WESLEYAN METHODIST PERCEPTIONS OF WILLIAM BOOTH

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Wesleyan Methodism and William Booth were forever bonded in that William Booth began his ministry as a Wesleyan Methodist preacher, served the Wesleyan Reformers Movement, and was finally ordained in the Methodist New Connexion Church. This paper seeks to explore the tensions that came to characterize Wesleyan Methodism’s perceptions of William Booth—tensions that not only resulted in Booth’s leaving Methodism and becoming a free-lance evangelist, but as well, accounted for harsh judgments on his Salvation Army. Inherent in these tensions were the distinct theological differences that came to distinguish the Salvation Army from Wesleyan Methodism. This paper as well, attempts to account for the interesting ways that Wesleyan Methodism changed its perceptions of Booth in the late nineteenth century—perceptions that lifted up admiration for Booth.

To accomplish the above tasks I will follow a precise methodology. First, I will present a brief historical overview of William Booth’s odyssey from Wesleyan Methodist preacher to free-lance evangelist in order to lay a foundation for this study. Second, I would like to determine specifically how the Wesleyan Methodists perceived Booth’s ministry from 1878 (when the Salvation Army was officially recognized) to the time of his death in 1912. Of this period three time-frames will concern us. (1) In the early 1880s how did the Wesleyan Methodists view the Salvation Army with its many organizational and theological controversies? What were their many judgments regarding its socio-religious thought, its sacramental theology and the controversial methods that it employed to carry out its ministry to the poor? (2) By the middle of the 1880s, how did Wesleyan Methodists evaluate Booth’s mission in light of their own developing social consciousness—a consciousness that made them sensitive to the problems of the poor? Did Wesleyans seriously consider the formation of a “Methodist Army” as they sought to establish their own mission in England’s urban areas? (3) In 1912 how did the Wesleyan Methodists remember William Booth at the time of his death? What were the comparisons they made between him and John Wesley? Did they feel they had failed in earlier years for not supporting the young Booth and incorporating his specialized ministry when he was one of them?

Two primary sources will concern us in this paper. Between the years of 1878 and 1912, thirteen articles were published in The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine that dealt with or had reference to the Salvation Army.
and/or its founders (William and Catherine). This magazine was first started by John Wesley in 1778 under the title, *Arminian Magazine*. In the eighteenth century, it defended Arminian theology against the claims of Calvinism, and in the early nineteenth century it went on to defend Wesleyan polity against the attacks of more radical Methodists. In 1798 the title was changed to *The Methodist Magazine* and again in 1822 (under the influence of Jabez Bunting) to *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*.  

The second primary source we will draw upon is the *Methodist Times* (London edition), edited by the prominent Wesleyan Methodist minister Hugh Price Hughes. Hughes founded this newspaper to support his “forward movement,” a program of forceful social and ecclesiastical action for the denomination. In the very first issue of the *Methodist Times* (January 1, 1885), Hughes lifts up in his article, “Our Raison D’Etre” that the special object of the magazine was “to see that Methodists are duly informed of all beautiful and Christ-like deeds in every Christian community and in the world at large.” By the sixth issue (February 5, 1885), the newspaper carried a front-page interview with William Booth regarding his work in East London. Reaction to the interview and other articles on the Salvation Army continued to be printed through the tenth issue (March 5, 1885).

Both the *Methodist Times* and the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* carried memoirs and evaluations of William Booth at the time of his death. It will be from these sources that we will draw as we examine Wesleyan Methodism’s final perceptions of William Booth.

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**An Overview—Booth’s Odyssey from Wesleyan Methodist Preacher to Free-lance Evangelist**

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army was born on April 10, 1829, and died on August 20, 1912. He was born in Nottingham, England, where at the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a pawnbroker. At the time of his apprenticeship, Queen Victoria had been on the throne for only five years. In his teens he began attending services at the Wesley Chapel in Nottingham. In 1844 he experienced conversion and became a lay preacher with the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Two years later the American evangelist, the Rev. James Caughey, visited Nottingham and greatly influenced Booth with his revivalist oratory. Biographer Harold Begbie describes Caughey’s impact on Booth:

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He went to all the services he could attend, he joined in the singing of some of Charles Wesley's triumphant battle-songs, he witnessed scenes of conversion which were extraordinarily moving, and he saw in the lives of many of his neighbors the veritable miracle of new birth. Here at last, was religion in action, the real and living religion of his dreams.3

Shortly after Caughey's visit, Booth joined his close friend William Sansom, in his open-air mission in the slums of Nottingham. Although Booth joined in the services, he felt too self-conscious either to pray or preach. The evangelist, David Greenbury, is credited with first recognizing that Booth would become a great preacher.4 Greenbury, a Wesleyan lay preacher from Sheffield had broken with the regular Wesleyan Methodist practice. He spent months in various circuits preaching with complete freedom. When they met, Greenbury urged Booth to assume his duty to God to speak and overcome his timidity.

