Gender and equality in God's army: An examination of women's public and domestic roles in the Salvation Army, British origins to 1930.

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Abstract

The Salvation Army was founded in 1865 as an East End Mission in London, England. Its founders, William and Catherine Booth, were motivated by the evangelical desire to save the unchurched masses within the burgeoning cities of industrial Britain. Preaching in ragged tents, rented music halls, and on the streets, the Booths' organization attracted a modest following among the working poor. Within a few years the mission expanded into other areas in and around London. By 1878 this religious body had assumed a quasi-military expression, 'invading' towns and cities with its Christian message of salvation.

One of the notable features of this Protestant missionary army was its professed commitment to sexual equality in ministry and leadership. The movement's 1870 constitution and subsequent regulations gave women the right to preach and hold any office in the denomination's hierarchy. These guidelines stressed that Army roles and responsibilities were open equally to both sexes. This thesis explores the extent to which this egalitarian philosophy of ministry and leadership was operative in the concrete life of the Salvation Army in Britain between the 1870s and 1930.

This work argues that Salvationists, including the Booths themselves, held Victorian and evangelical assumptions about gender and authority which were at odds with any widespread implementation of sexual equality within the movement. While women and men occasionally shared a preaching ministry, most Army tasks were assigned on the basis of gender rather than equality. Men assumed administrative and decision-making roles whereas women undertook responsibilities consistent with sacrificial service. Furthermore, the denomination's acceptance of the biblical concept of male headship led to women's subordinate status in the domestic and public life of the organization. In the end, these cultural and theological beliefs were largely responsible for the Salvation Army's failure to realize meaningful equality between the sexes.
This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Majors Ruth and Lloyd Eason. Their support and encouragement was a constant blessing.
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Introduction

During the early 1860s there was a concerted effort among evangelical Christians to reach the unsaved masses in the burgeoning cities of industrial England. A number of urban missions were established in such areas as the East End of London, where a large segment of the population was untouched by the gospel message. One of these missionary enterprises was the Christian Revival Association, founded by the Protestant evangelists William and Catherine Booth in 1865. Preaching in ragged tents, rented music halls, and on the streets, the members of this religious body sought to win the working poor for Christ. Within a few years this small mission experienced modest success in attracting a number of converts, allowing it to expand into other areas in and around London. Undergoing a series of name changes to reflect its growth, the Booths’ organization finally became known as the Salvation Army in 1878.

One of the most significant features of this nascent body was its egalitarian philosophy of ministry. As early as 1870 the organization gave women the right to preach, hold any mission office, and participate in all official conferences convened by William Booth.¹ The substance of this progressive position was not lost once the mission assumed military trappings in 1878. Its first-ever regulatory manual made this clear: “[T]he Army refuses to make any difference between men and women as to rank, authority and duties, but opens the highest positions to women as well as men ...”² The policy guidebooks which followed in later years continued to claim that a female Salvationist could “hold any position of authority or power in The Army, from that of a Local Officer [lay leader] to that of The General [international leader].”³ Given women’s
exclusion from positions of authority in the established churches of late-Victorian Britain, this principle of sexual equality was quite remarkable.

Many Salvationist writers over the years have taken considerable pride in this aspect of the organization. In the words of one student of the movement, equality between the sexes “has been the Army’s proudest boast.” Notwithstanding the rare detractor, the denomination as a whole has tended to exhibit this spirit of self-congratulation. Since the mid 1980s, however, a growing number of Salvationists have tempered such enthusiasm. Aware of women’s advances in other churches and the broader society, these commentators have acknowledged that the Salvation Army’s principle of equality has been less than commendable in practice. While praising female opportunities to preach in the Army, they have pointed to women’s relative absence from leadership and their relegation to numerous stereotypical responsibilities. Such criticisms have underscored the general inconsistency between the movement’s theory and practice of equality.

What might account for the Salvation Army’s failure to implement equality in any meaningful way? Surprisingly, this question remains essentially unanswered. The following feminist study begins to address this important issue by examining the movement’s formative years in Britain under the leadership of the Booth family. It looks at the beliefs and practices of Salvation Army Officers (clergy) from the 1870s to 1930, judging them in the light of the Army’s professed principle of sexual equality. On the basis of gender, theological, and historical analysis this investigation demonstrates that early Army women rarely possessed concrete equality with their male counterparts.
When present at all, sexual equality was centered largely around the platform. Put simply, there was a noticeable inconsistency between the Salvation Army’s espoused principle of sexual equality and its customary beliefs and practices.

This study puts forward a number of reasons for the Salvation Army’s poor performance in this area. First of all, it is argued that most men and women within this religious body accepted and reinforced Victorian beliefs about gender. Men were assumed to possess reason and authority, whereas women were associated with emotion and self-sacrifice. With the exception of preaching, these convictions generally fostered separate masculine and feminine roles in the public and domestic life of the organization. Second, the claim is made that certain features of the Army’s evangelical heritage worked against the promotion of equality between the sexes. The Army’s doctrines of sin and holiness discouraged women from fighting for a more visible and equitable position within the denomination, while the Salvationist adherence to male headship and masculine God-language led to women’s subordination to men. Taken together, these factors were at odds with any substantial realization of sexual equality.

These themes are developed in some detail in the pages which follow. First of all, chapters one and two provide the necessary theoretical and historical background to this study. The first chapter addresses the feminist assumptions and methodological tools which are operative throughout this work. Chapter two then explores the nineteenth-century ethos that gave rise to the Salvation Army, especially the factors which shaped its gender relations. This historical overview situates the Army squarely within the Victorian and evangelical climate of its day. These initial chapters establish a framework within
which to examine Salvationists’ understanding of gender and equality.

Chapters three and four begin utilizing these methodological and historical concerns as it critiques male attitudes and behavior toward Army women. Since William Booth was central to the founding of this organization, and made numerous references to women in his writings, his views on female ministry and equality form the content of chapter three. This section also provides a synopsis of the Salvation Army’s earliest history within Britain. Chapter four goes on to address other male perspectives on feminine gender and equality. One individual who receives special treatment is George Scott Railton, an early assistant of William Booth who was credited with promoting sexual equality within this religious body. Both of these chapters assess the extent to which the beliefs and practices of male officers fostered the sharing of gender roles.

This critical task continues in chapters five and six, where the focus turns to how women themselves constructed their identity in the public and domestic life of the Salvation Army. The fifth chapter examines the life and thought of Catherine Booth, the person largely responsible for framing the Army’s principle of equality. In particular, it compares her evangelical and Victorian beliefs with her views on female ministry and sexual equality. Following upon this, chapter six analyzes how female officers understood their role within ministry and the home. This final chapter also provides statistics on women’s representation in the early Army’s mid to upper levels of leadership. Once again, these perspectives are judged in relation to the movement’s professed commitment to gender equality.
The critique which follows is undertaken in the spirit of the German Enlightenment thinker Friedrich Nicolai when he said: "Criticisms are the only helpmate we have which, while disclosing our inadequacies, can at the same time awaken us to the desire for greater improvement." While acknowledging the positive aspects of women's involvement in the early Salvation Army, this investigation is interested in the factors which hindered the development of sexual equality within the denomination. If female Salvationists are to arrive at a more equitable place within this religious body, then the organization as a whole must come to terms with the problems in its past. Improvement seldom comes without candid reflection.


Chapter One
Methodological Foundations

In a helpful book entitled *What are they saying about theological method?*, J. J. Mueller states that a method is a tool which “extends our abilities, improves upon our limitations, reminds us of forgotten procedures, and allows others to see how we arrived at our conclusions.” A method heightens our capabilities by serving as a lens through which we can classify and channel our perceptions of and questions about the world. While no methodology is able to account for everything, it helps to shape this data into a meaningful and coherent whole. Furthermore, the procedural objectivity inherent in method - how one gets from ‘A’ to ‘B’ is open for all to see - adds credibility to the conclusions of any inquiry. By providing a means of organizing and analyzing a large body of information, a methodology enables a researcher to probe beneath the surface of a given phenomenon.

Since sexism may itself lie below the surface, masked in one form or another, a methodological framework is essential to uncovering its more subtle expressions. While obviously not ignoring overt instances of discrimination against women, feminist scholarship utilizes tools which unearth sexism’s underlying structural and cognitive dimensions. These instruments, which are outlined later in this chapter, prove especially relevant when considering women’s roles in the early Salvation Army. This evangelical body distanced itself from other denominations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by claiming to give its female members equal opportunities to work alongside the opposite sex. Consequently, any study which seeks to examine the possibility of
patriarchal and androcentric features within this organization must pay close attention to its deep-seated assumptions about gender, and its less than visible beliefs and practices concerning women. Feminist theory makes this possible by providing the means to go behind the seemingly obvious.

Notwithstanding these important justifications, some might still question the need to address methodological issues in a thesis on the Salvation Army. Because this religious organization has been known more for its practice than its theory, critics might suggest that an emphasis on theory (i.e., method) distorts the Army’s penchant for action. In other words, even if methodological issues are relevant to feminism, are they pertinent within a Salvationist context? Fortunately, Salvation Army history is helpful in answering this question. Its history reveals that methodological considerations were an important part of the early Salvation Army. Influenced by the American evangelist Charles Finney’s emphasis on the need for techniques and methods to reach the masses for Christ, the Booths believed that the Army had to adopt unique strategies to reach the poor. These techniques included the brass band, ingenious advertising, military uniforms, lively meetings, female preaching, and ‘open-airs’ (outdoor evangelistic meetings). Thus, contrary to common belief, the early Salvation Army placed great value on methodological issues.

Methodological Assumptions

Even more important than the early Army’s stress on method were its beliefs about methodology. Facing accusations of promoting vulgar and irreverent methods, the
Salvation Army was forced many times to issue statements defending its practices.

Underlying these statements were certain methodological assumptions. For example, in an 1882 defense, the Salvation Army stated:

[M]any of our methods are very different to the religious usages and social tastes of respectable and refined people, which may make those measures appear vulgar, that is, in bad taste to them; but this does not make them wrong in the sight of God. On the contrary, we think this adaptation of measures to the state of the masses is abundantly justified by the extraordinary things which God set His prophets to do... And, if it can be proved from the results that these methods lay hold of the ignorant and godless multitudes, compelling them to think about eternity and attend to their soul’s salvation, we think they are proved thereby to be both lawful and expedient...4

Within this positional statement are two implicit assumptions that are shared by the Salvation Army and feminism. The first belief is that a method is not sacrosanct. The early Salvation Army did not let the choice of the problem (i.e., how to reach the poor with the gospel) be determined by the ecclesiastical methods of its day. Instead of casting the problem of the poor into the pre-existing framework (i.e., how to get the poor into the churches), the Salvation Army let the problem suggest new methods; namely, strategies that brought the church to the poor. By relativizing existing methods in this way, the early Salvationists avoided what feminist thinker Mary Daly calls methodolatry.5 When patriarchal society worships method (i.e., engages in methodolatry), method becomes a false god that determines the choice of a problem, rather than the problem determining the choice of the method. Feminist method, including the framework embodied in this thesis, shares the early Salvationist belief that methodology must be adaptable to new situations.

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The framers of this 1882 statement readily acknowledged that Army methods were different from those used in the more established churches. Yet they did not consider a departure from conventional measures to be a problem, believing instead that there was no definitive way of reaching the unsaved. This viewpoint was the logical consequence of seeing method as relative. Early Salvationists adopted and modified a variety of secular and sacred methods in an attempt to win the impoverished masses for Christ. The critical or deconstructive task of Christian feminism, which seeks to analyze the roles, images, and experiences of women throughout church history, also makes use of a plurality of methodological tools. Christian feminist scholars employ any number of social scientific and theological concepts when examining the place given to religious women in public and private life.

Methodological Tools

This investigation of early day female officers makes use of a number of tools which are helpful in examining the pervasiveness of sexual discrimination within an ecclesiastical setting. These include the following: 1) gender analysis, 2) institutional analysis, 3) theological analysis, and 4) the critical principle of feminist theology. Each of these conceptual instruments provides an angle from which to study the subject under review. Taken together, they constitute the theoretical context for a comprehensive and critical analysis of women’s domestic and public life during the formative years of the Salvation Army. Since these methodological strategies are applied at various stages throughout this work, they need to be explained in some detail.
gender analysis

Many contemporary scholars differentiate between sex and gender. Whereas sex is defined as the biological fact of being male or female, gender refers to the things which are seen to be masculine or feminine by a social world. 7 In other words, sex is a biological fact; gender is a social construction. Specifically, sex and gender function together in what are called sex stereotypes. 8 Certain qualities are allotted to individuals based on their being male or female. More generally, sex and gender are incorporated into what anthropologist Gayle Rubin calls a sex/gender system. Every society has a “set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be.” 9 In time, these constructions become taken-for-granted realities for many people.

For any given society gender encapsulates the cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity. On the empirical level these expectations take the form of what sociologists and anthropologists call gender roles. 10 Certain types of culturally defined behaviors are deemed fitting for each sex within a society. Furthermore, as a person acts out his or her role a certain transformation takes place. As sociologist Peter Berger explains: “The role forms, shapes, patterns both action and actor. It is very difficult to pretend in this world. Normally one becomes what one plays at.” 11 Thus, what starts out as a predetermined role becomes a personal identity. Put differently, socialization takes place and becomes internalized within the individual. She or he becomes gender-typed: the cultural script of what it means to be male or female becomes a part of one’s self-
Within patriarchal societies gender roles are carefully circumscribed. Feminist historian Gerda Lerner, in a recent book entitled *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, highlights the major gender expectations and assumptions within patriarchy. First, men and women are seen to be different on biological, psychological, and social levels. Second, women are branded as intellectually and emotionally unstable while men are labelled as rationally superior and politically-minded. Third, patriarchal society assumes that the male role is to explain and order the world, whereas the female role is to nurture the young and sustain daily life. Fourth, within this environment men have the right to control women’s sexuality and reproductive capacities, but women have no corresponding right over men. Finally, patriarchal society delimits the role of women in religion. Men are the mediators between humans and God; women must reach God through the mediation of men.

Underlying these patriarchal gender roles is a certain bipolarity. The traits assigned to women and men are perceived to be polar opposites. In the assumptions outlined by Lerner, there are at least five of these bipolarities: 1) women are weak; men are strong, 2) women are emotional; men are rational, 3) women belong in the private sphere; men belong in the public realm, 4) women nurture; men dominate, and 5) women are passive; men are active. Moreover, within each of these binary sets the male side is valued more highly than the female side. In other words, human characteristics are tied to gender and valued accordingly. Consequently, people’s gender belief system tends to be bipolar and biased toward certain functions and expectations.
Nevertheless, there is also a multi-dimensionality of gender stereotypes within this overall binary system. Although it remains true that the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ conjure up certain associations, role behaviors and occupations can themselves be gender-linked. This means that a two-category system (i.e., male/female) is not the only way in which both sexes are socialized within Western society. Sociologists also believe that “the gender belief system is peopled with many different types of women and men.” There is, for example, the businessman, the blue-collar working man, and the macho man. Similarly, there is the mother, the career woman, and the sexual woman. These multiple categories do not contradict the overarching bipolar framework of patriarchal society, but they do provide a detailed description of the sub-types within patriarchy.

The gender differences apparent within patriarchal society, like patriarchy itself, have a history. The social construction of gender, however, has been reified. Reification takes place when human products (i.e., roles and institutions) are perceived as if they were non-human or supra-human entities. Consequently, gender assertions are transformed into ahistorical elements of an immutable nature. A gender-linked role becomes one’s fate in life. Accordingly, this obscures the historical origin and social nature of such a role. What is lost sight of is the way that Western thinkers from Plato to Sartre have created and reinforced gender differences.

In this thesis on the role of women in the Salvation Army, gender functions as a category of historical analysis. It addresses the ways in which gender was constructed during the earliest days of this religious movement. The assumption behind this approach
is that what has been constructed in history can also be deconstructed in history. As feminist historian Joan W. Scott explains: “We need a refusal of the fixed and permanent quality of the binary opposition, a genuine historicization and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference.” Gerda Lerner notes further that we must “step out of patriarchal thought” by subjecting all assumptions, values, and definitions to deconstructive analysis. In other words, our taken-for-granted worldviews need to be challenged.

Finally, gender analysis is more fruitful than merely studying the status of Salvationist women. Focusing on women’s status implies that women are a special problem separate from the wider social relations of the sexes. The effect of this is only the further marginalization of women. As an analytical tool, gender “has the advantage of integrating both women and men into any subject studied.” To engage in such a task is to acknowledge that women’s experiences are never in isolation from the experiences of men. Ultimately, gender scholarship’s commitment to the experiences of both sexes leads to a greater understanding of a particular issue. As the feminist scholar June O’Connor points out: “With a gender-alert hermeneutic, feminist research offers the promise of a more complete, less distorted, less partial knowledge base because through it more is examined and less is assumed.” Overall, gender offers an inclusive and epistemologically sound approach to a study of women’s position within the Salvation Army.
institutional analysis

A second methodological tool to be employed in the deconstructive body of this thesis is what might be loosely called institutional analysis. This device draws attention to the variables around which a social group organizes its members' lives. Put in more precise sociological language, this refers to social stratification. Sociologist Meredith McGuire defines social stratification as "the differential distribution of prestige and privilege in a society according to criteria such as social class, age, political power, gender, or race." Of particular interest here is the extent to which gender is correlated with stratification.

Given the fact that the Salvation Army became a hierarchically organized social institution after its adoption of military categories in 1878, it is a wise and necessary strategy to explore the extent to which gender functioned as a criterion of social stratification during its formative years. Perhaps gender played no role in the way that the Army was structured, but such an assumption cannot be made without empirical investigation. The issue here is whether Salvationist practice remained consistent with Salvationist theory (i.e., its principle of sexual equality). Because feminist theory seeks to uncover structural inequalities that oppress women, this analysis is imperative. The overriding question here is this: How and where were prestige and privilege distributed within this nascent movement?

The "how?" part of the above question alludes to one way of analyzing social stratification; namely, social status. How privilege and prestige were distributed within
the Salvation Army is therefore an important question. Was status arrived at in the same way for women as it was for men? These and related queries can be answered by looking for the presence or absence of achieved and derived status among early day officer women and men. Did male and female officers equally arrive at their status or rank on the basis of standards over which they had some control (i.e., job performance, qualifications, or responsibility)? In other words, were officers of both sexes equally able to achieve or earn their status? Or did officer women - single and married - derive their status from relationships with males (i.e., husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles etc.)? More specifically, was a married female officer’s promotion through the ranks of the Salvation Army because of her husband (derived status) or because of her job performance, qualifications, and job responsibility (achieved status)? Or was it a combination of the two?

To identify the extent of achieved and/or derived status within the Salvation Army, statistical information on key officer personnel from its early history is utilized. Four sets of questions are especially pertinent: 1) Were single female officers - notably those who lacked significant derived status - proportionately represented in the middle and upper echelons of Army leadership?, 2) Did married officer women ever hold more important jobs than their husbands? A related question would be: were married women officers well-represented in positions of authority?, 3) Did married officer couples ever receive separate appointments (assignments)? If not, who was given the appointment?, and 4) Were married officer couples ever given separate salaries for their work? If not, who received the wages?
Social stratification is also revealed by asking questions about where prestige and privilege are found within society and its institutions. This in turn discloses the degree of openness or opportunity to move from one status level to another.\textsuperscript{31} In other words, it reveals the extent of social mobility. Within the Salvation Army how much access did Salvationist officer women have to the higher ranks (i.e., Staff-Captain and beyond), and important jobs (regional, national, and international positions)? Did female married officers have the same access to the jobs and prestige available to their husbands? Or were they relegated to subservient or stereotypical posts under men? To answer these questions this study draws upon key statistics from relevant Salvation Army year books between 1906 and 1930.

\textit{theological analysis}

The extent to which gender stratification might exist within a religious organization is not determined solely by looking at quantitative data, such as how many women occupy leading positions in the group. A comprehensive treatment of gender stratification also involves the examination of qualitative data such as a religious movement’s God-language and central doctrines. This is because religion and gender are related in two central ways.\textsuperscript{32} First, religion structures gender relationships by delineating who does what in a religion. Within the Roman Catholic church, for example, high status roles, such as the priesthood, are open to males but forbidden to females. Even in Protestant denominations, where women may have access to ministerial positions, it is typically the men who control the resources and leadership offices of their churches. Gender analysis reveals the extent to which religious roles conferring power and
authority have been monopolized by men. Second, religion infuses gender with a notion of what it means to be human. For instance, throughout most of Christian history human nature has been male-defined. As a category of analysis, gender uncovers how women have been affected by the equation of male experience with human experience.

To study religion in relation to gender is to acknowledge that religion is a powerful force. Religion has the potential both to create and reinforce gender stratification and to challenge hierarchical relationships by offering a more equitable and liberating arrangement of reality. Consequently, a third tool to be employed in this thesis is theological analysis. One concern here is how the symbol of God functioned within the early Salvation Army. More specifically, what was this religious group's God-language, and how did it shape the male and female perceptions of a woman's place in the organization? Did Salvationist images of God reinforce or challenge the patriarchal and androcentric gender constructions within traditional Christianity? Feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson believes that these kinds of questions can be answered by determining the degree to which a religious group's God-language is exclusive, literal, and patriarchal.33 Three probing questions are relevant here: 1) Is God exclusively designated as male?, 2) Is God seen to be literally a father and king, thereby suggesting that maleness is essential to divine being?, and 3) Is God typically referred to as King, Lord, and ruler? Johnson contends that how we refer to God "functions in social and personal life to sustain or critique certain structures, values, and ways of acting."34 A male-defined God, for example, implicitly or explicitly sanctions male rule over women. In other words, such an understanding of God creates and/or reinforces gender stratification.
The second prong of this theological tool focuses upon two interrelated doctrinal motifs that have shaped Salvationist self-understanding: the doctrines of sin and holiness. Within the Salvation Army these twin emphases have addressed respectively the fallenness of humanity and the avenue of restoration for humankind beyond the initial saving work of Christ on the cross. Because these theological beliefs have implications for women's self-identity, self-assertion, and self-determination, they form an important part of this investigation on female Salvationists. First, what did the Army view as the fundamental problem separating humanity from God? Was the human condition described exclusively in the stereotypically masculine language of pride, selfishness, and self-assertion, or was reference also made to the traditionally feminine vices of overdependence, self-abnegation, and diminished personal agency? In other words, did this religious body ever appreciate the different temptations that men and women have been socialized to face throughout history, or did it generally define sin in terms of male experience? If the latter happened to be the case, what were the consequences for women? Second, how did the movement's holiness teaching, which proposed how a believer could achieve victory over a sinful nature, influence the role of its women? Did this doctrine give women the opportunity to develop and celebrate the self, or did it simply reinforce conventional traits associated with women, such as obedience, humility, and submission to authority? The extent to which the Army's understanding of the human condition and its remedy created an unfavorable climate for women is of vital importance here.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has argued that symbols have structural and psychological functions within religion. Not only do symbols provide a way of ordering
the world objectively, but they also elicit certain “moods and motivations” which serve to reinforce their assumed reality. This is especially true of theological doctrines that arise from deeply-held perceptions of God and the human condition. Whether referring to the divine or the human, symbols both order and subjectively sustain the world of a religious follower. The two-pronged theological tool outlined above addresses how the Salvation Army’s doctrinal beliefs established and reinforced certain gender relations among its officers.

*the critical principle of feminist theology*

A final tool to be incorporated within this overall method is what feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether calls the critical principle of feminist theology. The overall purpose of this principle is to expose and challenge the sexism of a given theological tradition. Within Christianity, for example, it critiques theological arrangements which make male thinking and experience the standards by which to judge all of humanity. In place of androcentric construals of reality, this feminist criterion embodies the biblical notion of *imago dei* (image of God). Feminists use this inclusive concept to affirm that women have the same capacity as men to mirror the divine, which the Judeo-Christian heritage reveals to be holy (i.e., righteous and just). It calls into question the androcentric assumption that only men share in the fullness of humanity.

When utilized by women (and feminist men), the biblical paradigm of *imago dei* becomes a critical tool by which to judge what is good and bad in any part of the Christian tradition. Put negatively, the critical principle of feminist theology contends
that “whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is ... not redemptive.”³⁸ Thinking, behavior, and structures that - wittingly or unwittingly - pervert women’s reflection of the Divine or limit their opportunities for self-actualization are labelled as sinful. In a positive form, however, this principle claims that “what does promote the full humanity of women is of the Holy, it does reflect the true nature of things, the authentic message of redemption and the mission of redemptive community.”³⁹ In short, this feminist standard functions as a two-edged sword, uncovering the oppressive and liberating aspects of Christianity in relation to women. Ruether’s principle lies behind the gender, institutional, and theological analyses that follow in this investigation of Salvationist women, exposing the positive and negative dimensions of their function and identity.

The preceding gender and theological tools are woven into the fabric of this thesis. In the central chapters of this work they are applied to the experiences and actions of Salvationist men and women. Gender analysis reveals the extent to which certain roles and responsibilities were stereotypically masculine or feminine. In so doing it looks at both the private and public sides of Army life. A second strategy involves the examination of social stratification within this organization; it highlights the degree to which structural arrangements of power and status were tied to gender. Working in conjunction with these conceptual instruments is theological analysis, which points out where Salvationist theology liberated or oppressed early day female officers. Finally, undergirding this overall study is the critical principle of feminist theology; it addresses the positive and negative aspects of the Army’s heritage.
Since the overarching framework of this study is theoretical and historical in nature, the next chapter concerns itself with the environment of nineteenth-century Britain. Such an undertaking is important, especially because it is one that traditional Salvationist scholarship has failed to take seriously. This contextual section examines the Victorian and evangelical ethos that gave birth to the Salvation Army. Although addressing where the movement belonged in relation to the economic, political, philosophical, and social influences of the era, it pays particular attention to the factors which shaped the gender relations and theological outlook of this ecclesiastical body. How these cultural and religious themes forged certain images, attitudes, and roles among the women and men of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is the major concern of the historical inquiry that follows.


6. Although Christian feminists are typically eclectic when it comes to the conceptual tools they employ, they generally agree upon a two-stage process of deconstruction and reconstruction. The deconstructive task is one of uncovering the oppressive and liberating features of women's existence in the past. This largely historical step addresses the ways in which Christian and cultural concepts, images, and roles have functioned either to subvert or legitimize women's subordination to men. Reconstruction takes the positive aspects of this critique and combines it with contemporary women's experiences to create a liberating, inclusive environment for both sexes in the present. Since the reconstructive project is one that must involve contemporary women themselves, it falls outside the scope of this investigation of early Salvationist women. As a male I hold feminist convictions, but I do not pretend to speak for the women of today. Moreover, I would argue that meaningful reconstructive proposals can only be offered once deconstruction is complete. Critical analysis of the period after 1930, which this thesis does not address, is needed before comprehensive changes can be made. For further information about the structural approach of Christian feminism, see Pamela Dickey Young, *Feminist Theology/Christian Theology: In Search of Method* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), esp. pp. 12-13; Ursula King, "Introduction," in *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, ed. Ursula King (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 4; and Anne-Louise Eriksson, *The Meaning of Gender in Theology: Problems and Possibilities* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University Press, 1995), p. 11.


13. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3-4. These gender assumptions are a summary of the conclusions reached in Lerner’s companion volume, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). In this earlier work, Lerner draws upon archaeological evidence and written evidence (i.e., religious myths, Mesopotamian and biblical law, anthropology, ancient history, philosophy, and science) from the Ancient Near East to trace “the development of the leading ideas, symbols, and metaphors by which patriarchal gender relations were incorporated into Western civilization.” (Ibid., p. 10) Research in psychology has reached similar conclusions about gender stereotypes. See Unger and Crawford, *Women and Gender*, p. 139.


15. The classic articulation of this phenomenon is by Sherry B. Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” in *Women, Culture and Society*, ed. Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 67-87. In this article, Ortner provides convincing reasons for the claim that women are universally devalued by being seen as closer to nature, whereas men are identified with culture—a superior association because of culture’s ability to transform and socialize nature. Another good discussion of this phenomenon, but within the context of early Christendom, is an article by Ina Praetorius, “In Search of the Feminine Condition,” *Concilium*, 6 (1991):3-4.


17. For an excellent introduction to the historical nature of patriarchy, see Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*. See especially pp. 5-8, 37, 212.


19. Ibid., p. 89.


28. Gender has tended to be neglected in the study of social stratification. In recent years, however, some scholars have begun to address the connection between gender and stratification; they believe that this relationship offers a helpful way of specifying and explaining inequality between women and men. See, for example, *Gender and Stratification*, ed. Rosemary Crompton and Michael Mann (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 1-5; and McGuire, *Religion*, p. 111.

29. For a detailed description of social status, see Spencer *Foundations of Modern Sociology*, p. 236.

30. I prefer the word ‘derived’ to the word ‘ascribed’. The choice is made on the basis of adequacy, not meaning. In other words, while both terms refer to status that may bear little relationship to one’s ability, the use of the word ‘derived’ is better suited to a critique of patriarchy. Given the fact that within patriarchal societies women often receive their status through males, to look for the presence or absence of derived status is one good indicator of a society’s or group’s patriarchal assumptions. In sum, it is a tool that helps identify the extent to which gender is a variable in social stratification.


Chapter Two

Paradoxes, Piety, and Popular Culture: The Salvation Army’s Victorian Roots

New religious movements do not arise out of a vacuum. Such phenomena, whether culturally accommodating or counter-cultural, are responses to or reactions against their historical milieu. In either case, as sociologist James Davison Hunter points out, the social environment in which a religion develops “exerts influence upon its quality and substance of expression.”¹ Even when the leaders of a new religious movement locate its origins in the mind of God, the historian is aware that even these theological claims are expressive of a historical setting.

As a new religious movement emerging out of mid-Victorian Britain, the Salvation Army must itself be understood within its historical context. This has, however, not been generally accepted within official Army historiography. Most of those within the movement, up until recently at least, have tended to see the Salvation Army as an act of divine creation, rather than as a product of its era.² A June 6, 1903 article in the Army’s weekly periodical The War Cry expressed this sentiment clearly: “The Salvation Army is divinely originated. The General - God bless him! - was the human agent to bring it into existence, but it was born in the heart of God...”³ Salvationists, presupposing their otherworldly roots, typically have seen themselves as a sharp departure from their age.⁴ Unfortunately, these assumptions, however valid they may seem in the minds of Salvationists, have functioned as obstacles, preventing a serious investigation of the movement’s concrete place within nineteenth-century Britain.

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This chapter aims to follow in the path of recent scholarship that has distanced itself from this tendency. This will be accomplished by placing the Salvation Army - and its forerunners - in the matrix of Victorian Britain. Only then will it be possible to appreciate the role of women in this religious organization. Moreover, a conscious effort to contextualize the Salvation Army will also lead to a richer understanding of the founders of this movement, Catherine and William Booth. If indeed, as historian Norman H. Murdoch argues, the Booths grasped sagaciously the religious and social language of Victorianism⁴, then it is all the more necessary to become familiar with their historical environment.

Therefore, the task of this chapter is not to provide a history of the Salvation Army - this will be integrated into the following chapter - but rather to make sense of the complex era that gave birth to the Booths and the Salvation Army. The ensuing pages will provide a general picture of Victorian life (1830s-1890s) alongside a more detailed examination of issues intimately related to women and gender. More specifically, nineteenth-century England’s economic, political, philosophical, religious, and social themes will be outlined, with special attention being given to how each of these areas sheds light on the roles of women and men in Victorian society. Furthermore, given the fact that Victorianism would continue among the lower middle classes and working classes well into the 1950s and early 1960s⁷, to understand Victorianism is to grasp the dominant environment of the early Salvation Army within Britain.
Economic Climate

In the popular mind, the Victorian era is synonymous with the word 'industrialization'. Clearly, it would be a mistake to explain this period solely in terms of this economic revolution, but it would be just as misguided to ignore its influence upon nineteenth-century England. This movement - with its immediate origins in eighteenth-century English philosophy (i.e., classical liberalism), inventions, and increased trade - had a profound impact on the whole of British society. It refashioned not only England's commercial life, but also its social, political, and religious life. Moreover, it could be argued further that industrialization illustrated the paradoxical nature of Victorianism: it provided solutions and problems, wealth and poverty, laissez-faire and state intervention, hope and anxiety, freedom and restriction. In sum, industrialization contributed to the shape and texture of this complex age.

Prior to 1850, industrialization was centered around the cotton, coal, and iron industries. According to the parliamentary reports, royal commissions, and select committees of the period, this economic transformation, especially as it was manifested in the factory system, subjected the lower classes to gruelling working conditions, poor wages, and occupational hazards. Whether or not the factory system was the primary cause of economic hardship among England's working classes is the subject of ongoing debate, but for many Victorians there was a clear relationship between the two. Consequently, the governments of the nineteenth century became increasingly involved in the regulation of British economic life through such legislation as the Factory Act (1833), the Poor Law (1834), and the Mines Act (1842). Notwithstanding these measures,
the Victorian period continued to be dominated largely by a laissez-faire mindset; beyond health and safety the government was to place few restrictions on the forces of the marketplace.\(^{10}\) The state intervened primarily to keep people from the edge of the abyss rather than to deal with the major factors behind the social and economic distress of the working classes.

The harsh economic reality of the Victorian age did not disappear as the century unfolded, but it was mitigated to some degree by a period of relative prosperity between 1851 and 1873.\(^{11}\) More of the British people were beginning to benefit from the economic strides of earlier decades, including the development of railroads and freer trade.\(^{12}\) Even with the ‘Great Depression’ of 1873-1896, unemployment did not increase and the standard of living actually rose, due in large measure to falling prices.\(^{13}\) At the same time, however, economic prosperity did not reach many in the lower working classes. Social surveys of the late nineteenth century revealed that 40% of London’s working class lived in abject poverty.\(^{14}\)

Urbanization, one of the Industrial Revolution’s offshoots, itself intensified the plight of the poor. Industrialization transformed England from a predominately rural society to one that was decidedly urban. By 1851, the majority of Britain’s population lived in cities and towns.\(^{15}\) This shift from country to city put a burden on existing urban centers; the poor had little choice but to gravitate to the slums, with their poor housing, overcrowding, crime, and disease.\(^{16}\) One place which became notorious for its “squalid, filthy and crowded” conditions was the East End of London.\(^{17}\) This part of London was characterized by high unemployment, disease, alcoholism, and a general lack of
sanitation. While the British had always had their poor, now they were clearly segregated in areas like the East End.

Industrialization was also one factor behind yet another kind of segregation - gender segregation. England's economic transformation separated productive work from the home; such work was now done outside the home in an office or factory. As historians Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English explain: "With the triumph of the Market [capitalism], the settled patterns of life which defined the Old Order were shattered irrevocably. The old unity of work and home, production and family life, was necessarily and decidedly ruptured." In the process of this polarization, men became associated primarily with the public world of business, whereas women became identified chiefly with the domestic realm. From a capitalist viewpoint, woman came to be seen as the 'other', part of a "pre-industrial backwater." A woman's usefulness lay ultimately in the care of children, the management of the house, and her biological capacity for reproduction.

