil to light

By now, Stead had heard the personal accounts of several young girls who had been entrapped, and he proposed a plan devised by a secret commission of the Pall Mall Gazette that he believed would shine a light on the immoral practices of child prostitution in England as well as expose the gentlemen and ladies who either directly or indirectly were supporting the white slave trade. Bramwell wrote, "We then decided . . . to make an experiment with an actual case, and to carry it through in such a way that we could call evidence from people of repute with regard to what had happened. We thought out the plan most carefully, and it was put into execution on the Derby day of 1885."11 Stead wisely informed the archbishop of Canterbury; Frederick Temple, the recently appointed bishop of London; Cardinal Manning; and Charles Spurgeon of his plan and its desired results and found support from these gentlemen. How many of the details of this plan were unknown by Catherine and William is impossible to say. It is highly unlikely, however, that Bramwell did not inform his mother and father of such details.

For the plan to succeed, someone with inside knowledge of the business was needed. Stead contacted Rebecca Jarrett, a former prostitute and brothel keeper who happily came under the influence of The Salvation Army first in Northampton and then at Hanbury Street and, through Catherine's personal intervention, went to Josephine Butler's refuge in Winchester to get away from the old evil influences of her former friends in London. Rebecca Jarrett was approached by Stead and told of the plan to expose this
crime. Understandably, Jarrett was at first reluctant to take part in the scheme, but she was finally convinced of its ultimate worth.

She reentered her old world and, through some unsavory contacts, was finally able to purchase Eliza Armstrong, then thirteen years of age, from her mother. It was understood that the procurement of this young girl was for immoral purposes, and Eliza’s mother, as far as she knew, gave up her own daughter to a life of prostitution in a London brothel. Eliza was then taken to Madame Mourez, a midwife and a professional procurress, where she was certified to be a virgin. From there she was taken to a brothel where Stead himself had rented a room. Stead spent about an hour in the room with Eliza, and then Eliza was taken from the brothel by a trusted Salvation Army officer, Mrs. Major Reynolds, who herself had posed as a woman desiring to enter a brothel so that she could report on the criminal behavior from the inside. Eliza was taken to a specialist who again pronounced her to be a virgin.

Bramwell then arranged for Eliza, in the company of Rebecca Jarrett, to leave the country, and they did so accompanied by Madame Combe, a soldier of the Geneva, Switzerland, corps and a “widow of independent means who was in the Army’s service at Clapton.” They went to Paris. Both Bramwell and W. T. Stead believed that a strong case had been made. They demonstrated that “although this particular girl had received no whot of harm, it was shown to be possible for a procurer to buy a child for money, to certificate her, bring her to a house of ill fame, leave her with a man she had never seen before, and sent [sic] her off to the Continent so that nothing further need to be known of her.”

All that was left now was for Stead to expose such criminal behavior to the British public. The first of ten articles entitled “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette on Monday, July 6, 1885, and, as Coutts wrote, “The run on the paper beggared description.” Victor Pierce Jones adds, “The circulation of the paper rose from twelve thousand to over a million.” Stead’s articles found their way to both Europe and America. The offices of the Gazette were besieged by many people offended by the content of Stead’s article. W. H. Smith’s bookstalls refused to sell the Gazette because of the indecency of the article, so William Booth opened up International Headquarters as a distribution center with cadets from the officers’ training homes distributing the newspapers on the streets. Coutts reports, “George Bernard Shaw offered to take as many copies as he could carry and peddle them in the streets.” W. T. Stead was either much maligned, some of that coming from competitor newspapers jealous of the instant popularity of his paper, or hotly defended. In any case, for better or for worse, here was the beginning of investigative journalism.

Catherine entered the battle publicly after the story was out. Mass meetings were conducted to increase the pressure of public attention on this cancer within Christian England. On one occasion, addressing a meeting at Exeter Hall, Catherine attacked the members of Parliament for their lack of will and was especially indignant against one member of Parliament who wanted to reduce the age of consent to ten! Catherine said:

I read some paragraphs from the report of a debate in the House of Commons which made me doubt my eyesight. . . . I did not think we were so low as this—that one member should suggest that the age of these innocents . . . should be reduced to ten and, Oh! My God, pleaded that it was hard for a man—HARD—for a man—having a charge brought against him, not to be able to plead the consent of a child like that. . . .