With this encouragement Booth not only became an effective street preacher, but he became a leader to the young lads in the Nottingham slums. He felt inspired to help them and to bring them into the fellowship of the Wesleyan Methodists at Wesley Chapel. One Sunday he marched his first regiment of the ragged and neglected into the aisles of this chapel and seated them in the best pews. The church leaders reprimanded him severely, and instructed him "to bring these outcasts into the chapel only if he entered by the back door (invisible behind the pulpit) and seated his converts in obscure benches reserved particularly for the impecunious and shabby."5

The scolding had a lasting effect, although his hurt did not bring him to abandon his work in Nottingham immediately. Accepting the judgment of his religious directors, Booth continued his ministry as a Wesleyan preacher in the Nottingham slums and then later in London. Joining twenty other preachers on a London circuit, he became impatient with "the trifling amount of pulpit work" divided among them. Soon he was drawn to start open-air work in the streets and on the greens of Kennington.6 In 1848 Booth resigned his position as circuit preacher to be free for this work.

Booth associated for a short time with the Wesleyan Reformers serving one of their churches in London for three months and another in Spalding, Lincolnshire. The Reformers under the leadership of James Everett, Samuel Dunn, and William Griffith had agitated against undemocratic Methodist polity within Wesleyan Methodism. When these same leaders were expelled at the Wesleyan Conference of 1849, the Wesleyan Reformers became a popular movement. While this group never officially thought of themselves as a separate denomination, their ideas

4Harold Begbie, Life of William Booth, op. cit., Vol. 1, 42.
5Ibid., 51-52.
prompted 100,000 members to leave the Wesleyan Methodist Church over a period of a few years.

In 1851, one of the Reformers judged Booth to be a “rebel” and withheld his ticket of membership. Three years later, Booth turned to the Methodist New Connexion Church offering himself as a candidate for its ministry. This British Methodist denomination was begun in 1797. Its members had withdrawn from Wesleyan Methodism over the issue of laity rights. They also believed that Methodism should join with nonconformist churches rather than with the Anglican Establishment. In 1854 Booth was appointed to the New Connexion London Circuit. A note beside his appointment read that he was to reside near the new chapel at Stockwell.⁷

As Booth continued to press for special evangelistic work, tensions arose between his supervisors and himself. Feeling himself confined by appointment to a circuit ministry, he presented a dilemma for his church. Church polity ruled that he must have a circuit appointment. No thought was given to authorizing him as a connectional evangelist without circuit appointment. There was great difficulty defining his ministerial appointment under which he could act within a circuit and at the same time exercise a wider ministry. In 1858 Booth was appointed to Gateshead where he pursued his calling as an evangelist. He continued to ask for permission to be a full-time evangelist. In 1861 a crisis arose over his ministry. Upon his appointment to the New Castle-upon Tyne circuit, his wife Catherine, who shared his passion for evangelism, cried out from the balcony her famous “Never” and the Booths left Methodism.

Booth's severance with Methodism enabled him to become a free-lance evangelistic preacher. In 1865 he founded the Christian Mission in the slum areas of London's East end (Mile End Waste) and dedicated his life to the poverty-stricken unchurched masses in that area. In 1878 the name of his missionary movement was changed to the Salvation Army.

Two factors characterize Booth's development from a Wesleyan preacher to free-lance evangelistic preacher. First, the influence of James Caughey's and David Greenbury's modelling as irregular evangelists; secondly, the inability of the Methodist Churches (Wesleyan, Reformed and New Connexion) to conceive of Booth's work outside the traditional definitions of circuit ministry.

