

RED, YELLOW, BLUE AND GREEN: ECO-THEOLOGY WITHIN THE SALVATION ARMY¹

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This article has been peer reviewed.

The aim of this paper is briefly to review historical and current ecological themes within The Salvation Army. Two positions are assumed. Firstly, humanity is in a place of power over God's earth as never before. This place of power and dominion (in a negative sense) has given rise to environmental degradation and abuse on a global level. This degradation and abuse appears to be causing changes in climate that will have far-reaching effects on earth's systems and life forms, both human and non-human. In essence, things are not as they should be. Secondly, eco-mission, pro-environmental behaviours, creation care and such, should be an integral part of Christian thinking and action, and therefore should also be an essential element of Salvation Army thought and action. In light of these assumptions this paper contains an overview of The Salvation Army's beginnings and subsequent operations and underscores the predominantly anthropocentric nature of the work to date. Eco-themes are observed in a number of Salvation Army writings and mention is made of a number of current signs of eco-mission. It concludes with possible challenges to expanding ecological justice into the praxis of Salvation Army work and indicates signs of hope for the future.

A Brief Overview of the Salvation Army

East London during the mid-nineteenth century was a place increasingly feeling the effects of growth in industrialisation and urbanisation. Human suffering, poverty, exploitation, starvation and their concomitant impact on the natural environment could be seen in their most unfortunate and unsightly forms. It was an area from which prominent churches of the Victorian era were

¹ The colours chosen are representative of The Salvation Army flag, which in essence symbolizes the Trinity: red represents the blood shed by Jesus Christ; blue the purity of the Father; and yellow the refining and empowering fire of the Holy Spirit. Green refers to God's good creation and related environmental concern.

‘surprisingly scarce.’² This was the birthplace of The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army is somewhat unique among the Protestant churches because historically it has not recognised itself as a denomination but rather as a social movement within the wider body of the church, having developed not as a result of schism but in response to the needs of Victorian-era Londoners. William and Catherine Booth, a Methodist couple, noticed the lack of compassion towards the poor, homeless and lower class citizens that pervaded the middle-class churches of the day. In response to the perceived need they formed the East London Christian Mission in 1865. In 1878 the movement was renamed ‘The Salvation Army’ and adopted militaristic nomenclature in order to reflect the vigorous approach with which the movement took to the streets, endeavouring to bring salvation to the masses and fight against the structural issues which stood in the way of this goal.³

Over the intervening years, the ‘war’ enlarged to include an ever-increasing array of social issues. The concerns raised were undeniably biased towards rehabilitating, saving, serving and providing for human needs over and above concerns for the wellbeing of nature as a whole. This anthropocentric concern, rather than being a particularly Salvationist phenomenon, is a common theme throughout human history.⁴ Although the broad anthropocentric focus of The Salvation Army could be perceived as being far removed from the ideals of eco-justice in the current

² P. Needham, *Community in Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology* (London: The Salvation Army, 1987), 1.

³ ‘Saving’ and ‘serving’ have enjoyed a close relationship from the early days of the Salvation Army. For one example, see *Orders and Regulations for Social Officers*, (London: The Salvation Army, 1898).

⁴ For example, Lynn White’s famous article ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis’, *Science* 155 (1967): 3767 posits that Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has known. W.H. Murdy argues that this anthropocentrism is valid: ‘by the same logic, spiders are to be valued more highly than other things in nature – by spiders. It is proper for men to be anthropocentric and for spiders to be arachnocentric.’ *Science* 187 (1975): 1168, 4182. In contrast to Murdy, ecofeminists would argue ‘cultural patriarchal attitudes of dominance over both women and nature’ have caused the environmental crisis, whereas social ecologists point to political ‘human social power relations’ as being the root cause; both in essence relating the issue as one of intraspecies rather than interspecies concern. Deep ecologists would still claim that notwithstanding all these arguments anthropocentrism is still at the heart of environmental degradation. George Sessions ‘Introduction: Deep Ecology’ in Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, et al. (eds.) *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993).

climate, I would contend that the relationship between caring for human needs and a broader concern for the care of all creation is both promisingly and beneficially close. This can be seen even within early Salvationist literature. For example, William Booth, now considered as the 'General' of this 'Army', in his *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), offered a '[plan, that] if realized [he believed] would solve the worst problems of modern society.'⁵ This plan includes the 'Cab Horse's Charter' and contains a link (however tenuous) between animal and human welfare. It stated that the generic cab horse in London, (the taxi of the day) could expect a better life than millions of men and women. Booth's two main points were: when the horse is down, he is helped up without any questions asked, and while he lives he has food, shelter and work.

With the orienting beliefs of a biblical mandate to share the gospel in word *and* deed, as spelt out in the Cab Horse Charter, ensuing 'battles' for social justice were won and are still continuing. An early example is the campaign to eradicate the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches;⁶ more recent examples include supporting and raising awareness of the fair trade movement⁷ and continuing the fight against human trafficking.⁸ In tackling many of the issues of social justice, positive impacts on the environment can also be observed, although in some cases it would seem an inadvertent benefit. An example of purposeful rather than inadvertent benefit is the contemporary fair trade movement which regards the relationships between social justice, economic development, and environmental protection as clearly measurable and compelling.

