A NEW MODEL ARMY
NEW EXPRESSIONS OF SALVATIONISM WITHIN YOUTH CULTURE
MARK GADSDEN
EDITOR: ALISON HULL
PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 01

SALVATION ARMY
YESTERDAY AND TODAY

– The Army and the burden of youth
– Changing the culture of youth ministry
– An adaptable evangelism
– A purposeful organisation

CHAPTER 02

EDEN, A NEW AND YET OLD IDEA!

– A catalyst for mission
– Eden’s principles
– Eden particulars
– Eden at Openshaw

CHAPTER 03

YOUTH MINISTRY AND THE PRIORITY OF PEOPLE

– From roots to the present
– Culturally relevant worship
– Regular evangelism
– Small group community
– Social action
– Summarising

POSTSCRIPT

REFERENCES AND NOTES
THIS BOOK WILL LOOK at why Salvation Army youth ministry must change. It is not about change for change’s sake — an accusation often made against those seeking contemporary renewal. No, change in this case has a justifiable two-fold rationale. It is both about preventing The Salvation Army from becoming, numerically speaking, an endangered species; as well as adapting our methods to the needs and cultures of today’s young people.

Salvation Army ministry, perhaps for too long now, has been based upon a ‘one size fits all’ mentality — the policies and practices delivered by central leaders are similar or even the same across all local corps. Of course this approach might have been relevant in the Army’s past, but today we are faced with extremely diverse cultures that require a variety of approaches to mission and ministry, particularly within the field of youth work. Although the new Youth Ministry Unit within the UK Territory has taken on the mantle of mapping out national changes, this book proposes that ultimately everyone involved in youth work at local level must take responsibility for creating a unique ‘Salvation Army’ relevant to their own context. It is not just that young people are crucial to the future of the organisation, they are also vital recipients of God’s love and salvation. Therefore their welfare and salvation are of more importance than the maintenance of our traditions. It stands to reason then that
anyone who takes youth ministry seriously will be unafraid of any present or future changes, for the sake of young people and the gospel.

This work was initially part of an MA research, but has now been tailored for practitioners who want to make their work relevant for the twenty-first century. It does not prescribe a detailed plan of how change will look locally. Its main concern is the whys and principles upon which vital change is fashioned. I hope that the reader will be challenged to think deeper about the way in which their ministry will benefit young people and uphold the true meaning of what it means to be a Salvation Army. I would therefore invite the reader on a journey which Catherine Booth put so well at the dawn of the Army’s great commission: If we want to take Christian mission seriously then we must ‘adapt ourselves and our measures to the social and spiritual condition of those whom we seek to benefit.’
'THE SALVATION ARMY RECOGNISES' that young people are our future. 'This statement, from The Salvation Army information sheet 'A force for good in today’s world', brings a lot of hope to many of us involved in youth work within this organisation. It is also a comfort to those who feel that the world without The Salvation Army would be an unthinkable possibility. In fact William Booth never envisaged a day when it would cease to exist. He said as long as there remains one dark soul without the light of God we must continue to ‘fight to the very end’. But if today’s Salvation Army is to continue to fight with the same vigour, innovation and spirituality of The Salvation Army forefathers, then its members must be prepared to go to any lengths to reach the next generation.

This is particularly important in the light of massive youth decline. The Research and Development Unit at the Territorial Headquarters have stated that the future Salvation Army is in danger of becoming an ‘old people’s club’, based on the fact that the average age of soldiership is 54. To combat this problem therefore, ‘any programme for change must focus on recruiting and retaining young people into membership.’ The lack of young people, one could argue, is a problem noticeable within the whole of the Church in the UK, and is not exclusive to the Army. Though this may be the case, the Research and Development Unit say
that the generation gap in the Christian Church ‘is even more striking in The Salvation Army.’

Thankfully, leaders in The Salvation Army today have neither ignored this problem nor hastened to bury their heads in the sand. A Task Force was established in 2001 to research a future youth work strategy in the UK relevant to the twenty-first century and yet ardently Salvation Army in heart and principle. Subsequently, what the members of the Task Force committee decided was the need for all local youth ministry to be re-branded and developed to meet the cultural needs of young people. Along with this they proposed that all youth ministry should be built around essentials of culturally relevant worship, regular evangelism, discipleship within small groups, and radical social action. Though aspects of these essentials may not be completely absent from all traditional corps, the Task Force was adamant that they become the core ingredient for all youth programmes, and that they act as a gauge for innovative ministry. They are essential principles that take precedence over methods and programmes, whether traditional or contemporary.

Change is never easy for any church denomination. Many Christians struggle with it or even loathe it, but without necessary change a church will not only fail to be effective in the present but also will not live up to the principles upon which it was built. This is particularly the case with The Salvation Army. If this radical organisation remains true to its own innovative past, then relevant change that relates to today’s cultural climate should be a natural response to its own ideology. If we want to reach young people in this society of cultural diversity, then we have to face the fact that some of our traditional programmes will no longer be suitable. This is not to say that all traditional programmes have had their day. No, the point here being made is that every ministry we run must relate to the culture and psyche of the people we are reaching and discipling. This is what made The Salvation Army such a potent force back in the nineteenth century. How each local ministry does this today will differ. To some this may seem like a moving away from the traditions of Army ministry, but as we read on, we will notice the contrary.

This book will be broken down into three sections. The first section will assess the current state of Salvation Army youth ministry towards the end of the 20th century, and ask the important question, ‘Is what it has become true to the original Salvation Army?’ In the second section we will refer to new models of Salvation Army youth ministry, looking
particularly at Eden — an interdenominational ministry for young people on the margins of urban society. Though a variety of churches share in the experience of Eden across inner-city Manchester, The Salvation Army has been given unique ownership of Eden at Openshaw. Eden is a very different experience of Salvation Army youth work but it still reflects in principle what it truly means to be ‘Salvation Army’, and therefore the basic principles can be applied to almost anywhere. In the final section of this work, we will look at the principles for change based upon the Task Force’s proposals. Ultimately, what this book will show is that the way we run youth ministry must relate to our local cultural context. Thus every ‘New Model Army’ may look different from place to place, depending upon the needs of young people, the existing sub-cultures and the specific calling God has assigned to us.
THE ARMY AND THE BURDEN OF YOUTH

Being a member of The Salvation Army is no mean feat, not least because of the challenge of discipleship. Following Jesus is a costly affair, and The Salvation Army’s Orders and Regulations offer no short cuts to the path of holiness. Perhaps the most noticeable challenge, though, for many people in more recent years is the concept of being a soldier in this individualistic and post-modern world.¹ In fact, many things about The Salvation Army,
such as the militaristic programmes and religious traditions, present challenges for Salvationists today trying to reach the culture of their friends and community. Many feel that the cultural gap is becoming too wide, particularly when relating to the world of young people, and thus discipleship for Salvationists has unnecessary added challenges.

There is no doubt that all Christians, at whatever age, have to face the challenge of being part of something considered by the world as peculiar. Jesus promises his followers that they will not always be appreciated by the world. On many occasions throughout his ministry, Jesus would detach himself from society as he sought a holy life. However, despite these obvious holy challenges, the Christian life is also, or at least should be, an attractive proposition to the world. Jesus’ life was extremely appealing to people. He befriended and helped all types of individuals, presented challenging yet compelling messages, partook in many social functions, displayed immense spiritual powers, and was publicly open in his manner and approach. In fact, he was often accused by the religious orders of his day of mixing too much with the sinners. Christians must emulate Christ at all costs and therefore are to be a beacon of hope and light to all people. Though to live for Christ means being ‘set apart’, Christian living also involves relating to the society in which we live. As Paul the Apostle put it so well, ‘I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.’ Therefore every cultural void we face when relating to today’s world must be overcome if The Salvation Army is to progress in its spiritual war.

Though the early Salvation Army’s visible presence in the world created much stir and at times opposition, the cultural forms they used in evangelism attracted many converts. It is this attempt to find cultural association back in the nineteenth century that led to the image and outward practices that we have become so familiar with today. However, we must ask the question, as is posed in the booklet All you ever wanted to know about The Salvation Army, ‘Is The Salvation Army’s public image, particularly its military style as effective today as it was a hundred years ago?’ In response to this question, the booklet suggests that the militaristic imagery may not be as appropriate any more because of the
realisation of the horrible cost of war. However, in
defence of it, the booklet also says that their ‘distinctive
uniform and structure identify Salvationists as people
who are available to the needs of the public,’ and the
militaristic method of governing local corps enables
‘decisions to be implemented effectively.’ It is certainly
ture that if the visible form of the Army that we have
become familiar with was changed or taken away, it
would take a long time for people to become
accustomed to it, as for many the presence of The
Salvation Army is a reassuring one.