The wealth accumulated through industrialization further reinforced gender segregation by the way it physically separated home from work. Prosperous middle-class families, increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, moved to the suburbs as railways and tramways expanded. This established a geographical distance between work in the inner city and home in the peaceful outlying regions, thereby reinforcing the separation of male and female spheres. Men were now physically absent from the home while women were enmeshed increasingly in domestic concerns. Accordingly, most men grew to have little knowledge of and interest in home management. Likewise, many
middle-class women were essentially excluded from debates about business and political issues.

Generally speaking, working-class women did not experience such a sharp dichotomy between private and public life. But even here industrialization did not fail to establish gender segregation. Although working-class women often had to work outside the home, the ideology of separate spheres was maintained by the restriction of women to certain tasks in the service sector, such as domestic service. For instance, between 1851 and 1911, domestic service employed the largest number of women in England. Working-class women seldom enjoyed these kinds of jobs; they often viewed them merely as temporary or partial solutions to a low or unstable family income. Overall, however, respectable Victorians saw any female employment as injurious to family life and the just retribution for poverty.

Political Life

On the political front, Victorian England was an age of gradual transition from aristocratic privilege and paternalism towards democratization. While only the educated elite would have been familiar with the ideas of Enlightenment philosophers like John Locke, the literate working classes were being influenced by popularized versions of Lockean liberalism, including its concrete expressions in the American and French revolutions. The work of one radical political thinker, Thomas Paine (1737-1809), was especially successful in capturing and articulating the spirit of the times. Paine's treatise *The Rights of Man*, written between 1791 and 1792, became a "sacred text for those
demanding male suffrage and parliamentary reform." Radicals like Paine helped to diffuse equal rights arguments within the larger society, thereby ensuring that the nineteenth century would witness the evolution of political freedom.

The movement toward democracy would not be complete by century's end - women and a minority of men would not gain the vote until the early twentieth century - but dramatic changes were taking place. The Victorian era witnessed a number of legislative and populist measures that slowly gave way to almost universal male suffrage, parliamentary reform, and growing working-class solidarity. The first important step toward democracy was the Great Reform Bill of 1832; it essentially gave the vote to middle-class men and initiated some reforms in parliament. Second, during the 1830s and 1840s, a national working-class protest movement known as Chartism demanded similar rights for all working men. Its 1837 People's Charter called for universal manhood suffrage and a more democratic parliament. While the Chartists' petitions failed to gain the House of Commons' support, most of its recommendations would be met by the early twentieth century. Third, the Political Reform Act of 1867 enfranchised most urban working-class men. Fourth, Prime Minister William Gladstone's Reform Bill of 1884 extended the working-class vote to the counties. Finally, the new unionism of the 1880s and 1890s was providing working-class men with additional political power.

Undoubtedly, the major political reforms of the Victorian era were male gains. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that voices were not being raised against women's exclusion from political life. Nineteenth-century England experienced a small, but growing, feminist consciousness. Beginning in the 1820s, some of the earliest
challenges to the political status quo came from a handful of men. Unitarians like William Fox and philosophical radicals like John Stuart Mill kept alive the feminist insights of the feminist pioneer Mary Wollstonecraft, whose 1792 book entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* had applied equal rights reasoning to women. For instance, John Stuart Mill’s 1869 essay “The Subjection of Women” argued that women should have rights similar to those of men:

> [T]he principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes - the legal subordination of one sex to the other - is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement ... it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

Mill and other liberal thinkers provided a much needed critique of Victorian society; they challenged a patriarchal culture which believed that a woman was merely her husband’s legal property.

Even more significant for women was the birth of organized feminism in 1856. Centered around women like Barbara Leigh Smith and Bessie Rayner Parkes in London’s Langham Place, this movement sought female access to higher education and wider employment, changes to a married woman’s legal status, suffrage, and the moral reform of society. Most of these issues betrayed the middle-class interests of feminism’s early days; however, by the late nineteenth century it would begin to attract mass support, thereby guaranteeing that suffrage became the dominant concern.

Overall, the emerging feminist activism had two identifiable streams. On the one hand, some of these women grounded their goals in the equal rights tradition of
Locke, Wollstonecraft, and Mill. For them, women should be able to enter the public sphere on an equal footing with men. On the other hand, there were a number of women who believed that a female’s maternal instincts and inherent virtues justified a woman’s wider involvement in society. Often couched in evangelical language, this view held that women’s moral guardianship of the home suited them ideally to be the moral trustees of nineteenth-century public life. At times, however, these two approaches overlapped; some feminists attempted to assert women’s equality with men and their essential difference from men.33

Victorian feminism was ultimately a mirror reflecting its age. In one sense, it was part of a wider transformation seeking democracy in society. Its small, but significant, victories in the educational, municipal, and legal realms were signals of an evolving Victorian desire for freedom. In another sense, feminism displayed the paradoxical nature of nineteenth-century life; it promoted equality alongside difference and maternalism beside calls for female higher education.

Philosophical Views

Added to the Victorian tensions within the economic realm (state intervention vs. laissez-faire, wealth vs. poverty) and the political realm (democracy vs. paternalism, equality vs. difference), nineteenth-century Britain experienced a philosophical conflict between the mind and heart.34 On the one side of this debate were the rationalists. They believed that reason was the key to material progress, scientific advances, and technological innovation. On the other side were the romantics. Focusing on the negative
effects of industrialization, these individuals did not see reason as the savior of the world. Instead, they saw the answers to human fulfillment lying in the subjective realm.

Largely the product of German philosophy, romanticism came into England through apostles like Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). Romanticism held a number of important beliefs. First, romantics contended that the inward journey of the self was more enlightening than the outward exploration of the physical world. Second, romanticism placed great value on the totality of experience, believing that an understanding of the world was arrived at through the human spirit's cultivation of imagination, mystery, and feeling. Third, it saw the human will as primary; as the seat of the will, the heart was to take precedence over the mind. Fourth, the romantically-inclined tended to view reality as spiritual rather than material; romanticism stressed that the real is the spiritual. Finally, in place of the atomistic and mechanical view of the world put forward by the Enlightenment, romantics perceived the organic interrelationship of all things.

At the level of worldviews, the conflict between rationalism and romanticism involved two differing perspectives of reality— a word culture and an image culture. The word culture was allied with rationalism. Influenced by the invention of the printing press, this metaphysical understanding centered around knowledge disseminated in written form. It valued the analytical and the objective, but distrusted the emotional. Furthermore, mystery was seen as a problem to be solved rather than something to inspire awe. Victorianism's educated elite fell largely within this framework. The impoverished masses, however, represented an image culture focused upon faith,
mystery, and emotion. Thus, they were more romantic than rational in worldview. The lower strata of the working classes appreciated emotion and drama more than theological sermonizing.

While the Salvation Army was never as successful as it claimed to be among the destitute, it did articulate a theology that appealed to the dramatic and emotional tastes of the poor. For instance, when the Christian Mission became the Salvation Army in 1878, its language and activities became increasingly image-centered. Referring to the Victorian age, G. Kitson Clark contends that the Salvation Army was “perhaps the most significant and notable product of this exciting period, for it used with great success all the elements of applied romanticism—rhetoric, the melodrama, the music, the evocative ritual and [the] symbolism ... of war.” Even when the Salvation Army moved beyond its lower-working-class focus, it retained this romantic orientation: the heart took precedence over the mind.

Religious Expression

*religion and the churches*

It would be an oversimplification to characterize the entire Victorian age as one of religious-mindedness. Although there was a good deal of truth behind this label, especially between the 1830s and 1850s, nineteenth-century England as a whole experienced religious advances and retreats. It was a period of “crisis and confidence; faith and doubt; revival and decline.” On the one hand, Victorian life was shaped by an
evangelical atmosphere, revivalism, and a diffuse Christianity. On the other hand, this period also revealed growing intellectual challenges to Christian orthodoxy, the gradual consignment of religion to the periphery of life, and the indifference of the lower working classes to regular church-going.42

It was especially the perceived working-class indifference to organized religion that concerned pious middle-class Victorians during the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s.43 The lower classes were not without religious beliefs and superstitions, but at this time religiosity was measured in terms of church attendance. Accordingly, the absence of the lower working classes from chapel and church worship services posed a serious problem. The religious census of 1851 magnified this concern; it seemed to confirm what many respectable Victorians had feared. It revealed that perhaps as many as five million lower-class individuals had failed to enter a place of worship on census Sunday.44

There were a number of reasons for the limited involvement of the working classes in organized religion.45 First, a rapidly expanding population, predominately in the cities, taxed the churches’ ability to build more places of worship. In a purely geographical sense, it was sometimes difficult to find a church or chapel close to where one lived. Second, socio-economic factors often kept the lower working classes away from church services. Pew rents, for example, were used throughout the nineteenth century to raise ecclesiastical funds. Those who could not afford such fees were often excluded altogether from organized religion, or, at best, ostracized by being given a poor seating arrangement in places of worship. Such a device served indirectly to widen the gap between the respectably well-off and the ‘indecorous’ poor. It certainly did not
encourage the lower classes to participate in mainstream religious life. Moreover, church-going required Sunday clothes and a certain level of literacy on the part of its participants, both of which were usually beyond the reach of the poor. Given these socio-economic obstacles, it is not surprising that the poor tended to associate the clergy with aristocratic privilege. Finally, substandard preaching and dull liturgy did little to attract or keep the attention of the lower working classes, many of whom spent their leisure hours at local public houses (pubs) or spectator sports.

For the middle classes, however, organized religion was at the center of their mid-Victorian lifestyles. Many of them saw the church or chapel as a vital component of middle-class respectability on Sundays, as well as a center of social and moral activity during the week. Moreover, most middle-class individuals were affected profoundly by the moral ethos of evangelicalism, a Protestant reformist movement with roots in eighteenth-century England. Even though evangelicals never made up a majority of Britain’s population, its emphasis on moral reform, home-life, and evangelism shaped early to mid-Victorian society.

For those who were devout evangelicals, missionary efforts were of utmost importance. In particular, the 1851 religious census had reinforced their belief that England’s masses needed salvation as much as those in ‘heathen’ countries. As religious revivalism swept across England in 1859, along with a growing awareness of Britain’s urban poor, this evangelical conviction was translated into an alliance of like-minded groups and individuals. The result was the formation of the Home Mission Movement in the 1860s. Consisting of nondenominational mission halls in the poorest areas of urban
England, its goal was to win the lower classes for God’s kingdom. Among these evangelical groups was the Christian Revival Association, a mission that eventually became the Salvation Army.

*evangelicalism and gender*

Evangelicalism’s impact upon society was clearly apparent in areas like missions, moral reform, and home-life. It suggested explicit strategies to reach the unsaved, uplift them morally, and create an environment of filial obedience, chastity, and piety within the domestic realm. At the same time, however, this religious orientation also had a subtle, and perhaps more significant, influence upon gender identity. In other words, evangelicalism made a profound contribution to the social construction of masculine and feminine gender in Victorian society.

Because Catherine and William Booth had deep roots in this tradition, it is imperative to highlight evangelicalism’s effects upon women and men. It offers an appropriate reference point for analyzing Salvationist gender relations in this thesis. Thus, the remainder of this section will examine two crucial issues: 1) evangelical theology’s impact upon women, and 2) the tension between the evangelical cultivation of *both* a feminine religion and a muscular Christianity.

As a renewal movement found largely within Methodism and Anglicanism, although incorporating other nonconformist bodies as well, evangelicalism’s self-understanding lay in four theological tenets. First, it was characterized by
conversionism; people were urged to be saved through a personal faith in Christ. The 'heathens' at home and abroad were missionized, with the hope that they would abandon their sinful lifestyles and seek salvation. Second, evangelicalism began to reject the extreme Calvinist view that left revivalism up to God. Human effort was seen as essential to the spreading of the gospel. Christians were called to public witness, and to an active role in the life of the church and society. Revivalism was not something to pray down, but something to work up. Third, coupled with this salvific activism was a high regard for the Bible. It was believed to be the authoritative guide to all of life. Consequently, the Bible formed the core of religious worship, education, and home-life for evangelicals. They viewed the scriptures as the exclusive source for defining their relationship to God and the world. Finally, evangelicals became known for crucicentrism - an emphasis on the death and sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Christ's atonement for sin was emphasized much more than the broad features of his earthly ministry.

These evangelical themes had an ambiguous effect upon women in the church. From a certain perspective, conversionism and missionary activity had a positive impact upon the role of women. The evangelical aim of salvation for all required the efforts of all Christians, including women. The belief that people were going to hell overrode any biblical injunction which implied that women were to remain silent and passive in the church. Motivated by this missionary zeal, evangelicalism utilized women in the areas of tract and Bible distribution, Sunday school teaching, fundraising, voluntary societies and, to some degree, preaching. Some of these skills, especially speaking in public before mixed audiences, later proved very useful in the women's rights' movement, but it must not be forgotten that they were first cultivated within evangelicalism.
Grounding wider female involvement in salvific activism was, however, problematic. Women were typically given a larger role within evangelicalism not because they were seen to be equals alongside men, but because female efforts were a means to the evangelical goal of salvation. Their work was of instrumental value, but not intrinsic value. In other words, pragmatism rather than principle was usually behind the broadening of women’s sphere in this movement. For example, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was opposed initially to female preaching. In time, however, he began to allow female prayer, testimony, and exhortation before mixed audiences. Yet, Wesley undergirded women’s modest public roles with a pragmatic argument. Claiming that Methodism was an extraordinary dispensation, he allowed for exceptions to Paul’s injunctions on women’s silence in the church. Women’s public ministry remained the exception rather than the norm.

Methodism’s allowance of female preaching clearly illustrated the indeterminate place of women within evangelicalism. On the one hand, Wesleyan Methodism provided a number of women with an opportunity to preach before audiences of women and men—a positive public role previously denied to centuries of Englishwomen. On the other hand, this evangelical movement did not institutionalize female preaching; women served as local and itinerant preachers, but they were never ordained. Moreover, women were excluded from the annual Conference, the Methodist body which made the key denominational decisions. While Wesleyan Methodism gave women a role that was unthinkable in mainstream English religion, female preaching was clearly subject to the dictates of a male-dominated administration and clergy.
The 1803 Wesleyan Conference demonstrated further the tentative nature of women’s gains within Methodism. At this annual gathering of Methodists a ban was placed upon female preaching. At least three reasons lay behind this decision. First, Methodists had never been in agreement over the legitimacy of female preaching, and by 1803 many were openly opposed to it. Second, the Wesleyan ministry was becoming professionalized. This in turn meant a standardized training program in theological colleges for all prospective ministers - an option not open to women. Third, Methodism no longer suffered from a shortage of preachers. Those without any official status - women preachers - were now considered redundant. At best, women experiencing an exceptional call to preach were limited to addressing their own sex. In the end, a female ministry capable of forging a new public role for women, as well as challenging traditional stereotypes, was lost within mainstream Methodism.

Within sectarian offshoots of Methodism, women found, at least initially, a positive atmosphere for their preaching talents. The chief example here was Primitive Methodism, established in 1812. Its founder, Hugh Bourne, considered female ministry to be one of its reasons for existence. As early as 1808 he had written a pamphlet, entitled Remarks on the Ministry of Women, in support of wider female involvement in the church. In the beginning, this religious body employed as many as forty women preachers. Another expression of sectarian Methodism’s openness to female ministry were the Bible Christians. At their peak, they had over seventy female itinerant preachers. By the 1850s, however, both of these sects were no longer recruiting new women preachers. Needless to say, female preaching soon became extinct. To a large degree, these products of Methodism had become respectable; they were now mindful of
Victorian values that discouraged a public role for women in the pulpits of established churches and chapels.

By the mid nineteenth century, women who felt called to preach had to look beyond the borders of respectable Methodism to find an opportunity for public ministry. Fortunately, a series of revivals soon provided a number of these women with a means to this end. This period of spiritual renewal began in 1859, and its effects continued to be felt well into the 1870s. Overall, revivalism's threefold emphasis on lay involvement, sensational techniques, and emotionalism created a climate conducive to female ministry. Women were part of the laity, they served as a technique to attract the unsaved, and they were stereotypically suited to an emotional kind of religion.

These favorable conditions encouraged a small number of women to preach in the 1860s and 1870s. Inspired largely by the American architects of this revivalism (i.e., Charles Grandison Finney, James Caughey, and Phoebe Palmer), these female preachers spoke to respectable crowds throughout England. Of these women, a few became widely known in Britain. Catherine Booth, the cofounder of the Salvation Army, was one notable example. While this was clearly an interesting period in the history of female ministry, as the revivalist spirit declined so too did the popularity and acceptability of female preaching. Apart from the Salvation Army, women preachers disappeared from public church ministry by 1880.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, many women were no better off than before. Female preachers were, for the most part, a fading memory of the past, and a
number of churches seemed intent on hurrying the process along. There were a number of reasons for this setback. First, the evangelical notion that female preaching, and thus a public role for women, was more the exception than the rule made it quite easy for the churches to dismiss it. Second, the growing desire of sectarian Methodism to become respectable within Victorian society meant the suppression of a public speaking ministry for women. Third, the close association of women preachers with revivalism proved problematic; once the climate of revivalism was gone so too were most female preachers. Finally, denominations that had traditionally spoken out against female ministry before mixed audiences now institutionalized these criticisms. For example, the Church of England’s custom of preventing women’s involvement in its councils became a decree in 1892; women were denied the right to be involved. Similar decisions were reached within Baptist circles. Such developments illustrated the tentative position of women within evangelicalism - they were useful but expendable.

A similar ambiguity surrounded evangelicalism’s emphasis on the Bible. On the positive side, the evangelical penchant for Bible study led some individuals to read the Scriptures in a way that supported a public role for women. In the process, three distinct viewpoints emerged. The dominant position justified female preaching by drawing attention to prophecy-fulfillment passages like Joel 2:28 - Acts 2:17-21. The pentecostal experience outlined in the early chapters of Acts was seen as a confirmation of the prophet Joel’s vision that in the latter days women as well as men would prophesy. Perhaps the clearest articulation of this first perspective was found in the work of Phoebe Palmer, a nineteenth-century American Methodist evangelist. In 1859 she wrote a defense of female ministry, entitled Promise of the Father, or A Neglected Specialty of
the Last Days, which argued that the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon women at Pentecost gave them, and all subsequent Christian women, the authority and obligation to testify publicly in the church. A second, less accepted, perspective pushed for women's equality in all areas of life by asserting that Christ's redemption had reversed the effects of the Fall upon women. Finally, an even smaller number of women began to see the Bible as culturally conditioned and used Jesus against St. Paul to advocate women's equality with men.

Most evangelicals, however, saw the Bible as prescribing divine absolutes that relegated women to the home under the authority of a father or husband. For these individuals, the evangelical devotion to biblical literalism and the final authority of Scripture prohibited female involvement in the public life of the church and society. Divine imperatives, reflective of the final authority of the Old and New Testaments, made little or no room for the relativizing influence of culture or exceptions to the norm. Even those who advocated the right of women to preach did not distance themselves too far from the authoritative claims of evangelical biblicism. While maintaining that women should have a public role in religious life, they did not challenge scriptural commands on wifely submission to their husbands. Equality on the platform did not extend into the social and domestic relations of everyday affairs. In the end, the divine authority of scripture functioned either to prohibit women from assuming a larger role in evangelical chapels or to ensure that such a public role remained a modest one at best. Because the preeminent expression of authoritative Scripture - male headship - was left unchallenged, women's involvement in the ecclesiastical realm depended upon the dictates of men.
Crucicentrism - Christ's sacrificial death on the cross - also had a nebulous effect upon evangelical women. Positively, this accentuation led some women to assume a larger role in the church. The suffering and sacrificial model of Christ on the cross figured in the thinking of the few women who ventured to speak in front of mixed audiences. Harsh criticism and ridicule might accompany their controversial activities, but such women could take comfort in the fact that Christ commanded all believers to take up their cross and follow him. Suffering became a sign that female preachers were obeying God. Moreover, just as Christ had sacrificed his all for the world's lost, devoted Christian women might sacrifice their reputations and self-interest in the service of a larger cause. Phoebe Palmer, for instance, described her own female ministry in this way: "I have given up my reputation to God ..."  

Catherine Booth, the cofounder of the Salvation Army, also associated a woman's ministry with the abandonment of her reputation. If female testifying and preaching destroyed a woman's reputation, she could find comfort in the belief that God expected Christians to deny themselves the things of the world in order to save it. Suffering and sacrifice were, therefore, themes that might enable women to justify their public role within evangelicalism.

The Christlikeness emulated by evangelical women also had its negative consequences. It represented a model that simply reinforced the stereotypically feminine traits of longsuffering and self-sacrifice. Following in the footsteps of Christ might engender a modest public role for some women, but in the process it also encouraged women to put the interests of others ahead of their own. This was problematic, since the Victorian and evangelical expectations of marriage and motherhood turned the notions of longsuffering and self-sacrifice into chains that tied women primarily to the domestic
realm. Suffering and sacrifice were ideas that could easily be used to justify a woman’s abandonment of the public sphere for the sake of her husband and children. Furthermore, the attributes of Christlikeness were incompatible with the self-interest and assertiveness necessary to unseat male privilege and fight for women’s rights in the ecclesiastical and secular world. Evangelical theology gave women little incentive to fight for, maintain, or expand their public presence alongside their male counterparts.

Alongside the preceding theological ambiguities, other evangelical factors were to affect mid to late-Victorian gender relations. One of these central aspects was the feminization of religion. Evangelicalism’s emotionalism, piety, and obsession with subjective experience in general created a religion of the heart that was stereotypically feminine.\(^5\) This was to prove troubling for women in two major ways. First, the feminization of religion reinforced existing stereotypes (e.g. women as submissive and suffering) by giving them divine sanction. Second, religion - and by association women - was removed from the public realm. It increasingly became an apolitical force centered in the home.\(^6\) legitimizing women’s relegation to the domestic realm.\(^7\)

Religion’s connection with the feminine was another important reason why many lower-class men distanced themselves from church involvement.\(^8\) Their absence from the typical church or chapel was reflective, in part, of the male belief that religion was too feminine; it threatened a ‘real’ man’s masculinity. Thus, when religious men like William Booth began to condemn the fighting, drinking, and betting associated with working-class masculinity, they were ridiculed and called effeminate.\(^9\) In an attempt to downplay the relationship between religion and the feminine, as well as reflect the
growing popularity of militarism among the late-Victorian British working classes, evangelical societies began to assume more masculine characteristics. To some degree, consciously or unconsciously, this represented a male attempt to take back a religion that had become too feminine. Only then could evangelicalism hope to attract the lower-working-class male.

The central feature of this turn toward an ostensibly masculine religion was paramilitarism. The elements identified with military ceremonialism, which had wide appeal among working-class men, were infused with religious meaning. \textsuperscript{80} Christian virtues were linked with military terminology (e.g. soldier-saint), religious societies spoke of the need for aggression and combativeness against sin, and the hymns of the period used military imagery to describe the spiritual life. \textsuperscript{81} A good example of this new brand of religion was the Christian Mission, the immediate forerunner of the Salvation Army. Implicitly challenging men to prove their masculinity by engaging in the moral battle, its language was overtly militant: "We are at war. The Devil knows it. The Publicans know it... We are at war against sin... We are at war for God. Go forward... Show on whose side you are." \textsuperscript{82} Even though the military imagery was understood primarily in a spiritualized manner, it was also a subtle appeal to masculine aggression and pride. True men were expected to meet the devil head on. In this way, the Christian Mission hoped to bridge the gap between the working-class male and organized religion.

In the end, evangelicalism's feminized religion was to make room for stereotypically male traits. The quintessential expressions of this new religious hybrid were the Salvation Army and the Anglican Church Army. \textsuperscript{83} Ironically, however, military
authoritarianism merely reinforced the feminization of religion. The Salvation Army, in particular, was to strengthen its calls for self-denial and submission by placing them within a quasi-military structure that demanded obedience and discipline. George Scott Railton, one of the movement's earliest leaders, recognized the power of this combination:

Now only admit that it is God Himself who so subdues and keeps in subjection those unruly spirits who never before submitted to any religious yoke whatever, and who now gladly present themselves, time after time, without hope of human reward, to be ordered about, to be kept in silence or told to speak at the will of a comparative stranger, and it cannot be questioned that The Army's system of organization and control has the conspicuous approval of God Himself. 84

Feminine religious virtues welded to a patriarchal structure served to intensify the hold that the early Army had over its soldiers and officers.

Social Environment

The efforts of sectarian groups to attract working-class men was a notable feature of mid to late-Victorian life. Such initiatives, however, tended to mask evangelicalism's declining presence in the broader society. Overall, Victorian social life revealed cracks in the evangelical canopy. With varying degrees of success, a growing number of English people challenged the evangelical emphases on church life, temperance, morality, and the ideal of womanhood. From this perspective, especially after 1880, the evangelical ethos was beginning to crumble. 85
Near the end of the nineteenth century, the evangelically-inspired focus on church life was waning. This had a lot to do with the commercialization of popular entertainment. Music halls, newspapers, trips to seaside resorts, and professional spectator sports provided alternatives to a social life centered around the church. Even the more fervent evangelical chapels did not grow as quickly as the population. The general decline of religion’s influence on life was further demonstrated by a 1902 survey which revealed that only one out of five Londoners was in church or chapel on a typical Sunday.

A second distinctive mark of evangelicalism was temperance. Many evangelicals saw alcohol as immoral; it undermined family life, character, religion, and the Protestant work ethic. But even here, evangelicalism was fighting a losing battle. First, many in the middle classes distanced themselves from the temperance movement; social drinking was an important part of Victorian lifestyles. Second, heavy drinking among the lower working classes was evident in England’s pubs and gin palaces.

Sexual purity was a third important component of the evangelical influence upon social life. Yet, its strict ethical code did not always reflect actual behavior. A prime example of this was Victorian England’s double sexual standard. Women were seen to be sexually chaste and passionless, whereas men were considered sexually impulsive. Thus, men were to be excused for engaging in premarital and extramarital sexual relations, but women were to remain faithful to one man. The women who violated this standard (e.g. prostitutes and girls seduced by boyfriends, older men, and employers) were considered ‘fallen’; they threatened society’s mores because of their failure to
fulfill their womanly role as the nation's moral guardians.\textsuperscript{92}

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the evangelical milieu was its contribution to gender relations. Along with biology, philosophy, economics, and tradition, it helped to construct what has become known as the ideal of womanhood.\textsuperscript{93} While found initially within the middle classes, it would become an effective shaper of societal values in general.\textsuperscript{94} Before addressing how even this evangelical tenet came under attack, it is important to highlight the three distinctive pillars of this gender system.

The ideal of womanhood was known chiefly for its domestic ideology or notion of separate spheres. By 1850, separate realms for men and women had become evident in the middle classes.\textsuperscript{95} Women were assigned to the private, domestic realm of the home while men were driven into the harsh, competitive workplace of the factory or office. As already noted, the idea of separate spheres could not easily be maintained for working-class women. In these cases, however, the ideology was re-created in the workplace; women would be given different tasks from men, usually in separate locations.\textsuperscript{96}

A second characteristic of the ideal of womanhood was the belief that women were morally superior to men. There were two important reasons behind this development. First, the feminization of religion reshaped attitudes about women: Eve the temptress became Eve the innocent victim.\textsuperscript{97} Now the female was seen to be naturally good, whereas the male was inherently evil. Second, the home became associated with moral virtue; it was a peaceful island of good amidst the immoral, public world of business.\textsuperscript{98} Women's connection with the home made them appear morally superior to
The final pillar supporting the image of the ideal of womanhood was sexual difference. Supported by science, philosophy, and religion, many Victorians believed that there were significant differences between male and female biology. These apparent physical dissimilarities became the basis of arguments for the intellectual and social differences between women and men. Men were seen to be rational, adventurous, independent, and assertive; these were attributes men needed in the world of business. In contrast, women were cast as intuitive, nurturing, dependent, altruistic, and noble; these were qualities believed to be essential for the motherly role in the home.

There is no question that the ideal of womanhood was the most enduring aspect of the evangelical ethos. In fact, it found its way into the twentieth century where it became a reality for a number of working-class women. Nevertheless, the ideal began to lose ground within mainstream social life near the end of the nineteenth century. First, a number of middle-class women began to justify a public role in society on the basis of moral superiority, thereby challenging the private/public dichotomy of this ideology. Second, debates about the appropriateness of the ideal of womanhood, known as the ‘Woman Question’, became more intense. A growing minority of women and men used the debate to call for an end to this oppressive image; they encouraged female higher education, marriage reform, and wider employment opportunities for women. Finally, during the mid 1890s, the image of the ‘New Woman’ began to replace the ideal of womanhood. Many saw the rise of the ‘New Woman’ as a rejection of marriage, motherhood, and sexuality, but for a growing number of women it provided a greater
freedom in morality, dress, leisure, and education. 

It is certainly true that evangelicalism molded much of nineteenth-century Britain’s social climate, but its effects were complex. It was at once tenuous (e.g. temperance, morality), trend-setting (e.g. church-going), and pervasive (e.g. the ideal of womanhood). Yet, by the turn of the twentieth century, evangelicalism would exhibit a fading impact upon mainstream life. This religious movement would hardly disappear, but its power would be contained largely within sectarian groups like the Salvation Army.

As the preceding pages demonstrate, a serious attempt to understand the Salvation Army must involve an analysis of its surrounding environment. This is all the more crucial when the context in question is the Victorian age. Although any historical period has its complexities, Victorianism seemed to have more than its fair share of them. It was a paradoxical era - a series of tensions spread across its economic, political, philosophical, religious, and social life. Perhaps best illustrated in the evangelicalism of its day, it left us with an ambiguous legacy that is yet to be fully understood.

Of prime significance in this thesis will be the extent to which these tensions were incorporated into the Salvation Army, whether at an institutional or a more interpersonal level. In particular, it pays close attention to the ambiguous nature of gender construction in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Britain. Two questions are imperative here: 1) Given the pervasiveness and enduring quality of Victorianism’s gender belief system among the lower classes, to what degree did Salvationists accept,
reject, or modify it?, and 2) Were evangelicalism’s tension-ridden theological tenets uncritically embraced by the Salvation Army, or were they redefined? The answers to these questions will point to the negative or positive correlation between Victorianism and Salvationism. In other words, they will reveal how much this religious body was a product of its age.

The next chapter begins to apply the foregoing theoretical and historical concerns to the life and thought of William Booth. More specifically, it provides a comprehensive and systematic analysis of his understanding of women’s roles and identity within the early Salvation Army. The history of Booth’s life, leading up to and including the formative years of this movement, provides the necessary setting for a survey of his attitudes and behavior toward women. This process seeks to disclose the solidity or fluidity of Booth’s thinking and actions in this area. Whether or not William ever arrived at ‘settled views’ on female ministry and women’s equality with men will be apparent by the end of the following chapter.


28. A detailed discussion of these measures can be found in Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today*, pp. 10-17, 32-37, 117-124, 151-152, 200-203; and Randle, *Understanding Britain*, pp. 111-119.


43. Parsons, "A Question of Meaning," p. 64.
44. Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today*, p. 86.


51. See, for example, 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

53. Gail Malmgreen is right to point out “that women took to the public platform on behalf of religion long before they were stirred by politics.” See Malmgreen’s “Introduction,” in Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930, ed. Gail Malmgreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 5.


59. Ibid.

60. Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism, p. 92.


65. Ibid.

66. In America, women within sectarian Methodist groups—known collectively as the Holiness Movement—fared better. Many of these churches allowed women to preach, and a few even ordained women. Even here, however, female preaching would be a rarity in the twentieth


88. Ibid., pp. 192-193. In contrast, the 1851 religious census had shown that approximately 40.5% of the British population attended church or chapel. See also Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, p. 149.


90. Ibid., pp. 311-318.


Chapter Three

William Booth and Women: Settled Views?

William Booth’s pivotal role in the founding and leadership of the Salvation Army gave him numerous opportunities to comment on and shape the function and identity of female officers. As the head of this autocratic organization, he had the authority to fashion the movement’s policies toward women. It is surprising, therefore, that scholars have never systematically documented his views on the opposite sex. At best, only highly selective aspects of his position on the subject have been presented. Put simply, there has been no comprehensive analysis of Booth’s perspective on feminine gender and sexual equality.

This chapter seeks to correct this deficiency by tracing William Booth’s attitudes and behavior toward women from his early life until shortly before his death in 1912. In particular, the historical themes outlined in the previous chapter are utilized here to provide answers to a number of questions. The overall issue to be addressed in the following pages is how Booth understood female ministry and sexual equality over the course of his lifetime. To what extent were his convictions about womanhood reflective of Victorianism and evangelicalism? Did he accept, reject, or modify the cultural and theological ambiguities of his age? How were Salvationist women affected by the choices he made in these areas? The answers to these questions require close attention to William Booth’s early life, Methodist background, and his subsequent development of the Salvation Army.
Early Life

William Booth was born of working-class parents, Samuel and Mary (Moss) Booth, in Nottingham, England on April 10, 1829. ¹ Having a loose connection with the Church of England, the Booths had their son baptized at Nottingham’s St. Mary’s Anglican church on April 12, 1829. Two years later, after the birth of William’s sister Emma, the family moved to the village of Bleasby, where Samuel rented a small farm. In late 1835 the Booths returned to Nottingham, and William was enrolled at a school run by a local educator, Mr. Biddulph.

In later life William Booth would describe his early childhood in Nottingham as “dark and unhappy”. ² These words aptly summarized a series of unfortunate events in his young life. Chief among these was Samuel Booth’s involvement in a series of risky ventures in the building trade; the volatility of the housing market soon left Samuel with more losses than gains. These unsuccessful business schemes caused the family a great deal of financial hardship. Because of Samuel’s economic troubles, William was taken out of school at the age of thirteen and apprenticed to a Nottingham pawnbroker. Sadly, William had to leave behind any hopes for a good education and assume a job that he would grow to hate. Added to these unsettling circumstances, the family was left destitute when Samuel Booth died in September 1842. Without any significant assets, William’s employment in the pawnshop became the family’s only stable source of income. In the end, William came face to face with the disquieting reality of poverty.
Fortunately, however, there were also a number of more positive influences working upon the young William Booth. In late 1842 William began to attend the Broad Street Wesleyan chapel on a regular basis, a church he had first been invited to by an elderly couple prior to his father's death. Over the next two years, William began to recognize the superficial nature of his relationship with God. Under the impact of Methodist revival meetings, Booth committed his life to God in 1844. This conversion experience signalled William's rejection of godless pursuits and his consecration to evangelistic work among the unsaved of England. Although still employed as a pawnbroker's assistant, Booth began holding evangelistic meetings in the streets and local cottages surrounding Nottingham. One of these small cottages was the setting of Booth's first sermon as a lay Methodist preacher.

