

by 1872 organized a work known as Food for the Millions...where for very small sums food could be purchased. (Booth did not believe in great giveaways...he was willing to give when it was mandated but otherwise he believed in "selling" to make the item more meaningful to the needy. When absolutely no money was on hand, he was generous but he did not want to encourage a lazy or indulgent society.) In 1878 the Salvation Army was organized and Booth was its "general" until his death. Although Booth travelled and preached widely, his main work was in the slums of London and the continuing need of the poor was always before him. Thus in 1890 he issued the work which is the point of our study as a means of alerting society to the needs of the impoverished and as an expression of how those needs could be met.

2. Of the Book Itself

Booth's long experience in the city had prepared him for an analysis of the problem. The circumstance of recent depression and the problems in his own family (Catherine was dying after a long illness) gave him a sensitivity towards the societal needs. Essentially the book is in two parts...the first describing the deplorable conditions of homelessness and destitution--giving vigorous descriptions and undebatable statistics and the second a long study on what what would relieve the situation; hence the title IN DARKEST ENGLAND AND THE WAY OUT. It is notable that the second part is about twice as big as the first. Consequently Booth avoided what is so common in our day: a careful discussion of the problems and no workable or tentative solutions! He proposed colonies, farms, self-help, schools, educational advantages, etc. all in the proportion of what ought to be done and what his twenty years experience had shown him would be workable. All sectors of society would work on this. Fundamental to success was the preaching of truth...the way out was not a Utopian society or a socialistic dream. Booth did not discount at all man's spiritual needs. But merely preaching to the spiritual need would not fulfill the requirements of life. The book caused a minor scandal in its depictions of impoverishment and created a great deal of exercise in what might be done although the exact ideas of Booth could only be fulfilled as they could be acted on in his army.

3. The influence of the Work...

I fear I have overlapped this a bit but the immediate influence sparked discussion and debate in Parliament, a good deal of self-criticism in the church, and no small amount of movement in the way of missions, etc., to aid those in need. It was a monumental influence at the time and actually set a pattern for events to come. The book was put forth addressed to the social levels and as such appealed to all humanity on biblical and social basis.

4. Some Observations:

Whatever success IN DARKEST ENGLAND knew, a good bit of it was due to the realism and practicality of the book. We can profit