In addition to international work on social justice issues,⁹ the Army has also been at the forefront of a number of progressive

⁵<http://www.salvationarmy.org/heritage.nsf/36c107e27boba7a98025692e0032abaa/899e7c59ac6489ab80256b8a003a5boc!OpenDocument>

⁶ White phosphorus caused hundreds of cases of 'phossy jaw' (phosphorus necrosis), a painful and disfiguring disease estimated to be fatal in 20% of cases. See M.L. Myers and J.D. McGlothlin, 'Matchmakers' 'Phossy Jaw' Eradicated', *American Industrial Hygiene Association* 57:4 (1996): 330-332.

⁷ See: <http://www.fairtrade.net>; <http://salvos.org.au/canberracityoasis/about-us/fair-trade/>

⁸ See: <http://www.law.uq.edu.au/humantrafficking>; <http://www.humantrafficking.org/>; <http://www.stopthetraffik.org/>

⁹ A leading example of this is The Salvation Army's International Social Justice Commission. The commission has continued The Salvation Army's long connection with the United Nations. The Salvation Army has partnered with the UN since 1947 –

socio-cultural movements without straying from the 'orthodoxy' of the mainstream Protestant churches. The movement was among the first to recognise the equality of women,¹⁰ the General and his family were promoters of vegetarianism,¹¹ and cultural sensitivity has been genuinely valued within international mission contexts.¹² As an organisation the 'Army' has a strong international presence and ethos. It is now in over 120 countries around the world in a wide variety of sectors.¹³ Internationalism can be considered one of the basic ingredients in the spirit of Salvationism.¹⁴ This is an important dynamic in light of the global scale of environmental degradation and reach of potential future changes in climate. International linkages, education, cooperation and eco-mission are

only two years after the UN had signed its founding charter. Once again, the main focus of this commission has been to alleviate suffering and support the UN to work towards 'security, economic development, social progress, human rights and the achievement of world peace'. Carolyn J.R. Bailey, 'The Salvation Army and The United Nations — Being Good Neighbors', *CrossCurrents*, 60: 3 (2010): 352. Only recently (August-September 2011) has a 'Call for Climate Justice' been publically engaged with (according to a recent search of the ISJC website).

http://www1.salvationarmy.org/IHQ/www_ihq_isjc.nsf

¹⁰ For further reading on the equality of women in the Salvation Army see David Malcolm Bennett, *Catherine Booth on Women's Place and Ministry: the Progress of her Thought* (Camp Hill, QLD: Camp Hill Publications, 2004); also Andrew Mark Eason, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003).

¹¹ See K. Iacobbo and M. Iacobbo, *Vegetarian America: A History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), and R. Green, *Catherine Booth: A Biography of the Cofounder of The Salvation Army* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996). The value placed upon vegetarianism resonates both with Gary Snyder (in B. Taylor *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 20, regarding eating as a sacrament, and biblical references such as 1 Corinthians 10:31. As a precursor to the Salvation Army, Methodism also had proponents of similar ideals. Evidence suggests John Wesley adopted vegetarianism at roughly the same time he published *Primitive Physick: An Easy and Natural Method for Curing Most Diseases* in 1747 (M. Lodahl 'Christianity — Methodism', in B. Taylor (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (Bristol, Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), 352-354).

¹² With particular reference to India, Major Booth Tucker held strongly that 'the approach to Indians should be from the Indian standpoint and that it was no part of the business of a missionary to Europeanise Orientals'. R. Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol. II 1878-1886* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1956 [1950]), 272. For more on India, see F. Booth Tucker, *Muktifauj, or, Forty Years with the Salvation Army in India and Ceylon* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1930).

¹³ See http://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq%5Cwww_sa.nsf/vw-sublinks/D46980EA862CD1FD80256D4F00411840?openDocument for more detailed statistics.

¹⁴ Shaw Clifton, *New Love: Thinking Aloud about Practical Holiness* (Wellington: Flag Publications, 2004).

affirmed both internally involving Salvationists in various cultures and climates, and externally with other branches of the Christian church, extending to other faiths and those of no faith.

Mission and The Salvation Army

Norman Habel suggests that Christian mission has over time progressively encompassed three elements, which I contend are applicable and relevant to the Salvationist context.¹⁵ Habel's first element involves mission focused primarily on the saving of souls. The second element broadens the idea of mission and includes bodily and community-focussed therapeutic evangelism (social justice). The third, and broadest sense of mission, takes the whole of creation as the focus of salvation, redemption and healing.

