THE INFLUENCE OF WESLEYAN SOURCES AND THEOLOGY ON THE SALVATION ARMY'S MINISTRY IN SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC POLICY IN NEW ZEALAND

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This article discusses the ongoing influence of William Booth's Wesleyan theological heritage upon the Salvation Army in New Zealand. It argues that the impact of Wesleyan thought has enabled the Salvation Army to hold its evangelistic and social imperatives in dynamic tension and considers how the recent recovery of Wesleyan theological roots has impacted the Salvation's Army's involvement in the social and public spheres of New Zealand life.

2012 marks the 100th anniversary of William Booth's death. His influence upon the Salvation Army's work and theology remains strong. Over recent years a number of historians and researchers have published accounts of William (and Catherine) Booth's work which have drawn attention to Booth's earlier revivalistic emphasis during the days of the Christian Mission and early Salvation Army contrasted with a significant emphasis on social action in the latter period of Booth's life.[1] These works have been in marked contrast to earlier works like St John Irvine in 1934 who offered little interpretative comment on any kind of change in Booth's outlook except to note that at age 60 'Booth was now a popular Public Person' and at age 80 'he was old and ill and his heart was haunted by a fear that he had allowed philanthropy to take the place of religion in his Army.'[2]

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[1] These have included Roger Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth, Founder of The Salvation Army* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005); Norman Murdoch, *Origins of The Salvation Army* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994); Roy Hattersley, *Blood and Fire: William and Catherine Booth and their Salvation Army* (London: Abacus, 2000); David Bennett, *The General: William Booth* 2 vols. (Longwood, Florida: Yulon Press, 2003); and Pamela L. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[2] St John Ervine, *God's Soldier: General William Booth* (London: Heineman Ltd, 1934), 741, 798.

In the 1880s something of a dramatic change appeared to take place in Booth as he embarked on a major campaign for social reform. The focus of this move was centred on a farm-based immigration scheme known as the *In Darkest England* scheme designed to lift the poorest of Britain's population out of abject poverty and deprivation. The scheme itself had limited success but it was the impetus to the creation of a large social welfare organisation within the Salvation Army. This was also the period when Booth embarked on some very significant programmes in social justice and reform including the Maiden Tribute campaign, aimed at raising the age of consent to sixteen years and putting an end to child trafficking and prostitution.

Various explanations have been offered for Booth's change in direction although he always remained at heart a committed evangelical revivalist. Norman Murdoch claims that the movement was faltering and needed a fresh impetus. 'Booth had always been sure that a Christian world would be achieved by revival means he had learned in the 1840s. But the world of the 1880s had frustrated that hope…in his own Salvation Army, which was experiencing stagnation. By 1889 Booth was turning in new directions.'[3] Roger Green argues for a maturing change in Booth.

> Booth concluded that he had two gospels to preach - a gospel of redemption from personal sin and a gospel of redemption from social evil. He broadened his theological language to take into account his changed theology. He added new meaning and a new dimension to the redemptive theological language that he had been expressing for years. Salvation now had social obligations as well as spiritual ones.[4]

Others point to the influence of individuals upon his thinking. Steele refers to Booth as a 'dominant but plastic personality that yielded to the pressure of personalities who worked under his command.'[5] Murdoch points to Commissioner Frank Smith who later became a socialist politician as a key player in influencing 'Booth's change of mind.'[6] Bennett argues that Smith's influence was not as critical to Booth's change of thinking in the late 1880s as was Catherine Booth's encouragement and interest in the Darkest

[3] Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army,* 145.
[4] Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth*,176.
[5] Harold C Steele, *I Was a Stranger: The Fact of William Booth of The Salvation Army* (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), 50-51.
[6] Murdoch, *The Origins of The Salvation Army*, 163.

England scheme prior to her death in 1890.[7] Wider social events and trends occurring in England at the time are considered by some to be important including economic depression, the collapse of British agriculture and the failure of social aid agencies under the Charity Aid Organisation as well as the wider church.[8]

This article argues that by the end of the 1880s and early 1890s Booth had achieved the financial and personnel resources along with the public support to embark on what had always been part of him as a committed Wesleyan. He had in his son Bramwell a consummate administrator as Chief of Staff and in extensive Orders and Regulations the governance structure required to undertake a major new undertaking. A large officer force of trained and committed Salvationists offered the manpower (and woman power) to act. There had been other significant evidences of social work in the earlier Army and Christian Mission but these had lacked the resources and expertise to be ongoing. These resources were now available as well as a level of public acceptance which had previously been lacking. What emerged in the 1880s and 1890s was an expression of who Booth had been from his early adulthood now made possible through a significant change in circumstances.

