

The Salvation Army
2014 USA Salvation Army Conference for Social Work and Emergency Disaster Services
25 to 28 March 2014, Orlando, Florida

GLOBAL CONVERSATION SESSION 1C

“What is The Salvation Army’s theology as we serve suffering humanity?”

Major (Dr) Dean Pallant

Under Secretary for Programme Resources and International Health Services Coordinator
International Headquarters

The question “What is The Salvation Army’s theology as we serve suffering humanity?” raises a number of other questions: What do we mean by theology? Is there only one Salvation Army theology? Who determines Salvation Army theology? To begin to answer these questions, we will discuss four voices of theological insight that shape Salvation Army theology as we serve suffering humanity¹.

First, **Authoritative Theology**: Salvation Army theology is based on the Bible and expanded in The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine. These are our primary sources of authoritative theology. However, many also give authority to the writings of our founders - William and Catherine Booth and others like John Wesley.

Second, **Academic Theology**: What do the experts say? Salvation Army social work is increasingly influenced by universities and professional bodies. In our early days, Salvation Army officers were discouraged from going to university. That has changed. Many of our training colleges are now accredited by universities. Academic teaching – from the faculties of theology but also business, social science, education, medicine – influences how we serve suffering humanity. Tensions between authoritative theology and academic theology need to be identified and understood.

Third, **Approved Theology**: In our day-to-day work serving suffering humanity we rely on a vast range of contemporary documents that have been approved by The Salvation Army – vision and mission statements, Moral and Social Positional Statements; strategic plans, project proposals, etc. In these documents we say what we are going to do; we set out organisation’s approved way of working. These documents carry theological meaning and are an opportunity for us to articulate what God is saying we should be doing in this time and place. These texts do not carry the same authority as The Bible or The Handbook of Doctrine but they are important sources of theological intent.

¹ . I am grateful to Dr Helen Cameron for introducing me to the concept of “Theology in Four Voices”. See Cameron, H. and Bhatti, D. et al “Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology, 2010, London: SCM Press

Fourth, **Action Theology**: What do we actually do? Our actions are full of theological meaning. We are a Christian church known for our authentic deeds rather than for our authoritative or academic theology. Therefore, our actions need to be carefully examined, understood and refined in the light of theology.

In this paper I seek to bring the four voices of theology into dialogue with each other. The voices are not always in harmony but it is important we hear the four voices as we try to answer the question: What is The Salvation Army's theology as we serve suffering humanity?

1. Authoritative Theology

I will focus on the Handbook of Doctrine and the writings of William and Catherine Booth to show how Salvation Army authoritative theology has developed in the past 150 years.

In the early years of their ministry, the Booths preached individual salvation and the blessing of holiness as travelling preachers around England. Catherine – the theologian in the family – had an orthodox Wesleyan, holistic understanding of salvation. In a sermon in 1881, Catherine taught the gospel was more than just saving souls:

It is not a scheme of salvation merely – it is a scheme of restoration. He proposes to restore me – brain, heart, soul, spirit, body, every fibre of my nature to restore me perfectly, to conform me wholly to the image of his Son.²

After Catherine died in 1890, the Army's work in "serving suffering humanity" expanded rapidly. Informed by the experience of life for poor people in the East End of London and his Wesleyan heritage, William understood that people required total transformation, including physical, social relationships with family, friends, society, the work place, the nation. William repeatedly refused to accept any salvation for the body without salvation for the soul. In his influential book, "In Darkest England and The Way Out", William conceived of The Salvation Army playing a key role in the total transformation of the whole world for God.

William did not make worship a condition of participation in any social programme. He argued Salvation Army worship should be so attractive people would not want to miss it. He placed the onus on Salvationists to attract people into the Kingdom rather than use coercive methods.³ There is a theology still relevant in 2014!

William was not ministering to the poor in order to create a more stable society. Rather, as Roger Green writes: "Booth was primarily an evangelist and a revivalist, pressing the hope that spiritual regeneration would manifest itself in social stability".⁴ This conclusion is foundational to a Salvation Army theology of serving suffering humanity in the 21st century. We are not faithful to the Booths' vision if we reduce "serving suffering humanity" to merely "helping people" secure their human rights or become good citizens or just build a more just and stable

² Booth, *Godliness*, 165.