Historically, The Salvation Army has certainly focused on the first two elements: salvation of humanity, with a particular focus on those experiencing suffering, poverty and hopelessness. The focus on the first two elements has sidelined a broader discourse around the value and care of non-human nature within the same progressive movement that acknowledged the equality of women and appropriate cultural praxis.¹⁶

It has been argued that the development and focus on the first two elements has bred especially well within evangelical theology and mission. Ross Langmead posits five reasons for this:

- 1) Evangelical views of the gospel are almost exclusively centred on the personal salvation of humans;
- 2) God's transcendence tends to be over emphasized [over God's immanence];
- 3) Evangelicals tend to emphasize the historical Jesus and his atoning work at the expense of Christ the cosmic creator;
- 4) Evangelicals often hold to an apocalyptic and otherworldly hope for the future;

¹⁵ Norman Habel, 'The Third Mission of the Church,' in *Trinity Occasional Papers* XVII: I (1998): 31-43. Cited in Clive Ayre, 'An Approach to Ecological Mission in and through the Christian Community in Australia: Beyond Apathy to Committed Action,' unpublished PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2008.

¹⁶ See Clive W. Ayre, 'Eco-Salvation: The Redemption of All Creation', *Worldviews* 14 (2010): 232-242 for a deeper discussion on broadening soteriology towards all of the created order. Michael Lodahl's *God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 2003) is also an excellent volume, discussing the valuable themes within Wesley's work that assist expanding soteriology to all creation.

- 5) Many evangelicals believe that reality is divided into spirit, which is ultimately real, and physical matter, which is at the least unimportant and perhaps even sinful.¹⁷

In addition, J.A. Simmons condenses Calvin DeWitt's ten main evangelical environmental stumbling blocks into three categories:

First, there is a worry about the apparently inevitable slide towards liberal political positions that accompany environmental sensibilities... Second, there is a worry about theological heresies, in particular what is often referred to as 'pantheism' and 'new age spirituality,' which accompany so much of secular environmental positions... Third, there exists a particular eschatological vision (popular among some evangelicals) that supposedly makes environmental concerns really quite irrelevant.¹⁸

These various stumbling blocks to evangelical environmentalism reflect, to some extent, the rich Christian ecological literary landscape, in that there are widely divergent views, and as Conradie contends, a lack of clarity.¹⁹ Indeed, Langmead's review of articles focused on the 'greening of mission' in an evangelical Christian context claims there is a fairly common thread. This commonality appears to be a need to 'justify the legitimacy of creation care theology' in light of its comparatively recent recognition as a significant topic within evangelicalism.²⁰ More broadly underscoring this somewhat ambiguous relationship between environmentalism and religiosity, Lieberman's survey of quantitative studies of the effects of religious factors on environmental variables, published between 1980 and 1999, concluded that it was not a simple task to

¹⁷ Ross Langmead, 'Ecojustice principles: Challenges for the evangelical perspective', *Ecotheology* 5&6 (1998-99): 162-172. This fifth point is described by Christopher Bounds as a 'virus', and 'many Christians today are infected with [this virus,] a form of Gnosticism'. Christopher T. Bounds, 'God's Ongoing Redemption of All Creation' in Joseph Coleson (ed.) *Care of Creation: Christian Voices on God, Humanity, and the Environment* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2010), 47-60.

¹⁸ J. Aaron Simmons, 'Evangelical Environmentalism: Oxymoron or Opportunity?', *Worldviews* 13 (2009): 58.

¹⁹ Ernst Conradie, *Christianity and Earthkeeping: In Search of an Inspiring Vision*. Resources in Religion and Theology 16. (Stellenbosch, South Africa: Sun Press, 2011).

²⁰ Ross Langmead, 'Integrating Ecological Mission into Mainstream Mission: Can it be Done?' (A paper delivered at the conference of the Australian Association for Mission Studies (AAMS), Sydney, 22 to 25 September 2011).

construct solid conclusions regarding the relationship between religiosity and environmentalism.²¹

Nonetheless, as we will see, given the explicit direction of recent environmental positional statements, policy formulation, regaining sight of historical leadership views and 'norms' of Salvationism it is likely that further participatory research may indicate change. Sections and individual Salvationists may begin, like Aldo Leopold, to 'see land as a community to which [they] belong, [and are eager to] use with love and respect',²² and resonate with James Lovelock's prescription that 'those with faith should look again at our Earthly home and see it as a holy place, part of God's creation, but something that we have desecrated'.²³

Sketches of Salvationism and Nature

The current research project is in its early stages; nonetheless research to date finds that literature connecting views of nature and Christian mission from a Salvationist standpoint are relatively scarce in comparison to calls to action on social justice issues and holiness. There are certainly various sections' websites that contain a positive environmental stance, such as Australia Eastern Territory, International Headquarters, UK and Ireland Territory, and Canada Bermuda Territory.²⁴ However, only a small number of articles have been located in Salvation Army journals and publications with specific reference to the environment.²⁵

²¹ Gretchen Lieberman, 'Caring for Creation: Investigating Faith Based Environmentalism,' unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Oregon, 2004.

²² Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and sketches here and there* (New York: Oxford University, 1989 [1949]): vii.

