Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

Matthew Seaman

In 1890, General William Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army, outlined a social scheme in a publication titled In Darkest England and the Way Out. A plan was offered within this book that Booth contended, ‘if realized would solve the worst problems of modern Society.’ This scheme aimed to see people saved spiritually from sin and temptation, as well as saved physically from the pollution and poverty that pervaded the increasingly industrialised cities of English society.

Basically, the scheme involved three phases. Phase one incorporated ‘city colonies’, to provide refuges and centres to offer people hope and work within towns undergoing rapid social changes, which in many cases brought about loneliness, alienation, poverty and crime. Phase two centred around ‘farm colonies’ and small holding farms to give opportunity for people to escape the city life and, as Commissioner Frederick Booth-Tucker, a firm supporter of farm colonies, stated, also hoped to reunite ‘the manless land with the landless man’. The third phase consisted of expanding the project through ‘overseas colonies’ with the aim of spreading this communal vision of hope to other lands (see figure one on page 4 for a pictorial representation of the scheme).

Booth’s work is considered both popular and influential. It is reported that 115,000 copies were sold within the first three months, selling in excess of 300,000 copies during the first year or so after its publication. In Darkest England formed the basis for much of The Salvation Army’s subsequent work and also informed the establishment of the British Welfare state in 1948. John Cleary suggests that:

The developments that led to William Booth’s great social venture and
opus, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, are both a response to the appalling social conditions which Booth and his soldiers confronted, and a consistent expression of the theological tradition which shaped him. The social ministry of William and Catherine Booth, while initially instinctive, developed its theological and methodological coherence in concert with their ministry.5

As Craig Campbell has noted, due to the distance in time and culture between Booth and today, the 'language can appear quaint, the analysis inadequate, and the style somewhat anecdotal.'6 Yet, *In Darkest England* has remained an influential and important text not just for many Salvationists around the world, but also for many Christians concerned with the biblical mandate for justice and the treatment of the poor, outcast and alien in modern society. *In Darkest England*:  

articulates foundational principles...[societies] must take responsibility to care for its citizens, and in this the Church is also responsible. Charity alone is not enough; the causes of need and injustice must also be addressed. The individual person has value.7

Hence, in the subsequent years since its publication, there have been numerous works focused solely, or in part, on exploring and examining the substance and impacts of the scheme. A shortlist of some of these writings include: H. Rider Haggard’s appraisal of the extant colonies in the United States and at Hadleigh Farm in England published in 1905;8 *In Darkest England Now* was published around 80 years after the original volume and surveyed the religious and social conditions in the UK at that time;9 *Bread for my Neighbour: The Social Influence of William Booth* by General Frederick Coutts;10 Victor Bailey’s 1984 review of The Salvation Army, social reform and the labour movement between 1885 and 1910;11 Norman Murdoch’s work ‘William Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out: A Reappraisal’;12 and Roger Green’s paper from the same journal volume, which has been kindly reprinted in this volume.13 More recent examples that focus or touch on aspects of *In Darkest England* include: Commissioner Ann Woodall’s comparison of the life and work of William Booth and Karl Marx through their experiences with poverty in London;14 Gary Bishop’s reflections and
stories of his own experiences in 21st century darkest England and his call for the Church to be the hands and feet of Jesus for the poor and marginalised in his book *Darkest England and The Way Back In*; 15 Tom Schemp’s master’s thesis *Fort Amity: An Experiment in Domiculture*, regarding the Colorado-based experiment for the scheme; 16 Lieut-Colonel Dean Pallant’s doctoral research, culminating in the 2012 book *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry*; 17 and my own research study *Yellow, Red, Blue and Green: Exploring Ecological Aspects of The Salvation Army*, which looks at ways in which caring for all of God’s good creation is part of the mission of healing and reconciliation of all things in Christ Jesus. 18

October 2015 marked the 125th anniversary of the publication of *In Darkest England*. At this milestone, there continue to be millions, even billions, of people in societies across the world today still struggling just to survive, or deal with the harmful and deleterious physical, social, environmental and spiritual effects of poverty, inequality, unemployment, crime and incarceration, disease and health issues, addiction, homelessness and more. It is therefore a timely point at which to reflect on the impact, insights and past applications and potential for the future of Booth’s significant work for Salvationists, the wider Church, society at large and, indeed, the oikonomia tou theou, or the entirety of God’s household here on Earth.