Early 1800s - Wesleyan Methodism's Perceptions of Booth

The first article to appear in The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine on the Salvation Army (after its official recognition in 1878), was that of Rev. William H. Booth written for the May, 1881 issue.⁸ William H. Booth

(as distinguished from William Booth), was a pastor in the Wesleyan Methodist Church from 1871 to 1926. His memoir noted that he was "a wise administrator and a helpful preacher" in his retirement position at Headingly Theological College from 1871 to 1914. During the First World War, he preached on the Brunswick and Leeds circuits. After these appointments, he served until the end of life, the chaplaincy position at the Becketts' Park Pension Hospital. 9

William H. Booth's article appears to have been written with a two-fold purpose. The first purpose was to inform the Wesleyan Methodist readers of the status of the Salvation Army. Thus, the first section of the article serves as an evaluation of the movement and its founder. The remarks are quite introductory and positive. The second purpose of the article served to address the "most common and weighty" objections to the Salvation Army. In the second section of the article William H. Booth revealed the organizational and theological controversies that surrounded this corps militaire, oftentimes making frank judgments regarding the socio-religious thought, the sacramental theology and provocative methods employed by the Salvation Army in its ministry to the poor. We will deal at length with the perceptions in both sections that this particular Wesleyan Methodist minister made about the Salvation Army—perceptions that dealt directly as well, with reflections of the agency's founder, William Booth.

In his introductory remarks, William H. Booth asserted "that the Salvation Army was a powerful force in evangelism" beyond question. Quoting recent published reports, Booth noted:

... there are in England alone—Stations, one hundred and seventy-two; Paid Evangelists, three hundred and sixty-three; Unpaid Speakers, six thousand one hundred and eighty; and further, that one hundred and sixty-six thousand services were held last year, at which seventeen thousand six hundred and sixty-nine pounds were contributed for the expenses of the work. 10

Acknowledging that the Wesleyan Methodists were "now fully convinced—this work is of God," Booth continued to praise the Salvation Army's work by comparing their growth to most of the evangelical churches.

When most of the Evangelical Churches were numerically almost standing still, these humble pioneers were adding nearly two hundred to the number of their paid Preachers, and more than two thousand to their voluntary staff, thereby enabling them to conduct sixty-six thousand more services last year than during the previous one. 11

9 Wesleyan Methodist Church, Minutes of Several Conversations at the One Hundred and Eighty-Third Yearly Conference of The People Called Methodists, Begun in York on Wednesday, July 14, 1926 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1926), 162.
In lifting up the head and founder of this “novel system of militant Christianity,” Booth was careful to remind his readers that the Rev. William Booth was formerly a Methodist minister. Accounting for the founder’s separation from the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Booth explained:

Partly through the stringency of our regulations, and partly as the result of a restless individuality, the ‘General’ has been brought to his present position of absolute independence and isolation.12

Booth also paid tribute to the founder’s wife and family. Catherine, his gifted wife “is only less prominent, and not a whit less popular, than himself.”13 Booth perceived the whole family to be consecrated to Christian evangelism, noting that the General’s three sons and two daughters were themselves engaged in various departments of the work.

Booth defined the Salvation Army’s specific aim as a mission “preeminently to the masses”—masses that are outside the ordinary church-going community.

It is amongst harlots, thieves and casualties, drunkards and pugilists, gamblers and wife-beaters, the immoral and the profane, that its grandest triumphs have been achieved. It is the lapsed, lost multitudes, unloved and uncared for, dead alike to shame and virtue, whom it seeks to reclaim.14

Booth not only declared that Wesleyan Methodists should gladly welcome such a system of evangelism that honestly endeavors to fight “this hideous heathenism,” but they as Christian observers should assume the duty of ascertaining “the secret of this wonderful success in a field in which there has been hitherto such conspicuous failure.”15

For Booth, many factors accounted for the Salvation Army’s “wonderful success.” First, the fundamental idea of an Army (an idea originating from a conversation between the General and Mr. George Railton, a son of a deceased Wesleyan Methodist minister) which lies at the center of the whole movement is scriptural in its conception. Not only is Hebrew history an almost unbroken record of a militant church, but the martial spirit was uplifted in the New Testament, save that the weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. As well, the militant character of the Wesleyan Methodist Church is widely recognized in their “formularies and hymnology.”16 Secondly, the idea of a strong Christian Army carried with it many practical advantages. It is not only intelligible and popular, but it implied discipline and self-denial. Its purpose and aims were declared in its very name. It matched the combative nature in which many of its new