²³ Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*: 36.

²⁴ E.g. <http://salvos.org.au/more/get-involved/social-justice/environment/> and http://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq%5Cwww_sa.nsf/vw-sublinks/CF485BD13C302A3380256DE8005191E1?openDocument.

²⁵ Specific references on the environment and Salvationism: Lucy Aitkenread, 'Is Green the New Red?', *The Salvationist* (6 June 2009): 7; Hanna Ferguson, 'From Vision to Reality', *All the World* 49:1 (January-March 2011); Raelton Gibbs, 'A Growing Admiration', *All the World* 48:1 (January-March 2010); Kenneth Hodder, 'Yellow, Red and Blue...and Green – A Call for Imaginative Faith', *The Officer* (May/June, 2009): 4-5; Michael Ramsay, 'A Holy Environment', *Journal of Aggressive Christianity* (April/May 2011): 38-39; and Cecil Woodward, 'Taxing Times', *Pipeline* 15:8 (Aug. 2011): 20-21. One further paper outlines a biblical environmental ethic not specifically mentioning the Salvation Army: Cornelius A. Buller, 'Ecology in a Damaged World', *Word and Deed* (Nov. 2001): 43-61

In many instances, certainly not confined to Salvation Army texts and communications, many references are made from nature towards a pertinent point or message within the Christian faith. Written and spoken analogies with reference to nature are not always pragmatic nor aimed to explicitly connect the listener or reader to an eco-centric respect for earth. For example, in one of his short stories, 'And He Shall Be Like a Tree,' Neil Young refers to Psalm 1:3 and relates this spiritual story to his early fascination with the life and growth of trees.²⁶ In a similar fashion, Samuel Logan Brengle, an early Salvationist from the United States, writing in 1929 noted that:

Renewal...and awakenings...never begin in a great way. They begin the same way oak trees begin. There is nothing startling and spectacular about the beginning of an oak tree. In darkness, in loneliness, an acorn gives up its life, and the oak, at first only a tiny root and a tiny stem of green, is born out of the death of the acorn. In a similar way revivals are born, souls are won, the Kingdom of God comes. Someone dies – dies to self interest, to the praise of men, to ambition – and lives for Christ, lives to save others.²⁷

Even though there is no explicit attempt here to move the listener or reader from anthropocentric action to eco-centric respect for earth, I argue that there are still positive and beneficial reasons for invoking remembrance of and acknowledging the natural order. Explicit examples of the value given to earth and non-human nature are seen from the beginnings of the Army. Early leadership, particularly Catherine Booth affectionately known as the 'mother of the Army,' was known to delight in nature and to be a strong advocate for the protection and care of animals. In her letters to William, Catherine notes her love of the natural world and often includes explicit reflections on her profound thankfulness and gratitude to the creator and the hope of a future perfect world. During the spring of 1853, she wrote, 'I love nature, even what little of its beauties I have seen have almost enchanted me sometimes. I shall never forget the feeling of buoyancy and delight I experienced.'²⁸ Also in the autumn of 1854, Catherine

²⁶ N. Young, *Still at School* (Forest Glen: Seedlife, 2004), 122-124.

²⁷ P. Farthing (ed.), *Samuel Logan Brengle: Heart for God* (Sydney: Carpenter Media, 2009), 134-135.

²⁸ D. Bennett (ed.), *The Letters of William and Catherine Booth* (Brisbane: Camp Hill Publications, 2003), 95. Also see B. Watson, *A Hundred Years' War: The Salvation*

wrote to William of the beauty of a sunset she had experienced in overly descriptive and blissful prose. She noted once again that it was an enchanting scene, one that stirred strange feelings, and touched chords which thrilled and vibrated through her whole nature.²⁹ While echoing the ideas of countless others such as Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold and Ralph Waldo Emerson, her letters did not subscribe to animistic or pantheistic approaches to nature.

Catherine's love of animals has been noted in a number of writings. It was said that she was greatly pleased to discover 'that Wesley and Butler envisaged the possibility of a future life for animals.'³⁰ W.T. Stead wrote of Catherine, 'it is well to note with what passionate sympathy she regarded those who were suffering, whether they were drunkards or animals, so long as they were sentient beings.'³¹ Likewise, William Booth spoke of his wife's whole soul being 'full of tender, deep compassion. [He thought] that she suffered more in her lifetime through her compassion for poor...animals than some doctors of divinity suffer for the...wide world of sinning, sorrowing mortals!'³² One assumes that it was Catherine's love for animals that was the basis for both the value placed upon vegetarianism within the Booth family and also the inclusion of a section within The Salvation Army's *Orders and Regulations for Soldiers*:

A soldier within the Salvation Army should be kind-hearted, and should manifest love and gentleness especially in their connection with the animal world. To inflict or to witness cruelty should be impossible. Not only should they avoid causing unnecessary hardship on animals, but should be willing to aid or relieve any suffering creature.³³

Army 1865-1965 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 277 for a story of 'being the Salvation Army' and reflections on being in nature.

