There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal, 3:28).

The development of the Salvation Army Rescue Network and its utilisation by Irish women in the nineteenth century form the subject of this essay. Since the Salvation Army considers the British Isles as one complete Salvationist Territory and, prior to this research, no real separation of Irish and British data existed, I will begin with an outline of the origins and development of the Army Rescue Network in the British Isles Territory, commencing in London, and the subsequent development into Ireland. Once a woman made contact with the Salvation Army and requested help, she became part of this rescue network.

This research provides the first study of Irish women who utilised the Salvation Army Rescue Network throughout the British Isles Territory during the nineteenth century. The sample of 233 Irish women was obtained from unpublished Salvation Army Receiving House Statements and Rescue Home records.¹ (See Table 1) Documentary research was also carried out on the Annual Reports of

¹ Five record books from the London 'Lanark House' register, 1886–1892, were the primary sources for this research. Information on all women giving an Irish birthplace was extracted and analysed. (During the course of my research it became apparent that this Salvation Army register was incorrectly labelled as 'Lanark House', because 'Lanark House' did not become Salvation Army property until after the period, 1886–1892.) The records in the so-called 'Lanark House' register refer to three Salvation Army Rescue Homes: the Chelsea Rescue Home until October 1886; subsequently for the Dalston No. III Rescue Home, at 44 Navarino Road; and afterwards the London No. III Rescue Home, at 183 Amhurst Road, Hackney (The Deliverer, June 1896, pp. 185–7). The other record books were, London Book I, Final Reports, 1886–88; London Book II, Final Reports, 1887–1890; Country Book I, Final Reports, 1887–1890; and Country Book II, Final Reports, 1890–1892. The London records deal specifically with the London Receiving Homes while the Country records deal with the Houses in the rest of the Army's British Isles Territory. It should be noted that there are changes in the information requested on the official forms and in the information given by the Salvation Army over time, so the amount of information available on each Irish woman was not always consistently recorded.
the Salvation Army between 1886 and 1900, and on various Salvationist journals and published works. The Annual Reports, although not acceptable as objective historical statements, nevertheless serve to pin-point certain events, offer evidence of the Army’s public progress and provide the basis for further exploration of its methods and mission. Furthermore, they provide valuable, collaborative background information to the hand-written reports of these women’s lives. They are also a valuable resource tool in providing a list of the Receiving Homes and Rescue Houses and their uses. Finding information about the early work of the Salvation Army in Ireland proved more difficult. Every Corps was required to record the main events locally, in what is called the Corps History Book, but because of the absence of a central collection or archive, many have been lost over time; this is similarly the case in Ireland. No specific history of the Salvation Army in Ireland has been written to date. While the scope of this paper does not lend itself to an in-depth examination of the work of the Salvation Army in Ireland, I hope it may stimulate interest and further research.

'It is easy to see the importance of history to feminism', Mary Cullen has observed, 'and why a feminist historical perspective begins with a search for the

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2 R.G. Moyles, *A Bibliography of Salvation Army Literature in English 1865–1987* (New York/Canada, 1988) is an invaluable source both for Salvationist publications and anti-Army critiques. In the section entitled ‘The Salvation Army Throughout The World’, bibliographies are subdivided by territory. Although there are two Salvationist entries for Scotland and one for Wales (p. 28), Moyles does not mention Ireland.  

3 For information regarding the Army’s activities in Dublin, see Sr Katherine Butler, R.S.C., ‘Dublin’s Hallelujah Lassies’ in *Dublin Historical Record*, xlii (1989), pp. 128–46.
historical identity of women.' This study endeavours to portray the 'historical identity' of the Irish women involved in the Salvation Army rescue network in Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century. In the course of my work, it became apparent that much of the Salvationist and general literature, as well as some of the present-day feminist literature available on rescue work, assumes that all rescued women were 'prostitutes', without always challenging the language that defined them as such. 'Rescue work' was associated in the nineteenth century with 'prostitution' and with 'unmarried mothers'; the language used about these women is often specific and damning. 'Fallen' women were those who had 'fallen' from the virginal or maternal high altar of respectability into the murky underbelly of a society which operated on a 'double standard'. The use of such terms to describe women is a significant illustration of nineteenth-century social and cultural constructs.