Once again, Catherine was vigilant for the rights of the poor, those unable to protect themselves, those who found themselves at the mercy of unscrupulous men and women. Well may the higher classes take care of their little girls! Well may they be so careful never to let them go out without efficient protectors. But what is to become of the little girls of unprotected widows? Of the little girls of the working classes of this country? . . . I could not have believed that in this country such a discussion amongst so-called gentlemen could have taken place.

But Catherine was not content with speaking at mass meetings. She wanted other pressures to be brought to bear in this battle, so she wrote to Prime Minister Gladstone and twice to Queen Victoria, pleading her majesty’s intervention in this matter. The first letter, written on June 3, 1885, centered on the issue of the children of the poor being the primary victims of this crime. Catherine directly and consciously took the side of the rich against the poor, those unable to protect themselves, those who found themselves at the mercy of unscrupulous men and women.

To Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen,

Your Majesty will be aware that since your last communication to me some heart-rending disclosures have been made with respect to the painful subject on which I ventured to
address you. It seems probable that some effective legislation will be the result, for which multitudes of Your Majesty's subjects in the Salvation Army will be deeply grateful.

Nevertheless, legislation will not effect what requires to be done. Nothing but the most desperate, sympathetic, and determined effort, moral and spiritual, can meet the case, and it would be a great encouragement to thousands of those engaged in this struggle if Your Majesty would at this juncture graciously send us a word of sympathy and encouragement to be read at our mass meetings in different parts of the kingdom, the first of which takes place on Thursday evening next at Exeter Hall.

Allow me to add that it would cheer Your Majesty to hear the responses of immense audiences in different parts of the land, when it has been intimated that the heart of Your Majesty beats in sympathy with this effort to protect and rescue the juvenile daughters of your people.

Praying for Your Majesty's highest peace and prosperity,

I have the honour to be, Your Majesty's loyal and devoted servant,

Catherine Booth

To this the Dowager Marchioness of Ely replied on July 22, 1885:

The Dowager Marchioness of Ely presents her compliments to Mrs. Booth and begs leave to assure her that her letter, addressed to the Queen, has received Her Majesty's careful consideration. Lady Ely need scarcely tell Mrs. Booth that the Queen feels very deeply on the subject to which her letter refers, but Her Majesty has been advised that it would not be desirable for the Queen to express opinions upon a matter which forms at present the object of a Measure before Parliament.

Catherine's reply two days later to the Dowager Marchioness of Ely is critical. Catherine wrote:

To the Dowager Marchioness of Ely:

Madam,

I am in receipt of the communication which Her Majesty has done me the honour to forward through your Grace, and I am deeply grateful for the expression it contains of Her Majesty's continued interest in the question to which it refers. I fully appreciate the delicacy of Her Majesty's position at the present juncture. At the same time, may I suggest that this is not a political question, and all the impression I wish to be allowed to convey to the people of England is that Her Majesty is fully with us in abhorrence of the iniquities referred to, and of opinion that every effort should be made to bring them to an end.

I am led to write this feeling that the comparative silence of the press is calculated to render it extremely difficult for Her Majesty to appreciate the intense and growing anxiety of the masses of the people on the subject.

I am proposing therefore to read the note which Her Majesty has been pleased to send me by your Grace at a meeting of 5,000 people on Monday night in London, and also at large meetings in Yorkshire unless you have reason to believe that Her Majesty would object to such a course.

This, however, I cannot fear, seeing that it simply assures the nation that the interests of the children of her people are still dear to Her Majesty's heart.

If your Grace could arrange to send a line by the bearer; or, if this is impracticable, to telegraph if Her Majesty objects to my proposition, I should be grateful if you would do so. Otherwise, I will conclude that I may use the letter in the manner I have indicated.

Catherine Booth

With no response forthcoming, Catherine assured people in her public address that the heart of the queen was with them in this cause!