It is important to know more about why the Army
came into existence, before we are to tackle this subject
with any firm weight. History is our initial starting point.
The *Christian Mission Magazine* in the 1870s describes the
purpose of The Salvation Army, under its original name,
‘The Christian Mission’: ‘The object of this Mission is to
evangelise by extraordinary efforts these outlying crowds
who are not reached by the existing ordinary
instrumentalities.’ These early missionaries confronted
the ‘appalling temporal and spiritual destitution of the East of London’, which in the main
was completely unchurched. For William and Catherine Booth and the early founders, if
people were not coming to church, then the church had to go to them — to the very heart
of their culture and community. The culture of the urban poor led the Christian Mission
upon a dual crusade — being a holy yet culturally relevant movement. Being an Army was
a pragmatic way of reaching the unreached, as well as organising a ministry that could be
maintained and expanded. We should acknowledge the magnificence of what was
accomplished in the past, but as K.S. Inglis has said, ‘what had once been sensational in its
methods, preserved in the next generation, became old-fashioned. Henceforth, it began to
be run, not by prophets but by administrators.’ Therefore, this form of religious
expression, which was used powerfully in the past, became too institutionalised and
essentially less effective.

Does this mean then The Salvation Army is now defunct as a mission? The vision statement of the UK territory would suggest not. The leaders believe that the ‘Army battle’ is not yet over, despite many of the concerns just raised. It states:

We will be a Spirit-filled, radical, growing movement with a burning desire to:
- Lead people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ
- Actively serve the community
- Fight for social justice.

The need to fulfil these objectives requires an active commitment, and the metaphor of soldiership for many Salvationists is still useful in symbolising this. Chick Yuill, in his book, *This Means War*, reminds us that ‘the idea of Christian warfare did not, of course, begin with William Booth! It is a concept which is firmly established in the pages of the New Testament.’ The call to soldiership is part of the spiritual quest for all Christians, regardless of background. Yuill, however, is only too aware that the outward form of spiritual battle can also betray us at times, as we become ‘more concerned about our personal comfort than about our personal commitment.’ What were once metaphors that represented radical commitment are in danger of becoming icons of religious conformity. Phil Needham also makes this point. Although he sees value in the soldiership metaphor, he says that there always lurks the danger of us ‘hiding behind practices and structures that no longer serve that calling . . . believing that the continuation of a tradition or method is synonymous with the implementation of missionary goals.’

Jesus was aware of how easy it was for people to confuse genuine commitment with outward religious acts. For example, when he challenged people’s treatment of the Sabbath, many were paying lip service to the practice of the Sabbath whilst neglecting the wider needs of humanity. The Pharisees in particular ignored the importance of healing and helping people on this day and were therefore guilty of nullifying the Sabbath’s true meaning. Jesus said the Sabbath was made for our benefit; we were not made for the Sabbath. As important as it is, worship on the Sabbath always requires us to love others at
whatever cost. We need to ask the question, how many of our religious duties serve the needs of people and the wider community? Do they in essence glorify the work and character of Jesus? Do they demonstrate a love for God and also love for our neighbour? If the upkeep of traditions or the enforcement of religious programmes is more important than this, then we are no less guilty than the Pharisees. Jesus’ challenge to us all is that our ministries, whether traditional or new, must be driven by the agenda to love God and people.

There are thankfully many people in The Salvation Army who are constantly reviewing the integrity and worth of each ministry programme when engaging with today’s world. *The Salvation Army Year Book* states that ‘Modern facilities and longer-term developments are under continual review.’ Even before the recruitment of the Task Force, The Salvation Army’s Territorial leaders organised a research into the current culture of young people as part of a strategy for redevelopment. This was made possible by an organisation called the Henley Centre who subsequently produced a report called *The Burden of Youth*. The report proposed that despite the valuable youth support found within organisations like The Salvation Army, ‘traditional forms of religion and spirituality do not appeal to most young people.’ Therefore space and opportunities should be given where young people can ‘engage with the Army in worship on their terms.’ The Henley Centre also pointed out that The Salvation Army is faced with a huge social gulf between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ created by socio-economic, educational and technological divisions. If The Salvation Army wants to be true to its traditions of social care, the report says it will also need to work towards reducing these divisions within youth societies.

This being said, it would be wrong to assume that the Army is not involved in valuable work with young people. The Henley Centre recognises that youth work ‘is run through nearly eight hundred local church and community centres . . . as well as thirteen residential
centres throughout the UK’, and the report lists many commendable social and evangelistic practices. The Task Force report recognises more than a few examples of ‘models of good practice’, all of which are ‘signs of hope’ for the future. The Salvation Army’s Mission Team has also played an important part in awakening corps to new forms of ministry. Even traditional discipleship groups such as Corps Cadets have been revamped because, as the former Youth Department leaders stated, ‘to today’s young people, the term itself is outdated, old-fashioned and irrelevant.’ However, whilst it is important to celebrate these important changes, they are, according to the Task Force, ‘by no means enough to stem the tide of decline.’ Greater investments must be poured into new schemes, and seen as part of mainstream Salvation Army youth work. The Henley Centre concludes that if the Army is to take seriously its commitment to its cause, it must ‘prioritise its mission and invest resources and expertise in the UK’s youth.’ Therefore, the future of Salvation Army youth work rests not only on the local corps, but also upon the institution to invest in youth ministry as a whole.

**CHANGING THE CULTURE OF YOUTH MINISTRY**

The question remains, why is the current policy of regulating and implementing youth ministry not appropriate any more? Is this just a case of throwing the old away and bringing in the new? One might think an accusation of this kind would be justified at this point, but The Salvation Army must work towards local innovation if it is going to have any impact on the young people of this generation. For a long time, Army members have been used to regulating youth ministry by a central administration. It has been delivered and monitored through the policy of *Orders and Regulations*. For youth ministry, there are *Orders and Regulations for Youth Clubs and Junior Clubs* and for *Work among Young People*. The main objective in the *Orders and Regulations* is to ‘make soldiers’ and there are many details explaining how this is done. The book *Chosen to be a Soldier* states that ‘The Young People’s work will be judged successful in as much as it produces senior soldiers who are truly converted . . . imbued with the principles of The Salvation Army.’ Across all generations, the objective is to establish reinforcements within the universal Army. As young people are recruited, their discipleship has traditionally taken place through channels such as Junior Soldiership, Young people’s bands, Singing Companies, Corps Cadets and Junior
These programmes have been, and still are in many cases, common to many Salvation Army corps.

Despite this somewhat formulaic and homogenous approach, the *Orders and Regulations* have in more recent years stated that to evangelise youth, each corps must ‘attract young people by a varied and relevant programme.’ This is an important aspect of youth ministry development, but it still falls short of the mark. Young people might well be attracted to a specific programme, but if they join the organisation, they are still ‘ordered’ to keep in line with traditional ‘Salvation Army principles and procedures,’ and to ‘use their gifts as active soldiers in the ranks of The Salvation Army.’ The problem here is found in the obvious cultural gulf between attracting young people from outside and discipling them from within. This is generally a problem to many churches. In trying to bridge this cultural gap, we can end up allowing our evangelistic activities to get sucked into worldly conformity, and yet at the same time leave our discipleship programmes stuck in the realms of yesterday’s world. Thus the gap becomes even wider than before. We can become, in Andy Hickford’s words, ‘captive to culture.’ Of the church generally he says, ‘On the one hand, our evangelism struggles to break free from the church’s own culture in order to reach the world. On the other hand, our discipleship often fails to break out of the world to be God’s church. It sounds absurd, but the church today is largely a cultural captive.’ But for Hickford there is hope, and that lies in the work of intentional youth ministry. He goes on to say that ‘by making work with young people a priority, we discover,
almost by accident, keys to unlock this situation. Young people have very distinct cultures that the church must adapt to and yet the church has a radical transforming message that has the ability to attract the attention of young adolescents. Working with young people can open up the Army’s eyes towards cultural relevance and yet at the same time push its members towards deeper spiritual commitment, which many young people are searching for. Therefore Salvation Army youth ministry must build a more exciting brand of Christianity which is attractive to young people and yet reflective of a vibrant and radical spirituality.