²⁹ Bennett, *Letters*: 228. See also Roger Green, *Catherine Booth: A Biography of the Cofounder of The Salvation Army* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996); and Chick Yuill, 'Restoring the Image (Catherine Booth and Holiness),' in Clifford W. Kew (ed.) *Catherine Booth: Her Continuing Relevance* (London: The Salvation Army, 1990).

³⁰ C. Bramwell-Booth, *Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 28.

³¹ Bramwell-Booth, 21. See also, Barbara Bolton, 'A Denouncer of Iniquity (Catherine Booth and Social Justice),' in Clifford W. Kew (ed.) *Catherine Booth: Her Continuing Relevance* (London: The Salvation Army, 1990).

³² Bramwell-Booth, 451.

³³ The Salvation Army, *Orders and Regulations for Soldiers* (London: The Salvation Army, 1961): Chap 4, Sec 8.

Other figures within the earlier days of the Army, such as James Barker in Melbourne, valued green space. Barker 'lamented the building over of the [beautiful green] Collingwood Flat...leaving no more vegetation than a billiard ball'.³⁴ With the 'consequent limitation of recreation space in the inner city, "what can you expect from the lads if you won't give them any playground for their cricket?"'³⁵ This statement from over one hundred years ago alludes to contemporary thinking on healthy child development, such as Richard Louv's recent description of the loss of interaction and connection with nature and its physical and mental effects on children as 'nature-deficit disorder'.³⁶

While Barker valued recreation in nature, William Booth strongly believed that farming was a great means by which to alleviate many issues within the new industrialised, impersonalised and alienating society full of smoke, temptation and poverty. Florence Booth would appear to endorse William's beliefs with her statement:

Alas! There are crowds of men and women, especially in our great cities, who are almost compelled to live very unnatural lives, herded together in factories, offices, mills or workrooms, breathing exhausted air through long hours of every day.³⁷

Interestingly, it appears Booth, Barker and Lovelock (originator of the 'Gaia' hypothesis) may share some common ground on this issue. Lovelock goes further than Booth, arguing that environmental degradation is tightly linked to the increased urbanisation of humanity and its disconnection from the land.

Over half the Earth's people live in cities, and they hardly ever see, feel or hear the natural world. Therefore our first duty if we are green should be to convince them that the real world is the living Earth and that they and their city lives are a part of it and wholly dependent on it for their existence. Our role is to teach and to set an example by our

³⁴ Barbara Bolton, *Booth's Drum: The Salvation Army in Australia 1880-1980* (Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), 114.

³⁵ Bolton, *Booth's Drum*, 114.

³⁶ Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005), 54.

³⁷ Bolton, *Booth's Drum*, 144.

lives...We need most of all to renew that love and empathy for nature that we lost when we began our love affair with city life.³⁸

In harmony with Barker noting the lack of green space and reflection on the potential for 'nature-deficit disorder', and Florence Booth's and Lovelock's urbanised human/nature disconnect, Frederick Booth-Tucker looked upon farming communities as uniting 'the landless man with the manless land.'³⁹ The Salvation Army in a number of countries, including the United States, South Africa, Holland, England and Australia acted upon the view of 'farming as work which healed and made people whole and drew them into rhythm with God.'⁴⁰ Farm colonies were planned and set up in numerous areas, with a number still in use today as drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres. However several farms, particularly in the United States, did close fairly quickly, in part due to poor land, lack of experienced workers, and funding issues.⁴¹

In more recent times The Salvation Army has in part responded to the environmental degradation evident around the world and has adopted positional statements that sound a moral and theological call for Salvationists to 'follow Jesus' pattern of humility, service and sacrifice in relation to the world.'⁴² Initial research has found the Canada and Bermuda Territory to be one of the more innovative and progressive territories in the area of environmentally based thought and action. The Ethics Centre within the territory has produced a position statement on responsibility for the earth. It is encouraging to see The Salvation

³⁸ James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2006), 142, 8. Cited in Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 20.

³⁹ Diane Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of The Salvation Army* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1999), 103.

⁴⁰ Bolton, *Booth's Drum*, 126. See also R. Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army Vol. III 1883-1953: Social Reform and Welfare Work* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1955), 136-148 for more on farm colonies and small-holding experiments predominantly based on the 'Darkest England' scheme.

⁴¹ Winston, 117-118. It is interesting to note Sandall claims high interest rates on loans, unexpected drought, and the 'Spanish-American war absorb[ing] public interest and funds' as primary reasons for the three American land colonies being 'liquidated' (Sandall, 146).