A third letter to the queen requesting an interview with the Prince of Wales may have gone unanswered. Clearly, Catherine wanted to press home the problem of vice in England. However, the strategy for winning this battle by letter writing and appealing to the government for immediate action was now over for Catherine and others. It was time to take this case to the public—and it was time for political action by the people. Catherine and William organized mass meetings in the provinces and in London to bring the battle directly to the people. Catherine was, as she wrote on the day previous to the publication of the first issue of “The Maiden Tribute Campaign,” “determined to have the law altered.” She was gravely concerned because “the rascals who are in this iniquity are raging, and our one fear is that it may make it worse for our poor people; however, we see no way to mend the evil but by fighting it out.”

Catherine took to the platform of Prince's Hall, St. James's Hall, and Exeter Hall, all now familiar venues for her, supported by those veterans in the fight—William, Bramwell, Florence Soper Booth, Stead, Josephine Butler, Samuel Morley, Professor Stuart, and others. Catherine readily admitted that “I felt as though I must go and walk the streets and besiege the dens where these hellish iniquities are going on. To keep quiet seemed like being a traitor to humanity.” In her many speeches, she made this an issue of human rights for the poor, speaking not only of the protection of young women, but also the equal protection of young men from exposure to vice and corruption. The Booths wrote a petition to the House, which, in the course of seventeen days, received 393,000 signatures. The petition was nearly two miles in length and was coiled up into an immense roll bound and draped with Salvation Army colors—yellow, red, and blue. The petition was then conveyed through London to Trafalgar Square, accompanied by an escort of mothers and the men cadets’ band. To comply with the law that no procession should approach within a mile of Westminster when the House was in session, the
petition was then carried down Whitehall on the shoulders of eight cadets and laid on the floor of the House because there was not sufficient room on the customary commons table.28

Here is the reading of the final petition:

I. The age of responsibility of young girls must be raised to eighteen.

II. The procuration of young people for seduction or immoral purposes must be made a criminal offence, having attached to it a severe penalty.

III. The right of search, by which a magistrate shall have power to issue an order for the search of any house where there is reason to believe that girls under that age are detained for immoral purposes, or where women of any age are so detained against their will.

IV. The equality of women and men before the law; seeing that whereas it is now a criminal act for a woman to solicit a man to immorality, it shall be made equally criminal for a man to solicit a woman to immorality.29

The Home Secretary decided to resume debate on the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and, on August 14, 1885, after a third reading, the bill carried and the age of consent was raised to sixteen. Frederick Coutts simply wrote, "A thanksgiving meeting was held in the Exeter Hall."30 That is understating the case. Thousands of Salvationists and other citizens throughout England rejoiced over what many perceived to be a grand moral victory. And the Army was now prepared to set up homes to care for the young girls who would be out on the streets as a result of this ruling.

The trial

All went well, so everyone thought. There was, unfortunately, a fatal flaw in the whole scheme. When Rebecca Jarrett made arrangements for the purchase of Eliza from her mother, she assumed—as did all who took part in the plot—that the father's consent had also been given. This was not the case, or so it seemed. The mother was acting alone in this matter, and Rebecca Jarrett had dealt only with the mother and had never spoken to the father, Charles Armstrong.

Problems arose when Mrs. Armstrong began to search for her missing daughter, prompted undoubtedly by greed and by reporters from Lloyd's Newspaper—"a Sunday rival of the Gazette"31—who were looking for a good story. Mrs. Armstrong, accompanied by a police inspector from Marylebone, went to 101 Queen Victoria Street (the Army's International Headquarters) to ascertain the whereabouts of her daughter. Eliza and Mrs. Armstrong were reunited, Eliza having been brought home from Paris where she had been staying with Rebecca Jarrett and Madame Combe. She may have been reluctant to be reunited with her mother, who did, after all, sell her into what was apparently going to be a life of prostitution. Eliza was fully paid for all her troubles, and everyone thought that the episode was now at an end. However, to everyone's amazement, on September 8, 1885, W. T. Stead, Rebecca Jarrett, Bramwell Booth, Madame Combe, [Sampson] Jacques (one of Stead's assistants), and Madame Mourez (the midwife) were charged at Bow Street under . . . an Act of 1861 entitled Offenses Against the Person, with the abduction of Eliza Armstrong from the care of her father. When proceedings began, however, the Attorney General announced that he had now decided to proceed under section 55, which made it a misdemeanor to abduct an unmarried girl under sixteen. To this was added the charge of aiding and abetting an indecent assault on Eliza Armstrong.32