³ Booth, *In Darkest England*, 139.

⁴ Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth*, 109.

society. We do all that but also much more. We are participants in God's mission to redeem the world.

The Eleven Doctrines of The Salvation Army focus on the nature of God and personal salvation. There is no mention of "suffering serving humanity" or "mission". In previous editions of the Handbook of Doctrine (1922, 1940, 1969) there is little reference to a theology of serving suffering humanity. Perhaps this absence of authoritative theology has encouraged some Salvationists to have a priority for matters of the soul over matters of the body? This weakness was addressed in recent editions. The 2010 edition teaches:

All our activities, practical, social and spiritual, arise out of our basic conviction of the reality of the love of God and our desire to see all people brought into relationship with him. None of our practices or programmes can be divorced from the reality that salvation is both a promise and a possibility for all people. Our doctrine reminds us that salvation is holistic: the work of the Holy Spirit touches all areas of our life and personality; all physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, our relationships with our families and with the world around us⁵.

There are a number of helpful quotes from the 2010 Handbook of Doctrine in the footnotes.⁶

Our authoritative theology is not static. For example, Salvation Army official teaching on the nature of people has developed over time. The 1923 edition of the Handbook teaches that the body is a lower order to the soul. "Man, as we see and know him, is ONE BEING, YET HE HAS BOTH A BODY AND A SOUL, or a lower and higher nature" (*emphasis in original*).⁷ By the 1998 version, there is hardly a mention of body and soul⁸ and much greater emphasis on the Trinity as relational and some references to the relationality of persons⁹. The 2010 version of the *Handbook of Doctrine* retains the relationality teaching and adds an explicit rejection of body-soul dualism.

In Salvationist faith and practice the wholeness of the person is crucial. It is reflected in the combination of our evangelistic and social work ... Any dualistic thinking which separates body and soul, often suggesting the body is either less important or evil, must

⁵ The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine, 2010, 160

⁶ "The mission of God's holy people encompasses evangelism, service and social action. It is the holy love of God, expressed in the heart and life of his people, point the world to Christ, inviting the world to saving grace, serve the world with Christ's compassion and attacking social evils. Holiness leads to mission." (198)

"The compassion of the Army's social action depends upon an understanding that God is Father of all without discrimination or partiality. In particular, we recognize in Scripture a divine emphasis on the pressing needs of the poor and marginalized. This "bias to the poor" gives a priority to the mission of the Church and has been recognized and acted upon by the Army since its founding days". (49)

"The Salvation Army is called to embody God's immense salvation in a wounded world. The challenge to each generation of Salvationist is to interpret the message of the Atonement in terms that can be understood, and to live authentically and attractively, embodying the message that they are called to serve." (143)

⁷ The Salvation Army, *Handbook of Salvation Army Doctrine*, 1923, 44.

⁸ The 1998 version collapses all differentiation between body and soul with the assertion: 'In the Bible the word 'body' means the whole person. The phrase safeguards the integrity of the human person' (118).

⁹ The Salvation Army, *Salvation Story*, 60.

be resisted as it can lead to unhealthy or immoral practice. Salvationist teaching must clearly present the wholeness of the individual as a basis for personal spiritual life and mission in the world.¹⁰

This is important teaching in at least two respects. First, it shows that authoritative theology develops over time. The Salvation Army understanding of body and soul shifted in just 75 years. Second, The Salvation Army's authoritative theology emphasizes the wholeness of the individual as the basis for mission in the world, the basis for serving suffering humanity.

It is also worth noting that the global evangelical church went on a similar journey in the 20th century. The Lausanne Movement – initiated by Billy Graham – has helped evangelicals understand the richness of the whole gospel for the whole person for the whole world.¹¹

2. Academic theology

Academic theology can inform our Salvation Army theology of serving suffering humanity in many ways. I completed a doctorate in theology in 2011 and learnt much. One of the most valuable lessons was learning a Greek concept - *telos*.