It is quite possible that William Booth first came into contact with female preaching at these cottage meetings. While banned from a public speaking ministry in the Wesleyan chapels, sectarian Methodist women were a predominant part of English cottage religious life from the early to mid nineteenth century. Even if this was not the precise context of Booth's first exposure to female preaching, it is clear that he was unimpressed with the first woman preacher that he encountered after his conversion in 1844. Put simply, Booth disliked a certain unnamed female preacher's "masculine and dictatorial manner." Perhaps he believed that if women were to preach at all they must do so in a strictly feminine manner appropriate to their sex. Whether Booth opposed all female preaching at this time is not known.
The subject of female ministry would be raised more forcefully in the future, but in 1849 Booth's mind was filled primarily with economic concerns - he had been out of work for close to a year. The length of his unemployment was not unusual during the 1840s, which was a decade of general economic unrest in England. Believing that employment might be found in London, Booth moved there in the fall of 1849. Upon arrival in the English capital he had planned to stay with his sister Ann, but she and her husband had become alcoholics; William was, therefore, not welcome in their home. With nowhere else to turn, Booth had to settle for a job in the only trade he knew - work in a pawnbroker's shop in the Kennington Common area of London. The hours were demanding, so William's free time only amounted to Sundays and one evening each week.

In spite of a strenuous work schedule, William began to look for opportunities to preach at local Wesleyan chapels in London. After being assigned a place on the lay preaching plan, Booth soon discovered that this arrangement actually amounted to little time in the pulpit. Always the pragmatist, he began to realize that the streets of Kennington Common would provide him with more opportunities to preach. Booth therefore notified his circuit superintendent, the Reverend John Hall, of his desire to focus exclusively on 'open-air' preaching. This request, however, carried with it Booth's desire to resign from the local circuit's preaching plan, and this was something that Hall refused to allow. Just why Hall turned down Booth's apparently simple request is not clear, but it is possible that Hall did not relish the idea of trying to supervise an 'open-air' preacher. In any case, Booth's determination to engage in street ministry led to his expulsion from Wesleyan Methodism.
After being forced to leave the Wesleyan fold in 1851, Booth was asked to join the Reformers, a Methodist splinter group seeking spiritual renewal and democratic changes within mainstream Wesleyanism. William had never identified himself as a Reformer, but the offer to join this movement was not a complete surprise. He had attended some of their meetings, and leading Reformers had been impressed with Booth’s preaching abilities. One of these influential members was a wealthy shoe manufacturer, Edward Rabbits. In June 1851 he convinced Booth to begin preaching in Reform chapels. Incidentally, Rabbits funded William between April and June 1852. This financial backing allowed Booth to leave his employment at the pawnbroker’s shop and preach full-time for the first time in his life.

Booth’s association with Edward Rabbits proved significant in other ways as well. Two incidents in particular had an impact on William’s attitude toward female ministry. First, Rabbits persuaded Booth to attend a service in which a young lady, Miss Buck, preached the sermon. Unlike his past experience with a female preacher, William praised her efforts and vowed never again to oppose such female ministry. This suggests that prior to this time he had in fact been against female preaching. Moreover, it is important to note that at this stage William was not encouraging female preaching openly; this active endorsement would come much later. Second, Edward Rabbits introduced William to the woman who challenged his views on sexual equality and female preaching. This woman, of course, was Katherine Mumford - the future wife of William Booth.
Engagement and Early Ministry

Several months after joining the Reformers, William Booth preached at the Binfield Road Chapel in London, the church home of Catherine Mumford and her mother.\textsuperscript{11} Catherine's initial impressions of this young preacher were quite positive; she especially enjoyed his sermon, which was based on the New Testament text John 4:42. Edward Rabbits, in particular, was pleased to discover that Catherine had received this message favorably, because he considered her to be one of the best judges of sermons in London.\textsuperscript{12} Not long after this incident, William and Catherine were invited, along with other local Reformers, to a tea party at Rabbits' home. This more informal setting provided Rabbits with the opportunity to introduce Catherine personally to William. Hereafter, a mutual attraction between Catherine and William developed quickly, and on May 15, 1852 the young couple were engaged.

Just as William and Catherine's relationship was growing more stable, William's association with the Reformers was becoming more uncertain. By July 1852, Booth was no longer supported financially by Rabbits. According to one of Booth's biographers, John Ervine, a 'rift' developed between William on the one side, and Rabbits and the Reformers on the other: "The Reformers, in their fear of priestly domination, refused any authority to their minister, and William Booth was not, at any time in his life, easily able to subject himself to the rules of committees or councils."\textsuperscript{13} Booth's autocratic tendencies were not, however, the only reason why he left the Reformers. Theologian Roger Green argues additionally that Booth perceived that the Reform movement was unstable and its leadership greedy and self-serving.\textsuperscript{14} Overall, each of these factors played
a part in William and Catherine’s decision to leave this Methodist group.

With no prospects on the horizon, and very little money, Catherine persuaded her husband to inquire about a ministry within the Congregational Union.\textsuperscript{15} Catherine herself was no stranger to this denomination, having attended intermittently a local London Congregational chapel, under the leadership of the Reverend Dr. David Thomas, for a number of years. Furthermore, she was well aware of the fact that this religious body exuded a certain air of middle-class respectability in mid-nineteenth-century Britain.\textsuperscript{16} She wanted William to have a bright future in the ministry.

There was also some evidence that this church, established in 1831, had toned down its Calvinist doctrine and might ordain a Wesleyan.\textsuperscript{17} Clearly, individual congregations had the authority to do this if they so desired; ministers were chosen by the local chapel itself.\textsuperscript{18} For a short while this avenue of ministry was opened to Booth, and he began his training within this denomination. As things turned out, however, the Congregational Union’s Calvinist theology was still a central part of its teachings. Booth’s aversion to Calvinism, especially its doctrine of election (i.e., the belief that God chooses to save only certain people), coupled with his doubts about the viability of preaching Wesleyan views from the pulpit, forced him, rather quickly, to abandon this course of action.

An offer from a Reformers’ faction brought William back into Methodist circles in November 1852.\textsuperscript{19} He was given their circuit at Spalding, Lincolnshire. Overall, this was a short and uneventful appointment for Booth. One issue, however, did create a good
deal of friction between Catherine and William. During Booth’s stay in Spalding, they had their first serious disagreement over the equality of the sexes. This subject had been of great interest to Catherine Mumford prior to her involvement with William. Not surprisingly, therefore, she soon expressed her conviction to William that marriages would not be perfect until women were educated as men’s equals. In response, Booth contended that women were emotionally superior to men whereas men were intellectually superior to women. To reinforce his position he also quoted the aphorism that women had a fibre more in their hearts and a cell fewer in their brains. In sum, William was articulating one of the central aspects of Victorian Ideal Womanhood — sexual difference.

Marriage and Female Ministry

Months before her marriage to William Booth in June 1855, Catherine Mumford caused William once again to articulate his position on sexual equality and female ministry. By this stage he had left the Reformers and joined the Methodist New Connexion, an offshoot of Wesleyan Methodism. Booth’s evangelistic campaigns within this denomination kept him apart from Catherine for long stretches of time, so the young couple’s letters became important vehicles for expressing their views on a number of subjects, including gender equality and women’s ministry. These latter subjects were raised when Catherine wrote to William shortly before his April 10th birthday. Catherine expressed the viewpoint that a proper reading of scripture supported women’s mental and spiritual equality with men, thereby legitimizing female ministry within the Church. While not addressing herself personally, she felt that women were needed in public
church ministry. In closing, Catherine conveyed her desire, subject to William’s approval, to write on the subject again in the future.

Having read Catherine’s letter, Booth sent a swift reply on April 12, 1855. Altogether, his correspondence was structured around two broad themes: the question of women’s overall equality with men and the appropriateness of female ministry. In the first part of the letter, Booth honestly disclosed his views on equality:

From the first reading I cannot see anything in them to lead me for one moment to think of altering my opinion. You combat a great deal that I hold as firmly as you do - viz. her [woman’s] equality, her perfect equality, as a whole - as a being. But as to concede that she is man’s equal, or capable of becoming man’s equal, in intellectual attainments or prowess - I must say that is contradicted by experience in the world and my honest conviction. You know, my dear, I acknowledge the superiority of your sex in very many things - in others I believe her inferior. Vice versa with man.²³

Overall, William’s comments on women’s equality with men revealed an ambiguity in his thinking. On the one hand, he espoused the perfect equality of woman as a being. On the other hand, he maintained the notion of concrete inequality (i.e., men’s intellectual superiority to women). The belief that certain qualities were gender-based had itself formed the heart of William’s first known argument with Catherine.

The topic of female ministry comprised the latter half of William’s letter to Catherine. His thinking here revealed an unsettled perspective on the subject:

I would not stop a woman preaching on any account. I would not encourage one to begin. You should preach if you felt moved thereto: felt equal to the task. I would not
stay you, if I had power to do so. Altho’, I should not like it. It is easy for you to say my views are the result of prejudice; perhaps they are. I am for the world’s salvation; I will quarrel with no means that promises help.24

For the most part, the attitude reflected here was consistent with Booth’s remarks after hearing Miss Buck preach in the early 1850s. At that time he had vowed never again to oppose female preaching. Obviously, however, such a commitment was not an unqualified endorsement of female preachers. In this sense, Booth had not departed significantly from his earlier views. Yet, his pragmatic nature kept him from totally dismissing the viability of female ministry.

In time, Booth’s flexible spirit gradually led him to encourage female ministry more openly. This became apparent while William was the minister of Bethesda Chapel, a New Connexion parish that he had been appointed to in mid 1858. Three incidents between 1859 and 1860 indicated that Booth was now promoting female ministry on a practical level.25 In 1859 William encouraged his wife to accept an invitation from the chapel’s leadership to speak at an upcoming prayer meeting. At this stage, however, Catherine declined the offer. Not long after this, William stood behind Catherine’s efforts to write a pamphlet in response to a minister critical of women’s right to preach. It is worth noting that William was pleased with the results of this booklet and urged his wife to address the issue at length. Even more critical were Booth’s actions when his wife felt led to speak before the congregation on May 27, 1860. He not only allowed Catherine the opportunity to ‘say a word’, but he also announced that his wife would preach at the evening service. This was just the beginning of Catherine’s long and successful preaching ministry throughout England. These events, in sum, did not
necessarily demonstrate a significant departure from William Booth's thinking on equality, but they did reveal a clear development in the area of female ministry.

Female ministry became increasingly important within the Booth household when William and Catherine left the Methodist New Connexion in 1861. Booth had resigned his post when the Connexion's leadership had denied his request to become a full-time travelling evangelist within the denomination. After moving in with Catherine's parents in London, William and Catherine received numerous requests to conduct revival campaigns throughout England and Wales. The Booths' harnessed this revivalistic spirit, touring the United Kingdom as independent evangelists for the next four years. Moreover, wherever Catherine and William went, they shared the preaching. By 1864, the Booths were in such demand that they embarked on separate campaigns. In early 1865, Catherine's speaking engagements brought the family - which by now included six children - back to London.

Mission Work and the Birth of the Salvation Army

Catherine's preaching ministry in the affluent West End of London proved to be the catalyst for William's future work among London's poor. Among her audiences were middle-class gentlemen fervently involved in the evangelization of poverty-stricken East Londoners. Two of these philanthropists, Richard C. Morgan and Samuel Chase, became aware of William's past ministry after meeting Catherine. Morgan, in particular, was a member of the East London Special Services Committee, an evangelical organization arising out of the Home Mission Movement. It will be recalled from chapter.
two that Protestant revivalists, eager to reach the ‘heathen’ poor of urban England, had created this movement.

When one of the committee’s regular evangelists became ill, Morgan asked William to conduct a campaign in the Whitechapel area of East London. Booth accepted the offer, and on July 2, 1865 he began preaching in an area of London known largely for its squalor, crime, and despair. ³⁹ For devout Christians it was additionally a place where the “bulk of the population were totally ignorant and deficient of real religion, and altogether uninfluenced by existing religious organizations...” ³⁰ Booth’s venture into this daunting atmosphere was centered around a large, ragged tent pitched on an unused Quaker burial site. Alternating between the tent and Mile End Road, he held numerous nightly and weekend services for the poor.

In the beginning, neither Booth nor the East London Special Services Committee had any notion that he would devote the rest of his life to this area’s poor. ³¹ After a few weeks, however, Booth’s work was showing positive results. Consequently, the committee’s members seriously began to contemplate William Booth’s future among them, finances permitting. Even more important, William was beginning to sense that God was calling him to this ministry. Such a conviction grew stronger as Booth perceived the extent of East London’s spiritual poverty. True to his evangelical heritage, Booth felt an obligation to share the gospel with the ‘heathen’ masses of this area. Years later he recalled this experience in the following manner:

[T]he church and chapel congregation somehow or other lost their charm in comparison with the vulgar East-enders, and I was continually haunted with a desire to offer myself to Jesus Christ as an apostle for the heathen of East
London. The idea or heavenly vision or whatever you may call it overcame me, I yielded to it...³²

Therefore, late one night after a tent meeting, William returned home to tell his wife Catherine of his growing burden for the East End. According to Salvationist historiography, he had found his destiny.

By the end of August, William was aggressively pursuing the task of missionizing the lower classes of the East End. With Catherine’s support, who was still preaching in the West End, William formed the Christian Revival Association as a vehicle for his evangelistic goals. His sabbath ministry continued to revolve around the East London Special Services Committee’s tent. Soon after, however, this makeshift shelter, which had been blown over by the wind on numerous occasions, was torn beyond repair. Now Booth and his small band of followers began renting buildings to use for revival services. Aided by income from wealthy friends, the Evangelisation Society (a group financing many local missions), and Catherine’s preaching, William ‘invaded’ the East End with the gospel message.³³

At first, Booth had hoped to funnel new converts into existing churches. Such an arrangement, however, did not work for a number of reasons: 1) the poor would not go to the churches, 2) the churches did not want the poor, and 3) Booth needed some of these converts to help him run the mission.³⁴ These circumstances resulted, therefore, in the mission becoming essentially a church for the lower classes. This strategy helped to consolidate the Booths’ work. Between 1865 and 1868, the number of rented facilities increased. By 1869, the ministry’s widening scope demanded both more permanent quarters and a change in name.³⁵ The former necessity became a reality in October 1869;
William purchased an indoor market and turned it into a central mission hall and headquarters. The latter concern was solved when the mission's current title - the East London Christian Mission - was simply shortened to the Christian Mission in late 1869. This new name reflected the fact that the work had begun to extend beyond the East End of London. Both developments signalled the consolidation of Booth's missionary endeavors.

What was also becoming well-established in the Christian Mission was female ministry. The available evidence shows that women were assuming an increasing presence in the work of the Mission. As early as February 1870, the Christian Mission's Shoreditch Circuit listed Eliza Collingridge as its superintendent.\(^{36}\) This position put this woman over a number of men, an unusual occurrence in mid-Victorian Britain. In addition, the Christian Mission's constitution of 1870 had far-reaching implications for women. Section twelve of this organization's first-ever constitution stated in part: "Godly women possessing the necessary gifts and qualifications, shall be employed as preachers ... and they shall be eligible for any office, and to speak and vote at all official meetings."\(^{37}\) Altogether, these were further signs of William Booth's growing acceptance of female ministry.

At the same time, however, William Booth was moving toward authoritarian rule within the Christian Mission. The fairly democratic 1870 constitution was revised in 1875, a step that put much more power into Booth's hands as General Superintendent of the Mission. Undoubtedly because of Catherine's influence, the modified constitution did not give any General Superintendent the power to change the rights of women enshrined
in the 1870 document. In other words, the principles contained within section twelve of the old document were incorporated into the Deed Poll of 1875.  

Overall, the 1870 and 1875 constitutions gave women three distinct opportunities: to preach, to hold any office, and to participate in official meetings. Between 1870 and 1878 the Christian Mission was modestly successful at implementing these principles. First, the number of female preachers within the organization grew from a small handful in 1870 to comprise nearly half of the mission’s preaching staff by 1878. Second, a few women like Eliza Collingridge assumed command of Mission preaching stations. In fact, a few people left the Mission in 1876 because of what they considered to be unbiblical - the placing of women over men in certain instances. Finally, the percentage of eligible women voters at the Christian Mission’s annual conferences grew from 17.14% (1870) to 26% (1878) of the total voting membership. Even though men still dominated the most senior positions in the Christian Mission, these women’s roles did expand into areas usually reserved for men.

Female ministry continued to expand as William Booth transformed the Christian Mission into the Salvation Army. The movement toward what would become the Salvation Army took place in three stages between 1877 and 1880. Changes in the Mission’s semi-democratic power structure signalled the first major step toward a military system. At a Mission meeting in January 1877, William Booth proposed autocratic rule as the solution to the ineffectual committee system. This recommendation was ratified at the annual conference in June, after the following ultimatum from Booth to all Christian Mission members: “This is a question of confidence as between you and
me, and if you can't trust me it is no use for us to attempt to work together. *Confidence in God and me are absolutely indispensable both now and ever afterwards.* Hereafter, the Christian Mission was controlled solely by one man.

Not long after these structural alterations, the Christian Mission adopted a new name and military terminology. Essentially, this second phase of the Army's evolution reinforced the hierarchical arrangement that Booth had put in place. Military metaphors, which had been employed at the Mission's preaching station in Whitby as early as October 1877, became a characteristic feature of the denomination. Incidentally, Elijah Cadman, the head evangelist at the Whitby posting, had called women and men to join "The Hallelujah Army". Not only did he call himself "Captain", but he also designated William Booth as "General of the Hallelujah Army". By May 1878 Booth had institutionalized this kind of military symbolism, describing the Christian Mission as a Salvation Army. Within a short period of time this nascent religious body became explicitly militaristic: preaching stations became corps, preachers became officers, members became soldiers, new openings became invasions, and William Booth's title of General Superintendent was shortened to the title of General.

These developments in turn necessitated a new constitution. This third and final phase of the Salvation Army's genesis brought legal recognition to its emerging self-identity. The Foundation Deed of 1878, coupled with minor clarifications in 1880, sought to record the movement's history, purposes and theology. Even more important, it legitimized William Booth's power. He was recognized by statute as the founder and sole head of the Salvation Army. All future policies, structures, appointments, and procedures
were in the hands of William Booth alone.

Significantly, however, the Foundation Deed of 1878 did not include any references to women's ministry. In so doing, it departed strikingly from its own constitutional heritage. Unlike the 1870 and 1875 documents, the 1878 Deed was silent on the subject of women’s ministerial rights. Granted, women’s voting rights (as well as men’s) had become obsolete with Booth’s abandonment of democracy; however, women’s rights to hold any office and preach were theoretically possible within the new structure. Just why these rights were not enshrined in the new Deed Poll is not entirely clear.

One possible reason for such a serious omission has been presented by Army theologian Douglas Clarke: “The simple explanation is that the position of female ministry had become, beyond dispute, part of the overall ministry and function of the Army.” In short, he suggests that women’s ministry had become such a common feature of the organization that it did not need special mention in the Foundation Deed of 1878. Given the influx of young women into the movement between 1877 and 1878, this may indeed have been the rationale behind the constitution’s failure to mention women’s rights. What is also apparent, however, is that William Booth himself was confused about the Foundation Deed he helped to write; he was under the mistaken impression that the 1878 Deed gave women certain ministerial rights when in fact it did not even make a single reference to women. If Booth had ever felt that female ministry was an established part of the organization, then why did he continue to remind his officers of the need to uphold these supposed principles? In sum, the constitution’s silence on women, as well
as William Booth’s own assumptions on the issue, revealed a certain ambiguity regarding women’s place within the movement.

General Booth, Gender, and Equality

1878 to the late 1880s

The early Salvation Army’s policies and practices did, however, display less ambiguity surrounding the role of women. At the policy level this was illustrated by the publication of the Salvation Army’s first internal procedural manual, Orders and Regulations for The Salvation Army. Written under the guidance of William Booth in 1878, this document reaffirmed the Christian Mission’s belief that all offices and duties were open equally to both sexes: “[T]he Army refuses to make any difference between men and women as to rank, authority and duties ... [it] opens the highest positions to women as well as to men ...” 43 Moreover, early Salvationist practices were moving toward these goals. As mentioned earlier, by late 1878 female evangelists - hereafter called Hallelujah Lasses or officers - made up almost half of the emerging Army’s field personnel. Hallelujah Lasses were sent out in systematic fashion to open the Army’s work throughout England and the world.

These young women’s successes did not go unnoticed by William Booth. As early as April 1878 he could boast that “the prosperity of the work in every respect just appears more precisely at the very times when female preachers are being allowed the fullest opportunity.” 44 This sentiment was reiterated by Booth on a number of occasions, most
notably in 1880, when he was invited to address the Wesleyan Conference. Before this body, he identified female ministry as one of the key reasons for the Salvation Army’s progress.\(^5^0\) The pragmatism displayed by Booth in his 1855 letter to Catherine regarding women and ministry continued to shape his thinking here; he was willing to use any successful method – female ministry or otherwise – to win the world for God.

Building upon the pioneer efforts of its female and male officers, the Salvation Army experienced amazing growth between 1878 and 1886. Although it is true that the movement was beset by decline in the East End of London, as historian Norman Murdoch has argued, it was expanding rapidly elsewhere.\(^5^1\) In Britain, for instance, the Army moved into many towns and cities throughout the early 1880s. By the end of 1886, the Salvation Army had 2,271 officers and 1,039 corps in the United Kingdom. This represented a net increase of 2,183 officers and 989 corps since June of 1878.\(^5^2\) Increase also characterized the foreign field. Between 1880 and 1886, Salvationists commenced work in the following countries: the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Ceylon, Sweden, France, and South Africa. At the close of 1886 the movement had 1,921 officers and 747 corps abroad. Throughout this period, except for the East End of London, the Army was literally marching forward.\(^5^3\)

Often, such phenomenal growth was accompanied by a certain amount of persecution from both the middle classes and the working classes. Respectable Victorians usually confined their displeasure to verbal and printed assaults upon the Army’s methods and theology - criticisms which included the public roles given to Salvationist women (i.e., preaching and parading through the streets).\(^5^4\) Working-class
protest, however, tended to be more violent in nature. Certain elements within the working classes did not appreciate the Army’s condemnation of their lifestyles and habits, such as their drinking, smoking, fighting, and disdain for organized religion. Particularly in the south of England, “Skeleton Armies” were formed out of working-class and local brewery interests to physically attack the Salvationist newcomers.

Success and persecution both helped to push the early Army toward a more detailed exposition of its theological tenets. The movement’s simple doctrines, recorded in the Foundation Deed of 1878, provided an inadequate basis upon which to defend Army practices and train new recruits. Consequently, William Booth - aided undoubtedly by his wife Catherine - laid down the essentials of Army theology and practice in 1881. The result was the publication of the Salvation Army’s first-ever doctrinal manual, *The Doctrines and Discipline of The Salvation Army*. It explained the Army’s understanding of the typical Christian themes of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin and salvation, as well as its more distinctive emphases.

One of the book’s purposes was to articulate the Salvation Army’s biblical justification for female ministry. Here, William Booth was influenced heavily by his wife Catherine; he drew material from her previous work in this area. The 1881 text put forward many reasons for the legitimacy of female ministry, but it is possible to summarize them under four broad categories. First, William Booth argued that St. Paul’s injunction to the Corinthian Christians regarding women’s silence in the church (1 Cor. 14:34) referred only to their exclusion from debates, such as the ones that often took place in the Jewish assemblies. He did not believe that this passage was meant to keep
women from preaching or testifying for Christ, since Paul described elsewhere the
manner in which they could do so (1 Cor. 11). He did not, however, deal with 1 Timothy
2:11-12, another passage often used to exclude women from preaching. Second, Booth
cited numerous examples of women who had been leaders and preachers in the Bible,
thereby suggesting that such a practice was authorized biblically (Judg. 4: 4, 10-11; 1
Kings 22:14-20; Acts 21:8-9; Rom. 14:12, 16:3, Phil. 4:3). Third, two additional New
Testament passages were put forward to prove that Christ and the Holy Spirit had
commissioned women to preach (Matt. 28: 9-10; Acts 2:16,18). Finally, Booth provided
the following interpretation of Galatians 3:28 to complete his defense: "The Holy Spirit,
in Galatians 3:28, states that there is neither male nor female, but that all are one in Jesus
Christ, thereby affirming that, in the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of Christ’s
Kingdom, all differences on account of sex are abolished."

The preceding passages provided, in sum, the rationale for the early Salvation Army’s employment of women.

While it is not clear that the foregoing appeal to Galatians 3:28 was taken to mean
the abolition of all sexual differences in the secular realm, such a position did signify a
spiritual equality between Salvationist women and men. Even with this seemingly narrow
understanding of gender equality, the 1881 doctrinal manual displayed a radical edge
within the context of Victorian spiritual life. Not only were female officers able to
preach in the streets and in the pulpit, but they were also allowed to serve communion at
Army corps; both of these activities were traditionally reserved for men. If indeed all
were one in Christ, as Galatians 3:28 claimed, then “outward, embodied sexual identity
[was] irrelevant to religious ritual.”

Ironically, however, the Army’s reasoning here
soon was used as a basis for abandoning these outward ceremonies (i.e., the sacraments)
altogether. Spiritual unity made such outward rituals unnecessary. Even though
communion ceased in Salvationist circles by early January 1883, female officers had left
their mark as the first Englishwomen to serve communion in a sectarian church setting,
and possibly the entire Victorian church.59

The public roles given to women officers and soldiers proved to be a hindrance
when the Church of England proposed a union with the Salvation Army in 1882.60 A few
Anglican bishops were sympathetic to the Army’s work and were anxious to capitalize
on their seeming success with the poor. These churchmen hoped that Booth would agree
to place the Salvation Army under the auspices of the Anglican establishment.
Negotiations toward such a union were guarded at best, with issues like female ministry
proving to be formidable obstacles. Essentially, the Church of England was not willing to
allow female officers to engage in prominent public roles such as preaching and serving
the sacraments. At most, Anglican officials offered the possibility that some women
might become deaconesses, a position inferior to women’s role in the Army. By early
1883 it was agreed by both sides that any kind of union was impossible.

In 1886 William Booth issued the first edition of his Orders and Regulations for
Field Officers of The Salvation Army. This guidebook for corps officers reiterated the
Army’s official stance on women’s rights; it contained a number of themes that had been
present in the 1878 manual for soldiers and earlier Christian Mission documents.
Although the book reflected an obvious androcentric bias - masculine pronouns were
assumed to include men and women - it did express an official commitment to the
equality of the sexes in the assignment of Army responsibilities, ranks, and power.
In The Army men and women are alike eligible for all ranks, authorities, and duties, all positions being open to both alike. In these Orders, therefore, the words ‘man,’ ‘he,’ or ‘his,’ must be understood to refer to persons of either sex unless otherwise indicated or evidently impossible.\textsuperscript{61}

Booth’s commitment here to sexually equitable principles of responsibilities and advancement, unlike his 1881 doctrinal handbook, seemed less susceptible to a purely spiritualized rendering of equality. The inclusion of words like ‘rank’ and ‘authority’ carried secular overtones. Women were, in theory, being offered equal opportunities alongside men to acquire power and status, possibilities that went far beyond the equal sharing of duties like preaching. Did this statement signal Booth’s commitment to a wide range of practices free of gender discrimination?

Clearly, the available evidence suggests that William Booth never really fostered a broad interpretation of the 1886 statement. The Salvation Army engaged in obvious gender-biased practices with respect to married and single officer women. First, married officer women had a dubious status within the movement. In the early 1880s, for instance, these women were expected to be involved in the work of the corps, but their names were not recorded in officer statistics.\textsuperscript{62} Officially, married women officers were joint officers with their husbands, but in practice officer rights resided primarily with the husband and only secondarily with the wife. Furthermore, the husband received the appointments (i.e., changes in job responsibilities) and all salaries -when available.\textsuperscript{63} Second, the early Army had a policy of paying single male officers up to a third more than their single female officer counterparts.\textsuperscript{64} All of these circumstances raised questions about the Army’s level of commitment to its own policies on gender equality.
Inequities in the area of salaries did not seem to trouble William Booth, but he did express some concern over the problematic status of married officer women within the movement. At a May 1888 meeting he identified the heart of the issue: "[N]early every week there are two officers turned into one...by some strange mistake in our organization, the woman doesn’t count." Appearing dissatisfied with this situation, William Booth stated that married women officers should be counted the same as - perhaps even more than - their spouses. In the end, however, Booth did little to change policies and practices that discriminated against women.

Throughout the late 1870s and the 1880s, William Booth’s overall treatment of women was less than clear. On the one hand, some of his policies, practices, and commentary seemed to suggest a commitment to equitable and liberating roles and identities for Salvationist women. His encouragement of female ministry, occasional willingness to put women over men, the 1878 and 1886 positional statements, and some of his written comments on the subject of women were all trends in this direction. On the other hand, his other policies, actions, and attitudes were vague at best and oppressive at worst for Army women. The exclusion of women’s rights from the Army’s constitution, inequitable pay scales, and the problematic status of married officer women all seemed to suggest limitations upon and inconsistencies in William Booth’s understanding of women’s place in the organization. Most puzzling of all, however, was Booth’s failure to address such problems adequately, given his autocratic hold over all Salvationists and all policies and practices.
William Booth’s views on women continued to be hard to reconcile with official Army principles after the death of his wife Catherine in 1890. In an address given in late 1890, Booth implied that women were the weaker sex, different from and subordinate to men. He believed that the Salvation Army was in need of the “more tender, feminine side of human character, as well as the more robust and masculine element” and that woman had “taken her place with man in the new kingdom as a helpmeet for [italics mine] him.” The emphases here upon man’s superior strength (i.e., robust element), gender differences (i.e., feminine and masculine elements) and women’s implied subordination (i.e., woman as a helpmeet for man) tended to betray the supposed gender equality of official Army Orders and Regulations.

Further evidence of William Booth’s vague position on women appeared in his 1890 publication entitled In Darkest England and The Way Out. While known chiefly for its advocacy of city, farm, and overseas colonies for England’s poor or “submerged tenth”, this book also revealed Booth’s attitudes toward women. It was a social commentary that illustrated progressive stances on social issues related to women and conservative views on women’s roles in Victorian society. In short, the book aptly disclosed the subtleties in Booth’s thinking on the subject of women.

Perhaps the best example of Booth’s liberal-mindedness towards issues affecting women lay in his comments on Victorian prostitution. He criticized a society that placed the most burdensome consequences of prostitution on women, while leaving the male
perpetrators unscathed:

The male sinner does not, by the mere fact of his sin, find himself in a worse position in obtaining employment, in finding a home, or even in securing a wife... It is an immense addition to the infamy of this vice in man [italics mine] that its consequences have to be borne almost exclusively by woman. 68

Booth’s critique was in essence an attack on the Victorian sexual double standard. This ideology held virginity as the goal of both sexes, but “women were punished more severely than men for infringing it since, unlike men, they were said to lack sexual desires, and their action could, therefore, result only from their vanity or their greed for money.” 69 Furthermore, prostitutes were the ultimate female symbols of such sexual transgression. In this light, Booth’s views were progressive: not only did he condemn the inequitable consequences of this punitive system for women, but he also went out of his way to concentrate on the sinfulness of the male participant in prostitution.

Other parts of In Darkest England and The Way Out were, however, socially conservative on the subject of women. First, Booth clearly was annoyed with nineteenth-century England’s educational system because of its failure to train “the mothers of the future” in the art of “how to bake a loaf or wash their clothes.” 70 Domestic training for women was seen by William Booth to be especially important in his emigration scheme to alleviate poverty; he proposed that emigration criteria include baking skills for women and farming skills for men. 71 Second, Booth believed that the factory system in England destroyed home-like virtues and duties - women in factories did not know how to bake, wash clothes, and sew. 72 Moreover, he seemed to imply a relationship between women’s absence in the home and the women’s rights movement: “Talk about woman’s rights, one
of the first of woman’s rights is to be trained to her trade to be queen of her household, and mother of her children.” Overall, Booth felt that women’s chief responsibility lay in the Victorian private realm of the home rather than the public sphere.

One obvious question arises from William Booth’s remarks about a woman’s role in the home: If he believed that a woman’s primary place was in the home, then how did he reconcile such views with his wife Catherine’s public role as a female preacher? The answer to this question was provided by Booth himself in an important address that he gave in 1891. Speaking before a large audience in the Australian city of Melbourne, he stressed that Catherine had in fact never put her preaching responsibilities over her home duties:

She ministered ever to my needs; ... She looked after my house; her public duties never interfered with those at home. In this relation I never met with any one who was her equal; she could do everything from the bottom to the top of a house ... I mention this because some people have a notion that when a woman is engaged in public work she is bound to neglect her fireside duties. My darling wife was a contradiction to such a notion.

These comments underscored the double standard that women had to contend with; women who wished to work outside the home still had to carry the bulk of domestic responsibilities. Moreover, Booth seemed to be suggesting that female ministry was subordinate to a woman’s role in the home.

It was within this context that William Booth, in the same address, praised his wife’s efforts as a preacher and role model for other Christian women. Of even greater significance, however, was Booth’s recollection of his earliest arguments with Catherine.
on the subject of sexual equality. As he told the Melbourne audience:

I had a sort of notion, *which I hold still to some extent* [italics mine], that woman was in some senses inferior to man, though in other senses his superior. I used to put it in this phraseology: that women have a fibre more in their hearts, and a cell less in their brains.\textsuperscript{76}

Contrary to the views of official Salvationist historiography, popular writers, and some recent scholarly research, William Booth’s revelation here casts doubt upon the assumption that he was ever completely won over to his late wife’s position on women.\textsuperscript{77} Granted, William had changed his initial views on female ministry by 1859 or 1860, but the evidence present here and elsewhere in this chapter indicates that a similar development on the subject of sexual equality was less clear.

The ambiguities surrounding sexual equality were not merely because of Booth’s adherence to the Victorian notion of sexual difference. What was also working against any encouragement of gender equality and liberation was the Salvation Army’s autocratic and patriarchal structure. Despite the fact that democratic impulses were spreading throughout late-nineteenth-century England, the Salvation Army’s center of power was increasingly in the hands of William Booth.\textsuperscript{78} Asked to defend these totalitarian tendencies during an 1894 interview, Booth likened the Army to a family:

> I stand in the relation of father to my people; the children will resemble their parents. My position and my duty have made me their instructor; my teaching has been, and, still is, accepted, followed, and repeated until it reaches every soldier in the most distant corps ...\textsuperscript{79}

Even if Booth was overstating his power over Salvationists, it is highly significant that he described the Army’s structure in such patriarchal language. Booth was the Army’s father, and each soldier was his spiritual son or daughter.\textsuperscript{80} This ‘father-child’ symbolism
denoted a relationship of unequal power; child-like soldiers were dependent on Booth the father-figure. Just how such an arrangement might support gender autonomy and equality within the Salvation Army was uncertain at best.