So where do we start to bring about relevant change? We must, as the mission writer Louis Luzbetak says, begin with an understanding of the culture we want to reach and work with. We must look at and understand the outward shape of culture with its images, shapes and icons before we turn our attention to its function; what is it for, what does it do and achieve? Then we must get to the bottom of culture and look to the values and theories behind what makes it what it is. In the case of youth ministry we need to ask pointed questions such as, what street cultures, activities and fashions are young people into? What do these things do? What is the function of a street gang for example, and what does ‘hanging out together’ in the park achieve? Ultimately we need to enquire into how we can understand our young people better and assess what their needs and aspirations are. How does the gospel relate to their world and sub-culture? Luzbetak insists that doing this is primary to Christian mission and he is right. However, it is also important for the church to understand ‘its own house’ before it really engages with the world. In fact, as Darrell Guder tells us, ‘Every aspect of congregational life, shaped by the legacy of previous generations, is subject to conversion by God’s spirit for mission.’ If the local church takes its missionary duties
seriously, then ‘it would spend much less time on providing activities that take its members out of the world.’ It must follow the path of its missionary cause, and if it does not do this, then it is due for a ‘congregational conversion’. Its methods and practices must become relevant to the people it wants to reach.29

William and Catherine Booth were aware in their day of how much the church had betrayed the people because of its lack of relevance. The Salvation Army was created to rectify this problem. The form, function and principles upon which it was based sought not only to reach the world, but to steer the church towards a conversion of its own. If we allow ourselves time to understand how and why the early Army came into being then we can address the Army’s position today with regard to its work with young people, and become more prepared for a transformed youth ministry.

AN ADAPTABLE EVANGELISM

It is difficult to draw any direct lessons from Salvation Army history about youth work, as soldiership ministry was universally applied across all ages.30 The industrial poverty of the latter nineteenth century did attract attention from a range of organisations, which led to supporting children and young people in variety of ways.31 Though the Army had no specific youth ministry vision, the population overspill, which forced many children and young people onto the streets, influenced the Army’s involvement in alleviating poverty for the young.32 Therefore, indirectly, their work catered for the children and young people of their time. However it is the early Salvation Army ministry per se that is of interest to us here. The way in which the Army originated and developed across all ages will provide us with insights into how youth ministry can be redeveloped within the organisation today.

The Salvation Army, as the name implies, adopted a militaristic strategy during the year of 1878, yet the origins of their work can be traced back to 1865, under the title of the ‘Christian Mission’.33 The Victorian urban context, particularly in London, forced the
Christian Mission into what Pamela Walker describes as a ‘neighbourhood religion’ that sought to transform the problems of urban life. It sought to rescue what William Booth called the ‘wretched crowds’ of the darkest England. The Christian Mission needed a strategy that set it apart from other churches unwilling to disciple the poor. The strategy came by way of using metaphors and ideas that were part of the fabric of urban culture, particularly the metaphor of war. Elijah Cadman was the first to adopt Army terminology in order to draw people to a service in Whitby, a small town familiar with poverty. Militarist talk and its usage was part of the every day life of the urban people, influenced by the culture of the British Empire, the Volunteer Force movement and the talk of war from overseas. This nineteenth century ‘missionary’ era, according to Louis Luzbetak ‘was generally described in military terms.’ Missionaries were ‘soldiers’ fighting on the ‘battlefield for the cause of Christ.’ For the Christian Mission, the use of these metaphors assisted their work in drawing the masses to the message of the Gospel. In fact, William and Catherine Booth adopted all sorts of cultural ideas derived from the very heartbeat of working class society. Pamela Walker in her book *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, summarises the variety of ways in which this happened:

The Salvation Army was a neighbourhood religion. It invented a battle plan that was especially suited to urban working-class geography and cultural life. Religious words were sung to music-hall tunes; circus posters and theatre announcements were copied so closely that observers often failed to distinguish them; preachers imitated the idiom of the street vendors; and congregations were encouraged to shout out responses to the preacher, much as they might in the music halls. Salvationists culled techniques from contemporary advertising and revivalism . . . The Army regarded pubs, music halls, sports, and betting as its principle rivals, yet its ability to use popular leisure activities as its inspiration was a major facet in its success. The outward shape of the Army’s evangelism was an attractive image to the people they
were reaching. The nineteenth century Christian missionaries would go to any lengths to fulfil their evangelical objectives, even if it meant breaking away from the traditions of old. Catherine Booth summarised the principles of their missionary ways under what she described as the theme of adaptation:

Adaptation is the great thing we ought to consider. If one method or agent fails, we should try another. . . . In this sense, to become all things to all men, if by any means we may save some. . . . That is, adapt ourselves and our measures to the social and spiritual condition of those whom we seek to benefit. It is here, I conceive, that our churches have fallen into such grievous mistakes with reference to the propagation of the Gospel in our own times. We have stood to our stereotyped forms, refusing to come down from the routine of our forefathers, although this routine has ceased to be attractive to the people, nay, in many instances the very thing that drives them away.41

Catherine and William Booth’s philosophy led not only to the creation of The Salvation Army but also to the variety of ways the Army was run particularly in places such as India, as we will see in more detail in the next chapter.

A PURPOSEFUL ORGANISATION

The Salvation Army’s use of militarism as a metaphor for evangelism was only part of the picture. The militaristic infrastructure also became a means by which converts were discipled and trained to develop the organisation further. The Christian Mission may have had no original intention to grow a church, but the lack of spiritual opportunities for the masses eventually led to the establishment of a denomination, albeit in the form of an Army.42 The Army therefore didn’t just reach the people, but sought to eradicate class and social distinctions, provide welfare for the underprivileged and train new converts for service in the world. Despite the severity of this evangelistic challenge, some social historians acknowledge that many of the urban poor were in fact open to religion and spirituality.43 What the poor required was a secure and relevant context to express their salvation and newfound spirituality in very practical ways. The Army provided this context and environment. It became, as William Booth described,

’an organisation existing to effect a radical revolution in the spiritual
condition of the enormous majority of people of all lands. Its aim is to produce a change not only in the opinions, feelings, and principles of these vast populations, but to alter the whole course of their lives, so that instead of spending their time in frivolity and pleasure-seeking, if not in the grossest forms of vice, they shall spend it in the service of their generation and in worship of God.44

The Salvation Army had a strategic plan. Its adaptation approach was not about change for change’s sake. Change was brought about so that the whole course of people’s lives could be affected. Here we begin to see the heart and principles of The Salvation Army’s aims – to be relevant to the cultures of the land, yet to be radical in Christian holiness. On the one hand its evangelism breaks free from traditional culture in order to reach the world, on the other hand it breaks out of the world to be a church set apart for God. The principle of Christian mission is about being immersed in the world whilst at the same time ‘not of it’. The Christian Mission sought to embrace culture yet also transform it. This strategy met contradictory opposition at times as The Salvation Army was ridiculed for being too much like the world and yet it was often attacked for being too apart from it.45 Therefore it faced persecution from both sides.

There was no compromise though. In these early years, the Army never went too far into cultural relevancy or ever settled too comfortably into religious conformity. The prerogative, as Catherine Booth insisted, was not to build temples and wait for people to come, but rather to go to the people wherever they were, and to communicate the gospel to them.46 This is the mandate of the New Testament missionary calling – not to invite people to churches, but to go and make disciples of all nations.47 The shape of our local church, our ecclesiastical styles and practices, should be fashioned according to our unique mission. We see the evidence of this in the history of all denominational beginnings, particularly with The Salvation Army. An effective church will always reap the fruit of what it sows, because it concentrates on sowing a gospel message deeply rooted in the ‘soil’ of people’s lives and cultures. We can look back at the Army’s past and celebrate the depth of missionary enterprise. This does not mean that we have to replicate every iota of their schemes. The Booths were, of course, from a different era to us, influenced by autocratic views of leadership and imperialistic governments.48 But that is precisely the point when we
consider Christian mission. Our mission must take into account the social framework of the contemporary era.