Telos was a concept used by Aristotle. It means our orientation, our goal, our purpose. *Telos* is not merely a guiding light for occasional reference by the pilgrim. It is a rich, dense concept that can be explored and lived out. Alasdair MacIntyre, the eminent philosopher, argues: "It is only possible to understand the dominant moral culture of advanced modernity properly from a standpoint external to that culture."¹² In other words, for any person or group to live well, we require a clear understanding of where we are going – something beyond ourselves. Without that clarity of *telos*, we do not know what we are aiming for, we float around without direction. *Telos* is not something we can pick up and put down as it suits us – it captures our whole being. "Purity of heart" said Kierkegaard, "is to will one thing." We need a singleness of purpose for the whole of life. It has no application unless it is for the whole of life.¹³

MacIntyre helped me understand the challenge The Salvation Army faces serving suffering humanity. It is a mistake to presume we are speaking the same language as our partners when we serve suffering humanity. In fact, we rarely share the same *telos*. There are a number of *telos* being used by governments, corporate partners, NGOS, even other FBOs. There is a tendency for secular agencies to use fragments from lost moral traditions, fragments that have become abstracted from a shared notion of what constitutes the good life and human flourishing.

So what is The Salvation Army's *telos*? Well, there can only be one. One Army, One Message, One *Telos*! Our *telos* is more than our mission – it is our orientation, our direction. I use the term "healthy persons" in trying to describe our *telos*. People who are restored to be what God created them to be – healthy in body, soul and relationships. This is not the same as the *telos* of

¹⁰ ———, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 243.

¹¹ www.lausanne.org

¹² MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, vii.

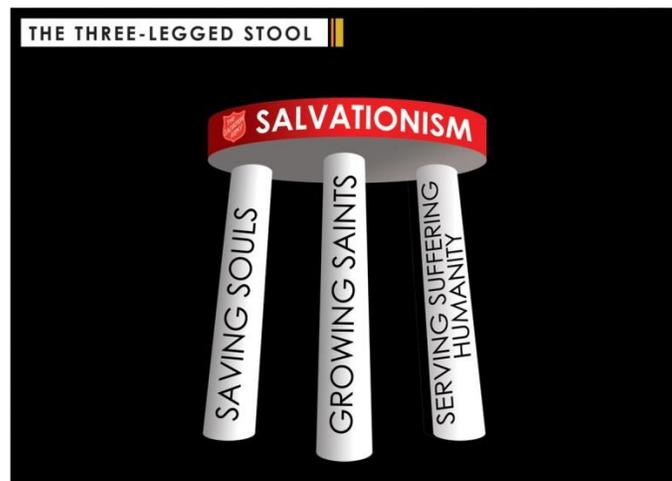
¹³ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 203.

many NGOs and humanists who aim to develop peoples who are autonomous, rational individuals. That is not our *telos*. We have a rich appreciation of people created by God as body-soul-for-relationships. “Healthy persons” whose lives are orientated by the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose lives are characterized by their relationship with God and are faithfully present serving him in the world. The *telos* of “healthy persons” transcends geographical, economic, and racial boundaries.¹⁴

3. Approved Theology

What do we say we are going to do? The Salvation Army’s approved theology is found in vision and mission statements; in teaching resources; in strategic plans. There are many examples. I briefly highlight two examples.

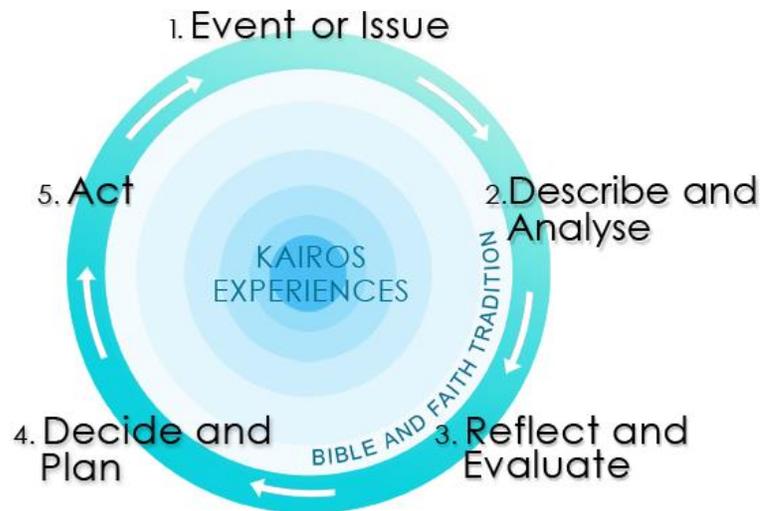
General John Gowans clarified our integrated ministry with the phrase: “Saving souls, growing saints and serving suffering humanity”.