⁴² The Salvation Army, *Position Statement on Responsibility for the Earth* (2009): <http://www.salvationarmyethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/responsibility-for-the-earth.pdf>

Army produce positional statements and raise ecological awareness, keeping in step with the emerging consensus among many denominations and ecumenical bodies throughout the world that a holistic mission of care for earth – not just humanity – is part of the Christian mandate. The Ethics Centre statement has been noted by some as one of the strongest Christian statements on this subject.⁴³ The statement covers a number of important ideas such as:

- The interconnectedness and delicate balance of earth systems,
- The belief that God delights in each part of creation and fills it with intrinsic value, regardless of its utility,
- Caring for creation is an act of worship to God, is an essential part of the Christian faith, while neglecting or abusing creation is an act of disobedience,
- Human sinfulness, and not adhering to the rhythms and regulations of biblical stewardship are seen as contributing factors to the destruction and degradation of the earth,
- Links are made between the degradation and destruction of natural resources with negative consequences for the poor, global neighbours and future generations as part of the broader reality of injustice and inequality in the world,
- A broad call for individuals, communities, religious organizations, businesses and governments to take practical steps towards conserving and the regeneration of creation.⁴⁴

The Ethics Centre has also conducted surveys of ministry units within the territory. It found that a variety of pro-environmental actions are taking place: Vegetable gardens have been planted on Army properties; bicycle use was encouraged and made easier for volunteers, clients and staff; measures were taken to increase efficiency in building climate control, water and energy usage; use of disposable and plastic utensils and water bottles has reduced, while using recycled materials has increased. This action is hopefully driven to some extent from the grass roots of the Territory; however it is increasingly coming also from the top – environmental policies are in place and ‘green toolkits’ are available from Headquarters. These policies encourage and insist

⁴³ Personal communications with religion and nature scholar, Bron Taylor, 2010.

⁴⁴ The Salvation Army, *Position Statement on Responsibility for the Earth* (2009): <http://www.salvationarmyethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/responsibility-for-the-earth.pdf>

on increasing environmental awareness, engaging in sustainable practice, reducing the ecological footprint in line with the belief that Salvationists are 'called to be good stewards of the earth, every day, in all decisions, big and small.'⁴⁵

Other current positive action is seen in various locations across the world. A quick selection of encouraging signs include the following: the Australia Eastern Territory established a committee with its focus specifically on social injustice related to the environment;⁴⁶ The Florida Division held a conference in March 2011, with the purpose of engaging the ideas of mission and environment within the USA Southern Territory;⁴⁷ Wind turbines have been installed in the India South Eastern Territory; in Alabama a new Family Store has been designed with sustainability in mind,⁴⁸ likewise with the Australia Southern Territory's new Headquarters.⁴⁹ Mention must also be made of the widespread and well-regarded recycling centres otherwise known as Thrift, or Family Stores. Even in 1990, *The Recycler's Handbook* mentions that "Two million pounds of clothes are kept out of landfills every year by the Salvation Army alone."⁵⁰ One would assume the original reasons for these stores would not have included an eco-friendly focus. The focus was rather to provide jobs for the jobless, cheap textiles for the poor, and funds with which to feed the hungry and keep the Army financially viable. Though these factors are still important, thrift stores have by and large only been seen through green-tinted glasses over the past couple of decades.⁵¹

Current Challenges and Future Hope

⁴⁵ <http://www.salvationarmy.ca/2011/04/18/the-salvation-army%e2%80%99s-%e2%80%99green%e2%80%99-initiatives/>

⁴⁶ http://salvos.org.au/about-us/news-and-resources/documents/pipeline_06jun2010.pdf

⁴⁷ <http://tsasameimaginativefaith.com/index.html>

⁴⁸ http://www2.oanow.com/m/news/2008/may/22/green_with_energy_salvation_army_opens_new_auburn_-ar-513551/

⁴⁹ <http://www.isis.com.au/projects/projects/office/salvation-army.aspx>

⁵⁰ S. Shim, 'Environmentalism and Consumers' Clothing Disposal Patterns: An Exploratory Study,' *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 13 (1995): 38.

⁵¹ John Henderson, 'Soup, Soap, Salvation...and Recycling!' in *The Salvation Army Year Book 1997* (London: The Salvation Army, 1997), 15-17.

Some challenges to Salvationist (and broadly speaking, Christian) eco-mission can be seen clearly in the ‘wicked’ problem of widespread environmental degradation.⁵² It is not hard to see ‘wicked’ problem elements, particularly complexity and divergence in values, within the rhetoric surrounding the heavily politicised anthropogenic climate change and Australian carbon price debate. The divergent values and beliefs can make available options seem unclear, difficult and even present practical realities for the Army in terms of funding the work. Major contentions against eco-mission may also emerge through popular eschatological resistance to the idea of creation care, influenced to some extent by prosperity theology and ‘Left Behind’ style dispensationalism.⁵³

Lieberman reports Guth and Kellstedt’s conclusion that ‘theological fundamentalism versus liberalism is the strongest religious independent variable for predicting environmentalism.’⁵⁴ From their 1993 study, it appears ‘evangelicals were the least environmental, protestants were somewhat greener, and Catholics the greenest.’⁵⁵ Guth and Kellstedt’s reasoning for this negative correlation between fundamentalism and environmentalism stems from the factors of ‘dispensationalism, end-times ideology, and pessimism about the possibility of reform.’⁵⁶ Lieberman mentions ‘the infamous example’ of...