We should celebrate the influence of the early Army’s work upon today’s society, but more importantly we should ask ourselves to what extent are the principles of their mission being practised today, particularly in the field of youth ministry? Society today poses as many challenges as the urban under-classes did back then. The work of youth ministry therefore calls us to think and pray hard about how Christ can be presented in a relevant way within the twenty-first century. Returning once again to our original question, ‘Is The Salvation Army’s public image, particularly its military style as effective today as it was a hundred years ago?’ we now find ourselves at a position where the question must be dramatically rephrased. As we have seen, Christian mission does not start with a prescribed universal programme. Its focus is about enabling the gospel to relate to the world which we so desire to reach, from which adaptations must be made. Perhaps therefore the question we are interested in is, ‘how can Christians in The Salvation Army adapt themselves to reach and minister to the cultures of young people with the gospel of Jesus Christ?’ This is a question that drove the early Salvation Army missionaries into urban ministry and one that should drive all those intent on seeing youth ministry change for the better in the twenty-first century. The rest of this book will look at how youth ministry in The Salvation Army can be built upon the principles of Christian Mission, and how we should encourage local corps to build new model armies for young people in their unique communities.
There have been a variety of new youth ministry initiatives in recent years, but one that particularly stands out as an inspiration to future youth ministry in The Salvation Army is Eden. Eden stands for innovation but is also a ministry based on traditional missionary principles. It adapts to meet the needs of specific cultural groups, and yet adheres to the gospel of the Bible. Eden specialises in working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds on a long-term basis. Its work is undertaken by a number of different church
denominations including The Salvation Army and operates by sending Christians into the inner city areas of Manchester, from which new church expressions for young people are developed. There are currently nine locations in Manchester that host an Eden, which are attached to local churches and specific denominations. However, the concept of Eden is guided by universal principles that accentuate the importance of cross-cultural mission in every location.

Eden has been an important feature of the Task Force’s research and, according to the Playing with Fire report, it ‘represents the rapidly emerging phenomenon of a generation who want to be The Salvation Army in a whole new, and yet old way.’ Andy Hawthorne, Eden’s founder, insists that Eden is close to the original Salvation Army spirit. He says,

Clearly The Salvation Army was once the most awesome organisation, used mightily by God. But the brass bands were the music of the streets a hundred years ago, the tunes they played were the dance tunes of the day . . . It worked back then and managed to reach thousands of people, but today the tunes just don’t cut it. The Salvation Army . . . need to ask themselves if what they are doing is the best way of reaching the lost for Jesus. That’s why I’m thrilled that The Salvation Army have got a new bunch of radicals . . . They’ve picked up on the Eden project, and I wonder if there’s a chance that, if their Eden project takes off in Manchester, Edens everywhere could become a part of their work.

This chapter will look specifically how Eden has in fact helped The Salvation Army in this way. Though Eden is the focus of this chapter, we will draw upon its principles in finding new ways to develop Salvation Army youth ministry. It is also important to note from the outset that our assessment of Eden is not based on ‘long-term success’ as Eden is still only in its infant stages. Rather it is Eden’s approach to mission that is of interest to us here.

**A CATALYST FOR MISSION**

Eden, simply put, is about Christian mission that knows no cultural bounds. Mark Smethurst, the former Eden projects manager, says that Eden is a ‘catalyst’ for mission, which brings an ‘identity to people with a similar vision.’ It is not something extraordinary: as he states, it is ‘nothing the Bible doesn’t say,’ and he insists that ‘there are people who are doing
it already.’ In other words, if you are prepared to be an adaptable missionary, then you are already involved to some extent in an Eden ministry.

The concept of Eden was birthed within the unique urban context of Manchester and is primarily concerned with young people from the margins of society. The lack of evangelism and discipleship amongst the toughest places of the city was a serious issue for the Eden founders. Andy Hawthorne says:

It can’t be right that over 65 per cent of the population in this country are considered working class, and yet less than 1 per cent of the church are working class, and it can’t be right that in Manchester, our city, my city, 80 percent of Christians live in the suburbs alongside 20 per cent of the people.³

It is difficult to quantify his evidence, as Peter Brierley from Christian Research has indicated that there is ‘no definitive breakdown’ of class membership in the Church. The general perception, though, is that the Church in this country is predominantly white and middle class. Hawthorne’s figures may appear anecdotal, but his frustration at the lack of Christian presence within urban Manchester did lead him onto a noble and worthy cause. He and his colleagues wanted a more missionary orientated youth ministry that would engage with the toughest youth sub-cultures of the city.⁴ In fact what really seemed to shape the heart of Eden vision was the missionary exploits of his great grandfather, Captain Robert Hawthorne, a missionary pioneer for The Salvation Army in India during the 1880s. Hawthorne reflects ‘when Robert and his co-workers got to India, it wasn’t long before they realised that their Salvation Army uniforms were a little out of place.’ As a result they ‘decided to ditch their precious threads and instead started wearing traditional Indian costume.’ As they did this, they steadily ‘absorbed more influences from the culture that surrounded them: the housing, the food and the customs,
even to the point of not wearing any shoes.¹⁵

Early writings from Commissioner Frederick Booth-Tucker, the leading pioneer of Salvation Army work in India, reveal the authenticity of Hawthorne’s words. Booth-Tucker spoke about a time when Robert Hawthorne himself was affected deeply by the challenges of sacrificial mission. He said, ‘I can remember very well discarding for the first time my Indian shoes, and going out barefooted for a march in Bombay. The corps officer, Captain Hawthorne, a warm-hearted Irishman, nearly wept.’⁶ Although Andy Hawthorne does not mention in detail his great-grandfather’s ventures, what we can see from this evidence is that the missionary soldiers of India engaged in a costly cross-cultural venture. Booth-Tucker said that the missionary endeavours in India were in response to William Booth’s command to ‘get under their skins.’⁷ In Booth-Tucker’s book Muktifauj, William Booth’s missionary principles of ‘adaptation’ are outlined. He stated that, ‘perhaps in no other country will there be a louder call . . . for the display of that principle of adaptation which is a fundamental principle of the Army everywhere.’⁸ They are to ‘attract’ people’s attention, ‘gain their confidence’, help them to ‘repent’ and also ‘train’ them to win others.⁹ For William Booth, to do this effectively The Salvation Army would not be ‘bound by any stereotyped or antiquated notions’.¹⁰

Andy Hawthorne’s desire to re-enact the principles of The Salvation Army Indian mission in urban Manchester, for young people in particular, led him to cultivating the vision of Eden. Although it began as a one-off project in Wythenshawe in 1997, in due course it led to more projects with other partnerships, including The Salvation Army. Hawthorne contends that the Eden spirit reflects ‘the same spirit in which Robert Hawthorne moved a hundred years ago,’ and thus it is able to make an impact not just upon the current Eden areas, but also potentially throughout the rest of the UK:

I honestly believe that there is nothing more important that I have been involved in than Eden. If we can get it right and pull in more partners who want to do similar things right across Britain, the implications are massive. Perhaps, just as things spread out from one tiny church in Wythenshawe, things could spread out from our one small corner of England and start to have an impact on the whole nation.¹¹
EDEN’S PRINCIPLES

One of the challenges of furthering the growth of new projects such as Eden is the temptation to make everyone else submit to its ideals. As David Bosch has said with regard to this problem, ‘a new imperialism in theology then simply replaces the old.’ There are some even linked to Eden who have acknowledged this obvious challenge and as a consequence feel that perhaps Eden belongs alone to the context of Manchester. Any attempt therefore to repackage its idea would negate its primary aim. John Drane is quick to point out the dangers of what he terms as the ‘pre-packaged religious product’, which avoids ‘a meaningful spirituality that begins from within the context of human experience.’ Programmes such as Alpha for example, according to Drane, can be limited by their lack of contextual meaning. In other words, they were developed out of a very different class culture whose language, ideas and activities may be, to some degree, unrelated to those we are seeking to reach. Does this then mean projects such as Eden have no transferable authority? Thankfully the answer to this is no. However, to avoid the problem we have just raised, the focus must always be on the principles behind the programmes, not necessarily the programmes themselves. For example, ‘Drop-in Cyber Cafés’ may be relevant to youth who enjoy their IT recreation, but may not be to a sub-culture interested in outdoor activities. However the principle of ‘dropping-in’ is always important for young people, as youth work strives to enable youth to participate voluntarily in a non-conforming and non-pressurised way.