What allowed William Booth to justify this paternalistic social order? Part of the explanation obviously lay in his charismatic personality and seeming success as a leader. Less evident, but equally important, was how the doctrine of the Holy Spirit served to support Booth's hold over soldiers and officers. He explained the loyalty of his soldiery by referring to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Army" and his leadership:

The loyalty of my Soldiers implies no mental servility, no soul-bondage. They believe in being influenced by the same Holy Spirit that influences their General, and in being led by the leader whom God shall raise up for them; and believing that God has raised me up to be their Leader, it is their joy to accept my direction.  

In short, Booth believed that his autocratic control of the Salvation Army was God-inspired. Overall, he implied that submission and obedience to the Holy Spirit meant submission and obedience to William Booth. Given the fact that Salvationist soldiers were to be led by the Holy Spirit, and that Booth was influenced in a special way by the Spirit to be the founder and leader of the Army, to disobey William Booth was to rebel ultimately against the Holy Spirit. This intimate connection between the Holy Spirit and Booth helped both to reinforce the paternalistic structure of the Army, and raise doubts about the possibility of personal freedom and gender equality within the movement.

Additional concerns about the possibility of gender equality and freedom within the Salvation Army centered around the increasingly problematic status of married
officer women. In late 1896 William Booth tackled the problem of their declining public presence in the movement. Once again his comments on the subject were vague. On the one hand, he criticized the practice among officer men of relegating "their wives to little more than the discharge of their household duties ... or at best only [using] them as mere subordinates." Calling this situation unjust, Booth urged officers to provide their wives with "fair platform opportunities". On the other hand, Booth contributed to the ambiguous position of married officer women by here merely identifying them as "wives". In contrast, he consistently referred to the men in this article as "officers" or by rank (i.e., Captain). The implication was that married officer women had less status than their officer husbands. Furthermore, Booth left additional doubts about marital equality in the Salvation Army by giving the husbands the responsibility for finding their wives more public work. In spite of his 1888 commitment to counting women more than men, Booth demonstrated in practice the reverse. His confusing comments here only reinforced the uncertainties surrounding women's roles and identity in the Army.

The place of senior married women officers within the Salvation Army was also unclear. This was demonstrated clearly by the publication of William Booth's policy guide for high-ranking officers in 1899. Under the title of Orders and Regulations for Territorial Commissioners and Chief Secretaries of The Salvation Army, this manual described, among other things, the kinds of responsibilities that a husband and wife could undertake in senior leadership. Its major ambiguity centered around the opportunities it afforded women. The book allowed for the possibility of both spouses holding jointly the rank of commissioner, but it prohibited such an arrangement for lower-ranking chief secretaries and their wives. A chief secretary's wife was to derive her rank from her
husband (i.e., Mrs. Colonel etc.), and she was not allowed to share "the duties of her husband, in the sense of being appointed joint Secretary with him." Why did Booth consider equality between spouses acceptable in the former case, but unacceptable in the latter instance? The answer seems to lie with his family. Since only Booth daughters ever benefited from the position of joint commissioner with their husbands, it is not unfair to conclude that William merely wanted to justify officially a practice that was common within his own family. Clearly, if Booth had been committed to gender equality he would have given the rank of joint commissioner to those other than his children, and he would have promoted the equitable sharing of the chief secretary's roles. Yet he never showed a propensity to do either.

the 1900s

In September 1901 William Booth wrote to his soldiers on the subject of women's opportunities in the Salvation Army. His thoughts on the issue once again raised questions about his true position on gender equality. The first part of the letter stressed that "married officers' wives" should assume a larger presence at the corps level, especially on the platform. Referring to platform ministry (i.e., preaching, singing etc.), Booth went on to say: "Here at least shall there be Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. For on that blessed sanctified elevation there is neither male nor female. You are all one in Christ Jesus." The words 'here at least' seemed to suggest that equality beyond the circumscribed boundaries of the platform was less important. Yet the latter portion of Booth's letter seemed to support a much wider interpretation of equality. Quoting from his Orders and Regulations for Staff Officers, Booth now referred to women's right to
“hold any position of authority or power in The Army, from that of a Local Officer to that of The General.”99 Taken alone, these latter comments indicated a clear commitment to gender equality in the Salvation Army; however, they appeared less than clear in relation to Booth’s earlier tacit approval of an equality limited to the platform.

What kind of equality did William Booth favor? Further evidence that he leaned heavily in the direction of an equality limited largely to the corps platform was apparent in a letter that he addressed to soldiers two months later. Entitled “More About Women’s Rights”, this correspondence focused on women’s right to speak, sing, and pray in public. After praising the effects of this kind of ministry in the Army and in his own life, Booth indicated that the responsibility for exercising these gifts lay with women themselves: “We have by God’s blessing opened the door of opportunity for woman, and made the platform [italics mine] for the exercise of her gifts. It is now for the sisters themselves to claim their privilege, to enter the door, and to fill the position.”90 In closing, Booth exhorted mothers to teach their children - especially the boys - the “duty and pleasure of treating woman as the equal of man...”91 This appeal, however, was made within the context of women’s spiritual equality with men - it was on the platform that equality was to be promoted.

Beyond the parameters of spiritual ministry, equality was an elusive concept in the early Army. It was especially hard to define within the marriage relationship. On the one hand, William Booth seemed to promote egalitarian marriage relationships. Booth’s Letters to Salvationists on Religion for Every Day, published in 1902, condemned marital arrangements which turned a wife into her husband’s property or servant.92 Booth argued
that such practices were wrong because they ignored women's capabilities, forced them to be subservient to men, and led children to show disrespect towards their mothers. In their place, Booth advocated partnership marriages, which he felt must be based upon equality: "The husband must regard his wife as his equal, and treat her accordingly ... The husband is responsible for giving his wife a position in the home answering to this equality ... If she is his equal, let him treat her as he would like others to treat him."^93 Here, William Booth appeared to be supporting sexual equality in marriage.

On the other hand, however, Booth also believed in a husband's headship over his wife. His acceptance of this position, which he felt was rooted in scripture and common sense, seriously undermined any notion of egalitarian domestic relations.^94 A husband was to assume complete, albeit loving, control over his household:

> The head of the home is responsible for its good government. He must settle the rules and practices which are to prevail in it. While he gives every possible and kind consideration to his wife's wishes, it is his duty to regulate what goes on there, the visitors who are to be welcomed, the books which are to be read, the money that is to be spent, and many other important, if smaller, matters which will occur to all who have homes of their own. The true wife will accept this principle.\(^95\)

A "true wife" was expected to obey her husband unconditionally.\(^96\) While Booth claimed to abhor marital practices which placed women in a submissive and demeaning light, his kinder version of marriage (i.e., rooted in love) had the same effects upon women. The belief that the husband was the master and guardian of the home, which for Booth included mastery over a wife's body, was yet another expression of male dominance and female subservience.\(^97\) Altogether, male headship was incompatible with William
Booth’s espousal of a partnership marriage founded upon equality.

Male headship within Salvationist families had ramifications at the corps, administrative, and constitutional levels of the Army. First, a married woman’s role in the corps tended to be dictated more by her husband’s position on female ministry than by any official policies on the subject. Second, apart from Booth’s own married children, officer couples rarely received an appointment where the wife held a position equal to or higher than her husband’s responsibilities. As already noted, the married man typically received the appointment while the wife was usually left with a subordinate job under her husband. Finally, a 1904 amendment to the Salvation Army’s constitution - a change sanctioning the creation of a High Council to elect a new General in the event of a serving General’s unfitness for office - discriminated against married officer women. Senior women officers holding commands or commissions in the same country as their spouses could be members of the Council, but voting privileges favored the husband: “One vote ... shall be given by the husband as he may think fit if he alone is present or both are present and shall be given by the wife as she may think fit only if she alone is present.” In the end, William Booth’s espousal of male headship had detrimental effects upon women far beyond the domestic front. Just as a growing number of women officers in the Army were getting married, many of their rights to equitable treatment in the movement were being undermined.

What also threatened women’s fair treatment in relation to men was William Booth’s acceptance of equality and difference. From one direction he seemed to foster women’s equality with men. In the Salvation Army, Booth argued, women could “hold
any position of authority or power ... from that of a Local Officer to that of The General.”101 Telling his senior officers to treat “women as being equal with men in all the social relations of life,”102 he also reminded them that “no woman is to be kept back from any position of power or influence merely on account of her sex.”103 Near the end of his life, Booth boasted that the Army had “welcomed [woman] to the platform and to the council chamber [and had] set before her an open door to every position of power and usefulness in [its] ranks.”104 Viewed in isolation, these statements affirmed a commitment to gender equality in the organization.

From the other direction, however, William Booth emphasized sexual difference. He believed that men possessed superior strength and decision-making abilities while women held a greater capacity for love, endurance, and perception.105 These avowed gender traits translated into less than equal relationships and opportunities between women and men. First, men’s purportedly superior strength and volition encouraged women’s passive dependence upon men. A married man, Booth believed, was called upon to “champion [his wife’s] interests, fight her battles, watch over her soul, and even die ... on her behalf.”106 Furthermore, only rarely did Booth portray women as anything but wives, mothers, and daughters - all of which implied women’s dependence on men.107 Second, the belief that women had special gifts not shared by men tended to exclude women from the center of Army power and administration. Stereotypically feminine traits like love and endurance (i.e., longsuffering) were of secondary importance to an institution that associated good decision-making abilities and aggressiveness with masculinity. Accordingly, Booth advocated the creation of special posts for women so that they could fulfill their unique abilities.108 What Booth never appreciated, however,
was how an emphasis on gender differences helped to create and reinforce gender inequality in the Army. The ideology of ‘equal and different’ or sexual complementarity was self-defeating and held troubling consequences for all Salvationist women.

Did William Booth ever substantially change his views on female ministry and sexual equality? It is clear that Booth’s position on female ministry had changed significantly since his early ministry in Nottingham and pre-marital arguments with his wife Catherine. Even if Booth’s notion of female ministry tended to be centered around the pulpit, clearly he had moved from opposition and indifference to an open encouragement of female preaching, testifying, and praying in public. In so doing, Booth’s actions helped to expand women’s roles in a way that - albeit unintentionally - challenged the public/private spheres of Victorian society. It seems, however, that William Booth’s views on sexual equality had changed very little from his youth. He still justified gender-based distinctions on the basis of sexual difference, even if his official principles said otherwise.

It could be said that William Booth shared in the paradoxical nature of Victorianism. Overall, his views on women were both radical and conservative for nineteenth-century England. He advocated female ministry and male headship, gender-blind policies and sexual difference, and equality alongside authoritarian paternalism. Furthermore, he fought Victorian views on sexual standards and women’s role in the church while maintaining the essential nineteenth-century stereotype of the mother in the home. All in all, this created an ambiguous reality for women in the Salvation Army.
Booth's cultural and theological background help to explain his ambiguous views on women. Culturally, he was the product of Victorianism. To varying degrees, William Booth accepted the three pillars of Ideal Womanhood. First, the belief that women possessed unique abilities was an expression of sexual difference and its accompanying gender roles. Second, Booth's emphasis upon a woman's home duties - especially as a wife and mother - was an example of the notion of separate spheres for women and men. Finally, Booth's portrayal of women as "angels" who possessed a great capacity for love was reflective of the ideology that women were morally superior to men.109

Theologically, Booth was a product of evangelicalism. It was out of this religious environment that he first became exposed to female preaching. This theological heritage, out of which William met his wife Catherine, created the conditions necessary for his ultimate acceptance of female ministry in the Salvation Army. At the same time, however, Booth was also influenced by evangelicalism's insistence upon male headship within the home. Biblical injunctions on a wife's responsibility to submit to her husband (e.g. Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22-24) were still valid, unlike the commands that seemed to indicate women's silence in the church (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:34-36). Booth never did appreciate this glaring inconsistency.

The acceptance of domestic inequality (male headship) side by side with spiritual equality (female ministry) created an enormous tension in the Salvation Army. Which side of the equation was to take precedence? Booth's attitudes and behavior toward women suggested that female ministry, while certainly valid, was subordinate to the husband's rulership in the home. Even when married women did assume a public role, it
was as wives, mothers and daughters rather than as autonomous individuals fully equal with men. William Booth may have institutionalized female ministry in the Salvation Army, but he also shaped an ambiguous cultural and theological heritage that led to a carefully circumscribed female ministry on the practical level. Women seldom experienced equality beyond the platform.

To what extent did other early Salvationist men contribute to the ambiguous legacy left by William Booth? Did they merely reinforce his Victorian and evangelical beliefs and practices, or did they offer an alternative perspective on women? The next chapter analyzes the written comments of male officers between the 1870s and 1930, paying close attention to their personal commentary and official statements on feminine gender and sexual equality. It places these assumptions about womanhood within the context of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century British society. How these beliefs affected female ministry and leadership in the Salvation Army is of special significance here. Overall, the pages ahead continue to assess the degree to which such attitudes, and the practices that followed from them, were consistent with the movement’s professed commitment to sexual equality.


13. Ibid., p. 61.


17. Murdoch, Origins of the Salvation Army, p. 27.


21. The Methodist New Connexion was established in 1797 when certain individuals within Wesleyanism felt the need for greater lay power and chapel autonomy. William Booth joined the Connexion in February 1854. For a brief history of this religious body, see Green, Catherine Booth: A Biography, pp. 59-62.


24. Ibid.


34. Booth, “How We Began,” in Twenty-One Years’ Salvation Army, p. 22.


36. Ibid., p. 271.


39. Pamela Jane Walker notes that 5 out of the 13 preachers on the Shoreditch Circuit in 1870 were women. See her “Pulling the Devil’s Kingdom Down: Gender and Popular Culture in the Salvation Army, 1865-1895,” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1992), p. 118. This arrangement, however, was not reflective of the mission as a whole. Moreover, these female preachers were not necessarily paid employees of the Mission. The circumstances were different by September 1878. At this time paid women preachers assumed 41 of the 91 station assignments. See Robert Sandall, The History of The Salvation Army, vol. 2 (1950; reprint, New York: The Salvation Army, 1979), pp. 304-305.


41. There were 29 men and 6 women at the 1870 conference, while there were 105 men and 37 women at the 1878 conference. See Christian Mission Minutes, 1st Conference, June 15-16, 1870; and Christian Mission Minutes, 8th Conference, August 5-7, 1878.


44. Ibid., pp. 228-230.

45. Ibid., pp. 287-292.


47. William Booth cites these supposed rights in his Orders and Regulations for Staff Officers of The Salvation Army (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1904), p. 8.


51. Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army*, pp. 113-145. Murdoch’s broader claim that “by 1886, the Salvation Army’s growth had come to a halt in England” (p. 113) is much less clear. In 1886 alone, the British operations of the Army increased by 491 officers and 237 corps. See Anon., *The Advance of The Salvation Army in 1886* (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1886), p. 9. Moreover, by mid June 1888 the Army’s British Territory had opened 278 new corps and had gained an additional 956 officers. See Anon., *All About The Salvation Army* (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1888), p. 7. These figures hardly suggest that the movement was entering into a period of stagnation by 1886. Even more importantly, Murdoch fails to appreciate the fact that this growth occurred at the same time that the Army was sending British officers all over the world to open new corps. In spite of tight resources at home, the Salvation Army still managed to expand. Murdoch’s argument may have weight when applied to the period after 1888, but it seems less applicable to the period before this date. In any case, his argument fails to account for the growth that did occur.


57. Ibid., p. 110.


66. Ibid.


71. Ibid., p. 84.

72. Ibid., pp. 74, 243.

73. Ibid., p. 243.

74. See also suggestions of this gender ideology in William Booth, Letters to Salvationists on Religion for Every Day (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1902), pp. 230-231, 296, 301, 303, 316; and The Founder’s Messages to Soldiers: During Years 1907-8 (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1921), pp. 182, 184.


76. Booth, “Mrs. Booth as a Woman and a Wife,” p. 510. See also Booth, Letters to Salvationists on Religion for Every Day, p. 292.


78. Murdoch, Origins of the Salvation Army, p. 100.


81. William Booth, A Letter from the General to the Officers of The Salvation Army Throughout the World on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday (London: The Salvation Army,

82. “Fifty Years’ Salvation Service,” p. 2.


84. Ibid.


86. William Booth, Orders and Regulations for Territorial Commissioners and Chief Secretaries of The Salvation Army (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1899), pp. 10-13, 144.

87. Ibid., pp. 143-144.


89. Ibid.


91. Ibid.


93. Ibid., pp. 290, 292.

94. Ibid., p. 286.

95. Ibid., pp. 285-286.

96. Ibid., pp. 314-316.

97. Ibid., p. 296.

98. Norman H. Murdoch, “Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth,” Church History, 53, 3 (September 1984): 359; Coutts, No Discharge In This War, pp. 47-246.


100. Horridge, The Salvation Army, p. 80.


Chapter Four

Feminine Gender and Salvationist Men: 1870s-1930

The period extending from the 1870s to the 1920s was, in a number of ways, an era of progress for British women. Feminists addressed society’s sexual double standard, women’s economic dependence in the family, and societal assumptions about sex roles. In addition, many women, both middle class and working class, were involved in the fight for female suffrage, an issue which resulted in militant campaigning prior to the First World War. Altogether, these collective actions led to some key parliamentary reforms between 1870 and 1928: married women’s control over their personal assets, the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, female suffrage, divorce reform, widows’ pensions, and access to the professions, parliament, and higher education.

Legislative victories of this nature were very important milestones for British women, but they did not radically alter the average person’s assumptions about femininity. While it was true that specific feminine labels began to change after 1900, the underlying gender beliefs remained intact. The dominant Victorian notions of the “Perfect Lady” and the “Angel in the house” gradually became associated with “mothercraft” and “housewifery” in the early twentieth century, but these ostensibly new constructions still rested upon some aspect of Victorian sexual difference, female superiority, and separate spheres for women and men. Notwithstanding their brief experience with traditionally male jobs during the First World War, women throughout this period were defined in terms of marriage and motherhood. Poor pay, limited job opportunities, and marriage bars - designed to prevent women from combining marriage
and a career - only reinforced the dominant conviction that women belonged in the home. In sum, women were becoming legislatively emancipated at the same time that cultural beliefs and practices sought to restrict their horizons.

Progress and restriction were also themes in the development of women's roles in the Salvation Army between the 1870s and the 1920s. Theoretically, a female Salvationist possessed the "right ... to an equal share with man in the great work of publishing salvation to the world ... [as well as the right to] any position of authority or power in the Army." Throughout the period in question, the Army's official regulations and pronouncements claimed that gender was not a determining factor in an officer's advancement through the ranks. In reality, however, women encountered beliefs and practices which carefully sought to circumscribe their public position in the movement. Cultural and theological assumptions, working in conjunction with institutional policies, ensured that the Salvation Army's expansion to six continents did not coincide with an enlargement of its women's roles and responsibilities.

This chapter highlights how early Salvationist men's understanding of gender, ministry and doctrine created an ambiguous environment for women. It begins by exploring the seminal views of George Scott Railton, a man who was second-in-command of the Christian Mission and early Salvation Army. Railton's perspectives on female ministry, sexual equality, and domesticity are analyzed in some detail. The chapter then demonstrates how other male officers of the period held cultural beliefs that worked against women's ministry and leadership in the Army. Following upon this, attention is drawn to how key theological tenets, reflected in the organization's
Handbook of Doctrine, discouraged women’s self-development. Finally, the last section briefly examines the extent to which institutional policies discriminated against women.

George Scott Railton and Women

In addition to William and Catherine Booth, the Christian Mission and the early Salvation Army were influenced heavily by George Scott Railton (1849-1913), the son of a Methodist minister. Railton joined the Christian Mission in late 1872, after reading William Booth’s booklet entitled How to Reach the Masses with the Gospel. By early 1873 Railton was living in the Booth home and, as General Secretary of the Mission, he worked closely with William Booth. Over the next seven years Railton was to remain a chief architect of the Booths’ evolving Army. This young ex-Methodist played a central part in “the formation of the theology and ministry of The Christian Mission and later of The Salvation Army.” After the mid 1880s Railton was marginalized by the Booths, because of his opposition to the Army’s emerging social and fundraising schemes. Nonetheless, he still played a vital role in the movement’s formative years.

According to Army leaders, historians, and theologians, one of the chief contributions that George Scott Railton made to the Christian Mission and the Salvation Army lay in his support of women’s equal opportunities alongside men in ministry. Bernard Watson, a Salvationist biographer, went as far as to claim that Railton “was a leading protagonist, perhaps the decisive influence, in causing William Booth to give women equal place with men in Salvation Army commands.” Although Watson overestimated Railton’s impact in this area - Catherine Booth was the decisive influence in
the area of female ministry — Salvationist scholarship generally has agreed that George Scott Railton was an early advocate of female ministry and sexual equality within the organization.

For the most part, the image of George Scott Railton as a liberator of Salvationist women has been based upon a less than adequate analysis of his views. Very few of Railton’s comments on women have been studied, and the overall assessment of his role in this area has been colored by the perspective of Bramwell Booth, the Booths’ eldest son and second General of the Army, who attributed women’s advancement in the movement to Railton. There has, in short, been no attempt to deconstruct Railton’s writings to prove, disprove, or qualify the claims made about him. Selective evidence and eyewitness reports have provided a less than convincing portrayal of Railton’s assumptions about female ministry and sexual equality.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to re-assess George Scott Railton’s views on women. The methodological tools of this thesis are employed here in a way that gets to the heart of Railton’s understanding of feminine gender, ministry, and domesticity. Both his explicit and implicit beliefs on these subjects are explored in light of the surrounding context of nineteenth-century England, thereby offering a fresh look at a man who had so much to do with the creation of the Salvation Army. Only after this has been done is it appropriate to judge the nature of Railton’s influence on the roles of female Salvationists.
female ministry

Three broad elements - historical, theological, and cultural - lay behind George Scott Railton’s position on female ministry. First, his own personal history predisposed him to accept the legitimacy of women preachers. As a young man in Cornwall, Railton had worshipped with the Bible Christians, a Methodist sect known for its employment of female preachers.¹³ Even though he encountered the group at a time when its female ministry was declining - the last itinerant woman preacher had been accepted by the Bible Christians in 1861 - Railton’s experiences at Cornwall contributed positively to his understanding of women’s place in religion.¹⁴ Years later, in 1882, Railton would argue that women’s ministry had been used by God since apostolic times.¹⁵ This historical line of reasoning was due, in some measure, to his early days with the Bible Christians in the late 1860s and the early 1870s.

Revivalist methodology and an appeal to scripture provided the theological rationale behind Railton’s perspective on female ministry. Mid-nineteenth-century Britain was infused with a revivalist atmosphere brought to its shores by American evangelists such as Charles G. Finney, James Caughey, and the husband and wife team of Walter and Phoebe Palmer. One of the central features of this revivalism was the use of techniques and sensational tactics to attract the masses to Christ.¹⁶ These methods, first associated with an earlier series of American revivals known collectively as the Second Great Awakening (1790s-1835), were used extensively by evangelical groups like the Bible Christians. In particular, female preaching before mixed audiences became a technique used by revivalists to attract crowds.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Railton was shaped by
this spirit of theological pragmatism, and he carried this mind-set to the Christian Mission in 1872. In a manner similar to that of William Booth, Railton initially grounded his support of women’s preaching upon the revivelist belief that “any legitimate means possible for the conversion of the world must be employed.”18 Women, Railton believed, would revolutionize the Christian Mission if employed in this manner.19

In time, as Railton’s views on female ministry matured, he expanded the theological justification of the practice. He did so by appealing constantly to Galatians 3:28, the New Testament passage which suggested that unity in Christ made distinctions based on sex irrelevant. This biblical proclamation supported his conviction that the female had “as much right to preach the Gospel, to exercise any sacred office, as the male.”20 In fact, he even utilized this scriptural principle as the basis for the early Army practice of allowing women officers to serve communion to its members.21 While it would be wrong to assume that Railton ever abandoned his pragmatic approach to female ministry, his theological defense of this phenomenon became more and more self-consciously scriptural in nature.

The third element underlying Railton’s appreciation of female ministry was the Victorian notion of sexual difference. He viewed women as the more attractive and emotional sex; they possessed traits which gave them a “superb capacity” for drawing crowds and saving souls.22 Women’s compassionate nature especially suited them to moving the hearts of sinners:

The power of the woman’s speaking, as her own heart melts and her tears flow at the sight of the lost around her, streams of tears from eyes that never wept for sin before, heaving breasts and broken hearts attest it, a million times,
For Railton, women were predisposed toward an emotional religion, and this made them a successful means of reaching the romantically-inclined working classes. In this way, Railton’s notion of sexual difference was closely intertwined with his theological pragmatism.

Sexual difference also seemed to lie behind Railton’s praise of the women officers who occasionally commanded corps. While certainly approving of women’s placement in positions of authority at the corps level, he explained their success more in terms of feeling than acquired ability:

The women are generally more popular than men. They more readily gain everyone’s sympathy [italics mine] and so enlist help of every kind, for which men could not decently appeal, and which no appeal would procure for them. It is not that women are usually gifted with extraordinary organising ability or business skill, but they can command those who have these gifts...  

The identification of women with authority was significant within the context of the male-dominated nineteenth-century British church, but women’s authority was based upon their stereotypical emotional capacity rather than any respect for the abilities they possessed. Railton certainly did not promote women’s leadership at the corps level because he believed that women possessed abilities comparable to men. Rather, he felt that a woman’s emotional nature enabled her to achieve positive support from her soldiers.
It is obvious that George Scott Railton accepted willingly the idea that women had a place in ministry and lower leadership. Yet it has also been claimed that he supported widespread equality between women and men. The evidence for this assumption has been threefold in nature. First, in an August 1876 letter to G. Thursfield, a Mission supporter, Railton seemed to imply that female evangelists should have the same pay as male evangelists: "If women can do the work and can raise the money they should have the same [pay] as men." Second, Railton has been cited as playing an influential role in the placement of certain women in command of preaching stations by 1875. Finally, his espousal of an egalitarian passage of scripture, specifically Galatians 3:28, has left the impression that Railton affirmed women's full equality with men. Taken together, this evidence has fostered the perception that George Scott Railton was one of the pioneers in the fight for sexual equality in Victorian England.

A closer analysis, however, reveals that Railton's views on the subject were much more ambiguous. On the one hand, his interpretation of Galatians 3:28 indicated that sexual identity was no longer relevant for the Christian: "It makes no matter to what family or sex any one belongs now." On the other hand, he also maintained that women's unique emotional nature suited them for the tasks of preaching and corps leadership. In short, he advocated both sexual irrelevance and sexual difference. Moreover, his writings disclose that within this uneasy tension he clearly favored the idea of sexual difference more than any notion of sexual equality. The former belief, for example, lay behind Railton's contention that the Salvation Army had "demonstrated its
confidence in God’s power to lift up the weakest [women] to the uttermost degree.”

To summarize, he tended to view women as either the weaker or the superior sex. Neither of these emphases, however, reflected a clear commitment to sexual equality.

Where equality was stressed by Railton, it was primarily spiritual in nature. This was clearly apparent in an article he wrote on the subject of men’s rights within late-Victorian society in the September 1875 issue of the Christian Mission Magazine. Although affirming men’s legal rights and their equality of opportunity, Railton felt that these concerns could “never be fully adjusted on earth.”

He went on to state “that there is a Judge and King enthroned on high who is reigning and judging alright ... [and] unjust inequality here will be put right in the world to come.” Furthermore, he believed that it was “a comparatively useless task to deal with the claims made for equality in [its] various respects” because all people were already equal in a spiritual sense: equally guilty, saved, called to service, and judged by God. This being the case, Railton, claimed that it was short-sighted to worry about earthly inequality - to do so might distract Christians from taking hold of the privileges of spiritual equality. Besides the obvious fact that women were not included in this exposition on equality, Railton’s thinking did not foster a critical concern for or a safeguard against possible concrete inequality within the Christian Mission and the Salvation Army.

This relative disregard for temporal equality provides the necessary background against which to judge Railton’s alleged commitment to gender equity in the areas of pay and opportunities. Even if he held such views - and the data is far from convincing - Railton was not predisposed to ensure their protection and consistent application. Where
sexual equality was a theme in Railton’s thinking, it was primary spiritual in nature - what he called the “equality of souls”. Railton lacked, therefore, the necessary motivation to attack institutional policies which discriminated against Army women in the temporal realm. Such obvious violations of equality - which are addressed, among other places, in the concluding section of this chapter - never seemed to bother him.

*domesticity*

George Scott Railton’s comments on domestic life shed additional light on the subjects of equality and female ministry. Concerning the former, he clearly never advocated sexual equality in the home. Instead, he implied both women’s domestic inferiority and their spiritual superiority in relation to men. A woman’s mission in the home was to “minister to the ease, the rest, [and] the comfort of man.” Such female subservience was reflected as well in the relationship between Railton and his spouse Marianne. She addressed her husband as “papa”, a title which denoted a less than egalitarian arrangement within the family. Nonetheless, Railton believed that it was legitimate for wives to usurp authority over men as a means to a spiritual end: “Is it not time somebody [woman] usurped authority over all the millions of professedly Christian men, who stand idle while the world is perishing.” Women were, by nature, adapted for saving men’s souls. Consequently, it was permissible for them to assume spiritual authority over men; zealous Christian females were, for Railton, a vast improvement over male mismanagement and stupidity in this area. According to Railton, women were in positions of inferiority and superiority within the home, but they were not considered to be equal partners with their husbands.
Women's spiritual authority, notably expressed in the area of preaching, did not conflict or appear incompatible with their domestic responsibilities. Railton may have acknowledged that a woman's vocation was not limited to the kitchen, but he echoed William Booth's sentiments when he asserted that "preaching does not prevent a good woman from looking well to the affairs of her house."\(^40\) Female ministry did not imply "the neglect of home duties."\(^41\) Moreover, Railton used domestic language to describe Catherine Booth's work on the platform. From his perspective, Catherine had established a "simple homely system of public ministry ... [where] as a mother [she] might talk to her children."\(^42\) Overall, Railton saw no incompatibility between preaching and the concerns of the home - women's preaching was not a threat to the home, but rather an enlargement of it.

As a way of capturing the essential features of Railton's foregoing position, it is possible to see his views on women falling somewhere between the Victorian feminine images of the "Angel out of the house" and the "Female Savior".\(^43\) Both models justified women's role outside the home on the basis of their unique abilities, but the latter image also called into question male leadership in society. The female savior had the task of ushering in an era of fuller humanity or salvation. Aspects of these two typologies converged in Railton's assumption that female ministry made use of women's emotional and spiritual qualities, both of which legitimized women's public role and usurpation of male authority in the spiritual realm. In one sense, the "Railtian" woman was radical - she broke through the barriers of a male-dominated church. In another sense, however, she did not alter patriarchal authority beyond the pulpit or push actively for sexual equality in the wider society.
Female ministry in the Christian Mission and the Salvation Army owed part of its origins to men like George Scott Railton. He enthusiastically supported a wider role for women in the Christian church, something for which he should be commended. Nevertheless, his alleged role in forging a pervasive atmosphere of gender equality in the movement is doubtful at best. Theological pragmatism and cultural beliefs, much more than sexual equality, lay at the heart of his position on women. When equality was apparent, it was defined in spiritual terms and essentially limited to preaching. In this way, George Scott Railton's understanding of women's ministry merely built upon the ambiguous thinking and practice of William Booth.

Other Male Perspectives on Women

The views that George Scott Railton held on the subject of women were, for the most part, shared by other men of high and low rank in the Salvation Army. Collectively, these early male officers, writing largely between the 1900s and the 1920s, exhibited beliefs which were consistent with the Victorian construction of Ideal Womanhood. Moreover, their understanding of feminine gender was fused increasingly with the images of motherhood and the housewife after 1900, both of which merely reiterated the dominant societal expectations for British women. Altogether, these male perspectives built upon an already ambiguous environment for Army women. The assumptions that these men held, either wittingly or unwittingly, worked against any meaningful implementation of sexual equality within the denomination.
lingering Victorian assumptions about womanhood

Queen Victoria’s long reign, which began in 1837, came to an end in 1901, but her death did not necessarily signal the end of Victorianism. As the eminent historian Asa Briggs has pointed out, Victorianism was “not a style ... but a system - a whole code of life, complete, self-sustaining, capable of being exported from one society to another.”44 In short, it was a worldview which outlasted a particular person or fashion. Edwardians and post-Edwardians attempted to dismantle this system, and introduce what they considered to be less restrained and more enlightened social mores45, but they were not successful in abandoning every feature of Victorianism. Certain nineteenth-century assumptions persisted well into the twentieth century, especially among the British lower middle and working classes.46

As a predominantly working-class religious body led by lower-middle-class leaders like the Booths, the Salvation Army continued to be shaped by its historical roots as a new century unfolded.47 This was true particularly with respect to its beliefs about gender. Male Salvationist commentary on women betrayed certain attitudes which were traceable to Victorian Ideal Womanhood, most notably the ideas concerning a woman’s place within the home (i.e., domesticity) and her spiritual excellence. In a variety of ways, these themes were present from the 1900s to the 1920s.

Domesticity, the notion that a woman’s place was in the home while a man’s place was in the public realm, was evident in three distinct ways in the early Salvation Army. First of all, female ministry was depicted as an extension of the domestic sphere.
rather than a rejection of it. A leading article in the Salvationist publication *All The World* made this clear. This essay, entitled “What Has The Salvation Army Done For Women?”, made reference to the pioneering leadership of a few notable women officers, but it placed their achievements within the context of the home: “[The Army] has brought the home, or rather those characteristics of home for which we are indebted to woman, into the Church.” The author of this article then went on to liken Catherine Booth’s death in 1890 to that of a “mother of a home [who] is called away.” Ultimately, this male writer described the tasks of women in the church as more home-like than public in nature. In effect, he subsumed women’s contributions to the Salvation Army under their sphere of influence and responsibility within the home.

In addition to a domesticated perception of female ministry, the Army urged married women explicitly to keep out of the paid workforce. This was illustrated amply on the front pages of an early edition of *The Social Gazette*, a British Salvationist periodical. The leading story, written by a high-ranking Army officer, openly criticized married women who - often out of economic necessity - attempted to supplement their husband’s wages. It maintained that “the married woman gains in every way who stays at home, makes the most of her husband’s earnings, and properly trains her family and cares for her home.” The author of the article went on to voice a common early-twentieth-century assumption, fuelled by a high infant mortality rate and a growing emphasis upon domestic science, that wives who worked outside the home did “great harm to themselves, to their husbands, and to their children.” As a whole, this viewpoint was a reiteration of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres.
George Scott Railton, writing soon after William Booth’s death in 1912, expressed the hope that Army women would never “be content to do their work only ‘behind the scenes’.”

