THE PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION

A Doorway to Heaven

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CHAPTER EIGHT

A CRADLE OF AMERICAN EVANGELISM

During the years 1880 to 1912 when Monroe proclaimed Christ's redemptive love at Pacific Garden Mission as convert, song leader, assistant superintendent and then superintendent, the historic refuge became a growing cradle of American evangelism.

Folks who slept in cheap flophouses—railroadmen, harvesters, lumbermen, boatmen, longshoremen—were among the best candidates for the ministry that Monroe could find. They came in great numbers to hear his story, and they saw many of their own number go out to preach the Gospel.

Six years before Colonel Clarke died, the mission doors swung open in 1886 to make way for Billy Sunday, but the Colonel did not live to see the trail of heavenly fire with which the ex-baseball star ran the bases from one key city to the next. Sunday's peak came from 1910 to 1920, although he had many campaigns before and after those years.

Likewise, when Mel Trotter was converted in 1897, Colonel Clarke had been dead five years, and nobody dreamed that the mission convert's influence would plant rescue centers in more than one hundred cities.

But Billy Sunday and Mel Trotter were not the only miracles of grace in Pacific Garden Mission annals. True enough, they shook the cradle of American evangelism like few men before or since, but apart from them the steady, stream of converts that has gone from the Mission into Christian service has left a tremendous mark upon the nation.

When the Clarkes began their venture, Jerry McAuley had the only other rescue mission in the land. Today there are more than two hundred such missions, with five hundred or more full-time workers. Most of them are spiritual children of the first two efforts. Still it has not been only to down-and-outers that Pacific Garden Mission graduates have ministered. In every avenue of Christian service and on every level of human life they have proclaimed the Gospel. Conversion in a mission did not limit their ministry to down-and-outers; other qualifications determined their respective places of service.

The Clarkes had won no insignificant number of converts in the two and one-half years before Harry Monroe walked into the mission. Nor were these converts slow in getting into Christian service.

Joe McVeigh, lanky printer, proofreader and prize-fighter, was only one among many. He had staggered into the mission where Colonel Clarke put his arms around McVeigh's dirty neck and said, "Jesus will save you." McVeigh deserted the heavy drinkers who were his buddies, gave his testimony at every opportunity, and became a Presbyterian preacher in Oregon.

Then came Harry Monroe's powerful testimony. In the years of his ministry the mission was destined to be a seminary graduating Christian workers almost every night with a special B. A. (born again) degree. They had more zeal than knowledge, nobody questions that, but with what knowledge they had the converts in turn went out in the power of Christ and won a great multitude for the kingdom.

There was "Curly" Tom Mackay of Erie, Pennsylvania, born in the shadow of his father's saloon, the Shamrock House. At the age of twelve Tom was shifting for himself, driving mules on the canal. Then he worked for a circus, and later became a jockey. Whiskey sent him askew, and to Chicago where the levee became his stamping ground. He could neither read nor write, but he knew most of the tricks used by hoodlums and gangsters. As a drunken carpenter about to commit a crime—few people know what it was, but Tom said later that "I would have been hanged for it"—he was overtaken by a tract distributor for the mission. Tom was spending the early part of the evening panhandling, already full of liquor.

"You don't need soup; you need Jesus," said the mission worker. "Go inside and let Him save you."

Tom thought he would at least see what was going on inside. He listened for a while, then fell asleep on the shoulder of a colored man seated next to him. He woke up for the invitation and gave his life to Christ. That was in 1894. He became a mighty voice for God as superintendent of Los Angeles' Helping Hand Mission, and one of the most noted open-air preachers on the Pacific coast.

There was Jacob C. Dudley, born in the blue-grass region of Kentucky where folks raise children and horses. His Virginia grandfather had squandered a fortune in two years on the race course. If the gambling instinct was hereditary, it skipped Dudley's father, for the lad was reared in a Christian home.