William Booth was converted at Broad Street Methodist Chapel in Nottingham at the age of fifteen. As an employee of a pawnbroker he was intimately aware on a daily basis of the realities of poverty around him. At one point he was unemployed for a year. Later, he threw his lot in with the Methodist New Connexion as an evangelist and circuit pastor. He was to withdraw from the Methodist New Connexion out of frustration over its lengthy committee processes and systems of governance but he was never to leave Wesleyan doctrine and outlook. The Methodist New Connexion's doctrines became in large measure the doctrines of the Salvation Army. Two quotes will need to suffice to illustrate Booth's commitment to Methodist belief and practice: 'I worshipped everything that bore the name Methodist. To me there was one God and John Wesley was his prophet.'[9] In 1885 Booth was interviewed by *The Methodist Times* and asked if he had any special advice for Methodists. The reply was swift and unequivocal: 'Follow Wesley, glorious John Wesley.'[10]

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[7] Bennett, *The General, vol. 2,* 293-294.
[8] Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth,* 168-69, 171-72.
[9] Harold Begbie, *The Life of General William Booth, Vol II* (London: MacMillan & Co Ltd, 1926), 367-368.
[10] Hugh Price Hughes, 'An Interview with William Booth on The Salvation Army', *The Methodist Times, (*February 1885): 81-82.

Green observes that 'To miss this Methodist nurturing in the broader framework of the evangelicalism of nineteenth century England…is to misinterpret William Booth from the beginning and to see him as a-theological.'[11] Harry Jeffs writes, 'Undoubtedly the Army owes its existence to the fact that General Booth was a Methodist. It was in Methodism that he served his apprenticeship as an organiser…It is the Methodist theology of personal experience of salvation, the theology of the love of God, the theology of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the only thorough and permanent reforming agency that has been the mainspring of Salvation Army organisation.'[12]

If Wesleyan Methodism was such a formative and influential element in Booth's life, then it is important to identify social imperatives and impulses within John Wesley himself. This is an important exercise because it is not always readily recognised by Methodist commentators who are also embarked on the task of rediscovering identity in the current context. Randy Maddox comments on this. 'Wesley's descendents rather quickly dismissed him as a model for theological activity, and this dismissal widely led to the loss of the distinctive tension of his concern for responsible grace.'[13]

Wesley's social impetus was always integral to his wider commitment to holiness and was a direct expression of it. Howard Snyder observes that:

> For Wesley, holiness and good works were one piece. He saw 'faith, holiness and good works as the root, the tree and the fruit, which God had joined and man ought not to put asunder.' He especially stressed prayer, the Eucharist, Bible study, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, helping the stranger, and visiting or relieving the sick and imprisoned. He would have disputed any claim to holiness not matched by good works.[14]

James Logan observes how the Wesleyan-holiness movement

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[11] Roger Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 36.
[12] Harry Jeffs, 'The Man and His Work,' in R. G. Moyles: *I Knew William Booth: An Album of Remembrance* (Alexandria, Virginia: Crest Books, 2007): 36-37.
[13] Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 256.
[14] Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1980), 120.

'saw the doctrine of entire sanctification inescapably bound with abolition, the plight of the poor and the enfranchisement of women.'[15] Don Thorsen observes that Wesley was 'concerned as much for the spiritual and moral well being of society as for the spiritual and moral well being of individuals.'[16] And Theodore Jennings notes, 'Wesley directed himself to the poor of England and away from the prosperous and the prestigious. We may imagine that this was simply a form of especially idealistic piety or even a misguided and ultimately failed strategy. It was the rigorous application to the field of proclamation and community formation of the being of God.'[17]

Wesley's social action can be grouped into three kinds of responses. Firstly, there was a pastoral response to the plight of individuals. His journal is laced with accounts of visits to individuals in prisons and also ministry to those condemned to meet the hangman's noose. He records 'on Friday and Saturday I visited as many more as I could. I found some in their cells under ground; others in their garrets, half starved both with cold and with hunger, added to their weakness and pain.'[18]

The second level of response was in the form of localised action to presenting needs.