Many questions persist, such as: Is there coherence between theologies, methodologies and ministries in the multitude of expressions of The Salvation Army around the world today? More simply put, how are we going? How could The Salvation Army corporately, and Salvationists individually, be living more practically holy lives in response to the Gospel in our varied contexts? Is Booth’s manifesto still valid in the 21st century?

Throughout this collection of papers in this book commemorating *In Darkest England*’s 125th anniversary, there is also a valuable amount of information and analysis of the content of Booth’s tome. 19 However, it may be useful to first briefly cover some of the major
themes and flow of the original volume, interspersed with short introductions to the papers that comprise this collection of reflections on *In Darkest England and The Way Out*.

**The Book**

Within the early Salvation Army, making use of current events, stories, music and media to create interest was commonplace. The title for Booth’s book is no exception. As Garth Hentzschel notes in his chapter, ‘it is well documented that William Booth capitalised on the success of Henry Stanley’s *In Darkest Africa.*’

Stanley’s text had been published only months earlier in 1890 and was well known by the time Booth capitalised on Stanley’s title and story.

**Part One**

The first part of the book is titled ‘The Darkness’. In the first chapter, attention is given to Stanley’s rendition of his time in ‘Darkest Africa’. Sections of his melodramatic text of the hardships and terrors are included to bring the reader to then consider the English context of the day. As Booth contends:

> It is a terrible picture, and one that has engraved itself deep on the heart of civilization. But while brooding over the awful presentation of life as it exists in the vast African forest, it seemed to me only too vivid a picture of many parts of our own land. As there is a darkest Africa is there not also a darkest England?... May we not find a parallel at our own doors, and discover within a stone’s throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great Equatorial forest?21

Following Booth’s passionate call to be a light in the darkness and work toward alleviating suffering and depravity, stories, data and statistics are presented in order to quantify the extent of the work ahead. These stories and figures were brought together from a wide range of sources including Salvation Army officers, and other writers and researchers of the day such as Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth (Charles was no relation to William Booth). William contended that there was approximately 10 percent of the population of Great Britain, some three million people, who were living in
poverty.

William Booth then proposes his ‘Cab Horse Charter’. 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 in England. Booth’s two main points were: when the horse is down, it is helped up without any questions asked, and while it lives it has food, shelter and work. Booth asserted that:

When in the streets of London a Cab Horse, weary or careless or stupid, trips and falls and lies stretched out in the midst of the traffic, there is no question of debating how he came to stumble before we try to get him on his legs again. The Cab Horse is a very real illustration of broken down humanity; he usually falls down because of overwork and underfeeding. If you put him on his feet without altering his conditions, it would only be to give him another dose of agony; but first of all you’ll have to pick him up again. It may have been through overwork or underfeeding, or it may have been all his own fault that he has broken his knees and smashed the shafts, but that does not matter. If not for his own sake, then merely in order to prevent an obstruction of the traffic, all attention is concentrated upon the question of how we are to get him on his legs again. The load is taken off, the harness is unbuckled, or, if need be, cut, and everything is done to help him up. Then he is put in the shafts again and once more restored to his regular round of work. That is the first point. The second is that every Cab Horse in London has three things; a shelter for the night, food for its stomach, and work allotted to it by which it can earn its corn.

These are the two points of the Cab Horse’s Charter. When he is down he is helped up, and while he lives he has food, shelter and work. That, although a humble standard, is at present absolutely unattainable by millions—literally millions—of our fellow men and women in this country.23

Further chapters within the part of the book describe and highlight the plight of the homeless, the unemployed and unemployable, those ‘on the verge of the abyss’, criminals, and children born into harsh and difficult situations. The concluding chapter of part one asks: ‘Is there no help?’ and briefly describes a selection of ‘well-meaning’ measures that are considered as being less than effective or limited in their scope to enact far-reaching and positive change for the poorest
people and the betterment of society as a whole, both physically and spiritually. This situational overview leads into the second part of the book which presents a hopeful overview of the scheme, devised as a ‘light beyond’ to counter and solve the ‘immense’ magnitude of issues in the dark places of English society.