Unfortunately, however, other men did not share this sentiment. They increasingly encouraged women to assume this very sphere. Voicing yet another manifestation of the Victorian notion of separate spheres, male Salvationist writers fostered the belief that a woman’s natural area of influence lay in the background. The value that men attached to this realm might differ, but Army men of high and low position agreed that women’s unique role lay in this area.

For men like Edward J. Higgins, a senior officer who became the Army’s third General in 1929, this feminine area of responsibility was an important one. In 1914, Higgins told a very large audience of women that “very often the most powerful influences are those that are hidden from view.”

He then asserted that a “woman possesses to a degree far beyond man the ability to influence affairs in this particular [way].” Women, he believed, were often behind the plans put forward by Army men. By and large, Higgins felt that this feminine role (i.e., one of persuasion “behind the scenes”) had steered the Salvation Army in the right direction over the years.

This depiction of women as hidden, powerful influences upon the movement was highly confusing when placed side by side with other statements that Higgins made in the same speech. He actually began his address by praising the female leaders he had served under in the past, all of whom were highly visible figures! Moreover, he also suggested that sex should play no part in the selection of leaders: “No man should fill any position simply because he is a man, nor should any woman because she is a woman.” What
Higgins failed to appreciate was how his own assumptions about feminine gender sent the opposite message. His belief that a woman’s role was a hidden (i.e., private) one called into question both his own praise of women leaders and his comments on sexual equality. Ironically, Higgins effectively discouraged his female audience from emulating the very leaders and principles he seemed to admire.

Less ambiguous, and perhaps more troubling for women, was a 1924 article written by a lower-ranking officer. Entitled “Woman’s Life Behind The Scenes”, this paper echoed the theme that a woman’s influence lay in the background. Its message, however, was now directed specifically at mothers: “It is the lot of most mothers to toil unceasingly and self-sacrificingly behind the scenes; only very few come before the public.” This maternal role not only was divested of any prestige, but was also given divine sanction: “The menial tasks are just as much [a] part of God’s will for us, as are the greater responsibilities...” The provision of a theological rationale for women’s mundane, self-effacing existence in the home did little to encourage them to pursue ministerial and leadership roles in the Army - they were told that they were right where God wanted them.

Victorian assumptions about separate spheres for women and men functioned in the Salvation Army to keep women either at home or tied mainly to ministerial roles suited to their self-effacing femininity. In the case of the latter, it was argued that female soldiers and officers possessed certain traits in advance of men which made them highly successful in certain areas of ministry. This feminine spiritual superiority, which was a second characteristic of Ideal Womanhood, was promoted openly by senior leaders.
besides William Booth and George Scott Railton. While it is true that womanly attributes of this kind allowed them to have a preaching ministry, such opportunities did little to undermine patriarchal authority or traditional gender stereotypes. For the most part, women’s alleged superiority in the spiritual realm translated into modest and limited opportunities for them, and merely reaffirmed conventional female images.

Women’s spiritual superiority over men, like the preceding notion of separate spheres, was expressed in three major ways by early Salvationist men. First of all, women were believed to exceed men in self-sacrifice. This motif was illustrated once again in Edward Higgins’ 1914 speech to women:

I can but recognize that God has endowed woman with special gifts, which make her influence supreme in many directions. In the spiritual realm she is capable of accomplishments beyond man, as in the physical realm man is capable beyond woman ... [She] has been largely instrumental in keeping alive the spirit of self-sacrifice in The Army ... Her forgetfulness of self and self-interests in her anxiety for others has produced a list of heroines of which the whole world is proud.59

To summarize, Higgins believed that feminine self-denial had shaped the ethos of the Army and the character of its women pioneers.

A belief in self-denial did indeed motivate many women to assume modest roles in the Army. This was notably the case during the earliest years of the organization, when Hallelujah Lasses willingly sacrificed reputations, comfort, and safety to carry the Salvationist message through the streets of British towns and cities. Yet the close association between the denial of the self and the feminine was ultimately counterproductive. Feminine self-denial gave women little encouragement either to
maintain or improve upon their visibility in a movement which failed to promote sexual equality in any widespread fashion. Self-assertion and self-interest were the human qualities that women needed if they were to protect their gains and move into the middle and upper ranks of the denomination, but such attitudes were the very antithesis of the construction of self-renunciatory female character. Women who possessed an assertive outlook violated the religious and cultural expectations of femininity.

The image of motherhood represented a second way in which women were perceived to be holier than men. A woman’s maternal role was associated with the sacred. This motif was particularly evident in an article appearing under the caption of “Mothers- A Great Need”. The author of this essay made the connection quite explicit: “[A]fter the word ‘God’ there is not a more sacred word than ‘Mother’ ... a good mother is the most perfect representation of God’s great love for this great world.”60 This paper, which was designed to be read at women’s meetings, went on to draw a parallel between motherhood and a moral society: “We need good mothers in order to have good citizens. As mothers are nobler in character, the greater and nobler the nation becomes...”61 Unlike maternal feminism, which sometimes used this kind of argument to extend a mother’s role into the public realm, the above reasoning was not placed within a broad context.62 Army mothers were called upon to use their pious position to train their families and raise future leaders for the movement, but these were tasks that ensured their confinement to the home. Sacred motherhood translated into domestic bondage.

James Hay, a senior Army leader writing in 1929, re-emphasized the belief that motherhood was a pious, but domestic, vocation. Against the backdrop of a growing
promiscuous moral environment in 1920s Western society, he wrote of the important spiritual obligation that mothers - the allies of the Holy Spirit - had "to care for the souls of the children." In particular, Hay reminded Salvationists of the great influence that Army mothers possessed in the training of the movement's future leaders: "Not one-hundredth part has yet been told of what the mothers of officers have wrought towards the salvation of the world, and it is so in the lives of thousands of our soldiers." Yet for James Hay this significant maternal influence was essentially "intangible, often obscure, [and] sometimes so silent as not to be noted at the time by any within a few yards of the home..." While wishing to acknowledge the contribution of Army mothers, Hay's comments unwittingly revealed the problems associated with a mother's role in this religious body: she was to influence but not to lead, she was to carry out most of her tasks at home rather than in the public realm, and from the perspective of men her overall contribution to the public life of the movement was hard to quantify. Once again, sacred motherhood served to dictate the nature and scope of a married woman's work within the Salvation Army.

Frederick Booth-Tucker, a prominent early day officer, illustrated a third way of understanding women's supremacy over men in the spiritual realm. Echoing the sentiments of William Booth and George Scott Railton, Booth-Tucker suggested that a woman was often more successful than a man at saving souls:

Very often the woman can do with a word, a look, a smile, a tear, an invitation, a casting of the net on the right side of the ship and the enclosing of a great multitude of fish within its meshes - what the husband, the father, the brother, the son, could not accomplish with their most strenuous efforts ... God loves to work with these simple and apparently insufficient agencies and means ... [they
have] the spirit and humility and non-self-consciousness of a child.  

Although Booth-Tucker’s comments were meant to acknowledge the importance of a public role for women - one which he felt was declining - his views highlighted the ambiguous characterization of Salvationist women by men; female achievements were tied to disquieting images and assumptions.

Underlying Booth-Tucker’s overt message that women were suited ideally for the task of saving sinners was a sub-text which hardly empowered women to pursue a public role at all. First, his remarks reinforced the image of the passive female. Compared to the arduous attempts of men, women seemingly required very little effort to convict the unsaved. In short, Booth-Tucker based women’s spirituality upon appearance and emotion (i.e., a look, smile, or tear) rather than on acquired skills or self-assertion. To associate women’s ministerial success with passivity was problematic, because it was precisely this trait which women needed to avoid if they were to have any place on the platform. The retention, let alone expansion, of female public roles in the organization demanded women’s active efforts. Second, Booth-Tucker’s portrayal of women as “insufficient” agencies and child-like in spirit did nothing to convince them that their public contributions to the Salvation Army were taken seriously. Condescending labels such as these left the opposite impression. These images, in sum, disclosed an environment which worked against women’s visibility in the Army.

The themes of domesticity and pious womanhood, both of which had been nurtured during Queen Victoria’s long reign, were not forsaken by male members of the Salvation Army. These men, following in the path of William Booth and George Scott
Railton, maintained what were essentially ambiguous perspectives on women. At the same time that women were urged to preach, they were reminded of their domestic nature; at the same time that women were declared to be equal partners with men in ministry and leadership, they were associated with the feminine stereotypes of the era. Overall, these tensions did little to construct an equitable place for women in the total life of this religious body.

*female ministry's secondary status*

A subtle logic, alluded to briefly in the previous section, gave further indication of the problematic place of women within the early Salvation Army. Male commentators left the impression that married women were wives, mothers and homemakers first, and only officers or public figures second. This kind of reasoning, while at times placed alongside assertions of women’s equality with men, was a serious obstacle to a liberating public ministry and leadership for women. A clear double standard emerged: a married woman’s public status and opportunities were tied to the home in a way that her husband’s status and responsibilities were not.

Alex M. Nicol, a senior officer addressing the topic of married women officers in 1908, betrayed the movement’s inconsistency in this area. His written remarks began with the assertion that the Salvation Army, unlike the wider society, was already firmly committed to sexual equality within marriage: “Partnership with man, instead of slave to him, is an ideal that is coming gradually nearer realisation [in society] ... But The Army has ever contended that woman is neither the inferior nor the superior of man, but his
equal.\textsuperscript{67} Yet the substance of Nicol's argument, which revolved around a case study of a young married officer couple whom he had visited recently, conveyed a message of inequality. First, Nicol referred to the woman in question as "Mrs. Adjutant" or as "one of our Adjutant's wives", whereas he described her husband as the "Commanding Officer".\textsuperscript{68} Unlike her husband, this woman was a spouse before she was an officer. Moreover, her officer role was subordinate to her husband's position in the corps.

Second, Nicol's characterization of this female officer as "a busy housewife and partner to an officer ... who give[s] the lie to the false notion that public service is incompatible with domestic and family obligations"\textsuperscript{69} suggested that her responsibilities within the home were of greater importance than her public ministry. Altogether, this case study unwittingly revealed the extent to which married women officers were, in both status and responsibility, devalued and restricted in ways that their husbands were not.

Female ministry's subordinate nature within married life was the less subtle emphasis of a 1910 article entitled "Army Wives and Mothers". The writer, an anonymous male officer, believed that his spouse or "helpmeet" was in "the place and position that God ha[d] ordained for her."\textsuperscript{70} She was, according to the suggestive logic of her husband, primarily a wife and mother, and only secondarily an officer:

As a wife I have found her ever ready to sacrifice for my comfort ... I have [also] had some experience of how my wife has discharged her sacred duties of home and children ... In spite of the numerous duties of home and children (and the brightness of our home and the appearances of our own children testify to the fact that these are not neglected) yet she has always found time to do a certain amount of visiting and to attend nearly all the indoor, and many of the Open-Air, Meetings ... and [take] her turns with me in giving the Bible lesson ... and [I] have known how they have had to be prepared, to a great extent in the rush and

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toil of the home work. 71

The fact that this woman officer had a public life at all was remarkable, given the

demands placed upon her by the home. Clearly, however, her officership came after her
domestic obligations, which included looking after five children and a husband. While it

was permissible for this married woman officer to miss the occasional corps function,
she obviously did not have the same liberty to set aside her arduous work in the family.
This double standard revealed the extent to which a married woman’s officership was
governed by the domestic expectations placed upon her.

Bramwell Booth, the second General of the Salvation Army, reinforced these

inequities even more by subsuming his own mother Catherine’s ministry and leadership

under domestic imagery. This was especially apparent at the early and late stages of his
career, which stretched from the 1870s to the 1920s. One of his initial tributes to

Catherine, written shortly after her death in 1890, domesticated her considerable public
accomplishments in a striking fashion:

It is probably because her own position as a mother, her
conception of her duties and responsibilities, and her

discharge of them towards her family, were altogether
unique, that she was enabled to accomplish what she did
towards the creation of [the Salvation Army] ... Mrs. Booth
was before everything a mother. 72

Then, shortly before his own death in 1929, Bramwell once again left the impression that

Catherine was a wife and mother before she was a public figure:

[S]he did a great work for her sex, vindicating their call to
preach the Gospel of Christ ... [but] the remarkable thing is
that despite all these labours and interests she fulfilled, and
more than fulfilled, every obligation of wife and mother ...
Her home sympathies were never dulled by the claims of

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the platform ... her own home was never neglected for what
some would call - I doubt whether she would have so
described it - the larger sphere. Both alike had been opened
to her by her God. She saw His purposes in both. In the
humble duties of the kitchen table ... or in the nursery ... or
at the bedside ... she was working for God’s glory.73

Notwithstanding Bramwell’s acknowledgment of his mother’s achievements, he distorted
the significance of her public work by over-emphasizing her domestic roles. The more
visible and unconventional nature of Catherine’s life and thought was somehow lost
under the conservative title by which Bramwell best remembered her - the “Army
Mother”.

Given the cultural expectations about a mother’s role in the home during the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is not surprising that Bramwell Booth, and
other early day Salvationist men, tended to assume that a married woman was a mother
before she was a public figure. Unfortunately, however, their acceptance of these societal
norms was at odds with the Salvation Army’s claim that it was based upon “the right of
woman to an equal share with man in the great work of publishing salvation to the
world.”74 While officially the Army gave no indication that such a principle was meant
just for single women officers, its male officers’ beliefs about gender suggested as much.
A conservative model of motherhood, grounded upon domesticity and feminine piety,
was hardly compatible with a liberal principle devoted to sexual equality. No married
woman officer could be expected to meet domestic obligations in the home, and then
assume an equal part in the public life of the movement.

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Salvationist Theology and Feminine Gender

Thus far, this chapter has analyzed how early Salvationist men from George Scott Railton to Bramwell Booth espoused views that created a less than liberating atmosphere for the preservation and expansion of women’s ministry and leadership in the Army. In particular, it has addressed the degree to which these men fostered cultural assumptions largely incompatible with the Salvation Army’s public pronouncements on sexual equality. Up until now, however, only brief attention has been paid to how Salvationist theology affected women. At this stage, therefore, a more detailed theological examination is in order. This is done by probing three areas which traditionally have had a profound impact upon women: God-language, sin, and holiness teaching. The Army’s Handbook of Doctrine, an official manual which was designed for training soldiers and officers, is utilized here. Put simply, did its formulation of these doctrines cultivate a liberating or a stifling context for women’s ministry?

*God-language*

Both theologically orthodox and unorthodox groups in nineteenth-century Anglo-American society witnessed a perceptible trend toward emphasizing the feminine traits of Christ and the softening of the traditional image of God the Father.75 On occasion, God was even referred to as female.76 For the majority of people, however, this feminization of religion did not unseat exclusive and literal masculine depictions of God. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an American feminist, recognized this reality clearly when, in 1885, she spoke out against Christianity’s worship of a completely male God and masculinized

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Despite its dramatic and passionate style of preaching, as well as its tendency to associate women with angelic qualities, the Salvation Army never moved in the direction of feminine God-language. Its *Handbook of Doctrine* implicitly supported the belief that the Godhead was solely male. This was largely because of the organization’s roots in evangelicalism. The Army shared the evangelical inclination towards biblical literalism, a method of interpretation that, when carried to its logical conclusion, sanctioned an exclusively male deity. For instance, the Handbook’s references to God as “Father” and Jesus as “Son” implied that maleness somehow was essential to the divine nature, as the following passage indicates:

> The First Person in the Godhead is especially the Father ... He is the Father of His Son, Jesus Christ. His designation of ‘The Father’ is due to this eternal relationship ... He is the Father of all men ... He is, in a peculiar sense, the Father of those who become His true followers.

The use of the words ‘is’ and ‘eternal’ suggested that the relationship between God and Christ was literally and immutably masculine in nature. In so doing, Salvationist God-language excluded the feminine from imaging the divine.

Exclusively male God-language was not conducive to the promotion of sexual equality within the Salvation Army. First, on a subtle level it encouraged male rule over females. Men were tied intimately to an authoritative and powerful masculine deity, an association that made it naturally fitting and theologically valid for Army men to assume the highest offices in the movement, as well as headship within the home. William Booth, it will be recalled, likened his own leadership to that of a father, a connection
which strikingly paralleled the role of divine fatherhood. Just as God the Father ruled over the world, the fatherly Booth ruled over the Salvation Army. Even after Booth’s death in 1912, the Army continued to base its patriarchal structure on “the government of the family, where the father is the head, and his directions are the laws.” This kind of symmetry implicitly made female leadership seem unnatural - somehow against the divine order. Second, the Army’s sexist God-language called into question women’s human dignity. Solely masculine depictions of God suggested that women were not able to image the divine, the highest good in Christianity. Witlessly or unwittingly, Salvationist God-language served to subordinate women and discourage them from developing a positive self-identity.

*doctrine of sin*

The Salvation Army’s understanding of sin also fostered a troubling context for women. Its doctrinal teaching on the subject spoke more to male experience than it did to female experience. Chapter five of the *Handbook of Doctrine* described sin in the stereotypically masculine language of selfishness: “The essence, root or underlying motive of all sin is selfishness; that is, pleasing self without due regard to the glory of God or the welfare of others.” This definition of sin hardly applied to Army women, given their identification with a lack of self-interest and their forgetfulness of self. Its narrow focus ignored the temptations which Salvationist women were likely to face in this religious organization.
From the evidence provided earlier in this chapter, it is clear that female Salvationists were urged to put others before themselves. Army women were encouraged to display self-sacrifice in ways that were not expected of their male counterparts (i.e., looking after the family, the home, the sick and the poor). These women clearly were not prone toward selfishness. The danger they faced was a lack of both self-assertion and self-interest. Yet, these were precisely the qualities that women needed if they were to remain in the public arena. Only rarely did Army men seem to realize this. The occasional references to the need for women to "boldly rise up [and] enter the door of opportunity" or fight for their rights were largely overshadowed by the dominant themes of feminine self-sacrifice and the demonization of self-interest. The implication seemed to be that it was both unfeminine and sinful for women to pursue public opportunities aggressively and push for their rights.

*holiness teaching*

Holiness, which was an influential tenet of many evangelical groups, addressed the believer’s need to overcome the remnants of sin in her or his life. The sincere Christian was expected, after conversion, to renounce worldly habits (e.g. fashionable dress, alcohol, secular entertainment) and demonstrate a willingness to serve God unconditionally. Throughout this process the Holy Spirit worked within the believer, providing cleansing from and power over sin. Salvationists, in particular, were among the chief advocates of this deeper work of God. In fact, one of their earliest doctrinal texts spent seven chapters on the subject. Like the Army’s expositions on God and sin, this ubiquitous teaching also had a bearing on women’s roles. Its effects, however, were not
always as detrimental for women. The concept of holiness was capable both of liberating and subordinating women. Overall, this doctrine had the potential either to challenge or reinforce the societal status quo.\textsuperscript{90}

Numerous studies of evangelical women have shown how holiness doctrine was sometimes used in ways that challenged the cultural assumptions of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century British and American societies. For instance, it has been argued that holiness teaching was one key factor behind the expansion of women’s roles in religious groups such as Methodism, the Salvation Army, and Pentecostalism.\textsuperscript{91} These sectarian bodies believed that the Holy Spirit could anoint any Christian, male or female, trained or untrained. After experiencing such a consecration or cleansing, believers often felt empowered to change their society for the better. Women, for example, appropriated the power and authority of the Spirit such that they might occasionally testify before mixed audiences or embark upon the moral reform of society. In either case, as the life of Catherine Booth demonstrated, the Holy Spirit’s bestowal of a divine calling upon women could indirectly challenge the Victorian notion that they belonged in the private sphere.

Within the Salvation Army, however, the empowering influence of the Holy Spirit tended to be overshadowed by a holiness doctrine centered around a feminized religion and an authoritative framework, both of which served to reinforce conventional views about women. The \textit{Handbook of Doctrine} reflected this reality in two significant ways. First, this manual defined holy living in terms of the stereotypically feminine traits of self-abasement and humility.\textsuperscript{92} Conversely, self-love and ambition were seen as signs
of an ungodly life.93 Virtue consisted of self-denial and submission, but these traits clearly did not motivate women to challenge societal or Salvationist gender discrimination. Nor did such qualities encourage them to seek leading roles in the Army system. Second, the Salvation Army used holiness teaching to bolster its authoritarian structure. Holiness doctrine functioned to produce compliant officers: "They ever put the interests of God's Kingdom and The Army before their own ease and advantage, and are, therefore, always to be relied upon to carry out instructions heartily."94 Because of their traditional association with submission and obedience to patriarchal leadership, women had the most to lose from this theological arrangement. By discouraging assertiveness and a questioning of authority - both of which were needed to overcome sexual discrimination - the Salvation Army encouraged women to remain passive and subordinate to men.

In the end, the Handbook's understanding of God-language, sin, and holiness was oppressive for women. These doctrines did not foster a climate conducive to female leadership and ministry in the Salvation Army. Instead, they supported the belief that women should remain subordinate and submissive to men in the home, the church, and the broader society. Assertiveness, self-interest, and ambition were considered aspects of a fallen humanity - things which Salvationists were told to forsake if they wanted to be holy. Yet these were the very qualities that women themselves needed if they were to have a substantial public presence in the movement. Such was the ambiguous environment with which women had to contend.
Institutional Discrimination

Not surprisingly, the preceding theological and cultural beliefs were reflected in a variety of institutional practices which discriminated against female officers. One clear expression of this was found in the economic realm. Between the 1880s and the 1920s, the Salvation Army’s salary policies favored men over women on a consistent basis.95 First, in the case of married officer couples, the husband received any wages provided by the Army. This arrangement was contrary to the movement’s principle of sexual equality, but it was consistent with the evangelical model of male headship96, as well as the societal assumption that the husband was the family breadwinner.97 Second, single male officers received a third more in wages than single female officers. Pay disparity along the lines of gender was indicative of the historical period in question, but once again it betrayed the Salvation Army’s failure to maintain equal standards between women and men. In the area of finance, both married and single women officers were treated inequitably.

Inequities of a different nature were evident in the Salvation Army’s method of assigning responsibilities to its married officers. Most often, headquarters’ announcements concerning the deployment of personnel to new commands did not include the officer wife.98 This disclosed the fact that officer wives were not generally given their own official appointments, leaving their duties largely in the hands of their husbands. It will be recalled from the last chapter that this was a troubling arrangement, since some husbands discouraged their wives from assuming any prominent place in ministry. It was expected, however, that married women, upon entering a corps, would
assist the leader of the Home League, a group created to train women in child and home management.\textsuperscript{99} But beyond the corps, the situation was far worse for married women officers. When a married man was appointed to a headquarter’s position, his wife might be left without any official role.\textsuperscript{100} At best, married officer women were expected to fulfill stereotypical roles (e.g. working in the Home League, assisting their husbands), while at worst they were given no specific function outside the home.

Few married officer women were fortunate enough to receive their own appointments. This was a fact which the Salvation Army acknowledged in a 1915 statement on the position of its women: “In some circumstances, a woman officer, after marriage, may hold separate responsibilities from those of her husband.”\textsuperscript{101} The words ‘some’ and ‘may’ highlighted the degree to which this was not the general practice of the movement. Furthermore, even a smaller number of women were given public duties which approached, met, or exceeded their husband’s official role. On the rare occasions when this did occur within the senior ranks, it was confined largely to women, who by birth or marriage, were related to Catherine and William Booth. The Booths’ daughter Emma and their daughter-in-law Maud both held posts equal to those of their husbands, while Lucy Booth-Hellberg, another daughter, was given a position that placed her over her spouse.\textsuperscript{102} Florence Booth, Bramwell Booth’s wife, also assumed important senior commands which, at times, came close to the status of those given to her husband.\textsuperscript{103} Those not associated with the Booth name, however, were not so privileged. The few married women actually given appointments at the administrative levels of the Army found, generally speaking, that such official capacities were “subservient posts under their husband’s command.”\textsuperscript{104} High-ranking women officers - such as the wives of Chief
Secretaries were not allowed to share any administrative responsibilities with their husbands.\textsuperscript{105}

The way in which the Salvation Army allocated ranks to its married officer couples further enshrined women’s subordination to men. In theory, women retained their full officership status after marriage, but in practice this was seldom the case.\textsuperscript{106} Their officer commissions were undermined in two central ways. First, married women tended to derive their designations from their husbands. A married man was always addressed by his rank and name (e.g. Captain William Jones), but his title never indicated his marital status. For married women, however, the situation was different - they were always identified primarily by their marital status, and only secondarily by rank and name (e.g. Mrs. Captain Jones or Mrs. Captain William Jones).\textsuperscript{107} The derived nature of a female officer’s public title was even more striking when she married a lower-ranking male officer - she was forced to assume her husband’s inferior rank.\textsuperscript{108}

Second, the widespread practice of classifying a married woman as an officer’s wife left the impression that she was not even an officer at all.\textsuperscript{109} At the concrete level of Army life, a woman’s officer status either was subordinate to that of her husband’s or questionable altogether.

Additional strain was placed upon a married woman’s officership by the aforementioned belief that she was a mother and wife before she was an officer. This assumption became an implicit part of Salvationist institutional policy. Officer manuals reminded administrative personnel of the unique working conditions faced by married women officers: “All necessary forbearance and patience must be exercised towards
woman in view of the drawbacks under which she labours in public life from marriage relationships, family cares, and other burdens which she is specially called to bear."110 These instructional books went on to assure leaders that the irregular working hours of a female married officer were fully compensated by her "personal influence and remarkable gifts".111 Such regulations were, undoubtedly, sincere attempts to accommodate the reality of a married woman's work in the home, but they did not appreciate the larger problem at hand - women officers, unlike their husbands, were expected to put their domestic responsibilities before their officership. This kind of official arrangement hardly provided married women with equal opportunities to engage in the sort of public work performed by their spouses.

Institutional practices of the foregoing variety illustrate the extent to which Army men's experiences of gender were guided more by nineteenth and early-twentieth-century norms than they were by any widespread application of sexual equality. These male commentators shared William Booth's Victorian and evangelical presuppositions about womanhood. Collectively, they justified female ministry by appealing to a woman's stereotypical nature, especially her domestic, emotional, and spiritual qualities. Positively, this understanding afforded Salvationist women a public presence in advance of their sisters in other denominations. In particular, early Salvationist men are to be commended for providing women with the opportunity to preach. Negatively, however, Army men legitimized such activity on a less than liberating foundation for women. Stereotypical femininity was not conducive to the maintenance and expansion of women's ministry and leadership in the Salvation Army. The evangelical and Victorian pillars of this construct, most notably the association of women with self-sacrifice,
functioned to discourage female ambition, and encourage women, when married, to consider the home and motherhood before all else.

The next two chapters explore the degree to which Salvationist women coped with, accepted, or redefined this construction of womanhood. This critical inquiry begins in chapter five with a detailed analysis of Catherine Booth’s life and thought. Central to this task is an examination of her views on gender and sexual equality in relation to her vision of female ministry and leadership. Did Catherine’s understanding of gender and equality allow her to transcend the feminine portrayals of the day? What was her contribution, if any, to the ambiguous Salvationist heritage regarding women? What kind of legacy did Catherine Booth bequeath to the women who followed after her? These and other important questions are addressed in the following pages.

2. The Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 sought to regulate prostitution by forcing women suspected of being prostitutes to undergo periodic examinations and possible confinement for venereal diseases. A woman's failure to comply with such measures left her liable to imprisonment. The fact that these laws only applied to women illustrated the double sexual standard within Victorian society. Feminists like Josephine Butler openly challenged this discriminatory legislation. See Trevor Fisher, Scandal: The Sexual Politics of Late Victorian Britain (Cornwall: Alan Sutton, 1995); and Judith R. Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, class, and the state (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).


4. The continuity between nineteenth and early-twentieth-century images of womanhood is discussed by Beddoe, Back to Home and Duty, pp. 9-10.


11. Army theologian Roger Green rightly chides Watson for failing to acknowledge Catherine's leading role in this area. See Green, Catherine Booth: A Biography, p. 171.

12. Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories, p. 178. Railton, rather than Catherine Booth, is described as the leading advocate of women's expanding roles in the Christian Mission and the Salvation Army.


18. Green, Catherine Booth: A Biography, p. 171.


22. G.S.R., p. 66; Railton, Heathen England, p. 120.

23. Railton, Heathen England, p. 125. See also pp. 121-123.


26. See, for instance, Watson, Soldier Saint, p. 13; Murdoch, Origins of the Salvation Army, p. 165; and Bramwell Booth, Echoes and Memories, p. 178.

27. Watson, Soldier Saint, p. 33.

28. Sandall, The History of The Salvation Army, vol. 1, p. 177. It is interesting to note that such stations were not necessarily important ones in the overall work of the Christian Mission. For instance, the first command that a woman held was described by Railton as “a little out-lying station”, while other women were sent to “small stations”. See Railton, Twenty-One Years’ Salvation Army, pp. 103-104.


32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.
35. Railton, Twenty-One Years' Salvation Army, p. 95.
37. Watson, Soldier Saint, p. 91.
40. Ibid., p. 119.
42. George Scott Railton, “The Empty Chair,” All The World 7, 1 (November 1890): 537.
43. These images are discussed by Elizabeth K. Helsinger et al., The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883, vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1983), p. xv.
44. Asa Briggs, Victorians and Victorianism (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1966), p. 3.
45. Ibid., p. 4.
47. It is interesting to note that Pamela Jane Walker situates the Booths between the working classes and the middle classes, while Norman H. Murdoch associates them solely with a middle-class lifestyle. The label “lower middle class” is offered here largely to incorporate both views. See Walker, “Pulling The Devil’s Kingdom Down,” p. 47; and Murdoch, Origins of the Salvation Army, p. 49.
49. Ibid.


54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., p. 585.

56. Ibid., p. 586.


58. Ibid., p. 30. The same theme is apparent in Anon., "Unemployed Staff Wives," The Staff Review, 1 (1922): 111.


64. Ibid., p. 101.

65. Ibid., p. 102. The association between maternalism and the home is also apparent in William Clements, "The Power of Woman in the Home," The Officer, 31, 5 (November 1920): 494-495.


67. Alex M. Nicol, "The Married Woman-Officer," The Field Officer, 16, 6 (June 1908): 205.

68. Ibid., pp. 205-207.

69. Ibid., pp. 206-207.

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71. Ibid., pp. 377-378.


76. Ibid.


78. Anon., *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1923), pp. 6-9, 30-33, 41-43, 58, 81-89, 105-106, 126. As the title page of this book indicates, it was “prepared under the personal supervision and issued by the authority of the General [Bramwell Booth].”

79. The evangelical propensity to consider God as literally and exclusively male was only cautiously addressed by evangelical feminists in the early 1970s. See, for example, Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardey, *All We’re Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women’s Liberation* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1974), pp. 20-21.


90. For an excellent discussion on how religion in general can function both to challenge and reinforce societal norms, see Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context*, third edition (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1992), pp. 213-236.


106. For the argument that women officers retained their commission after marriage, see Anon., “The Position of Woman in The Salvation Army,” in *Some Aspects of the Woman’s Movement*, p. 231.


Chapter Five

Catherine Booth's Legacy to Salvationist Women

The Salvation Army was a relatively young movement when Catherine Booth died in 1890, but its existence and expression owed much to her life and thought. Minnie L. Carpenter, a Salvationist author writing in 1945, captured well the significance of Catherine's influence in this area:

[S]o much of the foundations of our Movement was built upon the character of this great woman, and so much of her beliefs, methods and teachings was woven into its early super-structure, that, though few Salvationists of the present day can claim to have seen or heard her, as 'the Army Mother' she still speaks and unconsciously guides her great family.¹

While Salvationists up to the present continue to debate the precise nature of Catherine Booth’s contribution to the origin and development of the Army, especially her part in the founding of the religious body, a number of recent scholarly studies have confirmed Carpenter’s general thesis.² They have highlighted the ways in which Catherine Booth moulded and shaped Army theory and practice.

Among those who are familiar with Catherine’s life and thought there is a general consensus that her preeminent contribution to the Salvation Army lay in her defense of women’s right to minister alongside men in the public work of the movement. Numerous students of this Victorian woman have shown that the Salvation Army’s professed commitment to gender equality in ministry was fashioned upon her convictions and animated by her example. Even those unwilling to recognize Catherine Booth as the cofounder of the Army have accepted this contention.³ In short, there has been a general
recognition that Catherine set in place the organization’s principle of sexual equality within ministry. To use the language of theologian Roger Green, her views on female ministry became institutionalized within the Salvation Army.⁴

This chapter explores Catherine’s institutional legacy in further detail by assessing her part in defining women’s public and domestic roles within the early Salvation Army. What were Catherine’s assumptions about the public and private spheres of life, and how did they reflect or challenge her Victorian and evangelical surroundings? Because most research on this nineteenth-century figure has paid less than sufficient attention to her cultural and theological milieu, this question has yet to be answered satisfactorily.⁵ In particular, there is a need to analyze the relationship between Catherine’s convictions about female ministry on the one hand, and her beliefs about the self, marriage, and motherhood on the other. The following pages, by considering the interrelationship of these variables, provide a reassessment of Catherine Booth’s contribution to the women of the Salvation Army.

Early Years and Formative Influences

Catherine’s mature views on a woman’s place in the church and the home owed a good deal to what she learned as a child and adolescent growing up in early-Victorian England. She was born on January 17, 1829 at Ashbourne, Derbyshire, a small community situated in the English Midlands.⁶ Catherine was the only daughter of respectable working-class parents, John and Sarah Mumford. John Mumford was a carriage builder by trade. The Mumfords also had four sons, but only one survived
beyond early childhood. After Catherine's one remaining brother, John, left home at age sixteen, she became the sole child of the household. Since Sarah Mumford feared that neighborhood children might teach her daughter bad habits, the departure of Catherine's brother also meant the loss of her only childhood playmate.

Sarah Mumford's practice of preventing her daughter from associating with other children was an extreme measure, but it was motivated largely by religious convictions. Catherine was brought up in an intensely evangelical home. Not only was her father a local Wesleyan Methodist lay preacher for some time, but Catherine's mother was a person for whom religion was life itself. This evangelically-minded woman, like the seventeenth-century Puritan writer John Bunyan, believed in a Christian's literal separation from worldly people and popular amusements. Viewing this world as a place of preparation for the next, Sarah Mumford was suspicious of anyone or anything that might distract her family from this heavenly destination. In particular, she was afraid that Catherine's friendships with other children might lead her daughter to cultivate self-indulgent habits (i.e., novel-reading and fashionable dress), rather than the evangelical virtues of self-denial and self-restraint. The latter were seen by pious evangelicals as the concomitants of true Christianity. In sum, Catherine Mumford's social relations beyond the home were curtailed because of her mother's aversion to worldliness.