Eden is transferable in this sense; it is not built on any traditional or even contemporary stipulated formulae. Eden’s objective is to send Christians into places that the Church has forgotten or has previously been unwilling to go.
forgotten or has previously been unwilling to go. As a result, worshipping communities relevant to young people are built and developed. This transferable missionary principle reflects indeed the early Salvation Army mission. It parallels in many ways the principles proposed by Booth that we have just discussed. To remind ourselves, the first tenet of these principles is ‘attracting people’s attention’ by being culturally relevant. Before Eden started, Hawthorne and his colleagues began their ministry by forming a music band, which was then called the World Wide Message Tribe. This band had an agenda, not to tour the UK or even the world, but to work within the proximity of urban Manchester to bring the Gospel of Christ to the young people. The Tribe’s street language, fashion and music were highly recognisable and attractive within the urban context, and brought credibility wherever they went. Yet their message of God’s hope and love was loud and clear. But for Hawthorne this was not enough. Eden originated from the Tribe’s desire to make the gospel become more localised within young people’s sub-cultures and communities. Rather than just travelling around attracting young people’s attention, Hawthorne knew the importance of making this attraction become earthed in real relationships. Many workers of Eden today demonstrate an outward cultural relevancy to the urban youth. However, this cultural association within Eden is not restricted to a certain style or image. There are many different ways in which Eden teams connect with their communities. What is more important to the concept of Eden is building long-term relationships, which becomes, in itself, the key to attracting young people. Christians must attract the attention of people, as William Booth said, ‘not for the sake of any worldly gain, but because you love their souls and truly desire their welfare.’

All Eden teams highlight what they articulate as the ‘incarnational’ approach to mission. Incarnation literally means ‘embodiment in the flesh.’ Christians, though representing Christ’s body on earth, also identify with the world and cultures of the people God wants them to reach. They share in their humanity. Our missionary incarnation has some parallel to Christ’s: Christ, though embodying complete divinity, also became flesh and blood, as we are; he identified and associated with us and the people and cultures of his own
era. Therefore, although incarnation is a holy occurrence, it is also cross-cultural and does not hide away from the real experiences and events of humankind. Each Eden team resides within the heart of the urban communities; therefore where and how one lives becomes as important as what one does. It may seem to some that Eden relies heavily upon a strong resource of recruited personnel, and thus is in danger of relying too much upon non-indigenous people. But the fact that Christians venture into these ‘alien’ cultures on a long-term basis for the sake of the gospel is a testament to their willingness to engage in genuine mission. The regular presence of Christians within the community therefore will always create opportunities to demonstrate authentic faith. That is the key to Eden. As Christians absorb the experiences of young people, the young people will gain opportunities to experience the spiritual liberty of what Eden stands for. In other words they can see, hear and feel Jesus Christ as he is displayed to them through the ‘Eden people’. It is about identifying with the real lives of young people and allowing the gospel to bring real meaning into their world. This approach to mission also creates trust and consequently Christians involved in Eden are able to live out the second adaptation principle, proposed by William Booth, of ‘gaining their confidence’.

Over the last few years, at Openshaw in particular, many of the young people being reached have developed significant trust in the people with whom they have built strong relationships, to the extent that participating in Christian events has become part of their everyday experience. This is important as Eden has a strong
evangelical vision. Those involved with Eden want to present Christ to the world of young people. As trusting relationships develop, the third of Booth’s principles of adaptation, namely ‘repentance,’ becomes a more realistic possibility. Eden teams seek to implement spiritual change through many different ways. A Christian transformation is a holistic experience — an experience of Christ affects the physical, environmental and social, as well as the spiritual needs of young people. If young people lack financial stability, they can benefit from low-cost opportunities. If they have been abused by past relationships, they can now experience relationships of trust and care. If they have been prevented from fully participating in churches because of cultural prejudice, they are now invited into Eden churches, not only to participate but also to help shape the way they work and function. Ultimately, young people are encouraged to pursue a faith that leads to a spiritually and socially empowering life.

Booth’s final principle of adaptation centres on training people to live out their faith in their world. Eden provides this opportunity for Christians to develop their ministry skills, as well as to empower young people to live effectively within their world. People are the focus of Eden and therefore their God-given role in society is crucial. Every person, every culture and every leader is different in every Eden community. Therefore every Eden finds the most appropriate infrastructure in which people can express their worship and faith, and develop their gifts and talents. Cross-cultural mission of this kind will no doubt run the risk of compromise, but Eden creators have recognised this challenge. Eden prevents itself from going astray and compromising its Christian identity partly through the effective management of a steering group. The group’s function is to look at the bigger picture of mission in Manchester, but it also works in partnership with each host church to provide counsel, guidance, accountability and unity, when and where required. Principally, each Eden is required to live out a holy Christian faith in a culturally relevant way, so that God can meet young people on their ‘home turf’. Any compromise to this will negate what Eden stands for.

EDEN PARTICULARS

So what are the particularities as well as similarities of each Eden location? There is no space to write a detailed account of each Eden at this point. The general picture is that every
Eden has similar approaches to mission and ministry, yet each strives for its own cultural relevancy. Eden Wythenshawe was the first Eden project to be launched.\textsuperscript{18} Hosted by King’s Church, it is concerned to reach one of ‘the largest council estates in Europe with 75,000 residents,’ which has many issues such as crime and drugs abuse.\textsuperscript{19} The larger estates demand a greater work force, which is why Eden Wythenshawe has a much bigger team. It has adopted a variety of measures such as sports activities, cell groups, youth centres, and detached projects in order to build relationships that lead to meaningful spiritual experiences. The use of DJ decks, popular music, and various aspects of street culture and language all play a part in the development of a relevant worshipping community.

Eden Longsight, which is accountable to the South Manchester Family Church, works with a smaller community of five thousand people, but faces a wider multi-cultural mix. As a response, the team have developed youth cafés, cell groups, programmes for asylum seekers and have also adapted the times and format of their Sunday services to reach and work with students from a local school. They are not controlled by the 11am and 6pm congregational format found in many traditional churches: they have to be flexible to fulfil their missionary duties.

Eden Salford, part of the Mount Chapel Church, focuses on a deprived area, which is currently benefiting from a Government Health and Education Action Zone. As a result, this project was the first to establish a ‘LifeCentre’ – a drop-in that specialises in advising, caring, training and providing life and educational opportunities for young people. As a rule they ‘simply find out what the young people are into, and try to adapt accordingly.’ The drop-in centre has provided many opportunities to express the good news of Christ.
Eden Harphurhey, linked to Christchurch, faces many challenges such as crime and social poverty, but the team also say the environment is friendly. There is a distinctive open house trend in their ministry. Homes are used for worship, youth groups and meeting points. This is similar to early Christianity, where Christians often met in groups and homes during those first three to four hundred years after the day of Pentecost. Eden Swinton, under the New Frontiers International Network, has instigated projects to transform the Valley Estate, which so far have had a positive effect upon the crime of the area. Crowds of young people have engaged in large environmental projects to demonstrate that God cares for the community. Although the team have no building of their own, they use a range of facilities to run projects such as homework clubs and drop-in centres. They have had to adopt an extremely flexible programme to suit a fluctuating culture. Three new projects have also recently begun at Failsworth, Hattersley and Oldham.

EDEN AT OPENSHAW

What is particularly relevant in relation to my argument is The Salvation Army’s involvement with Eden. The Salvation Army currently hosts an Eden at Openshaw, which has been running since the year 2000. The Salvation Army’s involvement in Openshaw is not altogether new though, because as far back as 1880, Openshaw was The Salvation Army’s
third corps plant in the Manchester inner-city area. In fact Manchester became a key battleground for The Salvation Army in the 1880s, and according to Glenn Horridge, their war-like tactics had great effect upon the masses of working class people in Manchester. During the mid 1880s, Openshaw held a big children’s ministry programme, made up of 237 ‘little soldiers.’ Though Eden Openshaw celebrates the past, the team recognise the need to develop a strategy relevant to today. In helping with this cause, The Salvation Army institution has not placed any ecclesiastical restrictions on this new venture, as the Openshaw team were given what they term a ‘clean sheet of paper’. This is important because the team believe that the traditional Salvation Army sub-culture is now inappropriate to their context. Though they use a Salvation Army building, for instance, it is not the primary focus of their work. God relates to the young people in a variety of contexts and ways. In fact, their work reflects what John Pearce says all urban churches should reflect – a less ‘congregational’ and ‘cerebral’ and more ‘organic’ approach to ministry. Openshaw is after all the twenty-second ‘poorest and most disadvantaged area’ in the UK. Generally there is a feeling of ‘disempowerment’ – a ‘general air of apathy’ and a feeling of ‘being a prisoner in the area.’