**Part Two**

The second section is titled ‘Deliverance’ and contains suggestions about what might be done to remedy the current situation of those people who fall within the ‘submerged tenth’ under the umbrella of Booth’s proposal.

**The ‘In Darkest England’ Scheme**

Seven principles were given to guide the intentions of the scheme:

1. [The Scheme] must change the man when it is his character and conduct which constitute the reasons for his failure in the battle of life.
2. The remedy...must change the circumstances of the individual when they are the cause of his wretched condition, and lie beyond his control.
3. Any remedy...must be on a scale commensurate with the evil with which it proposes to deal.
4. Not only must the scheme be large enough, it must be permanent.
5. ...It must be immediately practicable.
6. The indirect features of the scheme must not be such as to produce injury to the persons whom we seek to benefit.
7. While assisting one class of the community, it must not seriously interfere with the interests of another.24

This wide-ranging and comprehensive three-part plan set forth by William Booth envisaged the formation of:

self-helping and self-sustaining communities, each being a kind of co-operative society, or patriarchal family, governed and disciplined on the principles which have already proved so effective in the Salvation Army. These communities we will call... Colonies. There will be:

1. The City Colony.
2. The Farm Colony.
3. The Over-Sea Colony.25
Phase One: The City Colony

Through his conversations with Salvationists, including William Booth, H. Rider Haggard was able to state that Salvationists involved in social work were ‘firmly convinced’ of two points in particular, 1) that ‘many of the great and patent evils of our civilization result from the desertion of the land by its inhabitants’, and 2) that ‘crowding into cities...is one of the most marked phenomena of our time’.26 Crowding within cities brought issues and opportunities that The Salvation Army was keen to solve, such as poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Assistance and ‘hope for all’ was to emerge through the city colony’s various ‘Harbours of Refuge’ which included a wide variety of workshops and other industrial or labour centres. After saving souls from any number of harmful or depressing situations via these ‘elevators’, the city colony plan moved into teaching useful crafts and skills and to aim for moral renewal and spiritual restoration for participants. Booth’s scheme then made provision for people to move and connect back with the wider community or further their journey by being placed into the country at the next stage: farm colonies.

Phase Two: The Farm Colony

William Booth was one of a number of reformers during the period who promoted country living and farming as a great means by which to alleviate many issues within the new industrialised and impersonalised society full of smoke, temptation and poverty. Booth contended that ‘God didn’t put Adam and Eve into a factory; he put them into a garden’.27 In a number of countries, including South Africa, the Netherlands, England, the United States and Australia, The Salvation Army acted upon the view of ‘farming as work which healed and made people whole and drew them into rhythm with God’.28 Farm colonies were planned and established in numerous areas, such as Hadleigh Farm in England, purchased in 1891, in order to give the unemployed new skills and become gainfully employed. In addition to larger farm colonies, the plan included small holdings farms or agricultural villages to be set up near farm colonies. This was to assist those who have moved from the city to the farm to take
charge of their own plot of land. It has been asserted that the farm colonies were ‘an attempt at a socialist means to a capitalist end’, yet descriptions of Booth’s scheme must also consider the divine purpose of the farm colonies as a journey to spiritual regeneration for those involved.

A number of these farms are still in use today for various purposes, such as Hadleigh Farm in the United Kingdom and Riverview Farm in Australia, where others have been repurposed or are focused as drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres. However, not all farm colonies were successful. Several farms, particularly in the United States, closed fairly quickly partly due to poor land, lack of experienced workers, and funding issues. Sandall has claimed that high 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’. Antalek argued that both farm colonies of Fort Herrick, Ohio, and Fort Rome, California ‘failed to settle the poor on the land’ and did not fully realise the desired aims of the scheme. However, through these farm colonies many people were indeed assisted by Salvationists and The Salvation Army.