From the age of ten Dudley's mind was filled with ideas of the turf. He read all the racing journals, and talked to anyone who knew anything about horses. He almost broke his father's heart when he came home drunk at sixteen, but it was poker that ensnared him like a vise. Dudley spent so much time over the card table that a breakdown resulted which sent him to a tuberculosis sanitarium for over a year. Dudley's Christian wife was heartbroken, but she loved him so tenderly that he became anxious to please her. He joined a church, though had had no change of heart. During revival meetings, the speaker mentioned some of the changed lives wrought by rescue mission work, among them that of Harry Monroe. So impressed was Dudley that he surrendered all his sins; all, that is, except horse-racing. Soon he had squandered all the money inherited from his father, his salary as secretary of the turf association being his only support.

In September, 1909, he came to Chicago, and early one Sunday night went to Pacific Garden Mission. Only two or three men had arrived. They were eagerly talking about Tom Mackay's conversion. When later the mission became filled and the testimonies were given, Dudley was strangely stirred. When the invitation was given, Dudley was the first to go forward. At the altar he fell on his knees and cried, "O God, here goes everything—race track, and everything!"

Mother Clarke gave him a copy of the New Testament after having written Dudley's name inside. On one cover was stamped: "From one who is praying for you"; on the other the words which Dwight L. Moody so often penned on the flyleaf of Bibles he was asked to autograph:

"Sin will keep you from this book;
This book will keep you from sin."

Dudley left the mission that night with the determination to make up the squandered years with "the fag-end of my misspent life." By 1912 he was a city missionary, and later was in charge of the rescue mission in Memphis, Tennessee.

There was A. E. Nissen, Iowa businessman. Stunned by the death of his wife, and almost insane with distress, he could find no cure for his loneliness until he wandered into the mission and found Christ. He gave up his business and became a Salvation Army Soldier.

There was Dick Lane, with a forty-year criminal record and stretches in several penitentiaries for burglary and safe blowing. When Dick landed in Chicago the police told him that twenty-four hours in the city would be too long for him to stay.

Dick called an old friend and asked for work, saying he was tired of crooked life. With some reluctance Chicago's Record-Herald put him to work as a receiving clerk. The following week while passing Pacific Garden Mission curiosity dragged him inside. He had heard preachers tell the Gospel story in jail, but now he heard gangsters telling it from the pulpit. He recognized one of the men giving his testimony as a chap who had served time at Jackson, Michigan, when he was there, so he knew the testimonies were "on the level."

When the invitation was given, Dick raised his hand. He felt overpersuaded to go forward, and at the altar pledged his life to Christ. Night after night as a firm soldier for Christ he testified in missions, churches, and on street corners. He stayed with the Record-Herald as a trusted employee until death took him in 1913. He left a fiery trail of Christian service.

There was "Sunshine" Harris, steeped in sin for seventy-one years and most of that time an infidel. Leaving home because he was such a disgrace to his family, he wandered around the country. He never went to church except for a funeral, unless to ridicule what took place. For fifty years he smoked and drank, then became such a slave of tobacco that he picked up stubs in the street to satisfy the craving. Filthy with sin he wandered often into the mission, usually drunk, each time resisting the pleadings of Colonel and Mrs. Clarke with scorn and mockery, and determining never to return.

On August 4, 1899, he bought a New Testament, hardly knowing why. When his eyes fell upon the words, "**Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee**," he became furious and closed the book. Later he wanted to reread the passage but could not find the verse. That made him more furious. In vexation he began with Matthew's genealogy and kept reading until the words were located. A few nights later he said, "God, tonight I am going to the mission. If you help me, I'll raise my hand for prayer." It was a never-to-be-forgotten night for "Sunshine" Harris.

"When the invitation was given I looked at one hand and it was so black and sinful, and then at the other and that was just as bad, so I raised both hands and was assisted by a Christian lady to the altar," he wrote, "and when I called upon the Lord He heard my cry, and the load of sin, mountain high, rolled off, and I rose to my feet and exclaimed, 'Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift, and for Pacific Garden Mission.'"

Harris sponsored an unscheduled house-cleaning in his filthy little room that night. Whiskey and beer bottles, old pipes and tobacco, disgusting pictures, cards and other habiliments of sin went into the furnace, and on the table by his favorite chair he placed instead the New Testament with a slip of paper marking the verse,

"**Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee**."