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12 Ibid., 350.
13 Ibid., 350.
14 Ibid., 351.
15 Ibid., 351-352.
16 Ibid., 352.
converts had been living: "they have been accustomed to fight, and fight they must." Every added member assumed personal responsibility to become a soldier, and every soldier was expected to fight.¹⁷

Lastly, Booth held that the Salvation Army was successful because it had great zeal—a zeal comparable to that of "Wesley and Whitefield." Its blood-red banner communicated this same enthusiasm with the words "Blood-Fire" emblazoned upon it. These words symbolized the doctrines that undergirded its structure: the Atonement and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. That same zeal was seen in the Salvation Army's faith in the ministry of song. As was true in the days of the Wesleys, the founder and his other leaders showed great wisdom in allowing sacred words to be sung to commonly-known tunes. The zeal of the organization was also manifested in the idea that "every soldier in the Army" had something to do in the open-air or experience meetings—an idea, Booth asserted, used to characterize Wesleyan Methodism. It was out of such mutual cooperation that a sense of unity was felt, a unity bringing strength to the whole of the movement.¹⁸

In Booth's report on the Salvation Army, we find his statement regarding the organization and its founder not only positive and praiseworthy, but intended to remind his Wesleyan Methodist readers that the traditions of the Salvation Army were once followed, but now lost, to the Wesleyan Methodist Church.¹⁹ It appears an underlying theme of Booth's article was to encourage the Wesleyan Methodists to recapture those traditions. As we shall observe more clearly in our discussion of the Wesleyan Methodist objection to the Salvation Army, the Wesleyan influence of discipline, enthusiasm, plainness of dress, concern for holy living, female ministry and rigid organizational rule came to characterize the movement—an influence that its founder William Booth received in his early days of being a Wesleyan Methodist local preacher.²⁰

Booth addressed seven common objections made by Wesleyan Methodists about the Salvation Army in the second section of his article. While we will list the seven by name so we can perceive the breadth of the complaints, we shall only discuss two of the issues at length, i.e., the weak structure of the Army and the Salvation Army's sacramental theology. Inherently as we discuss these two issues, we will be touching on the movement's controversial methods.²¹ The seven objections were:

¹⁷Ibid., 353.
¹⁸Ibid., 353-355.
¹⁹For a work that accounts for the splintering of Methodism and the loss of many early Methodist traditions, see David Hempton, Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press), 1984.
1. Does not the Salvation Army encourage irreverence bordering on profanity? (The reference here is to the Army's reduction of the meaning of salvation and holiness to coarse language.)

2. Does not the Army rob existing Churches? (This was once a complaint made against the early Methodists.)

3. Does not the Army create an uproar, and disturb the quiet of the Sabbath? (This complaint was directed against the Army's processions and bands.)

4. Does not the Army give indiscreet and unscriptural prominence to young and inexperienced female Evangelists? (This objection was accompanied however, by a recommendation of Mrs. Booth's tract, *Female Ministry*.)

5. Is not the organization of the Army structurally weak and liable to disruption?

6. Are not the Sacraments almost wholly ignored?

7. Do the converts stand? (Booth cited the founder's answer: "Many who profess to be saved, doubtless, are only convicted; and many who appear to be really saved fall away, unable to stand against the power of old habits and persecution. . . . But that multitudes do stand is evident from the number of officers and soldiers now in the Army.")

Booth asserted that the most serious defect of the Salvation Army was its weak organizational structure. Indeed, objections to its structure were well justified. His judgements were quite candid and interesting in that he made comparisons to Methodism's early structure.

It (the Salvation Army) has grown up under a dictatorship, and at present its government is a spiritual despotism. Mr. Booth is to the Army exactly what Mr. Wesley was to Methodism before the formation of the Conference. How long this military regime will last, it is impossible to say.

Emphatically, Booth defined the implications of the founder's control.

At present the General's command is law. He says 'Go,' and they go; 'Do this,' and it is done. No officer is sure how long he will remain in any one place. He is emphatically a 'travelling Preacher,' and may be summoned, like another Evangelist, to leave the scene of successful labour and go. . . .

This criticism of the General persisted throughout the 1880s. In 1892, the Rev. J. V. B. Shrewsbury of the Wesleyan Methodist Church upon a visit to a slum post at the West End of London wrote:

It appears to me that there is perhaps too much prominence given to the Booth family, and too much sensitiveness as to its reputation. . . . No doubt the Booths are a noble family and are worthy of all honour; but if they were to 'strive' and 'cry' less, and to sink their personality, it would be better for them and for their work.