> But I was still in pain for many of the poor that were sick; there was so great expense and so little profit…At length I thought of a desperate expedient. 'I will prepare and give them physical myself'…I took into my assistance an apothecary and an experienced surgeon; resolving at the time not to go out of my depth but to leave all difficult and complicated cases to the physicians as the patients should choose.[19]

Other localised schemes included the provision for widows, education of children in Sunday schools, financial lending services and strangely enough, the use of electric shock treatment for the

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[15] James Logan, 'Offering Christ: Wesleyan Evangelism Today' in Randy Maddox, *Rethinking Wesleys Theology for Contemporary Methodism* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 125-126.
[16] Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral* (Leamington: Emeth Press, 2005), 152-153.
[17] Theodore Jennings, 'Transcendence, Justice and Mercy,' in Maddox, *Rethinking Wesley's Theology,* 82.
[18] *The Journal of John Wesley*, Ed. Percy Livingstone Parker (Chicago: Moody Press), 192.
[19] Mildred Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 61-63.

treatment of a range of ailments which Wesley claimed brought relief to many hundreds of patients.[20]

Wesley's third response was at a wider social level incorporating major social issues of the time, specifically slavery and liberal alcohol laws. J. Wesley Breadey claimed that he showed 'an alert, intimate and life long interest in the 'bread and butter' problems of life…he was more familiar with the life of the poor than any man of his age; he knew that many of them dwelt in cellars and attics, amongst verminous surroundings, lacking warmth, raiment and decent victuals.'[21]

Wesley's opposition to slavery and its accompanying horrific trade was long standing and constant. In his *Serious Address to the People of England* (1777) he thundered: 'I would to God that it never be found any more! That we may never more steal and sell our brothers like beasts, never murder them by the thousands and tens of thousands!…Never was anything such a reproach to England since it was a nation as having any hand in this execrable traffic.'[22] Breadey also points out that Wesley's last written letter was six days before his death and was addressed to William Wilberforce. 'O be not weary in well doing. Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it.'[23]

Wesley's opposition to the liquor industry which thrived under liberal legislation is perhaps not so well known. In 1794 he wrote to the Prime Minister, 'Suppose your influence could prevent distilling by making it a felony, you would do more service to your country than any Prime Minister has done these 100 years.'[24] Also not so well known was his concern and practical action to assist French prisoners of war who were being kept under inhumane conditions in Bristol in addition to his campaigns to improve prison conditions at large.

In all this it should be noted that Wesley remained an ardent political conservative but he did not hesitate to embark as a radical reformer when social or legislative sanctions worsened the plight of people.

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[20] *The Journal of John Wesley*, 218.
[21] J. Wesley Bready, *England Before and After Wesley* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 238.
[22] Bready, 227.
[23] Bready, 228.
[24] Bready, 244.

This has been only a very brief outline of one aspect of the theology and ministry of the man who undoubtedly had the greatest influence upon William Booth as founder of the Salvation Army who in turn has continued to be the major determinant in the Army's ongoing social service ministry and commitment to responding to social justice issues within the public sphere.

During recent years a new urgency has emerged within the Salvation Army in New Zealand to have a closer alignment between its evangelistic and social agenda. It has been thought important that not only should there be a synergy between aspects of theology, evangelism, social service and social reform but that the organisation itself should be able to articulate and explain how and why that linking in ministry and service occurs. In the process of moving to this position, more attention has been paid to the Salvation Army's historical mandate and theology. This has laid bare our Wesleyan roots and given us a greater appreciation of their impact and value. Our journey toward a more integrated mission is a relatively recent one, with most of the real drive coming within the last ten years. To this extent, it is unclear whether what we are observing is a permanent change in how the Salvation Army in New Zealand undertakes its ministry, or whether more pressing environmental or international factors may arrest this approach.

From an early period, the Salvation Army in New Zealand separated its evangelistic and social wings administratively, financially and missionally. This gradually became entrenched, to the point that these ministries became two entities. It was common to talk about Salvation Army officers being 'field officers' (i.e clergy) or 'social officers' (involved in social service work) as if there was a 'great divide' between the two.