Against the backdrop of the decades of reform and colonial expansion in nineteenth-century Britain, the Salvation Army marched to its particular War. Popular papers reported the sensational finds and victories of the time, emigration to the far flung corners of the exotic empire was encouraged, and the battle against 'foreign control' had begun. In their study of the development of the English middle class, Davidoff and Hall argue that the 'powerful combination of religious, commercial and scientific ideologies' appealed to 'people carving out a destiny'; these images were in turn enhanced by 'the glory of war ... although the seriously religious, committed to Christ's Army, were uneasy in its unqualified celebration'. The Salvation Army was thus, to some extent, a product of its time, exciting, expansionist, and sensational.

The state of the churches in Britain was the first battlefield into which this Army marched. William and Catherine Booth's avowed mission was to the 'churchless' working classes. By the first half of the nineteenth century, it was clear in Britain that abstinence from religious worship was commonest amongst the working classes, the landless poor. A common practice of the time was to rent pews, with the further exclusion of the working classes because of lack of suitable

dress as they sat in the few available free seats at the back or in the corner of the church. The repeal of anti-Catholic/Dissenter legislation from the mid 1770s, culminating in the granting of Catholic emancipation in 1829, significantly altered the religious balance of power. However it was not until the 1860s that it became clear that the Anglican church could never hope to re-instate itself as the national church. The period then was one of increasing secularism. Continental free-thought was invading England and advances in science contributed to growing scepticism. Protectionism versus free trade, and the notion of linking colonialism with employment were attractive ideas to many people and carried weight at a time when there was considerable concern in Britain about what was called ‘the social problem’ — a generic term for the desperate condition of London’s poor, when strikes and riots and outrages were frightening the middle classes and colonies appeared one very obvious way to relieve poverty.

Catherine and William Booth, both dissident Methodists, were appalled by the misery of London’s slum-dwellers. They were determined to ‘wage war’ on behalf of the ‘submerged tenth’ of English society. The Salvation Army was successful and popular partly because of its military style. By the end of the nineteenth century, it had achieved the reputation of being one of England’s leading social reform agencies and had extended its work world-wide. Public notoriety and controversy, through the Booths’ social and political activities, also ensured the Army’s success. In particular, its well-known social services developed as a natural result of Catherine and William Booth’s belief that it was a waste of time to preach to a ‘congregation’ who were cold and hungry.

The East London Revival Society, led by William Booth and later called the East London Christian Mission, was the forerunner of the Salvation Army and one of the several organisations of the time combining some social service with religion. The Religious Worship Act of 1855 allowed the use of secular buildings for religious services, so now large crowds could be attracted to local halls, tents