Somebody named him "the miracle of the mission." He served God with such spiritual fervor and delight that the mission workers called him "Sunshine" Harris. He loved everybody and everybody loved him, with just one note of exception: during the first weeks of his Christian experience he kept waking during the night and shouting "Glory!" until some of the nearby roomers complained. He moved to other quarters.

Night after night he continued to testify at the mission, eager to tell how the Lord had cleaned his life. When he died June 10, 1907, he said in his cheerful optimism, "Tell them at the Mission I am going home to glory in the good, old-fashioned way." So clearly had his testimony rung out on Van Buren Street among the drink and tobacco addicts that once were his companions, that when Harris' Body was buried at Elburn, Illinois, all the hoboes on the levee knew his soul had gone to God.

There was Robert Atchison, who was picked out of Chicago's slums in 1893 and went out from the mission as a missionary to the Orient and became known as the "Mueller of Japan," and the "Mikado." Drink so overpowered him that he would sell his clothes for liquor. He became a tramp, riding freight cars to Florida when the cold north weather was too penetrating for his scanty clothing. He had been hired and fired by most of the railroad companies. He slept in deserted houses and begged meals and handouts at back doors. For nearly fifteen years he felt impelled to walk inside the Pacific Garden Mission. There he heard the story of the cross. The next night he returned and was saved.

His first job was to make restitution to a Brooklyn woman to whom he owed forty dollars for board. She replied, "I am very glad of the change in your life, and very glad to receive the money as I need it."

Ten years later, Atchison, his wife and two children, sailed for Japan, without any human sponsorship, but with Philippians 4:19—"**my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**"— committed to memory.

Eighteen years they travelled through the mountains and valleys of Japan, over twenty-five hundred miles on foot to spread the Gospel in remote places. A diet of rice and fish was their sustenance. Once they were rescued from a furious mob about to stone them for preaching Christ in their village. Another time, while the black plague swept hundreds to death around them, Atchison wrote that "we wrapped ourselves up in the ninety-first Psalm and continued about the Lord's business." Atchison often said that when God got through, the devil had made an awful fool of himself.

Fifteen years of tramping around the United States with whatever passed for food and lodging was God's training school for missionary service in Japan, "where food was bad and sleeping worse." It was in Kobe, Japan, where Atchison first met Charles M. Alexander, the noted Gospel singer. Learning that the missionary was saved in Pacific Garden Mission, Alexander said, "That's an awful place to get saved in." Then he repeated the statement. "They tell me," he continued, "that a person who gets saved in the Pacific Garden Mission never gets over it."

Atchison smiled. "As far as I'm concerned," he said, "you surely struck the nail on the head."

There was Edward Card, railroad express messenger, who lost his job for chronic drunkenness. Walking into the mission, he met Harry Monroe, and was converted. He went to St. Louis and founded the Sunshine Mission. At Mel Trotter's annual mission conference in Grand Rapids, Card and Harry Monroe almost annually would rise to sing together, "There's Glory in My Soul."

There was F. M. Smith, "the man at the prison gate." Before the Clarkes had ever founded Pacific Garden Mission, he had drifted into sin. Liquor, dope and crime had all left their scars before Smith reached Blackwell's Island, and then jail after jail. He sank so low that not a single relative or friend recognized him.

In 1896, as an inmate in Cook County jail, he heard a Gospel team from the Moody Bible Institute. The selfsame day Mrs. Clarke stopped for a moment at his cell and offered the first "mother's prayer" Smith had ever heard.

The following Sunday Mother Clarke came again, put her hand through the cell bars, resting it on the prisoner's head while she prayed for him. As soon as she had gone, Smith threw himself on the stone floor and prayed to God for mercy. A heavenly joy flooded his soul that moment. A few days later he went on trial, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to three years in Joliet. Having lived with his Bible, he was pardoned in less than half that time. He spent his days at Moody Bible Institute and his nights at Pacific Garden Mission, where Mother Clarke and Harry Monroe helped and encouraged him. Then, removing to Philadelphia, he became head of an office furniture manufacturing enterprise, and for more than a quarter century proclaimed the glad tidings of redemption as a Christian layman.