I use this picture around the world to challenge those who emphasize one “leg” – for example, the “sanctified” individualistic saint who has little time for “suffering humanity” or the passionate social worker who sees little need for connection between her professional practice and our *telos*.

The other example of an Approved Theology is Faith-Based Facilitation (FBF). General Clifton approved it after discussion at the International Management Council. The booklet, *Building Deeper Relationships*, has been translated into 10 languages and is widely used.

¹⁴ Pallant, Dean (2012) “Keeping Faith in Faith Based Organisations”, Eugene OR, Wipf & Stock has a fuller explanation of the concept of “health persons” and its application in Salvation Army ministry.



FBF is way of working which is being used by many Salvationists around the world in serving – and working with – suffering humanity. FBF a process and a set of tools which helps, encourages and enables people to speak and, in the light of Biblical truths, make more faithful decisions and build deeper relationships. An intentional searching for spiritual insight (called “*Kairos* Experience”) is central to FBF and emphasizes The Salvation Army’s roots in the holiness tradition. A faith-based facilitator not only has skills and tools, s/he seeks a Christ-like character.

The Faith-Based Facilitation (FBF) process includes the four key elements of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral – Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience – but by adopting the action-reflection process it can be used by NGOs and other partners who do not share our telos but work in a similar way. The intention engagement of contemporary issues with the Bible, Faith Tradition and the work of the Spirit (*Kairos* Experience) makes it distinctively faith-based. We have many “approved theologies” and they help us dialogue with the last of the four voices – action theology.

4. Action Theology

This is the theology we actually do. When the millions of Salvationists, employees and volunteers serve suffering humanity in Salvation Army programmes they are living their theology. They have their own motivation for working for The Salvation Army. Some of us believe we are doing God’s will and see our service as an integral part of the response to Christ’s call to be disciples; others may not believe in God but like to work with The Salvation Army because we help people; some may see their work as employment – a way of paying the bills. I believe we need to pay careful attention to the “action theology” being used by our

colleagues and ourselves. Action theology has more influence on the people we seek to serve than our authoritative, academic or approved theologies.

The Salvation Army has historically been good at action theology – we have learnt much from the voice of practice. We believe God speaks to us in our day-to-day ministry. The Holy Spirit challenges us during our encounters with the “real” world. We recognise the grace of God in our world. Often we can only see the work of God retrospectively but we know there is a prevenient grace at work in the world. Salvationists know that God is not only found in the Bible, the Doctrine Book, the University thesis or the Positional Statement. We fervently believe that God speaks to us in the gutter, in the work place, in the shops, in the home.

This willingness to recognise God in the world has saved The Salvation Army from the ugliness and detachment of self-righteous holiness. Our Action Theology keeps us rooted in the world – always seeking the Kairos Experience. In passing, let me say I believe it is this willingness to learn from the voice of Action Theology that will help The Salvation Army navigate through the current dangers facing us with our relationship with the Lesbian and Gay Community. When we know, care and learn from gay people, God will help us find a faithful response.

In conclusion, how do continue a conversation about The Salvation Army’s theology for serve suffering humanity? We need a dynamic, never static, theology for our movement. We live in a dynamic, changing world. The Holy Spirit is always speaking, inspiring, energizing. Serving suffering humanity is a journey and we need resources for the journey.

How can we create spaces to hear the four voices of theology in our ministry?