9 William Booth had been associated with the Wesleyans, the Reformers and the Methodist New Connexion. He was expelled from the Wesleyans in 1851, and became a minister for the Reformers in 1851–54. He joined the New Connexion in 1854 and resigned in 1861 when he was refused permission to be a travelling evangelist. He then worked as a free-lance evangelist until he became a missioner of the Christian Revival Society from 1865, which became the East London Christian Mission in 1867. Catherine Booth preached publicly for the first time in Gateshead in 1860.
10 William Booth, In Darkest England and the Way Out (London, 1890), pp. 21–3. Using Charles Booth’s recent survey of four London boroughs, Life and Labour of the People of London (London, 1889), as his guide, William estimated that one in ten of the population of the country was living in destitution, i.e. ‘the submerged tenth’. William’s calculations may be open to criticism, as he estimated the probable destitute population for the whole of London and then the rest of the country. William also referred to other authorities, taking a moderate figure from their opinions and calculations. See also Christine Ward, ‘Social Sources’, p. 192; Kathleen Woodroofe, From Charity Work to Social Work (London, 1962).
and theatres. The inception of the Army took place in 1878 when William, already aware of how difficult it was to make decisions by committee, was perusing the *Annual Mission Report* entitled *A Volunteer Army*. Conscious of the poor reputation of the volunteer forces of the day, he replaced the word ‘volunteer’ and brought the ‘Salvation Army’ into being with a stroke of his pen. He became the first General of that Army and remained so for the next thirty-four years, until 1912, when he was succeeded by his son Bramwell, later deposed in 1929. Evangeline Booth, William’s daughter, initially commanded a large London Corps, then was Commander of the United States Territory, and later became General of the Army, like her father and brother before her, from 1934 to 1939. A member of the Booth family was thus at the helm during the formative years of the Army. World-wide Territorial decisions and ideology were formulated in the London Headquarters and were directly influenced for many years by Bramwell who effectively ran the Army from 1881 as Chief of Staff and by his wife, Florence Booth, who developed women’s social work.

Catherine Mumford Booth is described by W.T. Stead, the well known editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, as ‘the prophetess of the new movement’ who ‘saw it afar off’: ‘She was glad she was a socialist of the heart, full of passionate sympathy with the poor and the oppressed of every land and clime; full too, of fierce indignation against all who did them wrong.’ Stead goes on to say that the distinct beliefs and ethos and enduring work of the Salvation Army were due more to Catherine than to any other human being’. During Catherine and William’s courtship, William had suggested to Catherine that man ‘was her superior in regard to intellect’. Catherine replied in Wollstonecraftian terms, arguing that ‘woman is, in consequence of her inadequate education, generally inferior to man intellectually, I admit. But that she is naturally so, as your remarks seem to imply, I see no cause to believe’.

The courtship survived as William admitted equality and they subsequently had eight children who from an early age were all involved in the expansion of the Salvation Army. From then it became an essential element of their creed that in Christ there is ‘neither female nor male’ and ‘that the gospel combined with nature to place both on a footing of absolute mental and spiritual equality’. This fundamental acceptance of the importance of women’s equality with male colleagues was demonstrated by the Army’s deliberate decision to exclude communion and have women lead the Meetings. Unfortunately this equality did not extend into comparative salaries until the twentieth century.

As early as 1865, Catherine Booth was aware that there were women ‘ready to perish’ for a variety of reasons, and that they ‘would willing enter a home if one were available’. Florence, her daughter-in-law, visited other rescue homes in order to educate herself as she strove to develop an ethos for the Army’s Rescue Homes. She was horrified by what she found:
Women were kept in these places for one, two and even three years, and if they failed to run well, were never given a second chance. Bolts and bars, bare, dismal rooms, high walls, no occupation but that of laundry work, seemed to explain this discouragement. I could not imagine myself becoming any better for a long stay in similar circumstances.\textsuperscript{15}

Catherine and Florence clearly understood 'that what these woman most needed was a real home, for they were homeless, and that they needed support in their first efforts to earn their own living and return to respectable society'.\textsuperscript{16} It was their genuine belief as 'Salvationists'\textsuperscript{17} that they were equal as sinners with those they were rescuing; this was the real strength behind the development of this early rescue work.

The Army's Women's Social Services evolved out of the practice of individual Salvationists, around the world, taking 'penitent'\textsuperscript{18} 'fallen' women into their homes. On 22 May 1884, the Hanbury Street Women's Refuge opened in London's Whitechapel district. This was the official start of the Salvation Army women's social work. Sewing and washing paid the rent and fed the women and, within months of opening the Refuge in Hanbury Street, the demand for places was overwhelming. From the beginning the provision of suitable employment and lodgings for women alone, without friends or family in the city or towns, was a very important feature in the development of the Salvationist social services.