From the 1950s and 1960s, the Salvation Army in New Zealand moved to more strongly professionalise and separate its social services. This came about from numerous drivers. The external environment increasingly demanded such professionalism; better educated and more highly skilled social service officers and practitioners were staffing our services; and there was an increasing demand of professionalism related to government funding contracts. The Salvation Army's theological imprimatur on its social service operation could best be described as a loose belief that loving God meant loving others - hence, 'social services' were justified as Christian acts. This was a well intentioned but somewhat theologically soft approach. During this period, there seems to have been little serious attempt to articulate and thus connect the Army's

increasing social service activity to a serious missional or theological mandate or framework of understanding. Where such a framework was clear, it was usually individually, rather than organisationally, held. Generally, it could be argued that Christian pragmatism rather than Christian theology influenced how the Salvation Army undertook its social and public ministry. This was not necessarily a bad general landscape from which to be offering ministry; however, it was insufficient for continuity and validation within a Christian mission approach.

The last decade has seen a reaction to this from within the organisation and a demand that ministries of social service and social reform are more unified with faith and evangelism.[25] Part of this was a growing international awareness of our Wesleyan doctrinal tradition.[26] The rediscovery and reaffirmation of our Wesleyan roots appears to have been strongest in the older Commonwealth countries of Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. A variety of factors has contributed to this drive to connect theology, evangelism, worship and ministry in the public sphere. The Church is always impacted by its cultural environment – in negative and positive ways. This has certainly been true for the Salvation Army in New Zealand. The rise of economic liberalism since the 1980s has contributed to the Salvation Army reconnecting in greater depth to its theological foundations. Economic liberalism has brought with it tendencies for self interest, dominance of the individual, dominance of the market, secularism and competitiveness. Additionally, there has been an increasing gap between rich and the poor. Inequality in any society has been postulated by Wilkinson and Pickett as being responsible for significant social harm and distress.[27]

John Wesley's concern for the plight of the poor is in stark contrast to the outcomes that economic liberalism delivers. Wesley understood that God always sided with the poor. Therefore, he reasoned, Christians must always be with and for the poor. The Church must reject and resist cultures that worship wealth, power, consumerism, materialism, and individualism. Holiness of heart and

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[25] *Shaping the Future of the Army, Territorial Strategic Mission Plan* (Wellington, 2006).
[26] Earl Robinson, 'Wesleyan Distinctives in Salvation Army Theology,' http://www.salvationist.org/extranet_main.nsf/vw_sublinks/8E93913570C2699B80256F16006D3C6F?openDocument accessed 11 December 2012.
[27] Richard G. Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level*: *Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

life calls Christians to be with the poor, because when we spend time with them, know their names, listen to their struggles and support them in their efforts to live in dignity, we do the work of Christ. In his sermon 'Visiting the Sick', Wesley writes:

> One great reason why the rich, in general, have so little sympathy for the poor, is because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it; and then plead their voluntary ignorance an excuse for their hardness of heart. 'Indeed, Sir' said a person of large substance, 'I am a very compassionate man. But, to tell you the truth, I do not know anybody in the world that is in want.' How did this come to pass? Why, he took good care to keep out of their way; and if he fell upon any of them unawares 'he passed over on the other side.'[28]

More economically liberal policies in New Zealand have increased the number of people in poverty turning to The Salvation Army for help. In the face of this, the Salvation Army has not been limited to operating in a more academically-influenced, professionalised approach, but to find ways of creating community and connection with people.[29] The result has been that the poor have become known and named and included within our Christian community. In the past ten years the Salvation Army at a congregational level seems to have become less middle class, and many of its congregations are increasingly comprised of people whose first contact was with the social and community services of the movement. An external context of economic liberalism seems to have challenged the Army to rediscover its roots and the essentials of its theology. At the same time, there has been more enthusiasm to understand the theology and early history of the Salvation Army.

Another external factor influential in this reconnection with the roots of faith has been an increased awareness in the public space of bi-culturalism and the vital importance of honouring the Treaty of Waitangi. The impact of Māori on the way public policy is viewed in New Zealand in recent years in terms of public organisation and policy has started everyone on a journey to better recognise elements of the partnership for which the Treaty provides. Although

[28] John Wesley, Sermon 98, 'On Visiting the Sick,' in Albert C. Outler, ed. *The Works of John Wesley vol. 3 Sermons III, 71-114* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 384-397.
[29] *Shaping the Future of the Army, Territorial Strategic Mission Plan* (Wellington, 2006).