Public opinion was polarized. Stead and the Army had their defenders, while others were sure that there was duplicity to be accounted for. Motives were suspected. Intentions were questioned. In spite of such public disgrace, Bramwell later affirmed, "The mistakes never made me regret in the least the plan that we pursued."33 And in a letter to his mother from the dock, he wrote, convinced that he was going to be convicted:

As to the case I have no regrets as to what I did. The mistakes and accidents all through have only been such as are usually attached to all human enterprises. I regret them, but I could not prevent them, glad as I would have been to do so. It is painful to have all regard for motive shut out of what they think it well to shut it out from, and yet to imply all sorts of bad motives in connexion with the smallest incidents of the affair. But I do beg you not to be distressed in any way about me personally. God will take care of me!34

Stead was of the same opinion, and, in an article titled "Why I Went to Prison," stated, "For one-tenth of the result then achieved I would gladly go to gaol again today."35 In that same article he said, "When I die I wish for no other epitaph upon my tomb than this: 'Here lies the man who wrote The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon.'"36

Lawyers were hired, and a defense fund of six thousand pounds was quickly raised. Among those subpoenaed for the defense were the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Manning, Bishop Temple, Samuel Morley, and Josephine Butler. The War Cry kept the case before the public and Salvationists and the defendants were viewed as heroes.37 Bramwell explained his role in this case to his fellow Salvationists in an open letter published on the front page of The War Cry.38 Needless to say, Catherine did not sit idly by while her friend, W. T. Stead, and her eldest son were unjustly accused while criminals were still engaging in grievous evils against women and children throughout the empire.

Catherine was on a preaching campaign with William in the provinces when they received a telegram informing them of the government prosecution of Stead and Bramwell. They were shocked. Catherine was indignant. The government should be pursuing those who already were breaking the Criminal Law Amendment Act rather than those who brought the evil to light, she thought to herself and expressed to others.

Catherine twice wrote to the Home Secretary, Sir Richard Cross, the first time pleading the case of Rebecca Jarrett. She wrote:

This woman was herself the victim of male criminality at the age of fifteen, and lived an immoral life for fourteen years, the greater part of which time she kept a brothel and was allowed
to prosecute her vile trade without the interference of the law. Nine months ago this women was rescued by The Salvation Army, and has since lived an entirely changed life. . . .

She is now in solitary confinement in a stone cell, with only a mat to lie on, without bed or pillow, her own warm clothing having been taken away, leaving her shivering with cold by day and night, notwithstanding that she is suffering from incurable hip disease, having left the hospital only a few months.

Jarrett gave herself up voluntarily twenty-four hours after she knew that a warrant had been issued for her arrest; nevertheless she was not allowed bail, although a brothel keeper charged with keeping a disorderly house was granted that privilege the day before. . . .

I cannot believe, Sir Richard, that you will allow such an injustice to continue.39

And, as she had done during the Maiden Tribute Campaign, she wrote to the Queen:

To Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen:

May it please Your Majesty to allow me to state that I know W. T. Stead, whose prosecution has been instigated by the hate and revenge of bad men, to be one of the bravest and most righteous men in Your Majesty's dominions and if tomorrow he should be sentenced to imprisonment it will shock and arouse millions of your best and most loyal subjects to the highest indignation. I pray by all the love I bear Your Majesty and by all the pity I feel for your outraged infant subjects that you will if possible interfere to avert such a national calamity. May God endue Your Majesty with wisdom and strength to realize the full extent of the Queen's revulsion against Stead and others. She could not stomach such extreme forms of exhibitionism. Moreover, she felt compelled to safeguard at least the appearance of virtue in England and really had no idea of the depths of depravity practiced by those around her, including, no doubt, some within her own court.