...the former US Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, a fundamentalist Christian, who resisted attempts to strongly protect national resources in the long-term by telling Congress, ‘I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns.’⁵⁷

Langmead suggests two more potential reasons ‘evangelicals often fail to pursue ecojustice. [These are] simply because of fear

⁵² ‘Wicked’ problems are those that include elements of complexity, uncertainty and value divergence. Australian Public Service Commission, *Tackling Wicked Problems: A Public Policy Perspective*, 2007: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publicationso7/wickedproblems.pdf>

While coming from a governmental perspective, this document has a helpful overview of ‘wicked’ problems, which includes a brief section on climate change.

⁵³ See Michael S. Northcott, ‘The Dominion Lie: How Millennial Theology Erodes Creation Care,’ in Kyle S. Van Houtan and Michael S. Northcott (eds.), *Diversity and Dominion: Dialogues in Ecology, Ethics and Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010), 89-108.

⁵⁴ Lieberman, 21.

⁵⁵ Lieberman, 21.

⁵⁶ Lieberman, 21.

⁵⁷ As quoted by Guth and Kellstedt (1993), in Lieberman, 21.

that it might lead to New Age thinking [and] evangelical activism tends to distract Christians from the full enjoyment of creation which would foster a pursuit of ecojustice.’⁵⁸

In addition, as a proportion of social work carried out is with the assistance of government resources and funding, this suggests that a highly politicised climate change debate may constrain the Army against speaking as freely as it might hope to on these issues without the possibility of endangering other areas of social work within the community.

In light of these issues, it is encouraging to note two recent, principally Australian texts. Firstly, a recent media release from the Australia Eastern Territory’s Major Peter Sutcliffe states that:

The Salvation Army acknowledges the efforts and intentions of the Federal Government to preserve the environment for future generations through the introduction of a carbon tax. For many years The Salvation Army has encouraged environmental responsibility in its operations and also encourages measures that assist our community in reducing our impact in the environment. Given the finite resources of the world and its expanding population, together with the impact of industrial and rural activities, development must take account of the need to preserve the earth – an exercise in responsible stewardship.⁵⁹

Secondly, a piece in a recent edition of *Pipeline* by Major Cecil Woodward which also covered similar topics in a slightly extended form, mentioning climate change, carbon footprints, the need for various levels of response (international, national, organisational and personal) and other related ideas.⁶⁰

David Bookless calls for evangelicalism to broaden the outlook of God’s purposes further than human salvation or welfare.⁶¹ He suggests, based on David Bebbington’s fundamental evangelical characteristics that ‘evangelicalism has largely failed to be fully biblical, cross-centred, conversionist or activist in engaging with the non-human environment.’⁶² This can certainly be applied to The Salvation Army. We have noted there are positive historical

⁵⁸ Langmead (1998), 168-169.

⁵⁹ The Salvation Army: Media Release (12 July 2011): http://salvos.org.au/about-us/media-centre/documents/2011_07_12SalvationArmyRespondstoCarbonTaxweb.pdf

⁶⁰ Cecil Woodward, ‘Taxing Times,’ *Pipeline* 15:8 (Aug. 2011): 20-21

⁶¹ David Bookless, ‘Christian Mission and Environmental Issues: An Evangelical Reflection,’ *Mission Studies* 25 (2008): 37-52.

⁶² Bookless, 38.

foundations for Salvationist eco-theology and eco-mission. However when one considers the bigger picture of the Army's journey towards healing and justice the overwhelming focus has been anthropocentrically based, primarily situated within Habel's first and second elements of Christian mission.

Nonetheless, with Bookless' framework in mind, there is optimism and hope to be gained from the current situation. If the evangelical values of biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism 'are rediscovered and applied to the environmental crisis, this approach to the gospel and to mission can offer a distinctive and valuable contribution to the current difficulties faced by the environmental movement, and to a world often paralysed by lethargy or fear.'⁶³ I would assert these are great strengths that The Salvation Army could, and should, bring to the current environmental crisis. The activist nature within the Salvation Army is witnessed the world over. In Australia, Barker was one such figure who 'had an unquenchable zest for life and a buoyancy which told him that if God's work and common humanity demanded that something should be done, it could be done.'⁶⁴ Bolton would agree, in that 'perhaps, above all things, the Salvationist is an activist. That is to say...happiest when...doing something. [The Salvationist] is rarely a contemplative, a scholar or a social analyst [but rather] a practical [person].'⁶⁵

Having said this, The Salvation Army also requires the raising up of both global and local strategic thinkers and doers to work through the finer points of mission in and for God's earth. However, it would be wise also to acknowledge a word of caution relating to 'doing' with minimal 'thinking.' Bruce Nicholls broadly asserts that 'evangelicals are activists and generally know little of contemplative prayer, fasting and meditation. Few are able to be still and silent before their Creator.'⁶⁶ While of course this is a generalisation with a focus on spiritual disciplines, it is a point to constructively consider. The fullest expressions of love for God and service to God's creation would arguably embrace and incorporate critical thought, spiritually attending to God, and practical action.