New Zealand is very secular in outlook, the impact of recognising our partnership with Māori has been to cause public policy to have a greater regard for faith and the spiritual dimension of life. This is, in my experience, unusual in Western democracies.

One public aspect of this is found in the religious ceremony and prayer associated with pōwhiri (welcomes) and other Māori cultural protocols at government occasions. This recognition of Māori religious ceremony and spirituality has provided new opportunity and acceptance for faith communities to be who they are and to have some acknowledgement of their own faith heritage. An example of this is found in a Memorandum of Understanding that the Salvation Army has with the Ministry of Social Development. In that document, the following statement is made:

> 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.[30]

That statement represents a significant acknowledgement of the faith tradition and motivation of a service partner. But it is not only recognition of the uniqueness of our faith tradition; it is also recognition that part of that ministry may be to challenge government itself. The Salvation Army works in over 120 countries in the world and, to date, I have not been able to find one other instance where a government has included in a contract such explicit reference to the faith-based role of our organisation. In fact, in some Western democracies the Salvation Army is forced to operate two organisations and have an organisational and governance split between its church base and its social base. So, for us in New Zealand, an outcome of the Treaty of Waitangi is that it has nurtured a unique opportunity to foster a rediscovering and reemphasis of the Salvation Army theological story and journey. That rediscovery has included a greater understanding of the biblical theme of justice, a deeper faith-to-life connection, increased biblical literacy, and a

[30] 'Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Social Development and The Salvation Army,' 2006.

desire to be missional in a way that makes a real difference in people's everyday lives.

Wesley's social impetus was always integral to his wider commitment to holiness and was a direct expression of it. This trait is seen in the contemporary efforts of Salvation Army ministry in corps and social centres in New Zealand, to place more importance on theological direction and consistency in our social services. Frequently Salvation Army social services now integrate worship and mission in more relevant and connected ways. Worshipping Salvationists are more likely to be on the staff of our social services, thereby providing a connecting bridge between these activities and the worshipping and congregational life of the Salvation Army. Our Community Ministries centres which used to be separate services for welfare provision are now largely integrated with a local Salvation Army congregation. There is more of a ministry 'with' than a ministry 'for' occurring, with reflection of this in our strategic planning and social reform agendas. Ten years ago, few Salvation Army corps would have had organised social or Community Ministries expressions as part of their congregational life. Or, if it was present it would have been undertaken by a corps officer. Now, the great majority of congregations have a community or social expression, training and engaging members of their congregation in that ministry. The community itself, rather than the church building, is increasingly seen as the centre of the mission. We understand that wherever human activity occurs is important to God and therefore the public space is a vital context of ministry. The importance of that public space is seen in the development of the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit which undertakes a specific ministry focused on the issues and people at the centre of New Zealand public policy.

There is also a new awareness that part of our theological DNA is to believe that no one is beyond redemption or cast aside from the grace and love of God. About five years ago, the Salvation Army in New Zealand started to work alongside a chapter of the Mongrel Mob one of New Zealand's largest and most troublesome criminal gangs. The Mongrel Mob is perhaps one of the most despised groups in New Zealand society. This work has been difficult to undertake because the almost universal rejection of these gang members by New Zealanders means that it is almost impossible for the Salvation Army to find locations where neighbours are comfortable for us to run programmes with the Mob. It has also meant that, at times, our ministry methods have been challenged by members of the Mob leading to changes in how this ministry is undertaken. A key

determinant throughout this partnership journey has been a determination to remain 'with' the Mob, continuing this connection and ministry despite any organisational threats. I think this demonstrates a greater adherence to our theological and mission purpose in an activity reflecting principles that are at the heart of Wesleyan theology.