There was George Preston, the prayers of whose mother reached from north Ireland across the sea. For twenty years Preston, a gifted singer, was on the operatic and theatrical stage in Europe, Canada and the United States.

On Sunday afternoon, September 25, 1910, while walking down State Street in Chicago, Preston saw the mission's gospel wagon. Drawn by two horses, the black carriage had a high roof and open sides. In it were a half dozen men with musical instruments, and around the carriage a half dozen others, talking and singing. There was a big crowd at the corner. Preston stopped to listen to the music. Then Harry Monroe began speaking. Preston was quite disinterested until he heard Monroe say, "I am impressed that there is a man here who has been thinking that years ago he promised his mother he would meet her in heaven."

Almost immediately Preston shouted: "I am that man!"

Pushing his way through the crowd, he stepped to the mission group, knelt by the wagon wheel and asked Jesus to save him. Until his death in 1941 he told redemption's story as an evangelist and singer.

There was John F. Wendell, whose love of liquor reduced him to poverty. Repeatedly he was housed in a cell for drunkenness at the Harrison Street police station directly across the street from the little flat where lived his wife and children. Wendell sought treatment for delirium tremens, but his physician finally lost patience, saying, "Let him die like a dog."

On November 19, 1893, a bitter cold night, with not a penny in his pocket, he wandered into Pacific Garden Mission as an alternative to begging. There he met Jesus Christ face to face and was converted. Often he returned to the mission to give his testimony, and prompted many to repentance and belief in Christ.

There was Billy Driver, the Scotchman, whose trade as carpenter was the only thing he had in common with Jesus Christ. A victim of drink and vice, he found new life at Pacific Garden Mission and then went to Denver, Colorado. There he worked at his trade during the day, and at his own expense kept up a mission at night. It developed into Denver's Sunshine Mission. After some years, Driver became an evangelist, serving faithfully until his death in 1927.

There was Lew Speegle, the street fakir, whose checkered career carried him apart from his wife and family in California, and sent him around the world as a drifter and steerer for clairvoyants, pickpockets and other crooks. One warm Sunday afternoon he was selling dime articles to the passing crowds at State and Harrison. Soon the Mission's gospel wagon drew alongside on its weekly "fishing trip" and stopped near the crowd. Speegle resented the invasion. He decided to abandon the spot to the "religious cranks," but the gospel music seemed to grip his heart. Men told how Christ saved them from the depths of sin and then came Harry Monroe's warm invitation. Speegle resisted and slipped away. Even in Mexico, his next stop, he could not forget the invitation nor escape the conviction that he should receive Christ as Saviour. He jumped a north-bound freight train, determined to find the men who spoke that day about Christ's power to save.

After quite a search he found the old mission and when the opportunity came, knelt in prayer and found Christ. The next day he went to work and made the first honest money in years. Night after night he returned to the mission to give his ringing testimony and then enrolled at Moody Bible Institute to prepare for practical Christian work.

Sometime later, the mission workers found him in an unhappy mood. They learned of sinful chapters in his past life that had never been righted, and prompted him to make restitution. Speegle wrote nineteen letters of confession, in which he admitted taking money unlawfully. Another went to the United States Navy, confessing desertion. As a result, he was arrested by the government, taken to Washington for a hearing, and faced with loss of citizenship and time in Leavenworth, the usual sentence.

When the stern naval officers heard his stirring testimony they told him to go back into the service and finish out his term. He soon had a Bible class under way in the town near his vessel.

Before half his term was completed, he was given his liberty.

From there with an old automobile, he toured the state of Ohio, preaching and distributing tracts. Then he became evangelist in Wisconsin, at the same time carrying on his business in order to pay the last of the old debts that weighed upon him. When his business moved him to Chicago, he returned faithfully to the mission to give the story of God's redemptive power.