In response to this, the populace of young people have created their own unique cultures to avoid the dreariness of normality and to oppose societal conformity. Many young people want to be, on the one hand, different from society and yet they also show a degree of peer conformity, reflecting the need to belong. Young people in Openshaw have similar dress codes and appearances that show a uniformity of their own, and so Army uniform could infringe upon their own identities. The last thing that young people need is a rigid religiosity that restricts both their own personal creativity and code of belonging. That is why it is imperative to understand what these sub-cultures mean. The team at Openshaw avoid making generalisations about young people’s culture. It is through relationships that Eden workers understand the issues, interests and concerns of young people. The feeling of being marginalized is evident and a Christian experience therefore must include an
experience of love and cultural acceptance.

In response to these issues the Openshaw team have embarked upon a number of programmes that aim to ‘provide a positive Christian presence in the community and to communicate and demonstrate the gospel of Jesus to young people in practical and relevant ways.’ Their methods of reaching young people are broadly similar to other Eden locations. The team live and work within the heart of the community and participate in united missions with other Eden teams. However, their methods are concerned with Openshaw. They work on the streets and parks and organise events, trips and church services that are related to Openshaw. Their worshipping community, although continually evolving, has seen a variety of spiritual encounters and Christian experiences. Many young people have been particularly blessed by encounters with the Holy Spirit and answers to prayers. Though the team are reluctant to formalise and write anything rigidly, they have developed their own membership creed that still requires a high level of spiritual commitment from its members. Ultimately their ministry seeks to go beyond the surface of the community to meet the real issues of the people behind it. Many of the team members are at Openshaw for the long haul. Their mission is incarnational and cross-cultural – not in any particular dress sense, but in the way they live their Christian lives. The principles of their work are based on Christian mission and therefore are neither new nor antiquated.

In this sense, all Edens are similar. They take seriously the need for cross-cultural mission within the communities of urban Manchester. One might argue that replicating Eden in another class context would lose its urban flavour. It is not just what people do and where
they go that makes Eden unique, however, but the way in which people live a public Christian life in meaningful and creative ways. Eden reflects something of the early Army’s Christian Mission, and therefore Hawthorne is right to say that Eden reflects the spirit of the early Army and captures the essence of what Christian mission is all about. Eden Openshaw does provide us with an authentic ‘Salvation Army’, and yet Eden is not exclusive to this denomination alone. The urban context is also an important reminder of where the Army once belonged. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, the issue here is one of how we must do mission, not exclusively about where we should go. In its simplest form, we only have to look towards our own neighbourhood in whatever context, to discover an Eden ministry opportunity. There are many forgotten young people in the UK that The Salvation Army has an obligation to serve, and the principles of Eden recapture the heart and essence of what youth ministry is all about.
More than a few leaders in recent years have sought to change The Salvation Army on a wider scale. So much so that the Roots Conference was created in the mid 1990s, born out of an attempt to challenge Salvationists to adopt a relevant and holy commitment, particularly by reminding them of their spiritual heritage. There is no doubt that the conference has influenced many Salvationists to seek spiritual renewal and reaffirm commitments. The
Hong Kong missionary Jackie Pullinger was invited to speak at the conference in 2002. She challenged Salvationists to look at their roots as a way of reminding them of their duties to care for those on the margins of society. This, in essence, is what she believes Salvation Army roots are all about. Roy Hattersley, though, in his foreword from the Henley Centre’s *The Paradox of Prosperity*, has pointed out that ‘The industrial poor — on whom William Booth founded his Army — are, mercifully, dwindling. Indeed in some ways William Booth’s social dream is coming true.’ However, though there may be less people on the breadline now, many are still marginalized through a range of social ills, such as unemployment, drugs misuse, prostitution, crime, family breakdown, economic instability and social isolation. In light of today’s poverty, Hattersley rightly says that The Salvation Army still ‘has to find a way of both providing its historical help to the disadvantaged and the dispossessed and of reminding the well-to-do majority that they should not live by bread alone.’

Every member of The Salvation Army has a responsibility to live out what it means to be a ‘Salvationist’ in today’s world — as the SS on the uniform epaulettes tells us, soldiers are ‘saved’ to ‘serve’, in whatever era or culture.

Many young people today are excluded from many of life’s opportunities and as a consequence are left feeling hopeless. Salvationists are called to serve young people and develop ministries that move beyond the parameters of traditional programmes. The Task Force’s report *Playing With Fire* states that young Salvationists particularly must be given opportunities to partake in ‘cutting edge, holistic mission’ — to serve the marginalized young on both a national and local level. The Henley Centre recognises a gulf between the young ‘haves’ and the young ‘have-nots’, and they encourage The Salvation Army to train youth workers to develop programmes of social empowerment. This is, in essence, a crucial principle behind the Eden vision, which enables the young ‘haves’ to minister to and empower the young ‘have-nots’. Although it might be a good idea to develop more Edens in the UK, the way forward in youth ministry is to build models that relate to the localised and personal needs of young people. This is, of course, a principle of the Eden vision. It has been said before that ‘the church is the only club that exists for the sake of its non-members.’ If
there is any truth in this at all, non-members will influence the way in which our churches are run. Pete Ward has said that God does not limit his activities to ‘those who attend church’ only. Though unchurched young people may have limited church experience, this does not mean they are not willing and ready to be open to an experience of God, as God is already present within many aspects of their culture.⁶

Youth ministry is therefore about enabling young people, both those inside and outside the church, to discover the gospel’s power within their own world and culture. One could say that the church exists for the sake of young people, as it does for anyone else. To look at how the Army can build a relevant church for today’s youth, this chapter will draw upon four key objectives proposed by the Task Force in their subsequent report, *Firestarter*. The report states that the Army must ‘increase the capacity to deliver dynamic, local youth work initiatives which are relevant and challenging within the context of innumerable dimensions of youth culture.’ To this extent the report emphasises the need to develop the product and image of the Army based upon four key objectives:

It is the aim of Salvation Army youth work to provide every young person with the opportunity:

1. To have access to regular worship in a culturally relevant context
2. To be regularly involved in evangelism
3. To be discipled in a small group community
4. To engage in ongoing social action⁷

To some people these objectives may seem rather prescriptive. To others they may already exist in many of the traditional Salvation Army youth programmes. However, these four key objectives, as we shall see, highlight important principles relevant to any context
including the Eden set-up. They are, in every respect, non-negotiable foundations for any youth ministry programme.

1. CULTURALLY RELEVANT WORSHIP

Andy Hawthorne recognises that the Army bands of the past were clearly the most relevant music of the day, but for many young people today, he says, ‘the tunes just don’t cut it.’ Every musical or cultural form used in the church, even those perceived as extremely antiquated, are derived from specific cultural eras popular in their time. It would be wrong to assume therefore that one musical form is more holy than another. God has always used the cultures of the world as a vehicle to impart his truth, and today’s world poses just as many opportunities to create a culturally relevant church. The only difference is that today’s society is a mix of complex cultural expressions, making the task a much more challenging one for the church. Young people in particular in more recent decades, have had to contend with what psychologists and sociologists recognise as prolonged periods of adolescence. On the one hand they are leaving behind the innocence, and in some cases the dependency, of childhood at increasingly earlier ages, and yet the responsibilities of adulthood are being delayed. In order to deal with this ‘prolonged adolescence’, young people build their own sub-cultures and peer communities. Youth ministry must relate to this adolescent journey and empower young people to worship God without sabotaging their identity. Each local youth ministry must find ways it can not only reach these sub-cultures, but also allow God to use them for his glory — hence the need for culturally relevant worship.