The fact that this evangelical concern for Catherine's soul was expressed chiefly by her mother was reflective of Victorian mores. British mothers, while not generally employing the extreme tactics of women like Mrs. Mumford, were expected to play the central role in the religious education of their sons and daughters. In large measure, this
gender-specific undertaking grew out of religion’s feminization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Liberal and evangelical Christianity, both influenced by the subjective emphases of European pietism and romanticism, began to associate the sacred and the moral with the traditionally feminine areas of feeling and the heart. This close correlation between women and religion made them appear to be the natural candidates for instructing children in religious and moral matters. Furthermore, as women’s conventional identification with Eve the temptress gave way to that of Angelic Mary, the mother of Jesus, spirituality and morality became defining characteristics of Victorian motherhood. It was appropriate, therefore, to have mothers shouldering the burden of the young’s Christian training.

In the case of Sarah Mumford, however, the maternal role in educating children was taken one step further. Despite the fact that the early-Victorian religious school system was ecclesiastically-based, she was determined to oversee Catherine’s entire education. Once again, this decision reflected a compulsion to separate her daughter from ungodly influences, whether in the form of classmates or teachers. Thus, when the Mumford family moved to Boston, Lincolnshire in 1834, Catherine was taught at home by her mother. Not surprisingly, the Bible was central to this academic curriculum, and Catherine’s reading skills developed steadily as she read through the entire scriptures a number of times. In 1841, however, this field of study was broadened when a close friend of the family convinced Sarah to enroll Catherine at a highly-respected local school. Within this setting, the twelve year old child studied history, geography, English, and math. According to her biographers, Catherine was a conscientious pupil.
Unfortunately, spinal problems forced Catherine to cut short her formal education in 1843. Although she had gained less than half the average schooling of her working-class contemporaries, Catherine remained eager to learn. In fact, while confined to her bed for an extended period of time, she displayed a remarkable interest in theology and church history. It was unusual for laypeople, let alone laywomen, to explore these subjects, because they were typically the preserve of Victorian clergy. Moreover, it was believed that a woman’s emotional nature made her incapable of any prolonged rational inquiry. Consequently, when Catherine ventured into works like Joseph Butler’s *Analogy of Religion*, a laborious if inadequate early-eighteenth-century response to Deism, she challenged prevailing stereotypes about what members of her sex could accomplish.

The less abstract works of other religious figures were, however, more influential in Catherine Mumford’s theological development. For instance, she became familiar with the important emphases of Methodism’s chief founder, John Wesley (1703-1791). Even though reason played a role in his theological system, Wesley’s approach to religious faith was essentially experiential and subjective; he believed that religion must speak to and transform the heart. This motif became an important part of Catherine’s theological understanding, as evidenced by her later writings. In her book *Life and Death*, she expressed the conviction that God’s Spirit worked through people’s subjectivity: “When a person begins to feel, it is a sign that the Spirit is striving.” Elsewhere Catherine stressed the “conversion of the heart” and a “salvation that renews the heart.” Religion that spoke only to the head was, according to Catherine, a counterfeit religion.

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A second Wesleyan theme that shaped Catherine Mumford’s spiritual life was the doctrine of holiness. John Wesley taught that holy living, by which he usually meant a perfect love for God and others, was a scriptural command binding on all Christians. Even with the help of the Holy Spirit, however, this righteous ideal was seldom obtained easily. The blessing of holiness came only after believers conquered the remaining sin (i.e., pride and selfishness) in their lives. Writing in her diary in 1847, Catherine Mumford mirrored the element of struggle that typically accompanied this quest for sanctification:

My desires after holiness have been much increased. This day I have sometimes seemed on the verge of the good land. Oh, for a mighty faith! I believe the Lord is willing and able to save me to the uttermost. I believe the blood of Jesus cleanses me from all sin. And yet there seems something in the way to prevent me from fully entering in. But I believe today at times I have had tastes of perfect love. Oh, that these may be droppings before an overwhelming shower of grace. My chief desire is holiness of heart. 17

A number of years elapsed before Catherine experienced the state of holiness, but the process of struggle leading up to this goal became the lens through which she interpreted her own entry onto the platform in 1860. On more than one occasion she suggested that her battle with pride and selfishness lay behind her own reluctance to speak publicly before others in the church. 18 In this way, Wesleyan holiness teaching proved to have a significant impact on Catherine’s later public life.

Besides the Wesleyan accents on holiness and the heart, Catherine Mumford gained a good deal of inspiration from the writings of Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875), the American revivalist. Of greatest interest to her was his Lectures on Revivals of
Religion, published initially in America in 1835, and then subsequently in Britain by 1837. This popular text - there were several hundred thousand British copies in circulation by the late 1840s - was regarded by Catherine as the “most beautiful and commonsense work on the subject [she had] ever read...”10 Although Finney’s volume was concerned primarily with the question of how to stimulate revivals in nineteenth-century society, it also advocated ideas that were conducive to female ministry.20

Two pervasive elements within Finney’s Lectures on Revivals of Religion were especially amenable to an increased role for women in the church. The first of these lay with the book’s inclusive ecclesiology; it underscored the New Testament notion of the priesthood of all believers. While this principle had been revived briefly by Protestants during and immediately after the Reformation, it eventually receded into the background as distinctions between the clergy and laity grew. Finney challenged this division by defining ministers simply as “soulwinners”, a label which in fact he gave to all Christians.21 This egalitarian thrust was reinforced further by his belief that revival meetings should “exercise the gift of every individual member of the church - male and female.”22 To summarize, the lowering of ecclesiastical and gender barriers within Finneyite revivalist circles encouraged women’s participation within evangelical religion.

Even more central to this brand of revivalism was its unconventional methodology; it was not slavishly bound to traditional ways of promoting religion. Following the lead of Methodists on the American frontier, Finney wrote of the need to employ “new measures” or innovative strategies to draw the interest of the spiritually
indifferent.\textsuperscript{23} He held that God had set down no prescribed method of reaching the unsaved.\textsuperscript{24} Experimentation was therefore seen to be legitimate: "As sure as the effect of a measure becomes stereotyped, it ceases to gain attention, and then you must try something new."\textsuperscript{25} Pragmatism of this nature justified a number of controversial measures, including female testimony before mixed audiences. New ways of presenting the Gospel seemed to take precedence over traditional policies regarding women's silence in the church.

Although Catherine's defense of female ministry rested more on biblical principle than pragmatism, and encompassed more than just female testifying in prayer meetings, she did retain much of Finney's methodological perspective. The debt she owed to this American revivalist was illustrated in a striking fashion many years later when she spoke of the need to present the Gospel in novel ways to sinners:

Adaptation is the great thing we ought to consider. If one method or agent fails, we should try another... 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... [I]f you would benefit and bless them, you must interest them.\textsuperscript{26}

Methodological freedom remained a distinctive element of Catherine's life and thought, and through her became a key feature of the early Salvation Army.\textsuperscript{27} Customary ways of sharing the Christian message were fruitless if they could not gain the attention of sinners. Catherine's conviction that a measure must attract sinners had, in turn, some bearing on how she viewed the public ministry of female Salvationists. While she did not
consider Army women to be typical measures that could be employed and then abandoned when no longer useful - in her mind women would always be able to attract an audience because they were suited by nature to preach - she did speak occasionally of her Hallelujah Lasses as "female agencies" or agents whose success lay in drawing numerous sinners to Christ.²⁵ From Finney she learned that successful measures, as long as they did not compromise the essential truths of Christianity, were reason enough to abandon man-made conventions of the past.

In addition to the foregoing theological considerations, Catherine Mumford also received, both before and after her back problems, opportunities to learn skills which would prove invaluable to her later ministry and leadership role in the Salvation Army. Prior to her illness, for example, she was associated with the Temperance movement. This largely evangelical cause aimed to restrict or ban the sale and consumption of alcohol in Victorian England. From this group Catherine gained exposure to the art of debate and learned to develop her own leadership abilities. First, the Mumford home became a central meeting place for Boston area residents to discuss the pros and cons of the drink issue. Although Catherine was only a child at the time, and therefore could not have possibly comprehended the complexity of the entire subject, she probably absorbed something from the stimulating atmosphere of debate.²⁶ The necessity of defending one's convictions with reasoned arguments against those with opposing views was perhaps the key thing that she learned from this environment. Catherine's logical defense of female ministry years later was traceable in part to this childhood setting. Second, at the age of twelve, Catherine became the secretary of the local Juvenile Temperance Society. This position afforded her an opportunity to gain valuable leadership skills and develop her
self-confidence. Altogether, these early experiences made lasting contributions to Catherine’s life.

Methodist chapel life was another factor in Catherine Mumford’s social development, especially after her family moved to the London area in 1844. Once settled in her new surroundings, Catherine joined the Brixton Wesleyan Chapel and began to attend the class meetings designed for members of the congregation. These classes were small groups that gave Methodists a forum within which “to study Scripture, confess sins, receive assurance of pardon, witness to lives of holiness, and otherwise support and strengthen the sisters and brothers of the movement.”30 This kind of nurturing environment not only stimulated the spiritual growth of Wesleyans, but also gave the laity a place to foster their self-confidence as they shared openly with one another.

Women, in particular, benefited greatly from the way that class meetings were organized. First, Methodist women demonstrating leadership qualities were urged to head chapel classes, many of which had twelve or more members. Those who assumed this responsibility cultivated their interpersonal and public speaking skills, and thereby increased their self-confidence.31 Catherine Mumford witnessed this kind of female leadership when she joined the Brixton chapel; she was placed in a class under the direction of a Mrs. Keay. Second, the individual members of a given class were encouraged to speak before others in their group. Mrs. Keay did her own part to persuade a timid Catherine to testify and pray in front of the others. According to the biographer William T. Stead, Catherine “pleaded in vain that the excitement and the strain of the effort made her ill.”32 This class leader continued, nonetheless, to urge Catherine to
utilize the gifts that God had given her. Stead, while acknowledging that Mrs. Keay may have pressured her relentlessly, claimed that without this prodding “Catherine Mumford would never have been Mrs. Booth, and the Salvation Army might have still been a thing to dream of.” Perhaps this statement was an exaggeration, but there was some truth behind it. The Methodist class atmosphere not only demonstrated to Catherine that women could assume a public role in religion, but also forced her to confront her own fears about speaking in front of others. While these factors alone were not sufficient to explain Catherine’s eventual public ministry and contribution to the Salvation Army, they were clearly necessary pre-conditions to such a life.

An incident which took place within Catherine’s denomination in 1849 ultimately led her away from the chapel where she had gained her first exposure to female ministry. By the mid nineteenth century the autocratic President of the Wesleyan Methodists, Jabez Bunting, had orchestrated a campaign to purge his denomination of so-called agitators: free-lance revivalists and democratically-inspired clergy and laity. Bunting’s tactics, one of which was to force Wesleyan ministers to indicate publicly their allegiance to his goals, resulted in a major secession of Methodists from the parent body in 1849. When the schism occurred, chapel leaders warned their members to avoid contact with the secessionists. This was not something that Catherine could do however, because she was sympathetic with the ideals of this break-away faction or Reform movement. She supported the Reformers’ demand that chapels should receive more local autonomy, and, more importantly, she viewed the Reform emphasis on revivalism as the antidote for a Methodism that had grown spiritually cold. Consequently, when Catherine attended the Reformers’ meetings and defended their views, she was expelled from the

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Wesleyan fold. Soon after this expulsion, she joined the Reformers’ chapel on Binfield Road, South London. Here, in 1852, Catherine assumed leadership of a Sunday school class of teenaged girls. In so doing, she found her first opportunity to act upon the advice she had received from Mrs. Keay.

Many factors shaped the early life of Catherine Mumford, but the overriding influence in her life was Methodism. As the chief expression of early-Victorian evangelicalism, this religious body nurtured her both within and outside of the home. Domestically, Catherine learned quickly that the Christian life was one of self-denial and separation from the world, and that mothers bore the responsibility for their children’s upbringing. Publicly, Methodist social causes like temperance and Wesleyan classes and Sunday schools afforded her the opportunity to confront her fears about public speaking and develop her leadership abilities. Significantly, however, the domestic and public aspects of Catherine’s life left her with two unresolved issues: how to develop self-confidence while maintaining self-denial, and how to promote female ministry while remaining committed to evangelical motherhood.

Female Ministry and the Public Sphere

It will be recalled from chapter three that Catherine Mumford met her future husband, William Booth, through a mutual friend and Reformer by the name of Edward Rabbits. Not long after the young couple was engaged in May of 1852, Catherine began to put forward her own position on female ministry. Whether or not this was the first time that she had done so is hard to know, but clearly her reading as a child, and later
exposure to a modest version of female ministry within her own Wesleyan chapel, contributed something to the shaping of her convictions. Moreover, William’s initial opposition to women preachers undoubtedly played a role in motivating Catherine to clarify and defend her notion of women’s ministry. This process of refinement only intensified as she encountered much more hostile critics of female ministry in the years ahead. In the end, it was Catherine’s background and the critics she faced that led her to defend and expand upon her views on women’s role in the church. This section examines the major arguments she used to justify a woman’s right to preach and teach, and then compares this rationale with the way she defined her own ministry and public contribution to the Salvation Army.

The extent to which women had fallen from their historic, albeit modest, role in the preaching life of Methodism was the landscape against which Catherine set her earliest views on female ministry. Wesleyan Methodism of the eighteenth century and sectarian Methodism of the early nineteenth century had given a number of women the authority to preach and teach before mixed audiences. Preaching, in particular, had enlarged a woman’s public role well beyond the parameters of the small Methodist classes, where a woman addressed just a few members of her own sex. A female preacher spoke before entire congregations and outdoor audiences of unsaved men and women. By the early 1850s, however, Methodist women found themselves within an environment that no longer allowed or encouraged female preaching. Theologically, they encountered a growing conservatism among religious leaders, many of whom had never been comfortable with John Wesley’s conviction that women with an exceptional call to preach could circumvent biblical injunctions against the practice. Culturally, women
were confronted with a Victorian domestic ideology that aimed to keep them in the private sphere of the home. Taken together, these circumstances led to the steady decline of women preachers within Methodism.

Catherine Mumford’s earliest comments on women’s role in the church were set within the context of this inauspicious climate. She was well aware of how the ecclesiastical arrangements of her own religious tradition were increasingly discriminating against the members of her own sex. Believing that God had, in both the Old and New Testaments, made use of women in public ministry, Catherine considered it “cruel for the Church to foster prejudice so unscriptural, and thus make the path of [female] usefulness the path of untold suffering.” In her first published article, written in 1854 to address the question of how to retain converts within the church, she found time to criticize Methodism openly for abandoning its progressive heritage of female ministry:

Why should the swaddling-bands of blind custom, which in Wesley’s days were so triumphantly broken, and with such glorious results thrown to the moles and the bats, be again wrapped round the female disciples of the Lord Jesus?

By invoking the name of John Wesley, the principal founder of Methodism, Catherine was challenging mid-Victorian Methodists to return to the core ideals of their own religious movement. Female ministry was not only biblical, but also part of Wesleyanism itself.

Female ministry remained an important topic for Catherine after she married William Booth in 1855, but it was not until 1859, when she was stationed with her
husband at a Methodist New Connexion chapel in Gateshead, that she defended the practice at length. The circumstances surrounding her more detailed analysis of the issue had to do with the arrival of the American revivalists Phoebe and Walter Palmer in the neighboring city of Newcastle in early September 1859. Phoebe and her husband had just commenced what would become a four year British evangelistic campaign to promote holiness and awaken the spiritually cold members of the church. What made the Palmers' revivalism unique was the fact that Phoebe took an active role in these endeavors, addressing both men and women publicly. Even though Phoebe never claimed to preach at her revival meetings, and never entered the pulpit to speak, her public testifying and biblical expositions differed little in substance from the preaching of the day. Whether she realized it or not, her public actions were a challenge to the mid-Victorian belief that women should remain silent in the church.

Catherine Booth, who was already familiar with Phoebe Palmer's books on holiness, told her parents in mid September that she hoped to attend one of her revival meetings, but Booth-Tucker, one of Catherine's early biographers, claims that she never found the opportunity to do so. While Booth-Tucker provides no hard evidence to back up this claim, it is clear that Catherine followed Palmer's controversial activities in the region quite closely. When, therefore, a nearby independent minister, the Reverend Arthur Augustus Rees, criticized Phoebe Palmer for preaching, Catherine was incensed. Rees' remarks, which were addressed initially to his own Sunderland congregation, and then published in the form of a pamphlet, meant to show that Palmer's preaching was a violation of the Apostle Paul's directives to the church. Appealing to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14, he argued that since sin had entered into the world
through Eve, all women were to remain silent in the church. Rees therefore considered it unnatural for a woman to assume any role other than one of quiet submission to the men of a congregation. Not only was Catherine angered by these comments, which she felt were demeaning to all women, but she also was unhappy with the various attempts to defend Palmer against Rees’ charges. Consequently, in December 1859 Catherine decided to refute Rees herself by writing her own pamphlet on the subject of female ministry.

This booklet, given the lengthy title Female Teaching: or, the Rev. A. A. Rees versus Mrs. Palmer, Being a Reply to a Pamphlet by the Above Gentleman on the Sunderland Revival, put forward a threefold argument in favor of women’s right to preach and teach in the church. First of all, Catherine furnished a response to Rees’ charge that it was unnatural (i.e., unfeminine) for a woman to preach in a religious assembly. While conceding that it was not customary or usual for women to do so, she claimed that the members of her sex were suited by nature to preach:

God has given to woman a graceful form and attitude, winning manners, persuasive speech, and, above all, a finely-toned emotional nature, all of which appear to us eminent natural qualifications for public speaking.

This being the case, Catherine went on to argue that women’s exclusion from public ministry was simply the result of prejudicial customs that prevented them from employing their God-given gifts. These man-made restrictions merely gave the impression that a public ecclesiastical role for women was unnatural when in fact the very opposite was true. For Catherine the nature that God had bestowed upon women gave them the right to engage in female ministry.
Given her own evangelical background, and the Victorian context within which she lived, it made sense for Catherine to argue that women's subjective qualities (i.e., emotionality, gracefulness, and persuasiveness) suited them for preaching. First, her own Wesleyan heritage equated religion with the heart or subjective aspects of human nature. To emphasize a woman's subjective characteristics was to underscore her compatibility with the essence of religion, and thereby present her as an ideal candidate for preaching the Gospel message. Second, the emphasis that Catherine put on the subjective side of a woman's nature was not meant to imply that women were by nature intellectually inferior to men. Elsewhere in Female Teaching she argued that any inferiority which women faced in the mental realm was due to their inadequate training and unequal access to education. Therefore, unlike her husband William and other Salvationist men, Catherine did not believe that a woman's emotional characteristics came at the expense of, or overshadowed, her intellectual abilities. This was strikingly apparent in the way she presented this first argument. Rees and other Victorians might claim that a woman's emotional nature suited her to a secondary role in the church, but Catherine turned such reasoning on its head: a woman's subjective qualities made her the logical choice for the pulpit!

Above all else, however, Catherine Booth believed that her defense of female ministry had to be justified biblically. Her evangelical conviction that the Bible was the authoritative guide to all of life, divinely inspired and infallible, made her recognize the gravity of this task. Consequently, the scriptures became the focal point of her second general argument in Female Teaching. At the heart of her strategy here was to show that the Bible, when interpreted and applied properly, supported a public role for women in
the church. It followed from this premise that opposition to female ministry resulted from a mishandling of the biblical text. The overall charge that Catherine levelled against Rees and others was that they took "isolated passages, separated from their explanatory connexions." More specifically, she claimed that they 1) severed scriptural texts from their contexts, and 2) failed to use the "plain and unmistakable" portions of the Bible to shed light on the more difficult sections. Once the biblical texts were handled in a more responsible manner (i.e., contextually), then a strong case for female ministry could be made. With this in mind, Catherine devoted the body of her pamphlet to the key passages related to the subject.

One part of this strategy rested upon a reassessment of the two New Testament texts most often used by conservatives to prohibit women from preaching and teaching in the church. The first passage in question, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, was taken by most Victorian believers to prescribe women’s silence in the church. What Catherine argued here was that the Apostle Paul, the assumed writer of this text, could not possibly be commanding women to remain completely silent, because he had just described how women should pray and prophesy publicly in chapter eleven of the same epistle. To claim that he enjoined absolute silence upon women was to make his earlier comments meaningless:

[I]f the Apostle refers in both instances to the same thing, we make him in one page give the most explicit directions how a thing shall be performed, which in a page or two further on, and writing to the same Church, he expressly forbids being performed at all.  

Catherine’s hermeneutical method (i.e., comparing scripture with scripture), and her assumption that the Bible could not contradict itself, led her to conclude that 1
Corinthians only precluded women from engaging in "a pertinacious, inquisitive, domineering, dogmatical kind of speaking" that might "bring them into collision with the men, ruffle their tempers, and occasion an unamiable volubility of speech." This reinterpretation, although encouraging no direct challenge to male authority, had the potential to subvert the traditional male monopoly over the public exercises of the church.

The second text that opponents of female ministry often cited was 1 Timothy 2:11-14. It conveyed the following admonishment:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (King James Version)

Rees, in particular, drew upon this passage to argue that women's silence in the church was a punishment for Eve's role in bringing sin into the world. Catherine's major tactic here was to question the assumption that these verses referred at all to a woman's deportment in the church. She put forward the views of commentators who suggested that this passage, when studied contextually and grammatically, was aimed simply at wives who usurped the authority of their husbands in the home. It is also apparent that Catherine weakened the argument linking women's silence to the fall. While acknowledging that woman was the first to sin, she reminded Rees that man bore equal responsibility for introducing sin into the world. She argued additionally that even if one were to place any moral significance on woman's temporal position in the fall, this was overshadowed now by the primacy of woman's role in redemption: "If through her, sin first entered, through her also, without the concurrence of man, came deliverance."
The fact that Christ had been born of the Virgin Mary, and had upon his resurrection appeared first to women, was more than sufficient evidence to counterbalance the dishonor associated with the female role in Genesis chapter three. Although Catherine’s main concern was to call into question the relevance of 1 Timothy 2:11-14 to an ecclesiastical setting, she also helped to undermine the rationale used by church leaders to keep women silent.

After reinterpreting these so-called problematical texts, Catherine put forward the positive biblical case for female ministry. Two dominant proofs emerged from her appeal to various portions of scripture. First, it was argued that a public role for women in religion had divine sanction. Women like Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah had been commissioned by God as leaders and prophetesses in the Old Testament, and the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalene were among the first individuals in the New Testament to receive authority from Christ to spread the message of salvation in a public manner. Each of these instances proved that God endorsed a public ministry for women. Also significant for Catherine was the New Testament book of Acts, especially the second chapter, because it revealed that, following upon Christ’s ascension to heaven, the Holy Spirit was bestowed equally upon the male and female believers, authorizing each of them to prophesy publicly. Moreover, Catherine claimed that the prophesying referred to in Acts was equivalent to preaching: “The prophesying spoken of was not the foretelling of events, but the preaching to the world at large the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ.” It was apparent, therefore, that when Acts referred to women prophesying - such as Philip’s four daughters in Acts 21:9 - they were in fact preaching. Put simply, Catherine believed that God’s spirit authorized women to preach.
On the basis of these biblical texts, she contended that God willingly entrusted women with explicitly public roles in the church.

Catherine’s other major rationale for female ministry rested upon Galatians 3:28.

She took this passage to mean that in the church all cultural and sexual divisions were to be set aside:

If this passage does not teach that in the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of Christ’s Kingdom, all differences of nation, caste, and sex are abolished, we should like to know what it does teach, and wherefore it was written.59

From this text she drew the conclusion that a woman’s sex could not be used to disqualify her from a public ministry in the church. All believers, male and female, should therefore have the freedom to utilize their gifts, including those of preaching and teaching, within the Body of Christ. Old distinctions, even those between the clergy and laity, were to be superseded by oneness and liberty in Christ.60 That the Gospel signalled a new age of freedom whereby men and women could minister together was apparent, Catherine claimed, from the Apostle Paul’s letters to the Roman and Philippian Christians, within which he identified a number of women as his co-laborers in the Lord (Rom. 16:3-4, 7, Phil. 4:3). These relationships hardly revealed women’s subordination to men in the church: “To be a partner, coadjutor, or joint worker with a preacher of the Gospel must be something more than to be His waiting-maid.”61 In other words, a woman’s role in the Christian religion was not to work for men, but to work with men. Overall, Catherine Booth viewed Galatians 3:28, and its subsequent application in the earliest churches, as the expression of authentic Christianity.
Thus far Catherine’s defense of female ministry included appeals to a woman’s nature and the Bible, but near the conclusion of her pamphlet she presented a third and final argument. Here it was claimed that success accompanied the efforts of female preachers. Quoting extensively from Phoebe Palmer’s book *Promise of the Father*, Catherine documented the positive results achieved by the evangelical female preachers and missionaries of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was clear from these accounts that numerous holy women had been “owned by God in the conversion of thousands of souls, and the abundant edification of the Lord’s people.” Catherine reasoned further that since success was, according to the Apostle Paul, evidence of a divine call, then women in ministry had the approval and blessing of God. In closing, she asked her Victorian readers to ponder “whether the circumscribed sphere of woman’s religious labours may not have something to do with the comparative non-success of the Gospel in these latter days.” For her there was no doubt about the answer.

This pamphlet’s threefold argument, set within the context of a woman’s right to preach, represented a bold challenge to male privilege in the church. Yet the assertive tone underlying this justification of female ministry was not translated as easily into Catherine’s everyday life. She struggled at a personal level, as she had during the 1840s, to assert herself publicly by speaking in front of others. The nature of this problem was illustrated clearly in an early letter that she wrote to William in 1853: “I want to serve God as He requires, but I fear to err in my judgment and my nature shrinks from singularity and publicity.” While Catherine had, by late 1857, garnered enough confidence to speak before a group of young temperance supporters, she continued to display an ambivalence toward her own public ministry. Writing to her parents soon after
she had given this lecture, she stated:

Indeed I felt quite at home on the platform, far more so than I do in the Kitchen! ... But I must not be too sanguine. Perhaps I may lose my confidence next time. 

Here Catherine was beginning to discover her gift for public speaking, but self-doubts lingered on. Two years later, however, on the eve of the publication of Female Teaching, Catherine’s tempered enthusiasm for her own public future was no longer apparent. When asked by the leaders of her Gateshead chapel to address a special prayer meeting, she turned down the request. Describing this incident to her mother, Catherine exclaimed: “Of course I declined. I don’t know what they can be thinking of!” Although Catherine’s writings encouraged women to assume a public role in the church, she was reticent to take on this role herself.

When in fact Catherine finally found the courage to preach for the first time, in the late Spring of 1860, she did not justify her own entry into the pulpit with the assertive language of rights or on the basis of self-determination. Instead, her own motivation for female ministry grew out of an intense religious experience. On a Sunday morning in May, while sitting amongst the one thousand in attendance at her husband’s Gateshead chapel, she sensed two inner voices. The first of these urged her to fulfill a recent vow that she had made before God to testify in public:

It seemed as if a voice said to me, “Now, if you were to go and testify, you know I would bless it to your own soul as well as to the souls of the people,” and I gasped again, and I said in my soul, “Yes Lord, I believe Thou wouldst, but I cannot do it.” ... Then the voice seemed to say to me, “Is this consistent with [your] promise?” and I almost jumped up and said, “No Lord, it is the old thing over again, but I cannot do it.”
Immediately after this divine prodding of her conscience, Catherine seemed to hear another inward voice, that of the Devil, tempting her to remain silent:

   And then the Devil said, “Besides, you are not prepared to speak. You will look like a fool, and have nothing to say.” He overdid himself for once. It was that word which settled it. I said, “Ah! This is just the point. I have never yet been willing to be a fool for Christ, now I will be one.”

With this Catherine moved out of her seat, went up to the front of the chapel and told her bewildered husband William that she wanted to “say a word”. Turning to the assembled crowd, she confessed that she had been resisting God’s will for some time by refusing to speak publicly in the church. Once this admission was made, William Booth announced that his wife would be preaching during the evening service. This Gateshead experience marked the beginning of Catherine’s long and successful preaching ministry.

Over the course of the next twenty-eight years Catherine Booth not only became a popular preacher throughout Britain, but she also helped to establish and run the Christian Mission and the Salvation Army, defend the nascent movement against its critics, and through her sermons and books provide the organization with some of its basic theological foundations. Numerous Victorian observers of the Salvation Army considered her preaching and teachings to represent the best the movement had to offer. Yet despite these impressive accomplishments and acknowledgments, Catherine rarely took the credit that she deserved. First, she based her own preaching on a denial or deficiency of self rather than on the basis of her gifts and right to utilize them. Her own call to preach arose out of submission to God and self-sacrifice, or what she had to yield to or give up rather than what she had to offer. Then during the height of her public ministry, she placed her own preaching within the context of human weakness:
Never mind how weak you are. I have gone from the bed to the pulpit, and back from the pulpit to bed. It is not by human power, wisdom, might, or strength - it is by My Spirit, saith the Lord. He loves to use the weak things that the excellence may be seen to be of God.  

There is no question that Catherine experienced periods of illness throughout her life, but she too easily subsumed her own preaching talents under the theme of human weakness. Second, when the Christian Mission evolved into the Salvation Army and adopted military titles, Catherine did not take one. Her husband was known as the General, whereas she was simply “Mrs. Booth” or “Mrs. General Booth”.  

Such a title gave the impression that Catherine derived her stature from her husband William, when in fact this was not the case at all. Third, Catherine never took sufficient credit for her role in the founding of the Christian Mission and the Salvation Army. When she did refer to the movement’s origins, she attributed them solely to her husband.  

Roger Green is correct when he suggests that Catherine Booth often underestimated her level of physical energy, but it is equally true that she devalued her own contributions to the Salvation Army, as well as her own place within the organization’s hierarchy.  

What explains Catherine Booth’s reluctance to affirm her own abilities and acknowledge her own part in the creation and maintenance of the Army? To some extent she was protecting the fragile ego of her husband William. As historian Norman H. Murdoch has noted perceptively, Catherine’s early success as a preacher and author, all of which gained her a good deal of coverage in the international press, was more than “an insecure husband could cope with.”  

Perhaps even more significant, however, was Catherine’s strict evangelical upbringing. She grew up in a home where the concepts of submission to God’s will and self-denial were of paramount importance. This kind of
environment hardly encouraged her to take credit for anything she did. The subordination of one’s will to God, which was necessary to overcome sin, meant that the self had to be renounced. To allow part of the self to remain was to remain in sin. It is apparent from Catherine’s own writings that she never abandoned this evangelical perspective. In her early correspondence with William this understanding of selflessness was expressed clearly: “I must get self destroyed, and then the Lord may trust me to do good without endangering my own soul.”79 Another instance of this notion of self-abnegation surfaced in an article that Catherine wrote on pastoral visitation. She asked her readers if they were “willing to trample on self”.80 Weak (i.e., selfless) individuals were God’s chosen vehicles for ministering to a lost world. Then in her book Papers on Godliness, Catherine identified the self with the epitome of sinfulness: “[God] hates selfishness - selfishness is the devil, the very embodiment of him. You must get out of self...”81 In the end, Catherine’s evangelical beliefs about the self had a lot to do with the way she interpreted her own life and place within the Salvation Army.

By way of summary it can be seen that Catherine Booth’s public legacy to Salvationist women was an ambiguous one. Positively, she was fearless in her writings, challenging male prejudice in the church and demolishing arguments that sought to keep women silent in the church. Furthermore, the fact that she placed her defense of female ministry within the context of a woman’s right to an equal role alongside men in the church was groundbreaking for her age. Not only did she go beyond the early Wesleyan practice that based female preaching on an exceptional call, but she also refined and expanded Phoebe Palmer’s arguments for female ministry. A female preacher was not the product of unusual circumstances (Wesley) or a preacher in disguise (Palmer), but
rather someone possessing a God-given right to enter the pulpit. This conviction in turn found its way into the Salvation Army’s *Orders and Regulations*, wherein the principle of sexual equality in ministry was laid down. Negatively, the ways in which Catherine Booth interpreted her own preaching and other contributions to the Salvation Army were less than liberating for women. The placement of her own abilities and accomplishments within the evangelical context of self-denial, weakness, and submission carried at least two disturbing messages: 1) that it was not legitimate for women to celebrate their own strengths and abilities, and 2) that women’s self-expression and self-determination were sinful at worst, and at best, much less important than their self-sacrifice and selflessness.

Domesticity and the Private Sphere

By the 1850s Victorian society had solidified a number of gender-based roles and expectations. Underlying these social constructions was an ideology of separate spheres: man’s place was in the world of business while a woman’s place was centered around the home. 82 Living largely within the confines of the domestic sphere, which was identified with morality and religion, a respectable lady desired only marriage and motherhood. The precise nature of these expectations has been described concisely by historian Martha Vicinus: "[T]he perfect lady’s sole function was marriage and procreation ... All her education was to bring out her ‘natural’ submission to authority and innate maternal instincts." 83 Even though these feminine ideals were challenged directly by the more radical members of the nineteenth-century women’s rights movement, they remained normative beliefs for the vast majority of British people well into the twentieth century.
To look simply at the public legacy of Catherine Booth it may appear that she challenged or was unaffected by these societal mores. Clearly it is true that her own public ministry on the platform helped to blur the distinction between a masculine public realm and a feminine private realm. Was it, however, ever Catherine’s intention to do so? Judging from her assumptions about domestic life the answer is no. While Catherine felt justified in pursuing a public life of preaching, she also largely reflected, and at times reinforced, the Victorian pillars of domesticity: feminine submission in marriage and maternal obligation in the home. The extent to which these beliefs conflicted with the kind of public life she envisioned for herself and other women is the subject of this section.

views on marriage

Catherine’s earliest views on marriage appeared in correspondence she sent to her fiancé William when he was stationed at the Reformers’ circuit in Spalding, Lincolnshire. Two of these personal letters, written between late December 1852 and early January 1853, revealed a degree of ambiguity on the subject. The theme of the December note was male headship in marriage. At this point, Catherine reminded William that “the father is, and must be, in every well-regulated family, the head of his household.”44 Here, she seemed to be advocating a hierarchical marital relationship where the husband was over the wife. In contrast, the January letter carried a more egalitarian message.45 Now Catherine suggested that Christ had restored woman to a position of equality within marriage, thereby reversing the curse of Genesis 3:16 (i.e., wifely subjection to her husband). Christian marriages were to be based upon a “perfect
oneness" or union between both spouses. Moreover, Catherine criticized the Victorian educational system for teaching women to accept the notion that they were completely subject to the will of others. Concluding her 1853 correspondence, she stated that marriages would not be perfect until woman was "valued and educated as man’s equal..." The substance of this argument was equality rather than submission.