Joseph Benson's biography of Wesley cites Woodfall in the following description of Wesley:

> He penetrated the abodes of wretchedness and ignorance, to rescue the profligate from perdition; and he communicated the light of life to those in darkness and the shadow of death. He changed the outcasts of society into useful members; civilised even savages, and filled those lips with prayer and praise that had been accustomed only to oaths and imprecations.[31]

In ministry with the Mongrel Mob, this theological tradition is maintained. Wheeler notes,

> When Wesley confronted problems as massive and widespread as poverty in 18th century England, or the international slave trade, or the decay of justice and respect for law in his own day, he did not stop with condemnations: he searched for causes. He looked for patterns and relationships that explained why problems existed and how they might effectively be attacked.[32]

The Salvation Army has focused in its ministry more on causes as it has rediscovered its Wesleyan roots with a greater understanding of biblical justice. Eight years ago, the Territory was led to question the effectiveness of its social services operation in achieving real change for those it served. A survey of New Zealand social indicators in 2003 revealed 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.[33] We were bringing some people to faith, we were doing a huge task of offering loving care to individuals through a wide range of social services, but in the Gospel

[31] Joseph Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley* (London, 1811), 489.
[32] Sondra Wheeler, 'Wesley and 'Social Ethics"
http://www.livedtheology.org/pdfs/wesleyt.pdf accessed 10 December 2012.
[33] Work undertaken by Bonnie Robinson in 2001 looking at the effectiveness of Salvation Army Social Services in South Auckland.

imperative to create a more just society we were doing and achieving little. Causes were not being addressed.

In an effort to make some impact on this situation, Salvation Army leadership approved the establishment of a specialist unit focused on engaging with social policy and areas of social justice in New Zealand. This new entity, of which I have served as Director since its inception, was formed in January 2004 and christened 'The Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit.' It was deliberately housed not at our Territorial Headquarters in Wellington or with the seat of government, but in a Salvation Army social service centre in South Auckland, a location where some of New Zealand's most deprived neighbourhoods are located. In this we hear echoes of Wesley's call to be with the marginalised. The Unit's purpose was defined as 'working towards the eradication of poverty in New Zealand.' It undertook this purpose by seeking to engage with the four hundred or so individuals who were seen to be the most influential in setting 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;
- 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.

The initial research project of the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, a State of the Nation report entitled 'A New Zealand that Demands Attention,' identified what grassroots community and social service workers in New Zealand saw as the main drivers of need for those at the margins of New Zealand

society.[34] The release of this report was greeted with an immediate response from politicians, the media and the Units' target group of influential leaders.

In ensuing years, one area of social policy the Unit has focused on is criminal offending in New Zealand. A 2007 report, 'Beyond the Holding Tank,' was influential in driving a public and government reconsideration of crime and punishment policy.[35] In this document, the Salvation Army reflected on its own theology and missional foundations and made a case for significant reform. The report captured the attention of Government and was distributed by the Prime Minister Helen Clark to every member of Cabinet.

One of the most influential pieces of work undertaken by the Unit each year is the ongoing publication of its State of the Nation reports. At the beginning of each year the Salvation Army reports to the nation the progress it sees in five areas: 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. An attempt is made to reflect on the state of the New Zealand nation in regard to the foundational values that drive the ministry of the Salvation Army today. Another area of particular interest to the Unit has been to raise awareness of and combat human trafficking. There are strong parallels to the issues Wesley challenged when he confronted slavery in his age.

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. Firstly, there is evidence of a deepening awareness that a more complete integration of biblical truth is required. Salvationists and staff are grappling with the biblical concept of justice, along with mercy, faith and love. Social justice has become part of our missional agenda. The Salvation Army has adopted as one of its four strategic mission goals to work toward the eradication of poverty. Ten years ago this would likely never have been accepted as such a clearly articulated strategic goal.

Without lessening our 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

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[34] 'A New Zealand that Demands Attention,' Auckland: Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, 2005.

[35] 'Beyond the Holding Tank,' Auckland: Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, 2007.

institutional change. We are better articulating the truths of the Gospel into collective situations and environments. We have also found that it is possible to be a provider of social services receiving government funding and still provide robust critique and criticism of government social policy from our theological and biblical understandings. All of this sometimes brings controversy, tension and some strain, but for many people the willingness of the Salvation Army to fight for what it believes has been a welcome development. In this, of course, we are returning to our roots and reflecting the heritage of our formative years.