In order to be relevant, though, worship must be built upon relationships. Jesus tells us the greatest command is to love God and also to love one’s neighbour. These two are so interlinked that one without the other is impossible. Therefore relevancy has much to do with how one loves their neighbour and presents God to them in a language and culture they can relate to. I once knew a youth who lived much of his life within a street sub-culture. He had shown a strong desire to attend church regularly, but he never quite made it. One of the reasons for this, he told me, was because the church services he attended failed to speak
in his language and rarely, if ever, used his musical styles in worship. For him the message was attractive but the presentation of that message was often a big turn-off.

Eden, as we have seen, is about relationships that lead to meaningful worship. It is centred on God and people and not upon a pre-packaged product. God is always concerned first with people and their needs. Generally speaking, people come to faith through relationships, not foremost through religious activities. It is through relationships that youth ministry can create forms of worship relevant to the people. The heart of worship begins with relationships, and therefore to love God requires one to love their neighbour. To impose both an outdated or even a contemporary form upon a young person’s spirituality is far from being anywhere near the heart of worship. As Sally Morgenthaler says, cultural relevancy in worship is foremost about ‘God’s unmistakable presence’ and his ‘unconditional love and acceptance.’ There needs to be a realness of relationships, she says, because ‘if we are not real, we are irrelevant already.’ Worship is about losing oneself in God, and at times it will also require us losing our own preferences for the sake and interests of others.

Some might argue, though, that to be too mindful of relevancy can destroy the mystery and sanctity of worship. Being too relevant may compromise faith and worship, but it is also true that religious conformity can do the same. God allows our experience of him to relate to the very world we find ourselves in, and therefore, aspects of culture and creation become servants to Him. No form of worship is indispensable to God and therefore to the church, and God is not more in favour of one than another. As Louis Luzbetak says, ‘God, who created humans as cultural beings and who is Father of All, is as a rule not particularly concerned about form or expression, whether verbal or non-verbal; his concern . . . is the “heart,” the meaning, the whys.’ Worship may include contemporary items and mediums such as multi-media presentations and hi-tech music mixes, but if the meaning behind it is self-glorification, then it loses its value. Equally, more traditional uses of liturgy such as hymns and recited prayers may be genuine spiritual acts for many, but if they become an end in themselves and prevent Christians
from relating to their neighbouring world, then they lack the worship of love — as the Apostle Paul says, they become no more than a ‘clanging gong.’

Culturally relevant worship, whether through new or old forms, must enable young people who are being evangelised and discipled to meet God without any religious pretence or restrained conformity. This will indeed call for Christians to be innovative with their worship services. Is not God able, as he did in the early Army, to make use of the cultural sounds and forms that are part of the society amongst even the most pagan of people? God can use every culture, including that of young people, as part of his universal agenda of salvation and redemption.

2. REGULAR EVANGELISM

The temptation with any innovative ministry is to build a relevant church before we do the necessary missionary work. One could say we tend to put the cart before the horse. From my experience, many youth workers especially fall into the trap of planning and building fantastic programmes before they actually do the necessary work of evangelism. What they have created, although it seems contemporary, actually becomes irrelevant because relationships with the unreached have not been firmly established. The emphasis from the Task Force is to provide ‘every young person with the opportunity to be regularly involved in evangelism.’ Therefore Christian young people are part of a venture not to build a church for themselves but also ‘for the sake of non-members.’ Though it is important that all Salvation Army corps allow culturally relevant forms of worship to take place for Christian youth, what they must consider also is whether they are accessible to those outside the church; to their friends, family and youth from the local community. As we saw with those involved with Eden, evangelism is fundamental to their work. As young Christians cross the cultural divide they can begin to find ways to create relevant forms of Christian worship.

Evangelism is fundamental to youth ministry. Without the focus on reaching people, we will have no future church, let alone any youth work. It is an essential pursuit that takes much thought and prayer. God provides us with the power to communicate Christ’s message of love and salvation to people. It is not about selling a religious product, or about marketing the latest brand of Christianity. Though it is true marketing techniques were part of The Salvation Army’s evangelistic methods in the nineteenth century, they
were to help Christians focus upon the real, and not the perceived needs of the people. Our evangelism to young people may employ all kinds of tactics but they must only be used to help us communicate with young people. We are always faced with the danger of placing more value in the religious product than on the people. Geoff Ryan acknowledges the challenges of adopting contemporary methods that are equally as imposing as the old ones. He says that many of the things we adopted from our roots ‘were empire-based: militarism, uniforms, brass bands, governmental and central command structures.’ As a result the Army mission became very prescriptive and formulaic, set out ‘in manuals and Orders and Regulations.’ However, in our attempt to adapt to the modern world, Ryan warns us that we may be fashioned by a new ‘imperialism’, a type of ‘McArmy’ approach to ministry – a ministry built on modern business practices that have a homogenous approach without being sensitive to their contexts. If our evangelism is only preoccupied with the product, whether new or old, we may fail to realise God’s agenda and the real needs of people. We must ask first, whom are we reaching, and who is this God who can do immeasurably more than we could ask for or imagine? Therefore we must not be limited by contemporary models, nor those from the Army’s past.

Studying the writings of Charles Townshend may encourage us to think about whether the metaphor of war is also appropriate for our evangelism today. This war historian infers that in today’s ‘postmodern’ world, we have seen the arrival of ‘subconventional’ wars. Contemporary wars, he says, ‘take place in extremely complicated environments’ which conventional methods are no longer able to deal with. The old conventional wars with large
armies and universal strategies are no longer able to deal with the multiple complexities of global societies.\textsuperscript{17} The conventional metaphor of war is becoming less applicable to Salvation Army youth ministry in this postmodern era. We may need to take heed of changing military formats, recognising that the war metaphor, though it has its usefulness in explaining spiritual commitment, is not always the best metaphor for youth evangelism today. All organisations must assess to what extent their conventional methods relate to the real issues of people in their environments. John Friedman, who studies social development, says that centralised bureaucracies and empires are drawing to a close. Strategies for developing communities are being replaced by more flexible ways of working with people – an approach that operates from below rather than from above.\textsuperscript{18} The Salvation Army must focus primarily on people and their cultures rather than on the maintenance and development of its own establishment. Youth evangelism must take place within young people’s culture and be guided not by central commands, but by God’s unique agenda for specific people and sub-cultures.

3. SMALL GROUP COMMUNITY

The third objective proposed by the Task Force is the discipleship of young people within small group communities. Working in small groups has not only been an important feature of youth work in general, but of Christian ministry \textit{per se}. The early church met together in close-knit communities, without the structures that we have become so familiar with. Christianity is expressed through close relationships and community, and small groups create an important framework for these things to happen. People can feel lost in the larger congregations and conversely are starved of community experiences when detached from them. The small group rectifies both these two extremes. A small group provides young people with a sense of belonging within the close-knit community, amongst peers with similar needs and interests. Small groups also facilitate an environment for effective communication because they, by their very nature, allow people to converse on a ‘ground’ level. Small groups also enable a youth pastor not only to tend to the needs of young people but also to find genuine ways for youth to participate in ministry opportunities.

Though small groups have always been part of evangelical Christianity, churches have tended to place greater importance upon the larger Sunday congregation. However, the
development of ‘cell church’ in more recent times has highlighted the importance of small group community without losing the essence of congregational unity. The organisation CellUK states that ‘cell church is based on the belief that the New Testament church was balanced between corporate community and cell community: between a large group expression and a small group expression.’ It functions by making the groups not just a place to belong, but also a place whereby members can discover their gifts and use them in the service of God within the world. To use the four W’s framework of CellUK, it is a place where people can feel Welcome, where Worship can occur, the Word of God is communicated, and where the Witness of the gospel can be subsequently expressed. The Task Force report Playing with Fire reveals the importance of cell groups as a fundamental tool for encouraging spiritual growth within youth ministry. Each cell group allows young people to be engaged in effective discipleship and evangelism in a way unique to the particular group culture. Howard Austin says that although it is dangerous just to adopt the ‘latest trends’, he believes that cell church has led to a more community-orientated witness of the gospel. Eden projects have used the concept of cell as an evangelistic bridge to the clusters of sub-cultures that exist within the communities of youth. Each youth sub-culture can, in effect, become a type of cell group that operates to empower young people towards faith development regardless of whether they attend church or not. Cell ministry therefore provides creative ways to engage with young people on both a practical and spiritual level.
Small groups, whether cell groups, Alpha groups or house groups, must have meaningful communication to the unreached world — they are not an end in themselves. Phil Needham says we need to adopt ‘task orientated missionary groups’ within the church congregation. These groups focus upon ‘styles’, ‘concerns’, and ‘needs’ of the people in the community. They relate to the cultural setting of the people we seek to reach and work with. Needham is right to promote such an enterprise in the face of a multicultural world. The nature of any ministry group must have some missionary impetus and avoid being a safe haven of religious comfort. In the context of youth ministry, small groups are about allowing discipleship to take place in an environment that is not separated from the real world and sub-cultures of young people. Whatever way they are branded, these groups provide young people with a context to relate to God, to each other and to the world. This is far more important than getting young people to participate in traditional church congregations. The small group is the place where one can be evangelised and discipled, and also explore and share in meaningful acts of worship and church experiences.