Florence Bramwell Booth was put in charge of the new Refuge and, assisted by Adelaide Cox, expanded the Army’s rescue work to 117 homes in Britain during the next thirty years, thus earning the Army the reputation of being one of the largest, most effective, and, to some extent, most innovative rescue organisations in Britain and world-wide. Florence encountered daily the prevalent ‘double standard’ when she heard from young girls, just in their teens, ‘the stories of their destruction’ and wrote of her horror on discovering that if they were thirteen years of age, or if there were reason to believe they had reached that age, the men who destroyed them could not be punished; that for these outcast women there seemed left no place of repentance on earth, and the majority, even if they wished to return, were cast out of their homes and no one would give them employment; I felt this was a mystery of iniquity indeed.\textsuperscript{19}

In 1884 General Booth outlined a scheme for rescue work which included three target classes: prostitutes, young girls in danger of falling into sin, and 'girls who have been ruined and forsaken but who are opposed to leading an immoral life'.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Sunday Circle, 18 March 1923. \textsuperscript{16} Ibid. \textsuperscript{17} 'Salvationist' is a term used for work done or published by a member of the Army which expresses the ethos of the organisation; this term is still used today. \textsuperscript{18} Those who came to the Penitent Form (a stool or a bench) at the Army Meetings and made a public declaration to change their lives. \textsuperscript{19} Deliverer, July 1904, p. 2. \textsuperscript{20} All the World, iv (1888), pp. 64–8.
The latter clearly included unmarried mothers, who were often described as having taken only the first step on the ‘downward path’. But it was Florence again who was probably responsible for the Army’s entrance into a relatively new area of rescue work, caring for pregnant single women, and women with illegitimate infants. The ‘double difficulty’ of being both a ‘fallen woman’ and a mother shaped the direction of the Army’s social work in this area as very few other rescue homes allowed a mother to bring her child with her.

Thus Ivy House in England was established in 1890 for ‘girls who previous to their fall, have led respectable lives, and who have been betrayed by the so-called men to whom they have been engaged and whom they loved not wisely, but too well’.21 Such was the situation of Sarah, an Irish born woman who, according to one Salvation Army House’s Receiving Statement, ‘whilst in our situation became engaged to a young man, a member of the Brethren, who seduced her, and then went to America. Sarah was with us until just before her baby’s birth, returned to the House with her baby when well enough, and until she met with work. She is doing well and brings the child to see us sometimes. Sundays she always spends with us’.22 Sarah clearly represented one of the group of whom Florence Booth stated ‘no class of women for whom we have worked has yielded such uniformly encouraging results’.23 The high success rate claimed by the Salvation Army was not that surprising, considering the lack of alternatives for unmarried pregnant women. Loss of respectability, homelessness and unemployment, aligned with pregnancy and responsibility for the child, obviously limited their options and made them more obviously dependent on charitable assistance than other ‘fallen’ women. Because they were mothers and had therefore reached the pinnacle of Victorian society, by ‘foul’ means rather than fair, they were at the zenith of ‘fallen’ women – if one accepts a hierarchical structure operated in the rescuing of these women – once they chose to enter the rescue network.

The Women’s Social Services, graphically described as the ‘Cellar, Gutter and Garret Brigade’, responded to the changing needs of those they were rescuing. Slum work began in 1884, and developed into small social care agencies ministering directly to the needs of the poor in their own neighbourhood. Other Salvationist facilities used by Irish women were the shelters and metropoles,24 ‘eventide’ and servants’ homes, maternity hospitals, district nursing, alcoholic rehabilitation, crèches, adoption homes and children’s homes, a help and enquiry department and servant registries.