⁶³ Bookless, 39.

⁶⁴ Bolton, *Booth's Drum*, 31.

⁶⁵ Bolton, *Booth's Drum*, 253.

⁶⁶ Bruce J. Nicholls, 'Responding Biblically to Creation: A Creator-centered Response to the Earth,' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17 (209-22): 213, cited in Langmead, 169.

In looking forward to increased ecological concern within The Salvation Army and countering previously mentioned suggestions about why evangelicals may be unenthusiastic about environmental issues, Langmead offers seven helpful responses:

1. A cosmic view of salvation will balance the human-centred soteriology of many evangelicals.
2. An understanding of God as both transcendent and immanent... will restore a lively sense of God's intimate involvement with creation.
3. A broader view of the atonement which links the redeeming work of Christ to his role as the creative and originating Divine Word will hold together creation and redemption more easily.
4. A stronger affirmation of the value of this world to God, as demonstrated in the incarnation, will offset and balance the otherworldly hopes so common in evangelical thinking.
5. An affirmation of the goodness of the material world, and even better, new integrated ways of conceiving the relationship of spirit and matter, will overcome the destructive dualism of spirit and matter.
6. A willingness to work with others of like mind is needed to overcome the fear of the New Age.
7. Finally, a healthy sense of wonder and grace that may allow a livelier relationship with creation which will nourish the pursuit of ecojustice.⁶⁷

Langmead has also recently adapted William Dyrness' four actions recommended for Christians to undertake in order to incorporate environmental care into the Church's worldwide mission. His four modified principles to rate current and future action are:

- 1) *Recognise* the biblically announced mandate to care for creation and develop policies, structures and aims that characterise a culture of earth-care.
- 2) *Model* personal lifestyles of simplicity and earthkeeping, living as Christ would among us today.
- 3) *Provide* environmentally-sound development programmes among the poor with ecological awareness, procedures and actions.

⁶⁷ Langmead (1998), 169-170. For further reading on these topics, I refer again to Lodahl's wonderful book which touches on many of these points from a Wesleyan perspective: *God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way*.

- 4) *Train* ministers, missionaries and church members in the principles and practice of Christian ecology, as well as encouraging them to reproduce the message.⁶⁸

Within The Salvation Army, the doctrine of Holiness (further elucidated through the writings of Brengle, Coutts and others) and the ideal of a sacramental life may also be two important steps towards a further strengthening of the basis for eco-mission. The idea of seeing life as sacred, as a sacrament itself, is seen implicitly in at least one Salvation Army song and one hymn in particular from John and Charles Wesley. The Salvation Army song, while not explicitly broad in the application of refreshing and feeding beyond humanity, links the life of the Christian with the sacramental meal of the Eucharist and the hope for its realization within one's life.

*My life must be Christ's broken bread,
My love His outpoured wine,
A cup o'erfilled, a table spread
Beneath His name and sign,
That other souls, refreshed and fed,
May share His life through mine.*⁶⁹

Likewise, the Wesleyan hymn initially titled 'Grace before Meat' embraces the 'affirmation of the *sacramental* character of our creaturely relations and experiences.'⁷⁰

*Turn the full stream of nature's tide;
Let all our actions tend
To Thee their source; thy love the guide,
Thy glory be the end.*

*Earth then a scale to heaven shall be,
Sense shall point out the road;
The creatures all shall lead to thee;
And all we taste be God.*⁷¹

⁶⁸ William A. Dyrness, 'A Missiological Agenda for the 21st Century,' in W. Dayton Roberts, (ed.), *Patching God's Garment: Environment and Mission in the 21st Century* (Monrovia, CA: World Vision International, 1994), 148, cited in Langmead, 2011.

⁶⁹ The Song Book of The Salvation Army (1986), No. 512.

⁷⁰ Lodahl, 2003: 146.

⁷¹ Hymn #104, *Works* 7:211-12. Cited in Lodahl, 2003:145. Lodahl also mentions at this point the hymn was 'placed in a section titled 'For Mourners convinced of Sin' in the 1780 *Collection of Hymns*'.

Conclusion

Considering current environmental crises, the probable impact these crises will have on the people and places that are a major focus of the work of the Salvation Army, and most critically, acknowledging God's self-giving love and care for all creation, there is a need for a holistic eco-theology and related eco-praxis within The Salvation Army. This must be a holistic theology born both out of cooperation with ecumenical bodies (such as the newly formed National Council of Churches in Australia Eco-Mission Project) and flowing from the distinctive Salvationist perspective. A holistic and inclusive eco-theology is required that is both internationally recognized as a clear mandate for the global Salvation Army, and yet locally concretised in Salvation Army centres and individual Salvationists as they aim to live out the calling of salvation and hope, showing selfless Christ-like love to all of God's loved and degraded creation.