Phase Three: The Colony Over the Sea
Booth’s ‘third and final stage of the regenerative process’ was to be the colony over the sea. Land, most probably within the British Commonwealth, would be selected and provided for those who made the journey over the seas to settle in the Salvationist colony. This phase of the scheme depended on the availability of ‘millions of acres of useful land to be obtained almost for the asking, capable of supporting our surplus population in health and comfort’. The scheme proposed:

- to secure a tract of land in one of these countries, prepare it for settlement, establish in it authority, govern it by equitable laws, assist it in times of necessity, settling it gradually with a prepared people, and so create a home for these destitute multitudes.

While the entire scheme was never completely established, The
Salvation Army assisted in migration programs to colonies over the sea. Esther Daniel claims that ‘support for British imperialism and expansion of the British Empire by populating its Dominions with large numbers of white British migrants’ was a key theme in The Salvation Army’s juvenile migration programs from Britain to Australia. Economic benefits to the British government, labour benefits to British colonies, were also touted as a significant factor in defence of the programme. However, Daniel also maintains that the purpose of the training and migrant scheme was primarily aiming to restore a ‘Garden of Eden’ as it were, thereby leading the juvenile migrants towards God. Furthermore, Daniel contends that:

Booth believed that life on the land would provide the physical, emotional and spiritual nourishment which they needed and one which would isolate them from the sins and degradation of the city.

Tom Schemp’s paper in this volume titled ‘How Chicago Paupers Became Colorado Farmers: Daily Life at Fort Amity’ gives us a glimpse into the lives and stories of ‘aspirant farmers and their families...on the land that would become their new home and a grand social experiment for The Salvation Army: Fort Amity, Colorado’. It is interesting to consider that The Salvation Army is better known as an urban-based movement rather than a back-to-the-land organisation. As Schemp has argued in previous work, the ‘agrarian experiment does not fit into the common historical perspective of... The Salvation Army’. However, Booth’s scheme points out substantial connections to the wider creation, and to the social, physical and spiritual benefits that a closer connection with the land can produce.

The Work Continues...

With Booth’s orienting beliefs of the biblical mandate to share the Gospel in word and deed, as spelt out in In Darkest England and the Way Out, ensuing ‘battles’ for social justice were indeed undertaken and continue today in various forms. In this volume, Harold Hill’s paper, ‘Out of Darkest England: The Effect of the “Darkest England” Scheme on the Salvation Army Itself’, helpfully probes the
consequences the Darkest England scheme has had for the Salvation Army’s reputation, structure, overseas missions, fundraising, mission-focus and evangelism. The Army’s contemporary debate on these areas is indeed ‘out of Darkest England’, with its origins in the Darkest England scheme. Hill argues that *In Darkest England* continues to shape and challenge the Army’s thinking as well as its structures.

On the other hand, the public reception of Booth’s scheme ranged through each end of the spectrum from full support with a significant amount of financial backing through to complete derision and attack, such as that from Thomas Huxley. Whether one was with or against Booth, as David Bennett contends, *In Darkest England* ‘was not a volume that could be ignored’. Bennett helpfully explores this in more detail in his chapter ‘The Public Reception and Impact of *In Darkest England*’. Bennett quotes Booth’s comment that at the very least,

*In Darkest England and the Way Out...* had two or three advantages. In the first place, it was sold; in the second, it was read; and in the third place, the advice and counsels given therein have been largely acted on.