As Table 1 illustrates, the Salvation Army unpublished records for the British Isles Territory show twenty-nine Irish women staying in the London Army Houses and two hundred and fourteen outside London, i.e. in the rest of the British Isles Salvation Army Territory, between 1886 and 1892. Where information

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is recorded by the Army, seventy-two Irish women stated Ulster, with forty-one specifying Belfast, as their point of entry to the rescue network and a further thirty-eight women originally entered through the Dublin rescue network. Sixteen entered in London, and a further twenty-two entered from England, Wales and Scotland. It is clear from the Army records that once a woman entered the rescue network, she could be sent anywhere within the British Isles Territory, dependent on her needs as assessed by the Army.

II

Ireland - a land heretofore all uninvaded - by methods of evangelisation so downright and outspoken as ours. Just as well, perhaps, that simple women, utterly ignorant of all the countless political and religious complications of the country, pioneered it! 25

Women were continually involved as leading missionaries and administrators for the developing Salvation Army programmes. Salvationist women raised and administered the necessary funds for the Women's Social Services which operated independently from the rest of the Army. Women were also involved in the evangelical revival that spread across the Army's British Isles Territory. Caroline Reynolds was one of those women who, according to the War Cry of 4 September 1886, joined what was known as 'The Female Band' - a company of Whitechapel soldiers who went about to different parts of London and caused 'a great sensation in London'. 26 It was Caroline Reynolds who undertook the 'invasion' of Ireland, arriving in 1880; in the next twenty-eight months she opened sixteen stations, beginning in Belfast and Derry. By 31 May 1888, when the first Corps in Dublin was set up in South Richmond Street, there were twenty-eight Corps already established in Ulster. Although Ireland was part of the British empire, local customs and beliefs were different, to say the least, and unfortunately the Salvationists were not well prepared. As Captain Reynolds woefully remarked in 1886:

No one will ever know what we went through. The Army colours given for Ireland had a green corner with the harp and no crown. We did not know that this was treason. Then we had orange hymn books. The Orangemen gloried in that, and the Catholics were wild at it! There were always crowds of Roman Catholics in our open-air meetings. They won't stand songs about fighting, but anything about the Cross or the Blood they will listen to. 27

Once Belfast was better established, Major Reynolds moved on to Derry where, as was the norm in establishing Corps elsewhere, she initially faced strong opposition, with five days of riots. On their first afternoon there, they had no people

25 War Cry, 4 September 1886, p. 4. 26 Ibid. 27 Ibid.
to join in the hymns and she tells how they had ‘only sung one verse when young men came running from all sides – regular Fenians! I thought, here’s a beautiful lot of people to get saved!’

Undaunted the Salvationists held a meeting, and afterwards the police escorted them to a safe house. Despite the local difficulties, by the time the General visited Belfast in October 1886, 10,000 people were present at the meeting. Two years later, Catherine Booth saw 1,500 soldiers on the march.

In 1887, ‘The Irish Rescue Home’ was situated in 63 Great George Street, in Belfast described as ‘a locality in which abound the class of girls we are seeking to save’. In order to off-set the expenses incurred by the rescue home, the Salvationists, as was common with other homes, began to take in some work. In Belfast this was ‘the top-sewing of linen and handkerchiefs for one manufacturer, and the finishing of shirts for another’. Fulton’s warerooms and laundry, located in Fountaine Street, provided the home with sewing and also provided employment to three of the women when they left the rescue home. The poverty of the women is clear from the Salvationists’ request for cast-off clothing for the girls to wear as ‘most of the girls came in barefooted, with a shawl over their heads’. Major Adelaide Cox tells us that by 1889

Two hundred and fifty-five cases had been admitted into the [Belfast] Home, a large proportion of which have been successfully dealt with, many have been sent into situations, and others – long-lost daughters – have been taken home to their parents.