Catherine, however, persevered. Taking the advice of Her Majesty in the recent telegram, she wrote to Sir Richard Cross once again, asking this time directly for the release of the prisoners:

Sir:—Having appealed to Her Majesty the Queen on behalf of Mr. Stead and Rebecca Jarrett, prior to the passing of their sentences, Her Majesty graciously wired me in reply, stating that she could not interfere while the trial was going on, but instructing me to appeal through the Secretary of State for a remission of sentence if desired; accordingly I pray, on behalf of the Salvation Army, and also of thousands of the most virtuous, loyal, and religious of Her Majesty's subjects, that you will present our most humble and earnest appeal to Her Majesty for the immediate release of these prisoners, who, although they may have been guilty of a technical breach of the law, have been actuated by the highest and most patriotic motives, and have by their action procured an unspeakable and lasting boon to the most helpless and pitiable of the subjects of this realm, in the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill.

I have the honour to be,

Yours faithfully,

Catherine Booth42

The result of the legal deliberations was cause for sadness, but not regret. Stead had evidently been able to maintain a sense of humor. Bramwell wrote, "I remember that when I was in the witness-box at the Old Bailey, answering, I hope, with some effectiveness the cross-examining counsel, Stead sent me a slip of paper on which he had written, 'Hallelujah! The Court feels like a Salvation Army prayer meeting.' That was the spirit in which the whole of that dreadful business was carried through."43 Frederick Coutts has well summarized the complex legal proceedings in this way:

At the Old Bailey hearing which opened on October 23rd a single major ruling by Mr. Justice Lopes virtually determined the course of events. He supported the judgment of the lower court that any evidence as to the motives which had governed Stead's actions was inadmissible. So the Archbishop of Canterbury waited in vain to speak, nor were either Lord Dalhousie or Samuel Morley called to testify. It was enough for the judge that Eliza Armstrong had been taken away without her father's consent, and consent gained by fraud was not consent at all. When the jury, in considering their verdict, wished to distinguish between abduction for criminal purposes and the technical offence which Stead and Rebecca Jarrett had committed, Mr. Lopes repeated that no motive, however high-minded, justified the taking away of a child from her parents without their consent. With the case narrowed down to this one point, the acquittal of Bramwell Booth was virtually assured but the fate of Stead and the others was sealed.44
amply proved the sincerity of her repentance. She is still with the Army, enjoying a happy old age, free from the bondage of the past, and trying to serve God in the sphere in which He has in His mercy placed her.”

As for Stead, he was gladly welcomed by Salvationists at the Congress Hall following his release from prison. He claimed, “I do not suppose there is one man in England who has done more harm than I myself. . . . I most distinctly say that I received no more than my deserts, if it was only for the trouble and expense which I brought upon The Salvation Army.”

Of course, the audience would have none of that. They believed he had acted for the cause of biblical righteousness, and for that he was lauded that night. He was probably carrying a shilling in his pocket, for, after the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, “a girl of thirteen, dying in hospital from venereal disease, sent Stead a shilling in gratitude for his work. He kept this with him all his life.” To commemorate his incarceration for the sake of justice, every year on November 4, Stead wore his prison uniform all day, “wearing it even on the train to and from work.” For the rest of his life, until his death on the Titanic, he was a friend of The Salvation Army.

Two postscripts to this whole affair lend irony to its telling. Before the completion of the trial, Stead had a suspicion as to why Eliza’s father had played such a minor role in this drama. Stead suspected that he was not really her father, and, had that been proved to be true, the prosecution would have been left without a case. Stead did not pursue this, but ten years later it was proved that Charles Armstrong was indeed not Eliza’s father! The second irony was that Mrs. Armstrong’s home on Charles Street was eventually owned by The Salvation Army, and the ministry from that home continued to reach out to poor women and children.

A day-care center was established for the children of working mothers—both single and married. The first child to be admitted was Eliza Armstrong’s own niece. Such Salvation Army homes would continue to become a familiar sight on the religious and social landscape of England. Furthermore, they provided opportunities for yet another aspect of ministry for women and thereby increased the Army’s recruitment of women as well as their authority in ministry. Pamela Walker explains, “For Salvationist women, the Rescue Work was particularly important because it developed the justification for women’s religious activities by extending it to social service work. These women did not undertake the work in a submissive, passive spirit but rather went into a sinful world, empowered by the Holy Spirit to make it anew.”