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24 Ibid., 357.

25 Ibid., 358.

As for enrollment and church discipline, Booth asserted that the Salvation Army must be judged favorably. Norman H. Murdock agreed with this assessment. He noted that the strong Wesleyan influence on the Booths was evident in the Salvation Army's *Orders and Regulations* compiled in the 1880s which showed a dependence on the Methodist discipline and conference rules of the 1850s through the 1870s. The method of enrollment whereby members were received into membership, Booth mentioned was superseded by a plan where class-meetings would be monitored by district, rather than personal oversight.

If Wesleyan Methodists had difficulty with the organizational structure of the Salvation Army, they were to have even more trouble with the fact that the sacraments were almost wholly ignored. Booth clearly addressed this objection to the movement with the facts he had gathered:

> We believe this is the case (that the Sacraments are ignored). There is no uniform plan of administration and, indeed no public or formal recognition of their obligation. The views of Mr. Booth in this respect closely resemble those of the *Friends*.

Booth did not account in any way for the General's decision to reject the sacraments. Biographer Harold Begbie informs us that the consideration of the abandonment of the sacrament came from George Railton's belief there was only one baptism—the baptism of the Holy Ghost, only one communion with Christ—the communion of cleansed heart devoted to His service. Railton was a strong leader in the Salvation Army. His final draft of arguments for rejection drawn up in 1881 became the ultimate decision of William Booth. For the founder, the sacraments became superfluous when he conceived his business with "suffering and sinful humanity" as the "stern and difficult business of redemption."

> There must be no baptismal service that can delude any one into a vain hope of getting to heaven without being 'born again.' There must be no Lord's Supper 'administered' by anybody in such a way as to show anything like a priestly superiority of one over another—every saved person being a 'priest unto God.'

Other criticisms of the founder's beliefs on the sacraments did not appear again in the early 1880s in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. But in 1885, an article reviewing the General's book, *Training of Children; or How to Make the Children into Saints and Soldiers of Jesus Christ*, carried this judgment about a ceremony the General had created that plainly intended to supersede infant baptism:

> Baptism seems to have no place in Mr. Booth's theology. It is ignored, and a *bizarre* ceremony of merely human device substituted for it. It is equally ignored when the child comes to religious decision. Be the reason for this singular course what it may,

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28 Booth, "The Salvation Army," *op. cit.*, 357.
we cannot but regard it as a very serious blot upon the whole system. A divine ordinance—a sacrament of the Christian Church, is not to be passed over in this half-careless, half-lordly manner. And the attempt to improve upon it deserves the sternest reprobation.30

In this section of the paper, we have examined Wesleyan Methodism’s perceptions regarding the Salvation Army’s social-religious thought, its sacramental theology and its controversial methods. Such a study has provided us with some understanding of the organizational and theological controversies that surrounded the movement and its founder in the 1880s. There is no question that these perceptions that we have studied reveal that the Wesleyan Methodists felt uncomfortable with the Salvation Army’s “eccentricities,” but as William H. Booth illustrated in his article on “The Salvation Army,” they were at the same time inspired by the organization’s work among the poor. Booth acknowledged the “Army” succeeds “in spite of these oddities.” It was apparent to him that the members were blessed by God the Holy Ghost, who is “the Author of all spiritual power over the consciences of the unregenerate.” “It remains for us as Methodists,” Booth concluded, to “ponder these things” regarding this great work. We must not despair because we have been “careless and self-indulgent,” for we can regain our course to be once again an effective power to bring the unregenerate to God.31

1885 — Further Perceptions

A sharpened awareness of poverty characterized the public mood of the decade of the 1880s. Editors Richard J. Helmstadter and Paul T. Phillips asserted in their work, Religion in Victorian Society, that by the mid 1880s “the conventions of mid-Victorian liberalism—self-help and laissez faire—could be openly questioned.” Sir William Harcourt communicated well this new empathy for the working classes and the readiness to consider new solutions to social problems when he said in 1889, “We are all socialists now.”32 The churches made major contributions to this change in public attitude. They published widely their concern for the poor, which in turn helped to spread the word of their condition. The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine published Rev. W. J. Dawson’s article, “Outcast London; or Wealth, Want and Crime,” in its January, 1884 issue.33 In

its February, 1884 issue, the magazine published Rev. H. W. Holland's article, "The Lowest Classes in Large Towns." Articles and essays like these continued to be printed throughout the 1880s.