One early and well-known example of action as part of the Salvationist mission to improve people’s living and working conditions is seen in the often cited ‘Lights in Darkest England’ campaign. This campaign developed in response to match production in the 19th century involving the handling of poisonous white phosphorus. This substance caused necrosis, commonly called ‘phossy jaw’, causing considerably high rates of disfiguration and death within the match-making factory workers community. A new non-toxic red phosphorous was available, but many match companies were not making the change to the healthier alternative. The campaign to eradicate the use of white phosphorous in the manufacture of matches involved The Salvation Army starting its own well-lit, well-ventilated match factory. In addition to paying fair wages to workers and using the non-toxic phosphorous, The Salvation Army called for other match-makers to follow suit and for consumers to pressure companies to make the switch to healthier
business operations. The drive was successful in changing the business of match-making and provided healthier working conditions for many workers.45

Another idea expressed in Booth’s scheme was the ‘Travelling Hospital’. As Garth and Rachel Hentzschel state, ‘Throughout its history, especially during World War One as well as in some developing countries, The Salvation Army has provided mobile medical assistance as part of its Christian service.’ Their chapter discusses the idea of the travelling hospital in the Victorian era and identifies some mobile medical endeavours of The Salvation Army. They also provide an evaluation of the need and possibilities for such a service in the current Australian climate.

Roger Green declares that the growth of Booth’s concern for both personal salvation and social reform was most ‘dramatic’ in his publication of In Darkest England and the Way Out in 1890.46 Both Keating and Murdoch have argued this change occurred in response to lower numbers of converts from sharing the Gospel to the poor;47 however, Ann Woodall characterises this argument as ‘too simplistic’.48 Green maintains that ‘the central theological motif was clearly that of redemption’.49 In his paper “Theological Roots of In Darkest England and the Way Out’, Green proposes a tripartite model to synthesise Booth’s redemptive motif that includes: 1) salvation, 2) sanctification, and 3) the kingdom of God, where all three redemptive categories are closely connected. The importance of personal salvation was underscored through the view that ‘only a holy people could do a holy work’ in bringing sanctification to the corporate and cultural spheres towards the ‘establishment of a rightly ordered society’, with the hope of bringing the kingdom of God to Earth.50

While it can be argued that even though In Darkest England is one of the most significant texts by William Booth, it is also one of the least explicitly theological texts. In the chapter ‘Socio-Political Holiness “In The World”,’ James Read makes the case that within In Darkest England, ‘we can still discover something that is as theologically sound, as missionally productive, and as attuned to the context of the 21st century as anything William Booth had to say’.51 Read identifies
three prominent elements within *In Darkest England*, and develops them in ways than may assist Salvationists and The Salvation Army towards a theology of 21st century social justice mission.

Two questions that were asked at the time of publication and that still attract discussion are explored by David Malcolm Bennett in his aptly title paper 'In Darkest England’, Whose Scheme was it?’ are: Who really wrote *In Darkest England*? And who devised the scheme that it contained? Bennett examines distant and immediate influences on Booth and the formation of *In Darkest England*, and argues that William Booth was the main force behind the book and scheme, also noting the major contributions made by others, especially his beloved wife, Catherine Booth.

It might come as a surprise to some that there are other Salvation Army writings related to, and even considered as supplements to, *In Darkest England* that may deserve more attention. In ‘The Impact of the Forgotten Supplement to *In Darkest England*: an analysis of Booth-Tucker’s Darkest India’, Garth Hentzschel has provided a timely reminder of this fact. As the title indicates, Hentzschel focuses on *Darkest India*. His paper argues that through ‘the sociological impact of the book, the understanding of India’s culture, and the contextual framing of Booth’s scheme, *Darkest India* should be lifted to a higher degree of importance’. Hentzschel’s analysis includes a review of current literature about *Darkest India*, compares the two works and investigates *Darkest India*’s impact on The Salvation Army in the Indian sub-continent.

It stands to reason that Booth’s scheme has not seen successes to the extent that was originally hoped and prayed for. Yet, as Jason Davies-Kildea contends:

> The culture of caring for those who are most marginalised, hard to reach, and who have burnt all their other bridges, has a long organisational history and is still pervasive within Salvation Army social services today. It is captured, perhaps most succinctly in the familiar slogan ‘We don’t give up on people’. 52

Nonetheless, Davies-Kildea notes that it may be unexpected to know
that 'in the midst of a stunningly ambitious global plan to eradicate poverty and disadvantage, [William Booth] did concede that there was a group for which there was little hope'. In his chapter 'Moral Lunatics and the End of the Line', Davies-Kildea asks: Are there really hopeless cases and, if so, what are we to do with them?