Ann R. Higginbotham adds:

Although female street-corner evangelists remained the most enduring image of Salvationist women, their work for the Army had another, more conventional side. The Women’s Social Services, begun nearly seven years before General Booth published his scheme for social regenration, In Darkest England and the Way Out (1890), became one of the largest rescue organizations in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. It had responsibility for the Army’s work with children and with fallen, homeless, or alcoholic women, but by the end of the nineteenth century the Women’s Social Services were particularly noted for their work with a special class of fallen women—unmarried mothers. Salvationist women raised and administered the necessary funds for the Women’s Social Services, which operated independently from other branches of the Army. One observer described the Army’s rescue workers as “ladies by birth and instinct.” Rescue work may well have appealed to Salvationist women who would have hesitated to lead a brass band or harangue a crowd in the slums of Whitechapel. Vicars’ wives and squires’ daughters participated in the work to reclaim fallen women throughout the Victorian period without any loss of respectability. The more respectable, or less adventurous, of The Salvation Army’s female converts could have found an acceptable outlet for their energies in the homes and missions established by the Women’s Social Services.

The Army was expanding its social ministries by the end of 1885—though not yet in a completely organized fashion. The organization of its increasing social work would come in 1890 with the inauguration of the Social Wing of the Army and the publication of William Booth’s In Darkest England and the Way Out. W. T. Stead was influential in the writing of that work. But there was no question that the Purity Crusade increased the reputation of The Salvation Army. As one author has noted, “The Army was now firmly established.”

**The Purity Crusade and social ministry**

The question must be asked, though, whether Catherine Booth intended the Purity Crusade to set the stage for the social work of the Army. Did she eventually see this crusade as a precursor to organized social ministry, and, if so, what form of social ministry did she envision at the time? Some have suggested, “The fact is that Catherine was deeply involved in the preparation of the social blueprint which incorporated many of her concerns that previously had been abandoned for lack of funds or personnel by the fledgling movement.”

Support for this idea is given in some of William’s own reflections after Catherine’s death, as well as by W. T. Stead, who wrote a tribute to Catherine in The War Cry following her death. Stead wrote:

That The Salvation Army is entering upon a new development is probably due more to her than to any single human being, and in its new social work we see the best and most enduring monument to the memory of the saintly woman who has at last been released from her suffering. But that may also be said to be true of The Salvation Army itself. The Army could no more have come into existence without Mrs. Booth than could the family of sons and daughters who are now carrying on the movement. No one outside can ever know how much all that is most distinctive of The Army is due directly to the shaping and inspiring impulse of Mrs. Booth. But even outsiders like myself can see that but for her it would either never have been, or else it would have been merely one more of the many small but narrow sects which carry on mission work in the nooks and corners of the land.

Stead’s words should not be taken at face value, however. He was a man of sympathy with social reformation and without doubt was one of the prevailing influences on William for the full in-
auguration of social work in the Army. Viewing Catherine as the chief protagonist for the use of social ministry is a way of simply trying to justify a program with which Stead himself was in sympathy—and which was completely organized and publicized coincidentally at the time of Catherine’s death. It furthermore demonstrates Stead’s genuine affection for Catherine—which caused him to write about her without the objective eye of the trained journalist and which explains his occasional antagonism toward William. The General and W. T. Stead were often in conflict; as a matter of fact, William was much more reticent about the Purity Crusade than was Catherine, partly because he feared that Stead, in his enthusiasm, was taking the Army along a path that should not be trod. In his correspondence with Catherine during the campaign and trial, William is often critical of Stead and his measures.

Obviously, the question of Catherine Booth and social ministry is more complicated than Stead would have people believe. In this case, Frederick Booth-Tucker may well express more clearly the conflict in Catherine’s mind that was not yet settled after the Purity Crusade. He wrote that after the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed, Catherine

left London with the General for the provinces, eager to use the widespread interest of the hour in awakening universal attention to the one great theme: the salvation of the world. The General, in particular, was anxious to remind his followers that the subject which had lately engrossed the public mind was but a single manifestation of the all-prevailing sin which, in a thousand different forms, was the source of the miseries of mankind. Nothing has perhaps more emphatically contributed to the success of the Army than the persistency with which its leaders have ever kept that one main object in view.