*The Methodist Times*, edited by the most notable Wesleyan social gospeler Hugh Price Hughes, was dedicated to bringing the working classes back into the ranks of Wesleyan Methodism. Advertised as communicating the thought the young Methodists, it featured on the front-page of its first issue (January 1, 1885) Henry Broadhurst's article, "Are the Working Classes Indifferent to Religion?" As well, on its fourth page of the same issue, it began a column entitled, "Methodism in London" that was to be the first of a series that would describe the ministry of Methodism with the outcasts of London, and offered practical suggestions for its improvement and extension.

It is within the context of this "new social consciousness" in the middle 1880s, and reflected in the publication, *The Methodist Times*, that we now turn to discern the perceptions of William Booth and the Salvation Army by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1885. Given the purpose of *The Methodist Times*, it was only a matter of time before an article on Booth or the Salvation Army would appear in the journal. That time came quickly. In the sixth issue of *The Times*, (February 5, 1885), editor Hughes ran "An Interview with General Booth on the Salvation Army," on its front page. Other articles on Booth and the Salvation Army, as well as, "letters to the editor" regarding these subjects, continued through the tenth issue (March 5, 1885). Two articles from this grouping will concern us: the Hughes' interview of February 5, 1885, and the lead article by the editorial staff on "The Salvation Army" featured in the next issue dated February 12, 1885.

Hughes' interview was in the form of a question-answer format. The perceptions that we are concerned with originate out of this structure. Here General Booth represented himself and his movement although his comments are directed by the questions Hughes poses. Three strong perceptions of Booth and the Salvation Army are derived from this interview. First, the Salvation Army is a powerful force for Christian evangelism not only in England, but throughout the world. Half of the interview was General Booth's reporting on the work of his movement in Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Africa, Asia (especially Ceylon), India, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada.

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Second, although the Army experienced serious problems (financial burdens and stagnation within older stations), the organization was unified by a spirit of obedience. Clarifying that perception, General Booth noted:

Every soldier in the Army is willing to obey and wait for orders. I myself wait incessantly for the commands of Jesus Christ. . . . The great weakness of Methodist is that you are not governed. You meet in conference, and pass the most beautiful resolutions, and then they are not carried out. Your president has no authority. The work hangs fire for want of personal authority.

The last perception was one of irony, since General Booth was so respected that he could now give advice to the Methodists—the same Methodists that once rejected him for doing what they felt they now must do. The following dialog lifted up this perception.

Hughes: Some of us are very anxious to release chairmen of districts from circuit work, and give them time and opportunity to initiate and stimulate Christian work. (Something Booth begged to do when he was connected to Methodism!)

Booth: That is the best piece of Methodist news I have heard for a long time. Such chairmen would prevent quarrels, reconcile opponents, start fresh enterprises, lift old churches out of deep ruts, and move the whole country.

Hughes: Have you any special advice for us Methodists?

Booth: Follow John Wesley, glorious John Wesley.

Reactions to Hughes’ interview with General Booth continued to be printed in The Methodist Times over the next few weeks through March 5, 1885. The most noteworthy response was that of The Times’ editorial staff entitled, “The Salvation Army,” published on the front page of the February 12, 1885 issue. The article attempted not only to defend the cause of the Salvation Army and the reputation of its founder as they were presented in Hughes’ interview, but it also attempted to answer the stirring question raised in a letter from “A Young Methodist,” “Why not have a Methodist Army?” The “Young Methodist’s” letter appeared on the third page (page 99) of the February 12, 1885 issue.

While expressing no direct opinion as to establishing a Methodist Army to care for the working-class in London, the editorial staff asked “with the utmost solemnity and earnestness why the Salvation Army should not be affiliated with the Methodist Church throughout the world?” Basically they saw “insuperable doctrinal barriers” between Booth and themselves.