A response by Claudia Franchetti

South America East Territory

The answer to this question is not easy, but necessary. It was helpful to address the question using the concept of “Theology in Four Voices” as it gives us a starting point. As I read the paper I tried to figure out how present these four voices are in the field, in the mission opportunities I have the privilege to support as a Projects Officer, and as soldier of The Salvation Army.

I fully agree with Major Pallant that **Action Theology** has more influence on the people we seek to serve than our authoritative, academic or approved theologies. The collective imagination of The Salvation Army is centered on people doing good things for others. Although this close connection to the action has saved us from self-righteous holiness, and helped us to navigate through the rapids of controversial issues, sometimes we are blind sailors.

Authoritative Theology is very much connected to the history of The Salvation Army. For common people, these are old fashioned statements, things that happened in the past. Hardly anyone can really see how the authoritative theology can help him or her to make daily decisions. The **Academic Theology** has a growing presence in our training colleges, and this is

very good, but I agree with Major Pallant that tensions between these two voices need to be identified, understood and addressed. By so doing, we will keep on growing in our understanding and commitment towards our theology. Then, these two voices as they converge, like two streams coming together, they are communicated to the Salvationists and other people as well. The **Approved Theology** emerges as an institutional message to orientate and clarify our ministry.

What I notice from my personal experience is that these four voices are not equally present in our daily ministry. People in the field do not have access to, or are not interested in authoritative and academic theologies. The closest they come to these is through the approved theology, but mostly in a “visual and advertisement” way. They may remember the slogan of the Territory, or they may be able to identify the international vision logo, but very few will go deeper and dare to unpack the content behind or underneath the statements. This makes us really think on the importance of communication. How do we communicate our Approved Theology? How do we make it accessible to all people, without losing its richness and profoundness?

In addition to distance, there is the timing issue. Action Theology moves faster and quicker than the other voices. We discover questions and situations that do not fall into the structure. Action Theology feeds and challenges the other voices. Unfortunately, in these days, we in The Salvation Army take too long to realize these critical issues and respond to them in a profound and exhaustive way. We may provide a practical response, but with a very weak, if not non-existent, theoretical backup. That’s how Action Theology is somehow divorced from the other voices, a time and distance separation. This separation weakens the four voices, and makes us more vulnerable to all kind of “winds of doctrine”.

How can we create spaces to hear the four voices of theology in our ministry? - Bringing them closer, in terms of space and time. Scholars and practitioners have to increase their connections; they have to know each other, understand better their realities, and share the faith.

How can we create spaces to hear the four voices of theology in our ministry? – Setting apart resources, mainly time, for reflection, at all levels; being intentional in our theology making.

The Salvation Army
2014 USA Salvation Army Conference for Social Work and Emergency Disaster Services
25 to 28 March 2014, Orlando, Florida

GLOBAL CONVERSATION SESSION 1C

“What is The Salvation Army’s theology as we serve suffering humanity?”

Major Campbell Roberts O.F.
New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga

For most of us the everyday reality of our ministry is serving a never-ending queue of suffering humanity. People impacted by the scourges of poverty, loneliness, addiction, criminal offending, homelessness, human trafficking, illness, illiteracy, social isolation, unemployment, abuse, and other human suffering.

Internationally, this torrent of human need is responded to by a Salvation Army ready with immediate care, crisis management, practical love, professional skills and training. Motivating Salvationists to make such a response is the impact and reality of God’s love and salvation operating in their individual lives. Salvationists are pragmatic people, and The Salvation Army a pragmatic organisation keen to respond immediately to need rather than spend time reflecting on the theology that might lead to this serving of suffering humanity.

From the post-war period to the 1990s, the approach of The Salvation Army in New Zealand in meeting need was similarly pragmatic, albeit using where possible the best of healing therapies and professionally competent staff. Although leadership would have denied it, the link between serving human and biblical theology had become organisationally isolated and theologically tentative.

Over the past ten years in New Zealand a change has occurred that has seen a stronger link between the Army’s theology and the services meeting need. A closer alignment between evangelistic and social theology, corps and social services, theology and practice, social service and social reform has occurred to the point that it could be said the link between the theology of the Army and suffering humanity is strong.