The author further states:

As has already been remarked, the spiritual work of the Salvation Army was not allowed to be interrupted during the year. Indeed it was a time of special progress. The foreign corps had increased from 273 to 520, being an addition of 247. Those in Great Britain had risen from 637 to 803, making an increase of 165. The total number of corps had thus multiplied from 910 to 1,322, an increase of 412. There had been proportionate progress in regard to officers. The year 1884 had closed with a grand total of 2,164. At Christmas, 1885, there were no less than 3,076, being an increase of close upon 1,000 for the year.

In Catherine’s mind, though, was there a clear distinction between the cause for which she had fought in 1885 and the spiritual work of the Army? Should social ministry be thought of as separate from spiritual ministry, as Booth-Tucker implied? He clearly thought of the spiritual work of the Army only in terms of the ministry of the corps, which was still largely evangelistic—street meetings and indoor meetings in which sinners were saved and saints sanctified. There was very little of what might be called social work taking place in the corps in 1885.

Catherine, even at age fifty-six, was still the product of her strict Methodistic rearing. She continued undoubtedly to think of spiritual work as that of winning souls for Christ, while social ministry might be helpful as a prelude to such a task. As one who read the manuscript for In Darkest England and the Way Out, Catherine was certainly in agreement with William’s thesis stated so carefully in the preface:

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.

At the wedding of her daughter Emma in 1888, Catherine said:

There are plenty of other people about all other kinds of work, and I am always glad to hear of anybody doing anything good and kind and true and helpful to humanity; whether it is feeding little boys and girls or the poor, or enlightening the ignorant, or building hospitals, or anything else whatever so long as they are doing more good than harm, I say “Amen, God bless you!” But that is not the particular work Jesus Christ has set His people to do. There are plenty of people to do all that kind or work, but there are few for the peculiar work which Christ has set His people to do. The great characteristic of His people in the world was that they were to be saviors of men—Salvationists. Their work was to be to enlighten men with respect to God’s claims upon them, and enlighten them with respect to what God is willing to do for them in the salvation of others; therefore, I ask you to help us. If you won’t be Salvationists yourselves, do the next best thing—help us. Help us save the world. Amen [italics mine].

On the other hand, there were times when Catherine was remarkably insightful, and her vision of the sacramental life and of every common act as being a means of grace would certainly give rise to the logical conclusion that social ministry was of itself sacramental and, therefore, spiritual. It needed no further justification, but was itself a full expression of God’s grace and a means of such grace—if done in a redemptive context and carried out as a sign both to the ministers and the recipients that God’s ultimate desire was to save people for the present as well as for eternity.

There is no clear resolution in Catherine’s thinking concerning this theological matter as there was, for example, in her theology of women in ministry. It is likely nearer the truth that at times she felt conflicted and fretful about the relationship of social work and spiritual work, while at other times she had a calm settled view as to their perfect harmony and unity.
Whatever case one is prepared to make in this matter, the kind of national crusade Catherine waged with Stead, Josephine Butler, and Bramwell was not repeated by Catherine in her lifetime. The exhausting work associated with the Purity Crusade, along with the spiritual and moral energy mustered to wage that war, proved detrimental to Catherine's already delicate health. As one writer noted, the crusade "was Catherine Booth's last battle to reform England and it had probably done something towards ending her life."  