What accounted for the vast difference between these two letters, written just a few days apart? Fortunately, Catherine’s subsequent correspondence helps to explain the nature of this ambivalence. Perhaps the best clues to an answer were contained in an April 1855 letter she addressed to William:

I would not alter woman’s domestic position (when indeed it is scriptural) because God has plainly fixed it; He has told her to obey her husband ... God ordained her subjection as a punishment for sin, and therefore I submit; but I cannot believe that inferiority was the ground of it ... [Furthermore, Jesus] has taken the bitterest part of her curse “out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” ... In Him her equality with her earthly lord is realised, for “in Him there is neither male nor female,” and while the outward semblance of her curse remains, in Him it is nullified by love being made the law of marriage.67

This quotation highlights the extent to which Catherine’s understanding of equality within marriage was primarily spiritual in nature. Besides the obvious fact that she did not wish to challenge the social hierarchy of the home, she also prefaced every reference to equality with the phrase “in Him”, thereby placing the concept within the context of spiritual union with Christ. In Catherine’s mind, spiritual equality seemed to be mutually exclusive of a husband’s rule in the household.
The belief that male headship could co-exist with spiritual equality was, however, ultimately flawed. Domestic or social servitude did indeed have a direct bearing on a woman’s spiritual standing. Catherine suggested as much in her later pamphlet Female Teaching. Near the conclusion of this thirty-two page treatise, she asserted that a woman had a right to preach and teach “except, when, as a wife, silence is imposed upon her by her own husband.” In other words, a wife’s freedom to minister equally alongside men was in the hands of her spouse. As the head of his household, he alone possessed the power to uphold or undermine his wife’s equality in the pulpit. While Catherine appeared to be comfortable with this arrangement - William allowed her to preach - it created an ambiguous environment for the overwhelming majority of married officer women who followed in her footsteps. First, male headship rarely sanctioned anything other than a modest public role for them in the life of the movement. A woman’s responsibilities and rank were derived from those given to her husband. Male headship ensured that public roles and power remained predominantly in the hands of men. Second, headship within the home placed female ministry upon a precarious foundation. Married women’s access to preaching and leadership roles did not constitute an inalienable right, but more of a privilege given to them by their husbands. Such opportunities were only meaningful insofar as women had husbands who shared their convictions on the subject. It will be recalled from chapter three of this thesis that not all Salvationist officer men held liberal views in this area. In sum, male headship functioned to keep a woman’s public role modest and on a tenuous foundation.

To claim, as Catherine did in her 1855 letter to William, that wifely submission was governed by the law of love may have sounded somewhat liberating for the
Victorian Age, but it did not mean very much in reality. Given what Catherine said in *Female Teaching*, a woman could not appeal to the law of love to legitimize her calling to preach if her husband objected to the practice. This moral stipulation had very little impact upon a husband's authority in this area. Furthermore, it is not clear what purpose this condition had in any sphere of married life, because Catherine admitted that her tempered version of subjection seldom lasted beyond a couple's courting days. In reality, her appeal to the law of love merely put a benevolent face on patriarchy, and therefore did nothing to challenge the assumption that power rested ultimately with the husband. Overall, Catherine's unwillingness or inability to distance herself from this evangelical and Victorian understanding of marriage worked against her more liberal views concerning a woman's right to preach.

*views on motherhood*

Having herself been raised by an evangelical mother who devoted much of her time to the spiritual and mental nurture of her offspring, it is not surprising that Catherine Booth held strong views on the maternal role in raising children. In fact, Catherine viewed motherhood as a sacred obligation that was not being taken seriously enough by her Victorian contemporaries. As a young adult in the mid 1850s, she criticized the English educational system for failing to prepare women morally and mentally for the responsibilities of motherhood. In her mind, female education was "calculated to render woman anything ... but a judicious self-dependent trainer of children." Then in 1857 Catherine lamented the fact that working-class girls employed in factories were receiving hardly any training for their future roles as mothers:
What pitiable wives and mothers they will make! Mothers!
Alas, I should say bearers of children, for we have
lamentable evidence that in every thing desirable to the
sacred relationship they are awfully deficient. 91

Years later, through her addresses to the middle classes of the West End of London, she
continued to believe that maternal responsibility remained on the decline within Britain.
She felt it necessary to remind women themselves of the vocation to which they were
called:

[The Great want of England is mothers - right-minded.
able, competent, Christian mothers, who realize their
responsibility to God and to their children, and who are
resolved at all costs and sacrifices to discharge it. 92

Even as she approached death in October 1890, Catherine continued to see herself as a
crusader for motherhood. 93 Altogether, she urged society in general, and women in
particular, to recognize its importance.

For Catherine Booth the chief responsibility of mothers was to educate their
children entirely at home. She shared her mother's belief that Victorian schools, even so-
called Christian ones, were seedbeds of immorality and impurity. 94 In her book entitled
Popular Christianity, written in 1887, Catherine warned women not to neglect their God-
given capacity and duty to educate their young at home:

God has given every child a tutor in his mother, and she is
the best and only right tutor for the heart. I defy you to fill a
proper mother's place for influence over the heart ... God
has tied the child to its mother by such peculiar moral and
mental links that no other being could possibly possess. I
tell you mothers here, that if you are good mothers, you are
committing the greatest wrong to send away your child
from your homes, and I believe this wretched practice is
ruining half our nation today. 95
At one level this admonition reflected simply an extreme evangelical philosophy of education, but on another level it signalled how much Catherine’s thinking was shaped by the nineteenth-century assumption that mothers were suited naturally to the domestic realm as the guardians of their children’s moral and intellectual training.

The Victorian expectation that mothers should devote their energies to the raising of children placed enormous pressure on evangelical women who wished to combine motherhood with female ministry. When, for instance, Catherine Booth agreed in 1860 to take on William’s circuit while he recovered from a nervous breakdown, it was difficult for her, as a young mother of four small children, to fulfill both ministerial tasks and domestic obligations. A late summertime letter she addressed to William, who was away from home seeking treatment for his illness, revealed how stressful this situation could be: “You see, I cannot get rid of the care of the home, and this sadly interferes with the quiet necessary for [sermon] preparation ...”96 What Catherine never appreciated, however, was how her own stringent views on motherhood exacerbated an already frustrating set of circumstances. At no time did she allow her public role to come at the expense of her maternal duties.

Even with the birth of four more children between 1862 and 1868, Catherine Booth sought to balance her maternal obligations with her public ministry. There is little doubt that her ability to endure such a demanding schedule owed something to her exceptional talents. More telling, however, is the fact that the Booths employed domestic help, especially after Catherine moved onto the platform.97 Domestic servants looked after many of the time-consuming household chores, while a governess assisted
Catherine with the education of the Booth children. This left Mrs. Booth with the time she needed to oversee the training of her children and preach outside the home.

Other Salvationist women, lacking the financial resources of the Booth family, were less fortunate. This was particularly true of field officers - those working in Army corps. A field officer’s salary, which was never guaranteed, was seldom more than enough to feed and clothe his family. Consequently, domestic help for married officer couples was modest and sporadic. Under ideal conditions an officer family might employ one domestic servant, but meager finances typically prevented the hiring of either long term or reliable help. Furthermore, few, if any, married women officers had the means to employ a governess for their children. In an age when day-care facilities, nurseries, and kindergartens were non-existent, this ensured that officer mothers spent considerable time at home during their children’s formative years. A typical working-class household in Britain kept a woman busy for up to sixteen hours a day. Therefore the burdens of the home, even if mitigated occasionally by domestic help, did not allow married female officers to have the kind of public life afforded to Mrs. Booth.

Male headship within marriage and maternal responsibilities within the home were hardly the things that would provide Army women with equal opportunities to minister alongside men, or assume prominent leadership roles in the movement’s administration. Yet these were part of Catherine Booth’s legacy to female Salvationists. Notwithstanding the fact that Catherine alluded to male privilege in the church as part of the reason why women were excluded from the pulpit, she left the preeminent expression of male privilege - headship in the home - largely unchallenged. In so doing, she left the
application of Salvationist principles of equality in the hands of men. Moreover, Catherine seemed to imply that the primary aspect of womanhood was motherhood in the home. The demands that she associated with this task were enough to keep women tied primarily to the domestic realm, even if they had domestic help on occasion. Unfortunately, Catherine Booth left women with no clear way to resolve possible tensions between an exacting maternalism and a public ministry in the life of the Army. Because more and more single women were marrying their male counterparts by the late 1880s, this inequitable arrangement was faced by an increasing majority of women within the movement.102

There is no question that Catherine Booth’s beliefs and teachings were incorporated into the Salvation Army. Thus far, however, most scholars of her life and thought have focused almost all of their attention on the public face of this institutional legacy. Regardless of the good intentions behind this approach, it has led to a less than complete picture of this complex nineteenth-century woman. In particular, those pursuing this one-sided strategy have given the impression that Catherine’s evangelical and Victorian background, especially what she learned in the home, had little bearing on the kind of public life she envisioned for herself and other women. Yet it is clear from the preceding pages that Catherine Booth’s evangelical assumptions, especially those concerning the self, marriage, and motherhood, played a significant part in how she interpreted and lived out her vision of a woman’s place within society. Taken together, the public and domestic aspects of her thinking represented an ambiguous legacy. While she did much to attack sexism in the church and expand the rationale for, and opportunities of, women in ministry, she also did a lot to reinforce theological
convictions and cultural mores that identified women with selflessness, submission, and domesticity.

The last chapter of this study addresses the extent to which the Salvationist women following in the footsteps of Catherine Booth shared or challenged this ambiguous set of circumstances. This critical examination, which encompasses the period from the 1890s to 1930, looks at what female officers thought of their public and domestic roles in the movement, as well as what they did to expand or restrict their responsibilities in either realm. Additionally, this final section provides much needed statistical evidence to assess the degree to which these women, married or single, found either the time or opportunity to pursue a public role in the middle and upper levels of Salvationist leadership and administration.


5. This is particularly the case for material written prior to the 1980s. Works reflecting this lack of critical historical and evangelical context include Frederick Booth-Tucker, The Life of Catherine Booth: The Mother of the Salvation Army, two volumes (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1892); William T. Stead, Mrs. Booth of The Salvation Army (1900; reprint, Oakville, Ontario: Triumph Press, 1979); Mildred Duff, Catherine Booth: A Sketch (1901; reprint, London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1914); Joan Metcalf, God Used A Woman: Catherine Booth (London: Challenge Books, 1967); and Catherine Bramwell-Booth, Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970). More recently the situation has improved somewhat, but much remains to be done to situate Catherine Booth within her nineteenth-century context. Norman H. Murdoch begins to add historical context in his 1984 article on Catherine Booth. See his “Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth,” Church History, 53, 3 (September 1984): 348-362. Even here, however, there is a less than adequate interaction with Victorian and evangelical scholarship on women. Unfortunately, Roger Green’s 1993 article “Settled Views: Catherine Booth and Female Ministry,” and his 1996 book Catherine Booth: A Biography lack even Murdoch’s cursory treatment of historical background. Green acknowledges this weakness, however, in the introduction to Catherine Booth: A Biography, p. 15. Perhaps the best attempt thus far to bring Victorian studies to bear on Catherine Booth is Pamela J. Walker’s 1992 dissertation “Pulling The Devil’s Kingdom Down”. Notwithstanding this helpful work, there is much more to be gained by studying Catherine Booth within her Victorian environment and in relation to her evangelical convictions.
6. The biographical information which follows in this section is drawn largely from Booth-Tucker, The Life of Catherine Booth, vol. 1, pp. 10-50; and Green, Catherine Booth: A Biography, pp. 17-37.


9. A good examination of women's identification with morality and spirituality is found in Jane Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France, and the United States, 1780-1860 (London: MacMillan, 1985), pp. 73-107. See also the various references to this phenomenon in chapter two of this thesis.


11. The average working-class child received between four and five years of formal schooling during the 1830s and 1840s. See Arnstein, Britain Yesterday and Today, p. 56.


14. Deism was a product of Enlightenment rational religion. It held, among other things, that God no longer had an active and personal interest in the ongoing life of the world.


16. Catherine Booth, Papers on Godliness (1881; reprint, London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1890), pp. 4-6; Catherine Booth, Popular Christianity (1887; reprint,


23. While Charles Finney was not the first to adopt “new measures” such as protracted meetings and mourners’ benches, he did the most to promote this new kind of revivalism among respectable evangelicals. For a helpful analysis of this issue please see Richard Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. 10-16.


25. Ibid., p. 181.


27. Catherine encouraged her husband William Booth to adopt Finney’s techniques. See Sears, “An Overview of the Thought of Catherine Booth,” p. 141. The extent to which these views were incorporated into the early Salvation Army is apparent in Anon., *All About The Salvation Army* (London: S.W. Partridge and Co., 1882), pp. 9-10.

29. Roger Green is right to point out that Catherine Mumford, given her age at the time, could not have possibly comprehended everything on matters such as temperance. See his Catherine Booth: A Biography. p. 26.

30. Green, Catherine Booth: A Biography, p. 28.


32. Stead, Mrs. Booth of The Salvation Army, p. 42.

33. Ibid.


35. The role of women within early Methodism is summarized concisely by Jane Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism, pp. 91-93. For a more detailed analysis of this topic see chapter two of this thesis.


41. Rees’ pamphlet, entitled *Reasons for Not Co-operating in the Alleged ‘Sunderland Revivals’*, is examined in some detail by Pamela Walker, “Pulling The Devil’s Kingdom Down,” pp. 33-35.

42. Since no one has been able to find a copy of the 1859 original, the analysis which follows here is based on the second (1861) and third (1870) editions of the pamphlet. The second edition, *Female Teaching; or, the Rev. A. A. Rees versus Mrs. Palmer, Being a Reply to a Pamphlet by the Above Gentleman on the Sunderland Revival* (London: G. J. Stevenson, 1861), was obviously still directed toward Rees. Nevertheless, it is apparent from a 1861 letter from Catherine to her mother that the pamphlet had been revised significantly for the second edition. In this letter she noted: “I have finished the emendations for the new edition ... There will be considerably more matter than before, and I think it is much improved.” (Cited in Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth*, vol. 1, p. 322.) Just what these changes were we do not know. Historian Pamela J. Walker appears to be unaware of this correspondence, because she speculates that the 1859 and 1861 editions were probably very similar (Walker, “Pulling The Devil’s Kingdom Down,” p. 65, endnote 53). The third or 1870 edition of Mrs. Booth’s pamphlet retained the central arguments of the 1861 edition, but it also bore some changes. Now, for instance, the booklet received a new title, *Female Ministry; or, Woman’s Right to Preach* (1870; reprint, New York: The Salvation Army, 1975). This change reflected the fact that Catherine was no longer directing her arguments against Rees; she was now aiming her arguments more generally at all opponents of female preaching. Furthermore, the words “preach” and “right” in the subtitle indicated more explicitly what the work sought to address. Although the contents of the 1861 edition had referred quite clearly to a woman’s right to preach and teach in the church, its title was more subdued than the title of the 1870 edition.

43. *Female Teaching*, p. 3; *Female Ministry*, p. 5.

44. *Female Teaching*, pp. 3-4; *Female Ministry*, p. 5.

45. Although Catherine Booth’s argument here was presented in an unique fashion, and placed within the context of rights, it was not the first attempt to justify female ministry in terms of a woman’s nature. Phoebe Palmer’s earlier, and more lengthy, defense of a woman’s public role in the church, entitled *Promise of the Father; or, A Neglected Speciality of the Last Days* (Boston: Henry V. Degen, 1859), had incorporated this theme within her overall biblical presentation. See *Promise of the Father*, pp. 15, 62-63, 316. Pamela Walker and Roger Green are incorrect when they suggest that Palmer did not appeal in any sense to a woman’s natural suitability for public ministry. See Walker, “Pulling The Devil’s Kingdom Down,” p. 42, and Green *Catherine Booth: A Biography*, p. 126. Notwithstanding the fact that Catherine’s argument from nature was more explicit and sophisticated than Palmer’s, and placed within the context of rights (Palmer had stayed away from the language of rights. See *Promise of the Father*, p.1.), it is quite possible that Catherine’s own reasoning owed something to her in this area. This would not be surprising since Catherine made extensive use of *Promise of the Father*

46. *Female Teaching*, pp. 23-25.

47. Catherine Booth’s high view of scripture is clearly apparent in her book *Life and Death*, p. 32. See also her correspondence in Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth*, vol. 2, p. 154.

48. *Female Teaching*, p. 31; *Female Ministry*, p. 19.


50. *Female Ministry*, p. 8; *Female Teaching*, p. 10. See also Palmer, *Promise of the Father*, p. 7.

51. *Female Teaching*, p. 12; *Female Ministry*, p. 9. Phoebe Palmer makes a similar argument in *Promise of the Father*, p. 47.

52. *Female Teaching*, p. 21.

53. Ibid., pp. 16-17; *Female Ministry*, pp. 12-13.

54. *Female Teaching*, p. 21.

55. Ibid. Here Catherine based her reasoning on Luke 1:35.

56. Ibid., pp. 17-18, 25. See also *Female Ministry*, pp. 14-16.

57. *Female Teaching*, pp. 8, 15-16, 19; *Female Ministry*, pp. 10, 16. The ramifications of Acts 2:17-21 for female ministry was undoubtedly something that Catherine Booth learned from Palmer’s *Promise of the Father*. The central thesis of this book was that the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon women gave them the authority and obligation to testify publicly in the church. See *Promise of the Father*, pp. 68, 87, 171-172, 231, 246, 320, 324, 338, 358, 366.

58. *Female Ministry*, p. 10. It should be recalled that Phoebe Palmer had also equated prophesying with preaching. See *Promise of the Father*, pp. 34-36, 43, 329-330.

59. *Female Ministry*, p. 17. See also *Female Teaching*, p. 21.


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61. Ibid., p. 17. Catherine placed great importance on the women mentioned in Paul’s epistles, arguing that they shared prominent preaching and teaching offices with the men, even that of apostle.

62. Female Teaching, p. 30. See also Female Ministry, p. 18.

63. Female Teaching, p. 26; Female Ministry, p. 18.

64. Female Teaching, p. 32; Female Ministry, p. 20.

65. Historian Pamela Walker makes this point in her recent work on the Salvation Army, but she does not attach any particular significance to it. See Walker, “Pulling The Devil’s Kingdom Down,” p. 59.


67. Ibid., p. 176.

68. Ibid., p. 180.

69. Booth, Aggressive Christianity, p. 128.

70. Ibid. See also her Papers on Godliness, p. 94.

71. Aggressive Christianity, pp. 128-129.


74. Booth, Aggressive Christianity, p. 132.

76. Booth, *The Salvation Army in Relation to the Church and State, and Other Addresses*, pp. 67-69.


95. Ibid., p. 179. See also pp. 177-178.


102. The trend toward marriage was noted by William Booth, “Our May Meeting in Exeter Hall: Summary of the Year’s History,” *The War Cry* (May 12, 1888): 10. Speaking of this period, biographer John Ervine notes that the Salvation Army was intent on filling its ranks with
Chapter Six

Feminine Gender and Salvationist Women: 1890s-1930

Writing to female officers in 1913, Florence Booth, the wife of the Salvation Army’s second General, suggested that women’s equality with men in the ranks depended upon maintaining their feminine identity:

Now, in order that we may take and retain the place prepared for us, we must be true to our womanhood. There is no need for us to abandon this in any sense, even though we take a position of equal authority and influence with men, or use to the full all the opportunities afforded us by The Salvation Army.¹

A similar message was conveyed by Catherine Higgins, another high-ranking British officer, in 1915: “It is my own firm conviction that the real strength of a woman leader lies in remaining absolutely true to the instincts of her own nature...”² Booth and Higgins both intimated that a female officer’s presence in the public life of the movement was determined largely by her adherence to the characteristics of her sex.

In reality, however, the correlation between feminine gender and equitable leadership opportunities was more of a problem than a solution for Salvationist women. Notwithstanding the rare exception, Army women assumed identities and roles that reflected and reinforced the ambiguous heritage of Victorianism and evangelicalism. Consistent with the views of their male counterparts, and certain aspects of Catherine Booth’s life and thought, female officers from the 1890s to 1930 accepted societal and theological beliefs about gender that jeopardized their right to equal opportunities alongside Army men. Such an environment, while not ruling out a public role for officer
women, worked against their promotion beyond the pulpit or the more traditional areas of female ministry. The following pages pay close attention to the cultural and theological pillars of womanhood that Salvationist women embraced and fortified, but seldom modified in any significant ways. How women defined this notion of femininity, with its corresponding obligations and consequences, is of central importance here.

Women and the Domestic Realm

During the period covered in this chapter - the 1890s to 1930 - the ideology of separate spheres, which had its origins in evangelicalism and bourgeois Victorianism, became a reality for many working-class women within Britain. Notwithstanding their involvement in the public arena during the First World War, and a gradual reduction in the size of their families, British women faced increasing pressure to remain at home, looking after their husbands and children.¹ This societal expectation was reflected in a number of ways throughout the period. First, as wages began to rise there was a growing consensus, especially among men, that married women no longer needed to work outside the home.² The notion of the male breadwinner - earning enough to support the entire family - became a possibility for more and more working-class households, thereby making a married woman's paid work unnecessary. Second, a high infant mortality rate in the early 1900s was accompanied by renewed calls for women to pay more attention to the needs of their children in the home.³ This concern was even reflected in the school curriculum of working-class girls. Their education was designed to make them responsible mothers and efficient housekeepers.⁴ The Education Act of 1902 went as far as making domestic subjects compulsory for all female working-class students. Finally,
marriage bars, which became increasingly prevalent after 1900, prevented women in
general from combining motherhood with a career.7 After having their first child, many
women were forced out of a variety of occupations. Taken together, these circumstances
represented an extension of the Victorian belief that a woman’s rightful place was in the
domestic realm.

Unlike many middle-class women, and a growing number of their working-class
peers, Salvationist officer women were not tied exclusively to the home. They generally
had some kind of public expression in corps life and social work. Furthermore, there
were no obvious marriage bars within the organization; Army guidelines did not prohibit
women with children from undertaking female ministry. In fact, as noted in earlier
chapters, the movement’s official regulations boasted of women’s equal opportunities
with men in the visible aspects of its work. It has likewise been seen, however, that
underlying these official guidelines were assumptions and practices that worked against
women’s adoption of this principle of sexual equality. The ideology of separate spheres,
while sometimes more insidious than its application within the broader society, was
never jettisoned by the early Salvation Army. The fact remained that officer women were
responsible for the home and children in a way that their menfolk were not. This section
addresses the ways in which this notion, with only the rare exception, was accepted and
reinforced by women officers, and the impact this had on their officership status.
morality, spirituality, and the home

Although not denying that members of their sex had a public ministry to fulfill in the Salvation Army, a number of women officers filled the organization’s literature with the message that a uniquely feminine task was to be a moral and spiritual guardian in the home. On a general level, women were urged to have a positive influence on their domestic surroundings. More specifically, mothers were called upon to ensure that their children received adequate moral and spiritual training to prepare them for the outside world. In typical evangelical and Victorian fashion, and clearly consistent with the teachings of Catherine Booth and male Salvationists, female officers portrayed the home as a place within which women cultivated the heart and the soul. The purpose of this pious undertaking was, in sum, to bring one’s family closer to God and moral excellence.⁸

The belief that women generally were responsible for setting the moral climate within the home was an important theme in Florence Booth’s book Mothers and the Empire. Published in 1914, but essentially a compilation of speeches delivered between 1905 and 1912, this text linked national character with women’s involvement in the domestic realm:

For woman generally, the home offers a wide field; and while she exercises herself to the utmost of her ability, and wields an influence for good in the home, whether as wife, mother, or daughter, she is undoubtedly rendering a service to the nation. For the home represents the nation; and only as far as the homes of its people are pure and good can the nation itself be pure and good, and fitted to take its place in the world.⁹
For Florence Booth the significance of women in the home was not simply because the home made the nation virtuous, but because there was a close moral symmetry between the domestic realm and feminine gender. Elsewhere in this book she argued that the home, whether heavenly or earthly, should be marked by love, and that God had “especially entrusted [women] with the power to love.”\textsuperscript{10} According to this reasoning, women’s unique capacity for love suited them to be the moral guardians of the home.

A woman’s moral and spiritual imprint upon home life was of such vital concern to Florence Booth that she established a Home League in 1907. This body, which was designed exclusively for women, quickly became a fixture of all Army corps around the world. Its overall purpose was to help women have a pure and godly role in their families, especially among unsaved loved ones who remained outside the Army fold.\textsuperscript{11} Besides the general oversight of these weekly meetings, a woman officer was responsible for preparing or providing for a suitable short lecture on some aspect of a woman’s domestic duties. The best of these presentations were occasionally published in the Salvation Army’s periodical \textit{The Officer}, and female officers were encouraged to use such material in their local Home Leagues.

Invariably these published lectures reinforced the belief that a woman’s primary task was to be a moral and spiritual beacon in the domestic realm. One paper, for instance, depicted the ideal housewife as a person of “moral power and excellence” who serves her family with an “unselfish womanly spirit” from behind the scenes.\textsuperscript{12} A second article, entitled “Husbands and Wives in Unison”, conveyed a similar message: “If women cannot be much at the front, they can wield such an influence at home that its
mark shall be seen in the world."13 The author went on to urge Home League members to make the most of this function by encouraging their husbands and children to serve God. Yet another lecture, appearing in the January 1919 issue of The Officer, reminded its readers that "woman represents the heart of the home."14 Consequently, the feminine task was to cultivate a pure and tender heart within the home so that the spiritual and moral needs of the family might be met.15 Because these articles identified morality with the stereotypically feminine (i.e., the heart, sacrificial work behind the scenes), they strengthened the belief that a woman's work was more inward and domestic than outward and public.

Feminine morality was expressed preeminently in motherhood. The maternal task was a sacred undertaking16 or, as Florence Booth described it, one of "the holiest and highest vocations" open to a woman.17 In any case, however, it remained a responsibility tied mainly to the home. Central to this calling was the ethical and spiritual nurture of children. The moral component of this training was to prepare young people for the outside world, which, in the minds of evangelicals, was typically a place of lurking evils. A mother's role, wrote one officer mother, was to enlighten her children to the "moral dangers" beyond the home, and to instruct them "lovingly and carefully [as to] what their pure eyes will see in [such] surroundings."18 This sentiment was echoed by Florence Booth. In her mind the godly mother sent her children "forewarned and forearmed to meet the evils of the world around [them]."19 In particular, as Adjutant Beatrice Wallis suggested in a 1916 Home League paper, a mother's duty was to prepare her child morally for school life.20 A young person's character was dependent on a mother's diligence in this area, since she believed that ethical principles were learned "almost
entirely at home." A mother was also expected to be a spiritual counsellor to the young. Her task here, as one early female Salvationist expressed it, was to shape the climate of the home in such a way that her children would be "led early to Jesus and into the Army Fold." The maternal mission, wrote another female officer, was to cultivate the hearts of her offspring so that they would grow up to live for God. Altogether, the spiritual and moral instruction of children was a feminine obligation within the domestic sphere.

There is little question that female Salvationist writers, consciously or unconsciously, carried into the twentieth century the Victorian assumption that the domestic realm was essentially a moral and spiritual environment wherein a woman trained her children to confront - and hopefully change - a less than virtuous and Christian public arena. Because the nurturing of a child's moral and spiritual being was associated with the heart - a stereotypically feminine domain - women appeared as naturally gifted for these aspects of an adolescent's education. Moreover, since evangelical religion linked virtue with self-sacrifice, a woman's traditional propensity for putting the interests of others before her own made her the obvious choice for teaching the young about other-centeredness and service to God. Finally, who better to instruct a child about an omnipotent, unseen God than a mother, whose work was ever-present but often unnoticed by the outside world? There was, in other words, a congruence between the feminine and certain elements of a child's development. Not surprisingly, therefore, Army women, rather than Army men, were held accountable for these things. Clearly this gender-typed responsibility tied officer mothers to the home in a way not expected of their husbands, but women themselves did not question how this arrangement infringed upon their right to an equal share with men in the public life of the Salvation Army.
domestic laborers

Within the British working classes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was widely assumed, at least implicitly, that women bore the responsibility for household chores.  The educational system of the day did much to reinforce this conviction, because it required working-class girls to take domestic subjects at school. Whether as domestic servants, wives, mothers, or daughters, women were to concern themselves with the incessant demands of the home: the cleaning, sewing, cooking, and washing. The average woman's domestic work after the turn of the century remained quite similar to that of her Victorian ancestors. This was especially true of women who lived in houses constructed prior to 1914. These dwellings lacked a hot water supply, making chores like washing and ironing time-consuming and difficult. Overall, a great deal of energy went into maintaining a working-class household.

Occasionally, early Salvationist literature provided glimpses into the mundane quality of domestic life within the typical working-class officer family. These descriptions, while often brief, revealed the many things to be done in an Army home, and almost always they gave the impression that such tasks were exclusively feminine ones. One early picture of home life was evident from an 1893 article written by Emma Booth-Tucker, a daughter of Catherine Booth. Addressing her married officer peers, she gave a clear indication of the arduous nature of their household work:

I am fully aware of your possible weakness of body, of the cares of the little family, of the heat of the kitchen, of the much washing and hard water ... of the often scanty means, and of the many other things which, as sisters of the one dear Army family, we more or less share in common with

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Cooking and washing were, as Booth-Tucker suggests, essentially female chores carried out with less than adequate resources. Moreover, the endless cycle of preparing meals in hot kitchens and washing clothes, which was done by hand at the time, left officer women physically exhausted. Put simply, domestic work within the average Army home was not easy.

Similar depictions of a woman’s labors within the home appeared in the years that followed, but of these descriptions two were particularly illuminating. In late 1900, for instance, Marianne Railton, a senior female officer, noted that a woman’s greatest challenges come after marriage, when a “wife, mother, laundress, cook, needlewoman, nurse, and Field Officer have all to be united in one poor, tired little woman!” Recognizing that the domestic roles of her married colleagues left them with little time to prepare for a ministry on the platform, Railton went on to suggest that sermons could be crafted while at the washing tub. Such a remark underscored the demanding nature of home life for the typical female officer. The numerous duties of the household required careful planning, wrote another Army officer in 1916: “The work of a home should be done systematically ...[since] there is the washing and ironing, baking and cooking, making and mending of clothes, shopping to the best advantage, cleaning and the host of other things ... which only a mother knows need doing.” The modest means available to a Salvationist woman, which among other things necessitated frugality with food and clothing, served only to increase the time she spent looking after the needs of her family.
Meager financial resources also prevented the average Army family from hiring reliable, long-term domestic help. Even though officers received a house rent-free from the Salvation Army, they were obliged to pay the local expenses of their corps before they could draw a modest salary.\(^{31}\) This stipulation meant that officers, on numerous occasions, received less than their set wages.\(^{34}\) Given these arduous circumstances, domestic assistance was an unstable feature of Salvationist home life. A domestic servant, when mentioned at all, tended to be seen as a rare treasure\(^{35}\) or as the exception to the norm.\(^{36}\) At best, one might be kept for short periods of time within a household. Even when these more favorable conditions prevailed, however, it was not always easy to obtain a responsible helper.\(^{37}\) Perhaps the only exceptions to this overall pattern occurred in the Booth family. For example, both Emma Booth-Tucker and Florence Booth had at their disposal Salvationist women who, while not technically domestic servants, helped them with their household duties. Emma had the assistance of a Major Hannah Carr for thirteen years while Florence had the prolonged support of a Marianne Asdell.\(^{38}\) Yet apart from such privileged exceptions, officer women received less than adequate outside or live-in help.

There were, in addition, other ways in which female Salvationists received less than sufficient domestic aid. Only rarely, for example, were husbands portrayed as helping out with the household chores. In fact, just one early female officer, an Adjutant Narraway, mentioned the assistance of her husband in the home.\(^{39}\) She noted that this kind of co-operation in domestic matters had enabled her to maintain an equitable role alongside her spouse. Sadly, however, she acknowledged that too few married men supported their wives in this manner. Officer men, she claimed, were “largely
responsible for their wives having sunk the officer in the wife and the mother.”40 Perhaps
the word ‘largely’ was inappropriate, because women themselves did much to contribute
to this situation. Nonetheless, there remained a good deal of truth to Narraway’s
criticism. Salvationist regulations also offered little in the way of tangible help to female
officers in the home. Such policies may have urged senior staff to make allowance for a
woman’s domestic work when assigning her a public role, but in so doing they simply
reinforced the conviction that household responsibilities were “burdens which she [was]
specially called to bear.”41 In the end, Salvationist behavior and policy largely mirrored
the widespread societal belief that domestic work was women’s work.

impact upon officership status

What was the status of an Army woman’s public life, given her roles as a moral
guardian, religious teacher, and manual laborer within the home? More specifically, was
her officership function (i.e., working in a public setting) given a high or low value in
comparison with her domestic responsibilities? Two distinct answers to these questions
emerged when female officers weighed the demands of home and ministry. The first type
of response was to consider officership a calling which took precedence over the
concerns of the home. Emma Booth-Tucker, while not addressing officership directly,
provided one early instance of this perspective. She urged her Army sisters to involve
themselves in the public work of the gospel, stating that the “lesser things of self and
home ... [should] fall into their right and secondary places.”42 Although Booth-Tucker
assumed that housekeeping was a feminine undertaking, she believed that it should not
interfere with public ministry.43 This conviction, however, did not represent a dominant
theme within early Salvationist literature. Only one other female officer, referring briefly to her ministerial status, claimed to put her officership ahead of her work in the home.⁴⁴

Figuring much more prominently among female Salvationists was the belief, either implicit or explicit, that the claims of the home and children came before the claims of officership. This assumption, when taken to the extreme, undermined a woman’s participation in the public life of the Army. That an officer woman might abandon, or be tempted to abandon, public ministry after marriage was not uncommon within the ranks. One early observer, after describing the case of an officer wife who had given up all interests beyond the home, went on to state that it was “a pity to confine life’s horizon within such narrow bounds.”⁴⁵ While admitting that women had more to do in the home than men, this writer urged female officers to pursue some kind of modest public role in the movement.⁴⁶ Such advice was clearly needed, judging from the comments of another early Salvationist. From the perspective of this woman, a mid-ranking officer, it was not easy “to combat the idea - far too prevalent - that because an Officer becomes a wife and mother she in any sense loses her entity [sic] as an Officer.”⁴⁷ Yet another commentator noted this tendency among her fellow officers: “The novelty of having her own home and the extra house duties claim her attention, and there is a tendency to feel that that is her share of the work.”⁴⁸ For too many women officers, domestic roles supplanted, or came close to supplanting, their public calling. Even Catherine Higgins, a woman who believed that a good deal of feminine work should be done behind the scenes, expressed some concern here. She feared that her peers might “permit their [public] opportunities to slip by, excusing them on the ground of the burdens and anxieties of home life.”⁴⁹ Unlike other observers, however, Higgins failed to
appreciate the extent to which this was already a reality within officer circles.