This change had mixed drivers, including: a more aggressive and comprehensive territorial mission setting process that has unified theology and practice; an organisational change that has seen most corps embracing Community Ministries (the name of our frontline welfare centres), Just Action social justice conferences, the birth of Recovery Churches in addiction services, a deliberate Christian mission focus on social services, and the establishment of The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit (SPPU).

Theologically-based approaches to serving suffering have developed as Salvationists have more deeply understood and appreciated The Salvation Army's historical mandate and theology.

At this stage it is too early in the change process to know whether what we are observing is a permanent change in how The Salvation Army in New Zealand undertakes its ministry, or whether other environmental or international factors may arrest this approach.

I offer, therefore, in this paper a description of the New Zealand journey in this change as an example of what Salvation Army theology can look like when serving suffering humanity.

From an early period, The Salvation Army in New Zealand—in line with international trends—separated its evangelistic and social wings administratively, financially and missionally. This separation became entrenched, to the point where the social and evangelical work of the Army happened in two entities with Salvation Army officers divided into either 'field officers' or 'social officers'.

This divide increased in the 1950s to 1970s as social and health services in New Zealand moved to more strongly specialise and professionalise. The result was an external environment demanding more professional practice, staff better educated in social sciences and the requirement of more accountability in government funding contracts.

The Salvation Army's theological imprimatur on its social service operation at this time could best be described as a loose belief that loving God meant loving others—hence, 'social services' were justified as Christian acts of love. While this practice model of Christian love was appropriate overall, the theological understanding and rationale for service was not well articulated or understood. Christian pragmatism rather than Christian theology influenced how The Salvation Army undertook its social and public ministry.

In the 1980s a rethinking of the integration between service and theology commenced in The Salvation Army. Contributing to this change were external environmental factors and greater concentration on biblical truth.

Strangely, an economic philosophy contributed to The Salvation Army reconnecting in greater depth to its theological foundations. The dominance of economic liberalism as the major public policy doctrine in New Zealand came with a Labour Government in 1984 and changed how New Zealand acted as a society and how individual 'Kiwis' treated each other. Self-interest, individualisation, dominance of the market, secularism, competitiveness rather than cooperation, and an increasing gap between rich and the poor became increasingly the markers of New Zealand life.

These economically liberal policies resulted in a new poor. People found themselves in poverty, disenfranchised from the norms of New Zealand society, in low-quality housing, with limited employment opportunities, often victims of crime, and susceptible to social hazards.

One impact of this altered New Zealand on Army corps was a reinterpretation of corps mission, worship and service. This following what had been a loss of certainty in corps ministry created by the church growth movement and theological uncertainty. There were obvious links in this new economic liberalism to the situation for the poor in Booth's London. Salvationists became more interested in embracing the historical mandate of the Army and the theological roots of Wesley and Booth. Similarly, in social services, a new emphasis on creating Christian community was added to professional practice and therapies.¹⁵

The result of weaving people into a patchwork of Christian community means the marginalised have become known, named and included within Salvation Army communities in corps and social centres. Our congregations in New Zealand have become less middle class, with many congregations increasingly comprising people from Salvation Army social services. The embracing of economic liberalism in public policy was a wakeup call that helped the Army in New Zealand rediscover its theological roots.

Another external factor influential in the reconnection of Salvationists with their faith taproots has been increased awareness in New Zealand public life of bi-culturalism and the honouring of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand and was between indigenous New Zealanders, Māori and the British Crown. In recent years, New Zealand has been challenged to better recognise the bi-cultural partnership created by the Treaty in public policy and in its social and economic life.

Although New Zealand is traditionally a very secular state, to more fully recognise Māori people, there has needed to be greater regard for faith and the spiritual dimension of life. These are two essentials elements of Māoritanga.