Notes

1. Frederick Coutts, No Discharge in This War (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), 102.
2. For details of the intricacies of prostitution in Victorian England, and for some accounting of the Army's work with prostitutes, see Edward J. Bristow, Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in England since 1700 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), and Judith R Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Walkowitz challenges the stereotypical approach to prostitution in Victorian England and sees prostitution as more than a problem of the white slave trade or the result of luring young women into London with the promise of legitimate work. However, these were problems which the Army, in its ministry, encountered and which it decided to attack.
5. The War Cry (9 Aug. 1884), 5. The precise timing of the beginning of the work of Mrs. Cottrill is debatable. However, apparently, that work began in February of 1881. See Jenty Fairbank, Booth's Boots: Social Service Beginnings in The Salvation Army (London: The Salvation Army, 1985), 12.
7. See The History of The Salvation Army, 8 vols., Robert Sandall, vols. 1, 2, and 3; Arch Wiggins, vols. 4, 5; Frederick Coutts, vols. 6, 7; Henry Gariepy, vol. 8 (London: Nelson and Hodder and Stoughton). Sandall, The History of the Salvation Army, 316. See also Higginbotham, "Respectable Sinners," 219–230, for a comparison of the work of the Army with other rescue groups working in London at this time. Higginbotham concludes that "few other organizations worked on the scale of The Salvation Army.
8. Coutts, Bread for My Neighbour, 47.
12. Coutts, Bread for My Neighbour, 56.
14. Coutts, Bread for My Neighbour, 51.
16. Coutts, No Discharge in This War. 108. George Bernard Shaw would have a continued interest in this case, and he used the Eliza Armstrong case "as the basis for his play Pygmalion, later the musical My Fair Lady. Liza Armstrong and Liza Dolittle both came from Lilson Grove" (Jones, Saint or Sensationalist?, 43).
20. A transcript of the letter from Catherine Booth to Queen Victoria, 14 July 1885, is in The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre. Also see The War Cry (5 Aug. 1885), 1. Again, the titles of the lead stories of that edition on the first page indicate the continuation of the battle on the part of the Army. The articles were titled “The Tragedy of Modern Babylon,” and "Protection of Young Girls." 21. The Dowager Marchioness of Ely to Catherine Booth, 22 July 1885, in The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre. See also The War Cry (5 Aug. 1885), 1.
22. The Dowager Marchioness of Ely to Catherine Booth, 22 July 1885, in The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre.
23. This letter is in The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre, dated simply July [1885].
26. Booth-Tucker, The Life of Catherine Booth, 481. These meetings were well publicized and reported in The War Cry. See "Mrs. Booth on the Revelations Made by the 'Pall Mall Gazette'. A Meeting Convened by The Salvation Army at Prince's Hall," The War Cry (18 July 1885), 1. That issue also contained a letter from William Booth on the same subject titled "Giant Killing—Where Are the Davids?" See also "Modern Babylon. The Protection of Young Girls. Salvation Army Meeting in the Prince's Hall, Piccadilly. Samuel Morley, Esq., M.P. in the Chair. Speeches by Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Josephine Butler, and Professor Stuart, M.P."
28. The petition was first announced in The War Cry (18 July 1885), 1; "Special Notice! Protection of Young Girls." The notice read, "A Petition to the House of Commons for the above purpose will lie for Signature at the various Corps throughout the country, for the next few days. All Officers and Soldiers are earnestly desired to sign it and obtain as large a number of Signatures as possible, and forward the sheet, when full to Headquarters, 101 Queen Victoria Street, E. C."
29. Coutts, Bread for My Neighbour, 54–55. See also The War Cry (8 Aug. 1885), 1–2, for a full account of this event.
31. Coutts, No Discharge in This War, 110.
32. Coutts, Bread for My Neighbour, 55.
33. Coutts, Bread for My Neighbour, 57.
34. Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories, 135.
35. Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories, 137.
39. Coutts, Bread for My Neighbour, 59–60. For follow-up on Rebecca Jarrett, see Josephine Butler’s biography of Rebecca Jarrett, entitled Rebecca Jarrett (London: Morgan and Scott, 1885), 59 pp. Rebecca Jarrett also wrote two autobiographies, the first handwritten when she was seventy-nine years old and the second typescript. See the Rebecca Jarrett File, The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre; London, England. See also Pamela J. Walker’s work on Rebecca Jarrett in Pulling the Devil’s Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain, ch. 5, entitled “Authority and Transgression: The Lives of Maud Charlesworth, Effie Anthon, and Rebecca Jarrett.”
40. Catherine Booth to Queen Victoria, in The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre.
41. The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre.
42. Booth-Tucker, The Life of Catherine Booth, 2:496.
43. Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories, 152.
44. Coutts, No Discharge in This War, 111.
45. Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories, 139–40.
47. Jones, Saint or Sensationalist?, 34.
51. See the preface in William Booth, In Darkest England and the Way Out (London: International Headquarters, 1890). However, see also Stead’s own words in “In Darkest England Entirely the General’s Own,” The War Cry (10 Jan. 1891), 7.