Opposition to the newly formed Salvation Army came in many forms in the nineteenth century, both in Ireland and England. The 1880s was a period of particular physical violence towards the Army throughout Britain, especially from a group of thugs called ‘the Skeleton Army’; this group also threatened the newly formed Church Army and moral reformers such as Josephine Butler. Vicious attacks on the Army’s processions were not confined to the adult soldiers. The War Cry, 5 January 1882, states that by that time twenty-three children had been injured in various ‘battles’. Some people were killed in these attacks, among them women and children. Salvationists themselves were jailed for a variety of reasons during this time, including preaching by women and, even, disorderly conduct. As was common world-wide, these early Salvationists were attacked physically and verbally, with what ever came to hand, and so it was in Dublin. A 1901 edition of the War Cry describes Dublin as a city ‘whose women are said to be treated with a courtesy unsurpassed in any other part of the world – strange to say, the sight of a woman wearing an Army bonnet in the streets acts upon the crowd like a red rag to an infuriated bull’.

28 Ibid. 29 Final Reports of the Salvation Army Receiving House Statements, Country Book I, 1887–1890. 30 War Cry, 26 February 1887, p. 6. 31 Deliverer, 15 September 1889, p. 27. 32 War Cry, 13 July 1901, p. 12.
In the case of Ireland, both in Derry and in Dublin, their respectability was not doubted, just the Army’s ‘corybantic religion’. Belfast, on the other hand, welcomed the sight of these ‘respectable warriors’. Ireland in the nineteenth century became polarised between Catholics and Protestants through religious consolidation, socio-economic, political and regional separation. Evangelicals were anathema to the re-establishing Catholic Church. So to the majority of Catholics in Ireland the Salvation Army may have symbolised the oppressor, the British Protestant proselytising overlord. However, that did not stop some Catholic and other religious groups recognising the innate goodness and equality that the Army espoused. The strength of opposition to the Army in Dublin was fuelled no doubt by fear and ignorance as to the real nature of their work, at a time when the Catholic church was trying to establish its own charities and warning against proselytism. Catholics appeared frightened that their children would be ‘captured in the war for souls’, a ‘battle’ well-established in Ireland before the Salvation Army entered the fray.

The Army in contrast described themselves in the following words:

We have no politics, and therefore cannot enter into discussion or arouse enmity on that point. We do not contend with other religious bodies or attack their creeds. We are not a sect, but an Army of peace, whose one duty is to preach the full, free, uttermost salvation of Jesus Christ to the souls of the people and to care for their bodies. We are aggressive against the devil and sin in all shapes and garbs, and that aggression should appeal to the militant spirit of the Irish. We are full of fire and life, so are they. Our religion is plain, practical, happy and bubbling over with songs.

However, some ranks in Dublin were unable to wear their uniforms in public. One woman was advised not to wear her bonnet publicly by the Captain. ‘Not a bit of it’ replied the girl, staunchly, as the War Cry of 13 July 1901 reported: ‘I have always worn my bonnet and I shall continue to do so. I am not going back on my principle.’ This principled soldier was followed on her first Saturday night in Dublin by a howling crowd of men, women and children ... until she reached the door of her mistress’s house in Grafton Street. The following Sunday evening, however, a gang of rough lads were waiting about for her; they followed her

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35 All the World, September 1902, p. 471. 36 War Cry, 13 July 1901, p. 12.
through the streets, hustling and pushing her, while respectably-dressed men
and women encouraged them, and hurled their hisses and maledictions at the
bonnetted Salvation lassie. The ensuing battle by the crowd for her bonnet,
failed, but the onward rush of the crowd drove the defenceless girl’s head
through the glass panel of the door, [of her Mistress’s home] and soon her face
was bleeding profusely. The mob then turned its attention to smashing the
windows of the house and continued this little entertainment until dispersed
by the police.37

III

Who were these 233 Irish women who used the Salvation Army rescue network
in Ireland and Britain between 1886 and 1892? The majority were born or lived
in Ulster, and worked in either domestic service or the textile industry, possibly
both. Eleven came from Cork and thirty-five were born in Dublin or its environs.
A few came from a rural background. As stated earlier, for seventy-two women
Ulster was their point of entry, and Dublin for thirty-eight others. Most of them
were unattached and aged between fourteen and twenty-nine when they became
involved with the Salvation Army. The majority of these women stated that they
had lost their parents and partners through death and desertion. They came
because they were homeless, sick or pregnant, in debt, afraid or at risk. Many of
them had travelled a lot, a few to places as far away as New York, Canada or
France, others all over Ireland and Britain. They spent, on average, four months
in an Army refuge. They used other institutions like hospitals and refuges
frequently. For all of these women life was hard, society unwelcoming.