4. SOCIAL ACTION
The fourth objective proposed by the Task Force is for ongoing social action to occur within youth ministry. This was at the heart of William and Catherine Booth’s spiritual and evangelistic agenda – a Christian cause that would impact a broken society. The Salvation Army today continues to run a variety of social programmes such as helping the homeless, supporting the elderly, prison visiting services and family tracing programmes. These are obvious signs of positive Salvation Army ministry. However, social action must be central within the infrastructure of youth ministry also allowing Christians, young and old, to engage meaningfully with socially excluded young people in the UK. Social action must be professional but at the same time it must not lose the personal and relational touch. Jackie Pullinger says that the ‘personal’ has been lost from social care in many Christian projects today, even though it was fundamental to the gospel. The Good Samaritan story as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, she notes, demonstrates the personal touch of social action. Despite being disowned by the Jewish community, the Samaritan became personally involved in helping a wounded Jew. He gave of his time, money and resources as he helped this victim who was abandoned by his own people. The Samaritan took responsibility for caring for this person rather than relying only on someone else.24

Jesus demonstrated the personal touch of social action. He befriended the lonely, healed the sick, encouraged the disillusioned, fed the hungry and experienced and absorbed people’s very brokenness. Jesus was an incarnation of humanity in the perfect sense. He not only literally became human flesh, he became one with the people he sought to love. As the writer to the Philippians stresses, though Jesus possessed the full nature of God, he took up his cross to become a servant of men and women, even to death.25 He shared and identified with people’s weaknesses and struggles. To work with young people on the margins of society means to be ‘clothed’ in their cultural experience without losing the light of God in us. This is what makes Eden such a positive force for evangelistic social action. Eden shows that social action is not a programme but a lifestyle – one that demands a cross-cultural experience of incarnation and relationship building. Thus true spiritual and social liberation will only occur when Salvation Army youth ministry takes up its cross and becomes incarnate within the worlds and sub-cultures of young people. Social action may entail many forms of charity and social care but it must never lose the essence of loving one’s neighbour. Incarnational youth ministry reflects true social action because it expresses God’s
tangible love to young people – the body of Christ on young people’s earth.

SUMMARISING

The Salvation Army *Orders and Regulations* states the need to recruit soldiers for the universal Army. However, what we have seen is that evangelism and discipleship to young people is first and foremost about going – reaching people of a culture rather than people joining an establishment. Though God is the prime mover of mission, the scriptures reveal that his people are responsible for bringing the good news to others. The Army institutions, in the form of headquarters, corps or other branch departments, may have at their disposal a congregation of ‘soldiers’, but the context for kingdom growth begins within the sub-cultures in which people reside. This is the world in which the soldiers are commanded to go, to love and minister to the many broken lives. Therefore the cost for soldiers is not in the dressing up, or being different, but rather in the going, adapting and being a missionary church for a diversity of cultures and personalities. It is out of this going that we become something more relevant and yet, as the early Salvation Army shows us, more remarkably like Christ. This is important because we are his body on earth.

It is difficult to define in exact words the critical way forward for Salvation Army youth ministry. However, as this chapter has affirmed, there is a need to refocus the work away from pre-packaged and centrally delivered programmes and onto people and local communities. As youth ministry works towards culturally relevant worship, regular evangelism, small, group discipleship and radical social action, it becomes a relevant force of hope and liberation for young people. As the institution invests in its leaders and workers towards making this happen, young people become the benefactors of a relevant Salvation Army youth ministry.
This study has sought to demonstrate the importance of cross-cultural mission, which will inevitably lead to changing the way we present church to young people. It is important not only because of numerical decline but also due to the widening cultural gap between the Army and youth sub-cultures. More importantly still is to revisit the principles upon which the Army was originally built. Ultimately, though, we need to look more closely at a relevant work for the future.

The Army today is still highly recognised, particularly for its social work, but the path of self-preservation has at times negated its true mission. We have seen from the past that Christian Mission was the essential theme, and therefore being adaptable was crucial to the ongoing work. Eden has shown both a way back and, more importantly, a way forward to the future. Though its practice has its own style and particular features, the vision and spirit of Eden can be universally embraced in a range of contexts.

The Task Force has worked on important key proposals that provide important goals for ongoing ministry. However, it could be all too easy to replace one form with another without giving any prayerful and intelligent thought to the situation we find ourselves in. Change can lead to unnecessary compromises but the way to overcome this is to enable incarnation
to be at the heart of Christian mission and youth ministry. Eden is a heavily resourced project, but its uncomplicated approach to working with people makes it transferable to all places and contexts. Salvation Army youth ministry must never attempt just to replicate trends and methods, but it must enable people who ‘have’ been socially and spiritually equipped, to engage with those who ‘have-not’. Youth ministry in its simplest form is not about a ‘war’, or ‘product’ or even a ‘programme’, but about relationships in a particular context, where God reaches out to esteem and redeem young people.
REFERENCES AND NOTES FROM INTRODUCTION

2 Ibid. p.24.
4 The concept of postmodernism is never easy to explain, assuming it is possible to explain it at all. In this context it particularly relates to the idea that today’s society in general no longer accepts universal beliefs and practices. We no longer live in the ‘modern’ world – a world that supposedly ‘came of age’ when scientific knowledge, rational thinking and social homogenisation began to influence the way people lived their lives. Today, some sociologists insist, the world is more transient, fragmented, multicultural and individualistic. Hence, people cannot be ‘boxed’ into a particular mould.
5 Matthew 10.22.
6 Matthew 9:11.
7 Matthew 5:14.
8 1 Corinthians 9:22.

REFERENCES AND NOTES FROM CHAPTER ONE

9 Literary Department, *All you ever wanted to know about The Salvation Army*, (London: Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters) pp.7-8.

11 Ibid. Front Cover.


14 Ibid. p.74.


20 Ibid. pp. 89-90.

21 Ibid. p.6.

22 Ibid. p.91.


24 Ibid. p.25.


REFERENCES AND NOTES FROM CHAPTER TWO

54 Ibid. p.3.
56 Ibid. pp.1,2.
57 Ibid. p.71.
REFERENCES AND NOTES FROM CHAPTER THREE

78 Pullinger, J., All Dug Up, (Southport Salvation Army Roots Conference, 5th May 2002).
80 Ibid. p.5.
81 Ibid. p.4.
85 1 John 4: 20.
86 Matthew 19:19.
88 Philippians 2: 4.
90 1 Corinthians 13:1.
93 Ephesians 3:20.
95 Ibid. p.33.
96 http://www.celluk.org.uk/whatiscell.html.
102 Philippians 2:6-8.
“Mark Gadsden has been one of the pioneers of Salvation Army youth work for the 21st Century. Mark’s work provides an insight into a glorious past, a stark challenge for our present and great hope for God’s future. He clearly articulates our prayer for a Salvation Army in a new generation.”

RUSSELL ROOK  
Director for Youth Ministry, The Salvation Army

“New Model Army is an important contribution to the literature on youth ministry. I hope people inside and outside The Salvation Army will read it.”

DR PETE WARD  
Lecturer in Youth Ministry and Theological Education, Kings College

Mark Gadsden became a Christian in 1987 and since then has always had a passion to bring the Gospel to young people outside of the church. As a Salvationist at Raynes Park, he became a full time youth worker and worked with a team of committed Christians to serve and minister to the local community. He has recently finished an MA in Youth Ministry and Theological Education and lives with his wife and daughter in the community of Harold Hill, Essex. He continues to serve God, working with young people, and is currently employed by the Youth Service in Havering.