One public aspect of this is in the Māori religious ceremony and prayer (*karakia*) associated with *pōwhiri* (welcomes) at government occasions. This recognition also provides new opportunities for faith communities to receive public acknowledgement of their own faith heritage. An example of this is found in a Memorandum of Understanding between The Salvation Army and the Ministry of Social Development. The document reads:

The Ministry of Social Development acknowledges that The Salvation Army is an evangelical church and human resources provider, with its message based on the Bible, its ministry motivated by the love of God and its mission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human need without discrimination. This involves The Salvation Army in caring for people, transforming lives through God in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and working for the reform of society by alleviating poverty, deprivation and disadvantage and by challenging evil, injustice and oppression.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Shaping the Future of the Army, Territorial Strategic Mission Plan* (Wellington, 2006)

¹⁶ 'Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Social Development and The Salvation Army' (2006)

This statement is a significant acknowledgement of the faith tradition and motivation of The Salvation Army in its contracts with Government. By incorporating The Salvation Army mission in its partnership agreement Government not only recognises the right to encompass spiritual processes in the transformation and care of people, but also recognises that on occasions the Army will change and oppose government policy and practice in seeking the reform of society. I suspect this opportunity to have Government sanction and encouragement of our spiritual as well as humanitarian purposes is reasonably unique internationally in The Salvation Army.

The Treaty of Waitangi then is another example of an external influence that has served to nurture a rediscovery and reemphasis of The Salvation Army's theological story and journey.

Internally, the rediscovery of theological roots includes: a greater understanding of the biblical theme of justice, a deeper faith-to-life connection, increased biblical literacy, and a desire to be missional in a way that makes a real difference in people's everyday lives. As a result, social service work is now largely integrated into Salvation Army corps. Ten years ago, few Salvation Army corps included social service expressions as part of their congregational life. Where social assistance was given, it would have been undertaken by a corps officer. Now, nearly all New Zealand corps have a community of social expression, with appropriate training and engagement of soldiers and adherents. Increasingly, the community is seen as the centre of corps mission.

Salvationists seem willing to embrace actively that part of our theological DNA which understands that no one is beyond redemption or separated from the grace and love of God. Five years ago, the territory commenced addiction rehabilitation work alongside the Mongrel Mob, one of New Zealand's largest and most troublesome criminal gangs.

This work was difficult for Salvation Army Addiction Services to undertake because of the almost universal community rejection of these gang members by New Zealanders and the gang's insistence on contributing and commenting on all treatment methodologies. Without a strong connection to our theological and biblical mandate, this work would have failed. Professional treatment methodologies alone could not have been effective or sustained what turned out to be a very challenging journey. The faith component and theological touchstone enabled officers and staff to remain 'with' the Mob despite immense hurdles. Through this programme numbers of the mob have turned their life around and beaten their drug and alcohol habits.

As The Salvation Army in New Zealand has rediscovered its Wesleyan and Booth roots, the territory has focused its ministry on the causes and not just the effects of poverty and need. Nine years ago, the territory was led to question the effectiveness of its social services operation in achieving real change for those it served. In a 2003 survey it found that despite significant efforts in social provision, the Salvation Army had failed to arrest a decline in the social circumstances of New Zealand's most vulnerable groups in all the areas in which it was

working.¹⁷ Although some people came to faith and thousands were cared for, with regard to the gospel imperative to create a more just society, we were achieving little.

To change this situation, Salvation Army leadership established a specialist unit focused on engaging with social policy and the causes of injustice. This new entity, 'the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit' was deliberately housed in a Salvation Army social service centre in South Auckland where some of New Zealand's most deprived neighbourhoods were located. The Unit's purpose was defined as 'working towards the eradication of poverty in New Zealand'. It undertook this purpose by seeking New Zealand's social and economic agenda. These individuals were generally leaders in the community, government, politics, business and commerce.

The methodologies used in the engagement with these leaders included:

- an annual programme of social policy research
- regular publications to provoke and stimulate debate from our theological and biblical understandings around issues of social policy and social justice
- deliberate engagement with four hundred or so individuals seen to be the most influential in creating public policy
- organisation of an annual national (Just Action) conference focused on issues of biblical justice, social policy and social justice
- judicious use of the media to raise public awareness on key social policy issues
- the establishment of relationships with individual politicians and political parties represented in the New Zealand Parliament.