Twenty per cent of the 233 Irish women in the British Isles Territory were
recorded by the Salvationists as having ‘fallen’ due to ‘bad company’. One hundred
and seventy-one women were single or engaged, and pregnancy was not a major
cause of entry to the network as 57 per cent of the single women aged between
fourteen and thirty-nine had never given birth. It is often assumed that rescue
work in the nineteenth century was particularly designed for pregnant unmarried
women, and that women who entered such rescue networks did so due to
pregnancy. In fact the highest attributed factor for entry to the Army’s British
Isles Territory rescue network was ‘women at risk’, recorded as 18 per cent.

Since the Salvation Army in Ireland was more established in Ulster between
1866 and 1892 than in any other part of Ireland, it is not surprising that the
majority of Irish women were from that area. This would also have influenced
their employment opportunities, as this was the one area in Ireland in the late
nineteenth century where employment prospects were good, even if the wages
were not. Although categorisation of social class was in its infancy in the 1880s,
the 1881 Census attempted a division of the population into six different social

37 Ibid.
class categories. Using that categorisation and from the information available, it does not appear that the women in this study initially came from very poor working class backgrounds. 38

Applying the 1881 census categorisation to the details recorded by the Army of the former occupations of the 233 Irish women in this sample, the greatest number, 72 per cent, fell into Class II, i.e. domestic service, followed by 22 per cent in Class V, i.e. industrial workers, prior to entry to the rescue network. These figures dropped to 43 per cent for Class II, and rose to 25 per cent for Class V, for the women on leaving the Salvation Army network. These women were then at a low ebb, trying to survive on little or no wages. The social class of the father only defined the world in which women lived as long as their fathers were alive and employed, or as long as she lived under his care. For many women the death of a father or partner caused an immediate change for the worse in social class, and loss of old support networks as the Irish women moved downwards in the social scale.

Depending on the individual case of the women passing through the Salvationist rescue network, it became apparent that not all women were suitable for domestic service, and so some other form of alternative employment had to be found. In England bookbinding was operating in Devonshire House, Hackney and in Whitechapel by 1888. This was considered appropriate employment as 'it is sheltered, it is fairly paid, it is quickly learned, and it requires a concentration of thought and attention which is an invaluable shield and discipline'. 39 The Deliverer shows that knitting, text washing, upholstery and needlework were all industries undertaken within the rescue homes. 40 Laundry work was undertaken in 1891, when Florence Booth finally agreed to the establishment of a Salvationist laundry in Stoke Newington. The initial group were 'twenty-three women coming from the slums, the shelter, the rescue homes and stray workers who came on their own account'. 41

A detailed examination of the 233 Irish women cited in this study reveals that 16 per cent or thirty-eight women stayed for a period of four months in the Army's rescue network throughout the British Isles Territory. Overall, 192 women or 82 per cent were recorded as staying between one and ten months. Only 6 per cent remained within the rescue network for a period between fourteen months and under three years. In general, these were women who entered the

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network early in their pregnancy, and stayed until a situation could be found for them and arrangements made for their child. Others in this category were women who were particularly ill and needed to convalesce, or were unsuitable for employment outside the network, and chose to work and live with the Salvationists.