Contemporary Salvation Army ministry in New Zealand reflects what we have described as Wesleyan responses. The first of these is 'pastoral.' The impact of economic liberalism, the global economic crisis and the breakdown of community have brought an onslaught of new people through the Salvation Army's doors. Part of our pastoral response has been to link people to community, a source of hope, and to social and spiritual holiness in new and exciting ways. One example of this has been a more holistic approach to addiction treatment, which has seen the rise of Recovery Churches, which are now among our largest Salvation Army congregations. Within these congregations people are finding a pastoral support and hope that radically changes lives. This is reflected in Sondra Wheeler's observation, that 'Wesley did not entertain the illusion that we could bring the good news of God's limitless love to those immersed in suffering without addressing that suffering.'[36]

Secondly as Salvation Army communities have reflected more deeply on the genesis of their organisation they have been drawn to a more integrated community approach that sees holiness not only in individual terms but in collective terms. As there has been an increasingly outward focus, faith has been re-energised in the lives of Salvation Army worshipping communities. Wheeler captures an important aspect of why this may be the case:

> [T]he loneliness of guilt and the intensely personal affirmation of knowing oneself embraced by God, Wesley addressed in much of his preaching. But I suspect that this tells us more about the effects of sin than about the nature of God's grace. It is because we are encountered by God in our sins that we are encountered alone; as in the Garden, where the first disobedience leads immediately to the first recrimination, our relation with others is the first casualty of sin.

[36] Sondra Wheeler, 'Wesley and 'Social Ethics"
http://www.livedtheology.org/pdfs/wesleyt.pdf accessed 10 December 2012.

> Conversely, the first effect of grace received is to unite us into a body, and to turn us outward toward the world as the immediate venue of Christian life and growth. To be born again is immediately and essentially to be born into a family constituted by God's universal grace.[37]

Jonathan Raymond asserts that when we look closely at Wesley's nurturing communities as continua of grace reflected in his continua of small group social contexts, a number of principles emerge that are useful in our own nurturing of faith communities. I suggest that these six principles capture the shape of public sphere and social service ministry currently emerging within the Salvation Army in New Zealand.

1. It has something for everyone – regardless of where they are in a faith journey, the faith community is there for them.
2. Ministry is based on the premise that everyone's nature is perfectible – by God's grace mediated and provided by God through the means of others. All people can and should reach toward perfection – the likeness of Christ.
3. Human progress is possible through doing – not by acting as isolated individuals. Community is something to be experienced – doing something, doing something that makes a difference, and finally knowing what difference it makes; being 'doers of the Word and not hearers only.'
4. The spirit and practice of primitive Christianity can be recaptured – in pursing the models found in the earliest faith communities (and in Wesley's legacy as well). The church, like all human organisations, can drift from its divine moorings and get off course. It is possible to correct these deviations and return to a faithful orthodoxy and orthopraxy of authentic Christian community.
5. Authentic Christian community is inclusive – it includes the oppressed, and the marginalised along with everyone else, and its inclusion is reflected in its leadership as well as its membership. The primary function of leadership is to equip others to lead and minister – not to perform the ministry personally.
6. Social evil is not simply to be resisted, but overcome with good – authentic Christian community promotes social

[37] Sondra Wheeler, 'Wesley and 'Social Ethics"
http://www.livedtheology.org/pdfs/wesleyt.pdf accessed 10 December 2012.

> reform by creating change in systems and individual members of the faith community are strengthened and equipped to help redeem victims of social injustice by overcoming evil with good.

There is no doubt that the spirit of Wesley, 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 bringing us back to the intention of God for the Church – that we would be integrated in our own mission expression, and that we would proclaim the actuality of God's integration with the social and public spheres of his world. He is present and invites us to be present also.

This is a purpose well observed by Mark Maddix and one that provides both challenge and impetus for our activities today:

> Wesley is convinced that God's Spirit is at work everywhere in the world extending prevenient grace among all peoples. Thus, as Christians we can be assured as we go into the world to proclaim the gospel knowing that the Spirit is already present before we arrive, even as God is present in our own lives, making possible reconciliation and new birth. God's presence in every human life gives each person infinite value as the object of God's caring. If the Spirit is not intimidated by unbelief, should we be?[38]

Wesleyan sources and theology continue to play important roles in the social work of the Salvation Army and also in its efforts to impact public policy within Aotearoa New Zealand with some unique features distinctive to the Army's own traditions and theology. Undoubtedly the renewed interest in Wesleyan roots over recent years has granted the movement fresh surety as it has sought to be relevant to the current social, political and cultural scene.

[38] Mark Maddix, 'Wesleyan Theology: A Practical Theology: A Response.' http://didache.nazarene.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=65 accessed 10 December 2012.