There was Martin O'Connor, the plumber's assistant, who couldn't take care of the leak that made him so thirsty for whiskey. It was in a drunken stupor that he found himself one night at Pacific Garden Mission. There he was, sunk in the depths of sin, with the added burden of tuberculosis to remind him of his waywardness.

At the close of the service, the evening's speaker, Mr. Calverley, took O'Connor by the hand and led him to the altar. Kneeling beside him was Mother Clarke, speaking the first words of Gospel love that he had ever heard in his life.

"My friend, your trouble is not whiskey, or tobacco, or bad habits, or bad companions, or hard luck. Your trouble is sin. Sin separates you from God, and if you die in this condition, you will be separated from Him forever."

Then came precious words to the soul of Martin O'Connor:

"But God loves you and wants to save you from sin and the penalty of sin, so He sent His son Jesus into the world to take your place, and die in your stead. If you will take Him as your Saviour, God will not only forgive your sins, but will give you the power to live a life of victory over them." Then she prayed.

He left the mission that night trusting God to keep him. The very next morning found O'Connor beginning to enter a saloon. The appetite for whiskey was gone, however. God had not failed. His attendance and testimony at the meetings were faithful.

About five weeks after his conversion Harry Monroe asked O'Connor to be "Custodian" at the mission. As Martin O'Connor said, "Although this was to be a temporary arrangement, I stayed on the job and for six years was known as 'Harry's right hand man.' Mrs. Clarke's office was my home and through the lives of her and Mr. Monroe, I was very much encouraged and received many valuable lessons."

In 1914 O'Connor took over the South State Street Mission for eight years, or until the Pacific Garden Mission moved to its present location. Then came a call to northern Wisconsin where now for over fifteen years this vessel of God's grace and his wife have been preaching the matchless Word of Life to countless souls.

There was John Troy, grandson of a wealthy Serbian sea-merchant, and son of a famous European physician and lawmaker. But here he was, adrift in Chicago, far from family and friends, penniless, and unable to speak English. It was a sorry state for one who had enjoyed many privileges.

One night in the winter of 1907-1908 he walked into Pacific Garden Mission. It was the first Protestant service he had ever attended. Unable to understand the language, he nevertheless sensed the radiance and joy that welled from the hearts of the speakers. He wanted what they had. Staying to talk with Harry Monroe and the workers after the meeting the best he could, Troy was told the story of Jesus' love. By the time summer came he was in a way able to understand what Christ could do for him.

On the last Sunday night of August, 1908, he accordingly responded to the invitation and accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour. In 1915 he was graduated from the Moody Bible Institute and since that time has been engaged in evangelistic work in America, Canada, Great Britain, and the European continent. As John Troy himself has said, "Truly our God is a miracle worker, and I praise Him for the Pacific Garden Mission where I first heard the Gospel."

There was John Lester Osborne, who left home at seventeen and lived almost twenty years in sin and drink. When he awakened one Sunday morning, under the influence of liquor, he heard his son in the kitchen quoting Matthew 11 28. The words gripped his heart for a time, but again he fell into sin. The only solution seemed to lie in taking his life.

On the night of November 11, 1894, however, he wandered into the mission, walked down the middle aisle, sat down on the end chair in the third row from the front, bowed his head and prayed to God for help. From that time on, he became an usher in the mission and drove the team of horses on the Gospel wagon. These drivers felt they, too, had a divine commission for Gospel work, based on Luke 14:21:

"Go quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind."

Osborne later attended Moody Bible Institute, and for twenty-four years continued in the employ of that school.

There was Elias Auger, who in 1899 drifted into Chicago from Massachusetts, without friends, money or God. He was converted in the mission, and became a Baptist minister and chaplain, enjoying more than thirty years of Christian service after completing his theological studies.

There was that almost inseparable gospel song team, Mott and McCoy. Mott, a Canadian, was converted at the mission under Mother Clarke's influence in 1885. Nevertheless he fell back into drinking and gambling and narrowly escaped being murdered. When he came back to the fold he found McCoy, a Hoosier, whose talent and prosperity had become his ruin. McCoy was a fine tenor, and had sung in many exceptional choirs, including that of the Mormons in the Salt Lake City temple. But drink had got the better of him, too, and his life was being spent in Chicago's south Clark Street barrel-houses as fiddler.