One of the most influential pieces of work undertaken by the Unit is the publication of its annual State of the Nation report. Six of these reports have now been published. At the beginning of each year the Army brings its theological and biblical framework alongside public policy, examining: the state of New Zealand's children, the adequacy of work and incomes policies, adequacy of housing provision, progress in eliminating crime and moving towards a more rehabilitative punishment regime, and progress on a range of social hazards. Evidence is that Government is increasingly introducing policies to address these areas.

Apart from its external influence, the work of the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit has been influential in supporting a renewed understanding and outworking of the foundational beliefs of biblical justice in the life of Salvationists. Deepening awareness of injustice has caused an increasing group of Salvationists to be interested in social justice. Social justice has become part of the territorial mission agenda with one of four mission goals being to fight injustice. Ten years ago such a social reform mission goal would never have been accepted as a strategic goal of The Salvation Army in New Zealand.

¹⁷ Work undertaken by Bonnie Robinson in 2001 looking at the effectiveness of Salvation Army Social Services in South Auckland

Without at all diminishing its place as an evangelical church and social service provider, the Salvation Army in New Zealand has become increasingly known as a movement for social justice and institutional change. Recently, the head of a leading government ministry said, 'The Salvation Army is the strongest church body in New Zealand in terms of advocating for socio-economic change. MPs get jittery when they know a SPPU report is imminent.'

There is no doubt that The Salvation Army in New Zealand is more intentionally integrating its theology with its mission to serve suffering humanity. It better articulates the truths of the gospel in collective situations and environments. In doing so, it has found it is possible to be a provider of social services receiving government funding and still provide robust critique and criticism from our theological and biblical understandings of that government's social policy. We are making a pastoral response by linking people to communities of hope, and to social and spiritual holiness in new and exciting ways. This linking of theology and service has produced an Army willing to fight for what it believes and prepared to challenge the leadership of the nation. For many, this has been a welcome development in our public ministry that they feel is worthy of their support.

Additionally, as Salvationists have reflected more deeply on the genesis of their faith they have been drawn to a more integrated community approach that sees holiness not only in individual but also in collective terms. As there has been an increasingly outward focus, with faith re-energised in the lives of Salvation Army worshipping communities.

In New Zealand the better integration of Salvation Army theology in our mission of serving suffering humanity is contributing to a unification and renewal of the missional purpose of The Salvation Army in New Zealand. It is helping us bridge the great divide between church congregations and social expression by returning us to the intention of God for the Church: that we would be integrated in our mission expression, and that we would proclaim the actuality of God's integration with the social and public spheres of his world. God is present and invites us to be present also.

A response by Captain Nick Coke,

United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland

I have read numerous theological papers over the years. Not long ago I waded through vast amounts of theological material for my masters' dissertation. This was the first time, however, having finished reading that I spontaneously wanted to give the author a 'high-five'! Major Campbell Roberts, this is how your paper made me feel - exhilarated, challenged, inspired, emotional, proud. Let me explain why.

I created a 'word cloud' of the paper. The bigger the word, the more frequent its usage. After 'New Zealand', 'Salvation Army', 'theology' and 'social' – obvious words given the subject matter - surprisingly the most commonly used word is 'change'.

3. The change to instate social justice as an essential component of serving suffering humanity. I found this the most impressive part of the journey. Without doubt it is never enough to meet a need without attempting to tackle the root cause. As an international organisation with a 150 year track record of serving suffering humanity we have more than enough credibility to speak up on a range of issues. It made my heart glad to read that politicians 'get jittery' when the SPPU issue a report - it means The Salvation Army voice really counts! I have questions, though: how easy is it to balance a 'robust critique' of government social policy whilst receiving government funding? How should we approach partnership in building alliances for justice-seeking? How can we ensure the work of social justice filters down beyond the territorial level to the local setting? How far can we go in co-ordinating justice responses across territories?

These three changes challenge anyone with ears to hear. Change is uncomfortable, risky and requires the ability to 'hold your nerve'. It is also a constant requirement in response to shifting context, fluctuating needs and the refining fire of the Spirit. I commend your territory for its pioneering spirit - it is reflective of the values at the heart of The Salvation Army movement to which we are all proud to belong.