Records also show that 56 per cent (131) of the Irish women were admitted to non-Salvation ‘refuges’, on a total of 208 occasions. Women who stayed in these other refuges were destitute, homeless, estranged from their families or orphaned, some syphilitic, institutionalised, pregnant or otherwise at risk, and for the most part were considered unrespectable or ‘fallen’ in one way or another. The Salvationists offered a different type of ‘refuge’ trying to give a ‘fresh start’ to many:

For the methods of The Salvation Army are essentially movement, life, activity — light and colour and noise — the exchange of destructive excitements for these which are, at all events, harmless, when even not life-giving. And for women who have lived in the lurid glare and wild uproar of vice, this is better than the gloomy retribution of penance and penitence. 42

Inmates of non-Salvationist ‘refuges’ were largely involved in laundry or sewing, and the work was a vital source of income for the refuges. This latter point was in direct contrast to the beliefs of Florence Booth who resisted the ‘laundry work’ despite its financial gains for a long time, as she preferred the ‘opportunity for more personal influence over the girls’. 43

One particular type of ‘refuge’ used frequently was Magdalene Asylums. Women were committed to these asylums for a variety of reasons. Many women stayed in these places for two or three years and even longer, until pronounced ‘fit to attain their proper station in life’. In contrast, Irish women stayed in the Salvation rescue network from a few days to over two years, and were much freer within these institutions, bringing their children and friends with them, allowed to leave to get their belongings unaccompanied, and in general treated as an equal adult women. 44 Yet, despite the harshness of the regime of many of the non-Salvationist refuges, many women had no choice but to avail of these particular institutions. A visitor to the Army’s women’s shelter in Hanbury Street emphasises this difference, describing how the rollicking and rousing evening service, accompanied with banjos, tambourines and general noise often struck a right chord:

the conscience vibrates in unison with the appeal, outcast sinners rise redeemed as penitent Magdalens. For such as these The Salvation Army has ever a glad welcome … and, we venture to add, a more rational way of dealing with them than is to be found in the strict seclusion and dull monotony of many penitential homes. 45

42 Deliverer, September 1891, p. 45. 43 War Cry, 6 February 1886. 44 Fairbanks, Booth’s Boots, p. 9. 45 Deliverer, September 1891, p. 45.
The personal contact that the Salvationist rescue network provided to Irish women was also in marked contrast to many other institutions at that time. The Salvationists understood the lack of self esteem in the women who presented themselves for help. Society judged harshly women who had ‘fallen’ and expected them to continue in the ‘fall’; the women themselves defined themselves as ‘bad’ and ‘evil’ and could see no way out of the downward trend. As Florence Booth observed,

Now she is expected to be good; and, as a rule she is good. Considering the shattered nerves, the habits of drinking, the craving for excitement, the restlessness of mind and body with which a women who has been for any length of time leading a sinful life come to our homes, we could sometimes wonder ourselves as pronouncedly as they do others at the large percentage who have been permanently reclaimed therein.46

The Salvation Army presented an opportunity for these Irish women to attain ‘respectability’, by becoming a soldier or even through a personal commitment to the Army’s ethos. It provided shelter, training and retraining, employment, personal development and a new support network of friends and a larger family group, if requested, thus responding to the perceived needs of the ‘congregation’ they were helping. Yet the Salvationists’ primary task was to evangelise the masses, and the women’s social work was a method of doing this. This work involved a clear recognition of the economic inequalities and the vulnerability of all women. Similarities did exist between other rescue societies of the time and the Army; in particular, the Salvationist belief that fornication outside a legal union was sinful, reinforced contemporary whore/madonna dichotomies. A significant difference however, was their belief that everyone was entitled to help – no matter how black the sin; in fact as far as the Salvationists were concerned, the blacker the better, as the saving would be all the greater.

The nature of the Salvationist work with women as I have examined it, shows clearly their genuine belief in their ability to identify with the Irish women that they were helping. In 1865 the Wesleyan Times described Catherine Booth in the following words: ‘She identified herself with them as a sinner, saying that if they supposed her better than they, it was a mistake, as all sinners were sinners against God.’47 Within this philosophy these women were equal with their helpers; in this the Salvation Army had something unique to offer the women it strove to save.