Around 1910 he went to the mission on a Sunday morning and heard Tom Beaumont, the carpenter convert, give a Bible talk. He took Christ as his Saviour. McCoy, however, fell back into sin. Ten years after his first profession of Christ he was walking down State Street when the gospel wagon came along. Mott spotted him; Walter Taylor, the mission superintendent, singled him out. "Come here, McCoy," Taylor shouted. "I want to congratulate you."

McCoy wandered up sheepishly. "You and Mott used to sing together," said Taylor, "do it now." McCoy shook hands with Mott. They sang a Gospel song and McCoy was reunited with Christ.

There was Arvilla Beardsley, who left her small town home at seventeen for the glitter and jazz of the big city. She played her squeaky violin in a cabaret and soon reveled in night life with zest and abandon. Soon, however, despairing of life, she walked into the mission on January 25, 1911, just as Mrs. Ralph Norton of the Belgian Mission was singing, "You Must Do Something Tonight." Arvilla yielded her heart to God and returned for many years to the old rescue house to play her violin to the glory of God.

There was Charlie Palmer, a well-known harness dealer. He picked a strange night to jump into the waters of Lake Michigan. Above him, the waning moon peered dimly through jagged, wind-blown clouds. The waves roared against the stone walls of the breakwater. Along the shore stood the solitary figure of Charlie Palmer, struggling to make up his mind.

Born into a good family that gave him religious training, he nevertheless enjoyed quibbling with members of his home church, and finally joined an infidel club, of which he became a blatant enthusiast. Then came the craze for gambling. His wife could stand it no longer. Finally, joining hands with her over the crib of their sleeping baby, Palmer pledged never to enter another gambling hall. When he broke the oath, he cut a vein in his wrist, dipped a pen into the flowing blood, and wrote out another pledge. It worked no better. His wife finally left him.

Palmer often went at dusk to the suburban town where she lived, stationed himself across the street and watched the shadows on the window blind as the mother held their child in her arms. Then, his eyes flowing with tears, he would return to the city, go to some gambling den and play the wheels.

One night he went to Pacific Garden Mission, simply because he had nothing else to do. He heard Dick Lane testify how God had taken the love of gambling out of his heart. He went back again to hear Lane repeat the story. The second time Palmer followed Lane home from the mission, to make sure Lane didn't stop in at a gambling hole along the street. For forty-two nights in succession he trailed Lane to his house in similar fashion.

Convinced that Lane had the real thing, Palmer began to despair for himself, for he stood the more convicted of his own bankrupt life. It was now the night he found himself walking along the lake shore. There was some comfort in the thought that with a single plunge he could end his mental torture. Lifting his hands to heaven he cried to God for help. Something suddenly changed within him. He knew Christ had heard his petition and washed his sins away. He went back to the mission and gave his testimony.

His next move was to find Mrs. Palmer and their child. She welcomed him with open arms, and their home became a cathedral. Palmer entered business, and to the end held high his Christian testimony as a workman and as an early member of the Gideons. When the hour of death came and he lapsed into unconsciousness, he prayed for the faithful workers who carry the testimony of Christ's redeeming grace to needy men and women.

The growing army of mission converts spilled over the nation.

The largest proportion did not enter full-time Christian service in the sense of giving up secular employment, but the converts showed remarkable persistence and growth. From the beginning the mission's objective was to turn every convert into a missionary, whether in full-time Christian service or not. So it was that a tremendous lay witness was created, and as the years passed, almost every great firm in Chicago knew first hand the story of some drifter who had been on the verge of suicide, but had found Christ at the mission and was now making good.

Such was the work of Pacific Garden Mission in its earlier years, when, as today, it cradled American evangelists. They did not all step from the mission to the pulpit, though many did. But they stepped from the devil's stamping ground to God's trail for lost men, and in so doing, held the torch of faith aloft so others, too, could find the way.

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