As both personal and social redemption was crucial to this movement toward the Kingdom, understanding the contemporary situation was essential to bringing about positive and holy change. Florence, the wife of the eldest son of William and Catherine Booth, discerned the contemporary social, economic and related ecological issues such as pollution and poor working conditions that have become an important part of much of the Salvation Army's work, described in Booth's *In Darkest England*:

> 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.

In the chapter 'In Darkest Creation? Broadening Deliverance to the Whole Oikos,' I (Matthew Seaman) look outwards from *In Darkest England* and Salvationist discourse to examine some historical and future trends in scientific literature. I argue that as compassionate social concern ('serving suffering humanity') is considered one of the basic ingredients in the spirit of Salvationism—and that as negative environmental impacts bring about harm, health issues or other serious negative impacts on people, societies and ecosystems—it follows that Salvationist concern and action for spiritual, social and physical issues should also include the wellbeing of the Earth and the health of the multitude of local ecosystems within it.

The following chapter, 'Grounding *In Darkest England*: Personal, Social and Ecological Regeneration', aims to complement the previous chapter through the exploration of a range of current missional expressions and Salvationist views that follow on with the themes raised in the prior chapter. These are themes that in many ways carry on the work first laid out in *In Darkest England*, such as training farms and community gardens. The chapter also aims to
Darkest England and the contemporary Salvation Army. Andrew reflects and imagines what the future may hold for a Salvation Army that understands and lives justice in creative, committed and Christ-like ways.

This collection of papers covers a variety of topics, written from and sometimes written with a certain context in mind. There is a fusion of established and emerging writers, of scholars and practitioners who have made valuable contributions to this volume, and who speak from various contexts in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Yes, this book is written predominantly from and to English-speaking, 'developed' perspectives. Admittedly, it would have been (and still would be!) deeply valuable and greatly cherished to hear from Salvationist sisters and brothers in a wider range of cultural and social settings than is represented here in this initial collection of papers.

Furthermore, there are still a wide range of areas that have not been explored deeply within this book. For example, it would make for a particularly interesting qualitative project to hear further from a wide range of Salvationists and non-Salvationists alike on their views on the scheme itself, any perceived historical problematics and the present prospects of further implementation of elements of the In Darkest England scheme. Likewise, it would be fascinating to encounter further readings of In Darkest England from diverse perspectives such as: agricultural, conservation, psychological and business studies; urban and environmental design; feminist and ecocritical readings; liberation, practical and eco-theologies; community development, food security, policy and international relations; and further consideration of the importance of practical holiness to engaging with and caring for the biosphere that has been and continues to be degraded by human actions.56

Even as there is so much more to be considered, unearthed and conversed about regarding the influential work that is In Darkest England and the Way Out, I am thrilled that this collection of impressive writing from a group of wonderful people from around the world has become a reality. This book, Darkness and
Deliverance, does not attempt to provide all the answers, however, it does hope to encourage, challenge, and spark further conversation along with practical action. It is sincerely hoped that this gathering of minds around this Darkest England theme at this time will be of use and benefit to Salvationists, The Salvation Army, our communities and societies and indeed to all of God’s loved creation, for the glory of God!

It should come as no surprise that this book would not have emerged from the initial idea without support, kindness, patience and love from many people. Especially sincere thanks to the lovely Carmen, to whom I am blessed to be married and sharing the journey with; Peter Wells, a great friend and scholar; Mal Davies and Dawn Volz at Salvo Publishing; and of course the fantastic contributors to this book. Thanks and praise be to the One in whom we live, breathe and have our being!

~~~

... I am only one man among my fellows, the same as you. The obligation to care for these lost and perishing multitudes does not rest on me and more than it does on you. To me has been given the idea, but to you the means by which it may be realized. The plan has now been published to the world; it is for you to say whether it is to remain barren, or whether it is to bear fruit in unnumbered blessings to all...57

~~~