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38 Ibid., 82.
39 Ibid., 82.
40 Ibid., 82.
He himself is a Methodist preacher, and the majority of his officers are Methodists. They purchase more of our standard doctrinal literature than we do ourselves. Their teaching is essentially Methodistic, and all the characteristic features of their organization are modifications of our own. There are neither doctrinal nor ecclesiastical difficulties in the way. 44

To deal with the problem of the fully recognizable eccentricities in the movement, the editorial staff made these innovative proposals:

On the other hand, none of their peculiarities need be introduced into our ordinary methods of worship. They would still conduct their services as usual in their barracks, and we our services in our chapels. But we should be able to assist them in the administration of the sacraments, the care of the young, and the pastoral oversight of the converts. . . . They, on the other hand, would furnish suitable spheres of open-air and aggressive work for tens of thousands of our people who, like 'A Young Methodist,' are hungering and pining for it, but who do not care to engage in it in any way that separates them from the Methodist Church. 45

These proposals, that of affiliating the Salvation Army with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the weekly practice of sacramental ministry, the care of the young, and the pastoral oversight by the Methodists to be in partnership with this Army, were in keeping with The Methodist Times writers' belief in the ideal of a perfect church, an ideal they wrote of in an article entitled, "The Old and The New" published in their January 1, 1885 issue. 46

Now the ideal of a perfect Church would be that of a community of Christian men, always so alive—alive, in the best sense of the word, by the breath of the free Spirit of God—as to adapt itself with perfect flexibility to its environment; in other words, while conserving jealously the essentials of life and of truth, yet adapting its methods of life and its conceptions of truth to the requirements of the 'spirit of the age'—so far as that spirit is from above, and not from beneath. 47

These thoughts thus defined the sense of the "new social consciousness" of the 1880s—thoughts that allowed for new perceptions of the old—perceptions in this case, that sought to recognize in new ways the ministry of the Salvation Army and General Booth. Even more clearly stated, the writers of The Methodist Times declared:

Let there, then, be adaptation—adaptation without compromise. . . . It is easy to surrender truth; it is easy to yield up life; but to live, and live according to the truth as it is in Jesus, and yet to live in true harmony with all that is good in the knowledge and life of our own day—this is the problem we are called to solve. The writers for The Methodist Times will do their part, by God's grace, for this real serving of their own generation. 48

44 Ibid., 97.
47 Ibid., 3.
48 Ibid., 3.
1912 — Final Perceptions

The Salvation Army remained a separate entity—a distinct Protestant denomination derived from Methodist roots. The ideal of reunion urged by some socially-active Wesleyan Methodists in 1885 remained just that, an ideal. Indeed, early twentieth century Methodist perceptions toward William Booth and the Salvation Army had changed. Perhaps J. Scott Lidgett, Wesleyan Methodist pastor and editor of *The Methodist Times* in 1912, captured the meaning of these altered perceptions when he wrote about “The Secret of General Booth” in his final remarks upon the death of Booth on August 20, 1912.

To those who remember the early days of the Salvation Army, with the contempt and opposition it aroused, the change of sentiment must appear little short of a miraculous transformation. It says much for the good feeling and good sense of the public, which, though it may be prejudiced and suspicious to begin with, is ready to accord a generous tribute of praise. . . . It is a striking witness to the widespread demand for a faith that counts, and for a religion that means business.49

There is no question that Methodists had come to love General Booth. As many of the memoirs noted, “he was a great Methodist.”50 Many final remembrances compared him to John Wesley.

The same unquenchable evangelism and marvellous vitality marked the lives of each. Both were unresting travellers, scouring the British Isles for converts. Open-air preaching played a prominent part in their religious work, and each had occasion to break away from the established religious conventions of his day.51

The root-cause of the changing perceptions would always be open for discussion, but the fact that Wesleyan Methodism and General Booth shared the same tradition laid down by John Wesley held them spiritually bonded. It was this tradition the Wesleyan Methodists sought to recover in the decade of the 1880s. In their attempt at recovery they discovered General Booth had never left that tradition.

However we may criticise General Booth—his thought, his methods, or his schemes—he had rendered untold and priceless services to the Church and to his age. He has brought men face to face with the realities that count and the tasks that must be accomplished. But, above all, he has been enabled to manifest the triumphant power that faith brings to personality—to the man who can say with the Apostle, ‘We also believe and, therefore, speak.’52

It may be concluded from these words and from this study as a whole, that “as Methodism was raised up by God to quicken the Church of England, God (may) have raised up the Salvation Army to quicken

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50 Lidgett, 3.
52 Lidgett, 3.
These were the thoughts of Rev. John Shrewsbury in 1888, but they appear to have been the great tribute of the Wesleyan Methodist perceptions of Booth at the time of his death.

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