Even when officer women envisioned some sort of public role after marriage, they implied that such work was subordinate to domestic concerns. Those holding this viewpoint encouraged female ministry, but it was not to come at the expense of home and children. One commentator, for example, urged the members of her sex to remain active in the corps, but she also warned them that "no one respects the woman who neglects her house and children." A similar message was conveyed by another writer years later: "To be a public woman does not excuse one neglecting her duties in private life, such as ...[the] good management of home, or wise bringing up of her children, if she has any." Even more illuminating were the remarks of a senior officer, Elsie Shaw, in 1929. Although rejecting the notion that married women should abandon public ministry for the sake of their families, Shaw remained convinced that her peers "should [never] take up so large an amount of work outside as to cause neglect to [their] duties, temporal or spiritual at home." Because each of these writers associated the word 'neglect' solely with the domestic realm, the impression was left that a woman's absence from the home was more of a transgression than her absence from the public life of the Army. Put differently, her foremost obligation as a woman was to meet the needs of her household.

The home represented a female officer's highest calling largely because she alone bore the responsibility for raising her children to follow God. Consequently, it was not appropriate for a woman to put ministry and leadership ahead of the young. When faced with a possible conflict between the public and private demands of her life, she knew
what duties came first. One writer, addressing other mothers in the organization, expressed this conviction in the following language:

God has entrusted our children to us as very precious gifts, to be brought up in His fear and love and trained for His Service, and should not this part of our duty stand first when it comes to deciding between the claims of the Corps and our responsibility to God for developing the character and spiritual life of our children? We are responsible for our children in a sense in which we cannot be responsible for those of others. 53

According to this reasoning, a married woman’s accountability to God for her children surpassed any commitment she had to the corps. Unlike her husband, she had parental obligations that restricted her freedom to minister publicly.

Throughout the period under review, Salvationist women generally viewed themselves as more domestic than public. In keeping with the cultural and theological assumptions of the day, they fulfilled clearly defined spiritual and temporal tasks within the home. These responsibilities, however important they may have been, did not leave women with the time or the energy to pursue the ministerial and leadership opportunities available to their husbands. Theoretically, female officers had as much right to a public life as their male counterparts, but the reality was much different. At the corps level it was not unusual for a married woman to conclude that her “strength must be used in other things besides the purely active work of the corps.” 54 At the administrative levels of the Army it was likewise taken for granted that the “claims of home and family prevent[ed] her [from] undertaking any large responsibility.” 55 In the end, domestic demands helped to ensure that most female officers would enjoy little more than a modest role in the public ministry of the Salvation Army.
Women and the Public Realm

Housework and child-rearing placed obvious and significant restrictions upon a woman’s public expression in the Salvation Army. Domestic demands had, by themselves, the potential to jeopardize her public contributions to the movement. Even so, they were not alone in creating a less than liberating environment for female officers. Related evangelical and Victorian beliefs also helped to produce a troublesome public atmosphere for women, whether married or single. These assumptions conveyed, at best, mixed messages about female ministry and leadership, while at worst they implied that a woman’s femininity suited her to stereotypical or subordinate roles.

self-sacrifice over self-improvement

Self-improvement was, according to an early Army manual, necessary for success in ministry and promotion through the ranks. Personal betterment, however, required time for study and a desire to succeed. The former condition was obviously problematic for married women, because the concerns of the home filled up a large part of their lives. Yet for women as a whole the latter requirement was also something in short supply. Reflecting on the absence of women, single or married, in the front ranks of the movement, one early observer noted: “Many are not fired with that determined ambition, which enables them to take hold of themselves with a desperate resolution to develop and cultivate their powers, and become all that is essential to securing their highest and truest success as officers.” This writer urged her peers to make a more determined effort to cultivate solid qualifications for ministry and leadership.
Women clearly needed to possess this kind of drive if they were to rise in the ranks, but such initiative was at odds with the Victorian image of sacrificial, unselﬁsh femininity. Largely a product of evangelicalism, this understanding of womanhood permeated every social class in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Britain. The typical girl was taught soon after birth to put the interests of others ahead of her own, whether at home or in the wider society. More often than not this meant subordinating her dreams and desires to those of the opposite sex. Throughout her life she usually faced religious and cultural pressure to abandon her needs for the more important needs of her male counterparts. In short, a woman’s nature was defined in terms of service and selﬁsh denial. Since ambition was associated with selﬁshness and selﬁshness, it was hardly compatible with the expectations of feminine gender.

In order for the message of self-improvement to be heard unambiguously by Salvationist women, the underlying assumptions about selﬁless femininity had to be redefined. Yet this did not happen. Occasional references to personal betterment were overshadowed by deep-seated convictions about womanhood. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the thinking of Florence Booth. Certain portions of her thought gave the impression that women had to be assertive and ambitious if they were to move ahead in the movement. In 1906 she exclaimed: “[Women] will never hold the position that is offered to them unless they are individually worthy of it.” A few years later she boasted that female ofﬁcers had unlimited opportunities for leadership in the organization, provided that they qualify themselves for such roles. These remarks, however, were hard to reconcile with Booth’s overall depiction of femininity. She portrayed the ideal woman as a person who based her life on selﬁsh denial rather than on “competition with the
other sex”. Not only did this understanding of womanhood imply that women’s opportunities for leadership were more restricted than those of the opposite sex, but it also gave the impression that ambition was an unfeminine trait. The validity of this inference was only strengthened by Booth’s belief that godly, heroic women were those who “relinquished comfort and position ... to toil behind the scenes for the salvation of precious souls.” In her mind the door of feminine self-sacrifice was one that “should be opened as widely as possible” within the Salvation Army. All things considered, a woman’s humble calling to serve others was more in keeping with her gender than any competition with men for senior positions in this religious body.

The image of selfless womanhood remained dominant throughout the period in question. For instance, early pioneers of female ministry were remembered more for their self-denial than their assertiveness. Tributes to Catherine Booth emphasized her self-sacrifice much more than her arguments for women’s right to preach. Emma Booth-Tucker, who died in a train accident in 1903, was memorialized as a woman “in whom the principle of self was lost in a passion of love to God and [humanity].” These legacies of selflessness did not encourage female Salvationists, especially mothers, to pursue leading roles in the organization’s hierarchy. It was evident throughout this era that a godly mother was expected to give herself to her children, exemplifying “unselfish courage” and sacrificial love as she prepared them for life beyond the home. Furthermore, it was also assumed that single women officers possessed this spirit of self-denial, because they alone made up the brigades that ventured into the worst of the British slums to live and work among the poor and the sick. This pervasive culture of self-sacrifice left little room for the cultivation of ambition among women.
Even women higher up in the ranks felt pressure to put sacrificial service ahead of any aspirations for important roles in the Salvation Army. When, for example, the wives of senior officers were left without official appointments, they were reminded by one commentator that there was no shortage of “humble and unobtrusive work” for them to do.69 This included, among other things, ministry to other women, the sick, and the young. While acknowledging that it was “desirable” for a woman to have her own position, this writer felt that it was incumbent upon a female officer to “make the most of the lesser task, [and] to accept whatever service offers itself behind the scenes.”70 The use of the word ‘desirable’ underscored the double standard in the movement: it was taken for granted that a man had a right to an appointment, but it was merely advantageous for a woman to have one. In the face of such inequality a female Salvationist was expected to display self-effacement rather than self-interest.

An environment of self-abnegation was, in the final analysis, hardly conducive to the promotion of sexual equality within the Salvation Army. H. Rider Haggard, an early student of the organization’s social work in Britain, unwittingly suggested as much when he described the attitude he discovered among women officers:

In truth, a study of the female officers of the Salvation Army is calculated to convert the observer not only to the belief in the right of women to the suffrage, but also to that of their fitness to rule among, or even over men. Only I never heard that any of these ladies ever sought such privileges; moreover, few of their sex would care to win them at the price of the training, self-denial, and stern experience which it is their lot to undergo.71

Having been socialized to live for the interests of others, these women lacked the motivation to pursue a more ambitious place within the movement. Notwithstanding
their obvious potential for leadership, early female officers did not have the determination necessary to develop their capabilities and skills in non-traditional ways. Army regulations may have given women the right to leadership roles alongside or even over men - this was not, as Haggard believed, a right yet to be won - but the implementation of this principle in any meaningful way was hampered by the persistence of the Victorian belief that women were suited best for selfless activities.

sexual difference and public roles

Selfless femininity was one expression of the Victorian belief that men and women possessed largely opposite natures. The contrast between the "giving female" and the "acquisitive male" was taken for granted in the nineteenth century, and persisted well into the twentieth century. Sexual difference, however, was not simply confined to the moral and spiritual realms. The average person of this age - following the lead of social commentators, clergymen, and scientists - believed that there were other significant gender differences as well.\textsuperscript{72} It was assumed, for example, that men were powerful and independent whereas women were weak and dependent. Consequently, chivalry was the prescribed male behavior, submission to men the expected female behavior. Once married, a woman's divinely ordained role was that of a "helpmeet" to her spouse; her marital identity was defined in terms of subordination to male authority. Gender division was also maintained by the widespread conviction that men were rational while women were emotional. In symbolic language man represented the head, woman the heart. Throughout the period under review these stereotypes were reinforced by the ideology of separate spheres. Whether in the home or in the workplace, women and men generally
performed jobs suited to their natures.

Each of these gender stereotypes, to a lesser or greater extent, found expression in the early Salvation Army. Weakness, for example, remained a characteristically feminine trait. Florence Booth, perhaps the most influential female officer in Britain after the turn of the century, described this aspect of womanhood in her book Mothers and the Empire: “Women and children represent the weaker portion of the community; weaker, that is, both in their powers of self-preservation and in their means of expressing need or danger...” She believed, therefore, that women should be protected by men. Such an atmosphere of chivalry was to be encouraged within the Army’s ranks: “We want this spirit in The Salvation Army as well as in the knights of old - this spirit of protection.” Although Florence did not suggest that women were the weaker sex intellectually, she portrayed them as helpless individuals, resembling children more than men. This image hardly presented women as ideal candidates for leadership in the Army.

In addition to equating womanhood with helplessness, Salvationists generally assumed that women were, physically speaking, less fit than men for the burdens of public life. Clara Case, while herself a notable leader in India, admitted that a woman’s bodily frame was poorly adapted for the pressures of senior administration: “The leadership of women naturally has its difficulties. It is acknowledged that women are not so physically strong as men ... therefore a life of public service presses more hardly upon them.” A variation of this motif was noted by Agnes Povlsen, a social work officer, in 1930: “As for the single women officers it is often said that their health is not equal to the strain and stress of the work and responsibilities connected with the leading
positions." Povlsen was hesitant to subscribe unreservedly to this argument - poor health, she claimed, was no more of a sign of incompetence in a female leader than in a male leader - but her reference to this sentiment underscored its widespread acceptance in the Army. This general viewpoint was also apparent at the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. Explaining why a man should take the more active role in a corps, one female officer stated that "the physical frame of a woman is not built to stand the same kind of strain as a man's [body]." Those advancing this general feeling never explained how public life exacted more physical energy than a woman's more traditional labors in the home, but in the end they left the impression that bodily weakness put leadership beyond the reach of the average officer woman.

What also put authoritative roles beyond the reach of most female officers was the notion that the husband was the head of his family. Male headship ensured that a wife remained dependent on her husband, even when she performed tasks outside the home. This patriarchal arrangement was especially hard on women who had been commanding officers before marriage. One early officer, perhaps reflecting on her own experience, remarked that a newly married woman was "almost certain to find it a little difficult at first to subordinate her ideas of how things should be managed to those of her husband." Notwithstanding, a woman gradually learned the rules of this marital system. Decision-making, for example, remained a male preserve. A wife might discuss corps matters with her husband, but she gave him the "casting vote." The successful officer wife recognized that "where a command [had] to be given or a decision arrived at, her husband's voice should be heard, and not hers." Her overall function in the corps was ultimately secondary to that of her husband's. A female ensign, describing her past
experience in corps work, revealed unwittingly the extent to which this was true: “I looked well after the minor details of the Corps, and helped my husband by sharing his councils and plans for meetings.” The words ‘minor’ and ‘his’ betrayed the subordinate status of female ministry in the Salvation Army. Much the same held true for the wife of a senior officer, because a large part of her task was “to be an inspiration of her husband’s work.” As each of these cases suggested, married women lived out a role that was largely dependent on, and in the shadows of, their spouses.

The perception of women as weak and dependent indicated what Army positions were unlikely to be filled by female officers, but the corresponding assumption about feminine emotion suggested where they might be utilized. One of their distinctive tasks, as outlined by official regulations, was to deal with sinners who came to the church services at a local corps:

The power of the sympathetic and emotional nature of women is of immense service in this respect. After the powerful talk of a man, who may have convinced every sinner in the house that he is wrong, and that unless he alters his course he will die in despair, and lie down amongst everlasting burnings, some gentle, tender, appeal from a woman’s loving heart will break up every stubborn nature present, and some will be brought over the bar into the harbour of Salvation by this wave of feeling.

While a woman’s emotional appeal to sinners might be public in nature, it ideally followed the rational discourse of a man. Furthermore, this modest preaching role was justified in terms of her stereotypical sentimentality rather than on the basis of any acquired speaking ability; she was valued more for what she elicited than for what she said.
When women themselves occasionally described their responsibility towards sinners they likewise highlighted the emotional component of their ministry. Maud Booth, a daughter-in-law of the founders, conveyed the emotional power of women among unsaved men when she wrote: “Men who would resent any sympathy or interest expressed by a fellowman will listen quietly to a woman ... [because of] the tenderness of [her] words and touch.”  

A similar sentiment was echoed by Marianne Railton a few years later: “[The] Captain may be a very wonderful officer, but he cannot do what a woman can ... [her] touch on some hardened sinner’s shoulder will draw where his would irritate ...”

While this feminine work of convicting hearts figured prominently in corps settings or in “open-air” on the streets, it also had a place in Army social centers. In such surroundings a woman officer might not have an official appointment, but she did have a special part to play in the conversion of alcoholics who came to the Army for help. Her role was to care for the drunkard’s soul by offering him a “heartening word” and a “smiling welcome”. By making a “kindly inquiry” into his circumstances, and demonstrating gentleness and a “mother-touch”, she might bring him into the Kingdom of God. In any event, public or otherwise, a female officer’s evangelistic endeavors were viewed in terms of emotion rather than reason.

Since preaching in the early Salvation Army was often directed toward an emotional end - the conviction of the heart - female officers retained a modest role on the platform. At the same time, however, the identification of women with passion also placed them in more conventional fields of service. Once such area was the Home League, which as noted earlier, was a group designed exclusively for women. This corps ministry was a logical extension of passionate femininity, because it was believed that a
woman had "a special capacity for loving her own sex."

Not surprisingly, therefore, Army regulations of the period stipulated that when an officer couple entered a corps, the wife was to oversee this program. Moreover, the Home League activities in a given region (e.g., division) or country (e.g., territory) were typically put under the jurisdiction of the wives of administrative officers. These characteristically feminine roles quickly became institutionalized within the Salvation Army: in Britain alone the Home League had three hundred branches and twelve thousand members by 1915. The substance of this ministry came to be seen as an important vehicle "for the exercise of all a woman's best gifts [in the Army]."

Children's ministry was another area of corps life where a female officer, especially after marriage, had a unique role. Although a married woman did not have to run activities for the young - Sunday school programs were operated by the local soldiers of a corps - she was expected, unlike her husband, to attend these events on a regular basis. This somewhat supervisory function was ultimately an enlargement of her spiritual influence in the home, and consistent with her "natural love and tenderness" for the young. It became a distinctive part of a woman's public work in Britain. Furthermore, British officers serving overseas helped to institutionalize this feminine responsibility in other places as well. Describing the nature of her accomplishments in America at the turn of the century, Emma Booth-Tucker noted: "[W]ith few exceptions all our married women have separate and definite work apart from that of their husbands, such as the oversight of the Juniors' War in their various commands ..." Public involvement with children became, in time, an essential aspect of the ideal officer wife's identity; such a woman went out of her way to have an influence on the young people of
A final sphere consistent with a woman’s emotional nature was the care of the sick and the suffering. Addressing the subject of woman’s place in the Salvation Army in 1914, Florence Booth drew a clear connection between feminine emotion and service to the hurting: “God is graciously using the streams of love and sympathy and tenderness flowing from the hearts of Salvation Army women, all round the world, for ... the sick and for the broken-hearted and the suffering everywhere.”97 Whether within or outside of the corps, a female officer had opportunities to engage in this work of the heart. The visitation of sick corps members was one such task, because, as one officer expressed it, they “generally need the cheer, counsel, and help of a sympathetic and tender woman.”98 Higher up in the ranks a woman also had occasions for ministering to those in distress. The staff wife, for instance, was called upon to counsel the troubled women officers who came under her husband’s command. Writing of this particular responsibility, one senior officer told her peers that “their advice and sympathy may often help a younger officer to strike an even balance when reviewing her difficulties and may help her over a rough passage in her experience.”99 Because ministry to the sick and suffering depended more on emotion and large-heartedness than on reason and the mind, it seemed fitting for Salvationist women to undertake such care-giving roles.

Despite the fact that official regulations and leading figures of the Salvation Army claimed that all positions in the organization were open to women and men, an underlying adherence to sexual difference seriously jeopardized any principle of gender equality. Sexual difference led, in turn, to separate spheres for male and female officers
in the public, not to mention the private, life of the movement. In one of her more candid moments, Florence Booth acknowledged that the two sexes had different public functions in the Army:

Her part is not the same part as the man’s part, although their positions may be interchangeable. A woman’s work in the corps is not exactly the same as a man’s work. A woman’s work in the Division is not the same as a man’s work. And so throughout all its departments, the visiting, the praying, the speaking, the writing, the governing.  

The words ‘may be interchangeable’ suggested that occasionally a woman might be able to fill a traditionally masculine role - such as having authority over others - but ideally her ministry was in keeping with Victorian womanhood. As indicated, suitable feminine tasks included ministry to the unsaved, other women, children, and the sick.

*under-representation in leadership*

Gender assumptions of the foregoing variety, when coupled with the very similar views of male Salvationists, help to explain why women were poorly represented in the leadership ranks of the Salvation Army. As table 6.1 indicates, the organization’s top administrative positions were held almost exclusively by men.  

The Salvation Army’s senior commands nearly doubled as it expanded around the world, but the number of female leaders remained remarkably low throughout this entire period. Women filled on average only five of these postings. These low absolute numbers were indicative of the Army’s acceptance of male headship and sexual difference. First of all, the few women represented in international leadership were, apart from Florence Booth, single or widowed. Married women generally did not receive authoritative positions, but were
included in their husband's appointments. This sexist practice effectively excluded the majority of women—those who were married—from leadership roles.

Table 6.1

Gender and Senior Leadership Worldwide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Leadership</th>
<th>Total Men</th>
<th>Total Women</th>
<th>Men(%)</th>
<th>Women(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Salvation Army Year Book s for the years cited.

Second, Salvationist beliefs about gender were at odds with any substantial movement of single female officers into the higher offices. Women were believed to possess a sacrificial and emotional nature, making them the ideal candidates for a care-giving ministry in the Army's spiritual and social work. Positions of real power were left essentially to men, who were identified with authority, assertiveness, and reason.

Male headship and sexual difference also help to explain why the overall percentage of women leaders declined between 1906 and 1930. During the period in question an increasing number of women married, thereby leaving a smaller pool of
potential female leaders. The proportion of women to men within the leadership ranks, while always very low, dropped even lower as the Salvation Army filled its burgeoning international bureaucracy with married men. Furthermore, the organization’s social ministries, which had grown out of William Booth’s 1890 book In Darkest England and The Way Out, continued to expand rapidly in the early twentieth century. The Army built institutions around the world to help the destitute, delinquent and homeless children, expectant and unwed mothers, the sick, and the aged. Between 1906 and 1916 alone the number of these social institutions grew from just under 700 to over 1200. Single female officers, given their traditional association with selflessness and love, were found increasingly in this area of Army ministry. While social work among destitute men remained the preserve of male officers, most of whom were married, the denomination’s shelters for women, maternity hospitals, children’s homes, slum posts, and residences for the elderly became ‘natural’ places for single female officers.

Of the few women who were represented in the upper ranks of the movement, members of the Booth family figured most prominently: William and Catherine’s daughters Evangeline and Lucy, and Bramwell’s wife Florence and daughters Catherine and Mary all held significant commands at various times throughout this period. At any given time between 1906 and 1930 these women occupied two or three of the senior female postings. In 1930 Booth women were even more conspicuous, holding three of the four female positions available. More often than not they were also given commands in developed countries where the Salvation Army was relatively strong (i.e., North America and Europe), whereas their peers were confined exclusively to positions in developing countries like India and the Women’s Social Work Department in Britain.
Whether sexual equality had anything to do with the high visibility of Booth women is difficult to know, but there is evidence to suggest that nepotism was one significant factor behind their appointments. William and Bramwell Booth, the Generals of the period, were ultimately responsible for the promotion of key personnel, and they clearly used this power to benefit their family members. ¹⁰⁵ This fostered some resentment among officers, especially after Bramwell Booth took office in 1912. ¹⁰⁶ He gave his sons and daughters important positions, even elevating them rapidly through the ranks. ¹⁰⁷ For instance, Bramwell’s daughter Catherine was promoted to the rank of commissioner (a very high title) just a few months after being made a full colonel. ¹⁰⁸ In contrast, the average officer spent years as a colonel before being given this rank. Favoritism of this nature did not necessarily explain why few women were represented in the upper echelons of the Army - there was nothing stopping the Booths from promoting their family and a significant number of other women - but it did point to one reason for the disproportionate number of Booth women in senior leadership.

At the lower levels of leadership within Britain the marginalization of women was even more pronounced. In 1906, for example, only one out of the ten provincial commanders, each of whom was responsible for the oversight of large regions in the United Kingdom, was a woman. ¹⁰⁹ The appointment of this lone female, Lieutenant-Colonel Minnie Reid, was described at the time as “an interesting development” on the British field. ¹¹⁰ Within this context the word ‘interesting’ meant unusual, since Reid was the first and last member of her sex to be given such a role. Below the provincial commands, which were phased out by 1910, were divisions. The most senior officer in a division, known either as a Divisional Officer or a Divisional Commander, was in charge
of Army operations in a small region, city, or section of a city. As table 6.2 demonstrates, this mid-level of authority was strikingly male-dominated.\textsuperscript{111}

\begin{table}[h]
\caption{Gender and Mid-Level Leadership in Great Britain}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lccccc}
\hline
Year & Total Divisions & Total Men & Total Women & Men(\%) & Women(\%) \\
\hline
1906 & 37 & 37 & 0 & 100 & 0 \\
1910 & 25 & 25 & 0 & 100 & 0 \\
1914 & 30 & 30 & 0 & 100 & 0 \\
1918 & 25 & 25 & 0 & 100 & 0 \\
1922 & 35 & 32 & 3 & 91.4 & 8.6 \\
1926 & 39 & 37 & 2 & 94.9 & 5.1 \\
1930 & 38 & 37 & 1 & 97.4 & 2.6 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Source: The Salvation Army Year Book.s for the years cited.

The few women reflected in these mid-leadership statistics were all single women. Once again this pattern was consistent with the Army’s beliefs about male headship and feminine gender. Married men were appointed as divisional commanders, while their wives filled subordinate roles below them. As indicated earlier, the oversight of the Home League became the domain of divisional commanders’ wives. It was believed that women were suited by nature to minister to the members of their sex. This ideology of separate spheres became institutionalized within the Salvation Army.

This overall climate, reflecting Victorian and evangelical assumptions about power and gender, accounted for women’s relative absence from divisional commands,
but the sudden appearance of three women in the 1922 statistics was due to the actions of Florence Booth. In early 1919 Booth became the British Territorial Commander, and she held this post during the period when single women entered into the leadership ranks. As a territorial commander Booth was ultimately responsible for the appointment of divisional commanders, and she undoubtedly used this power to promote the six women reflected in table 6.2. While this showed some willingness on Florence’s part to place women in mid-level leadership, two of the six female appointees were her daughters Mary and Olive. This showed yet again that familial connections had something to do with the conspicuousness of Booth women in Army leadership. By 1930 Mary and Olive had moved into the upper ranks, thereby leaving only one female divisional commander in office.

Officially the Salvation Army gave no indication of the glaring inconsistency between its theory and practice of sexual equality. In fact, its public statements on the subject left the opposite impression. In 1927, for example, the organization’s publication Outlines of Salvation Army History, issued under the authority of General Bramwell Booth, suggested that equality had been “held and consolidated” within its ranks.112 This kind of claim may not have been a deliberate attempt to mislead the public, but it underscored the movement’s failure to think critically about the roles given to its women. Literature designed for internal consumption was only marginally better in this regard, because it rarely examined the issue of sexual inequality in any serious fashion. On perhaps the one occasion when the topic was discussed candidly, it was confined to The Staff Review, a journal designed exclusively for senior officers. Given the opportunity in 1930 to discuss the question “Are Equal Standards for Men and Women Officers
Maintained?”, the three female respondents answered largely in the negative. Pointing to the scarcity of women in leadership roles, they believed that Salvationist practice was decidedly out of step with its professed principle of equality. An acknowledgment of the problem was a necessary first step if the Salvation Army hoped to confront sexual discrimination within its ranks, but such criticisms were few in number and late in coming.

The imbalance between men and women in the middle to upper echelons of Salvationist leadership, whether criticized or largely ignored, owed a great deal to the Victorianism and evangelicalism of the period under review. Like their male counterparts, Army women generally espoused beliefs, and accepted roles, which were incompatible with a principle of sexual equality. An officer woman’s moral and spiritual functions in the home, combined with her other domestic tasks, either called into question or placed restrictions on her public ministry. Furthermore, once in the public realm, or if single, she was usually confined to responsibilities consistent with the notion of sexual difference. She was encouraged to possess a femininity defined in terms of self-sacrifice, weakness, dependency, and emotion. This construction of womanhood allowed women to convict sinners publicly from the platform - the public nature of which was notable for the age - but their overall ministry remained modest. A conventional vocation of service to other women, children, and the suffering was most reflective of the average female Salvationist’s life. Her ideal role was one of service and submission, rather than leadership and authority.
1. [Florence] Booth, "To the Women Officers of The Salvation Army: Where We May Excel," *The Field Officer*, 21, 4 (April 1913): 122. It should be noted that *The Officer* (known also as *The Field Officer*) always provided the first names of its male and single female contributors, but never did so for its married women writers. Wherever possible, however, I have attempted to correct this patriarchal practice by finding and citing the full names of married women officers.


3. The average working-class family had five children in the 1890s, and around three children by 1920. At the same time, however, England’s first census of family size in 1911 revealed that working-class families were generally one third larger than their middle-class counterparts. See Joan Perkin, *Victorian Women* (London: John Murray, 1993), pp. 68, 72.

4. National income within Britain doubled between 1867 and 1908. Obviously not all benefited equally from such prosperity, but fewer working-class women needed to supplement their husband’s wages. This was increasingly true for the period after World War One. See Perkin, *Victorian Women*, pp. 194-196; and Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman’s Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 203.


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17. Florence Booth, Mothers and the Empire, p. 18.

18. Mrs. W[ellman], “My Trials and Triumphs as a Wife and Mother on the Field,” The Field Officer, 18, 1 (January 1910): 19.

19. Florence Booth, Mothers and the Empire, p. 17.


21. Ibid.


24. A woman’s right to equal opportunities with men in the public life of the Salvation Army was repeated incessantly in the movement’s early literature. The most prominent references to this right after 1900 included William Booth, Orders and Regulations for Staff Officers of The Salvation Army (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1904), pp. 8-9; Bramwell Booth, Orders and Regulations for Officers of The Men’s Social Work of The Salvation Army (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1915), pp. 21-22; Anon., Orders and Regulations for Field Officers of The Salvation Army, p. 309; and Bramwell Booth, Orders and Regulations for Territorial Commanders and Chief Secretaries of The Salvation Army (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1920), p. 100. For a more complete list of such citations see the endnotes in chapter four of this thesis.

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27. Roberts, A Woman’s Place, p. 131.


31. Ibid., p. 405.


33. This expectation was spelled out in section 53 of the Salvation Army’s application form for prospective candidates considering officership. Section 54 went on to stress that candidates for officership were guaranteed no salary. John Manson reproduces this candidate’s form in its entirety in his The Salvation Army and the Public: A Religious, Social, and Financial Study (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1908), pp. 185-189. See also Orders and Regulations for Field Officers of The Salvation Army, pp. 612, 623. When a salary was available it was a modest one. For example, a married man with three young children could expect no more than thirty shillings a week in the early 1900s, which was only an average subsistence wage for the period. For an indication of Army salaries, see Manson, The Salvation Army and the Public, p. 187; and

34. That officers often received less than their allotted salaries is evident from the ex-officer testimonials in Manson, *The Salvation Army and the Public*, pp. 191-196. The less than stable income of an officer on the field is also noted by A[lex] M. Nicol, *General Booth and The Salvation Army* (London: Herbert and Daniel, 1910), p. 115.


37. See, for example, Mrs. McVeigh, “A Married Woman’s Opportunities: As a Wife and Mother on the Field,” *The Officer*, 22, 1 (January 1914): 40.


41. William Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Staff Officers of The Salvation Army*, p. 9; and Bramwell Booth, *Orders and Regulations for Territorial Commanders and Chief Secretaries of The Salvation Army*, p. 100.


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64. **Ibid.**, pp. 510-511.


68. The work of the “slum sisters”, as they were called, is described by Robert Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army*, vol. 3 (1955; reprint, New York: The Salvation Army, 1979), pp. 20-24, 158-164.


70. **Ibid.**


74. Florence Booth, “The Officer and His Duties Towards Women,” p. 286.


78. Wellman, “My Trials and Triumphs as a Wife and Mother on the Field,” p. 17.


84. Maud Booth, Beneath Two Flags, p. 256.


87. Ibid., pp. 201-203.


89. Anon., Orders and Regulations for Corps Officers of The Salvation Army, pp. 144-145. This continues to be reflected in more recent times. See, for example, Anon., Orders and Regulations for Corps Officers of The Salvation Army (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1988), p. 195.


92. Ibid.

93. See the 1917 edition of Orders and Regulations for Field Officers of The Salvation Army, p. 414.

94. Florence Booth believed that all women had a natural capacity for dealing with the young. See her comments in "To the Women-Officers of the Salvation Army: Where We May Excel," p. 123.


101. The top positions being considered here are as follows: the General, the Chief of the Staff (second-in-command worldwide), national and territorial commanders (in charge of a country, a part of a country, or several countries), chief secretaries (second-in-command at national and territorial levels), officers-in-charge and officers commanding (responsible for Army work in areas smaller than territories), general secretaries (second-in-command to officers-in-charge and officers commanding), the leaders and chief assistants of sub-territories, the leaders and chief secretaries of the British Men’s and Women’s Social Work, and the principals and vice-principals of the International Training College and the International College for Officers. Vacant positions, while never very common, are not included in this tabulation. It should be noted as well that comprehensive international statistics prior to 1906, when the first year book was issued, are unavailable.


103. These and other international statistics can be found in The Salvation Army Year Book for 1906 (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1906), p. 22; and The Salvation Army Year Book for 1918 (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1918), p. 26.


105. The Salvation Army’s third General, Edward J. Higgins, did not take office until 1929.

(New York: Brentano’s, 1929), pp. 61-64, 177.


109. See *The Salvation Army Year Book for 1906*, p. 10.


111. The divisional pages of early year books did not always list the first names of divisional officers or divisional commanders, but I was able to verify their gender by cross-checking last names with 1905 British corps indexes and relevant “Who’s Who” sections of yearbooks. The Salvation Army’s International Heritage Centre in London, England was helpful in this area. As with the international statistics, I did not include the rare vacant position in my totals.


113. See Mary MacFarlane, “Are Equal Standards for Men and Women Officers Maintained?” *The Staff Review*, 10, 4 (October 1930): 339-344; and under the same heading in this issue, Agnes Povlsen, pp. 347-352, and Johanna Van De Werken, pp. 352-353. I was unable to find any official response to these concerns. It should be noted that *The Staff Review* ceased publication in late 1931.
Conclusion

The Salvation Army emerged as a notable product of late-Victorian Protestant revivalism. Situated initially in the East End of London, its goal was to convert the impoverished masses. This overall purpose remained in place as the movement spread throughout England and the world. To attract the religiously hostile and indifferent, the Army made use of many sensational methods. Female preaching in the streets and on the platform was one of its most successful measures. Hallelujah Lasses played a public role in the Army’s evangelical mission to save the world from its sin. Through their actions these women challenged the Victorian belief that preaching was the preserve of a male clergy. Female preaching was exceptional for the age, and put women officers ahead of their sisters in other denominations. Moreover, the public nature of their ministry helped to undermine the conviction that women belonged exclusively in the home.

Catherine Booth, the cofounder of the Salvation Army, inspired many young women through her preaching campaigns across Great Britain. Her comprehensive justification for female preaching, which she had formulated earlier in her life, served as a forceful answer to critics who viewed the Army’s women preachers as unbiblical and unconventional. Catherine’s scriptural arguments in this area, while not unique, were framed in a cogent manner, giving the practice a sound theological foundation. Furthermore, her contention that women had a right to preach the gospel was significant for her age, going beyond the rationale of other defenders of female ministry. Importantly, this language of rights found its way into the Christian Mission, which became the Salvation Army in 1878.

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Theoretically, the women belonging to this religious body possessed the right to hold any office in the denomination’s hierarchy, from that of a soldier to the sole position of General. Claiming that St. Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28 referred to the eradication of gender barriers within the church, early Salvationist publications stated that Army leadership positions were equally available to both sexes. Such documents suggested that gender was not a determining factor in a person’s promotion through the ranks of the organization. At first glance, this principle of equality was remarkable for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Given prominent exposure in the movement’s numerous regulatory and doctrinal manuals, not to mention its promotional literature, this tenet appeared to have solid roots in the denomination. Certain personal comments of the Army’s leading figures seemed to support this conclusion. Consequently, the average person of the day, unfamiliar with the internal dynamics of this religious group, would have largely accepted Florence Booth’s claim that the Salvation Army was “God’s latest act in His work for the emancipation of woman ...”1 To the uncritical observer this was an egalitarian religious body which gave its women officers unparalleled opportunities to work in every area of its institutional life.

While the early Salvation Army was modestly successful in providing women with opportunities to preach alongside men, it largely failed to implement sexual equality beyond the pulpit. First of all, those within the movement held Victorian assumptions about femininity. Salvationists cultivated beliefs about womanhood that were at cross purposes with any notion of sexual equality. Their understanding of feminine gender was ultimately more conservative than liberal, more restrictive than liberating, more disquieting than commendable. Most officers embraced, and indeed perpetuated, the
nineteenth-century idea of sexual difference. Men and women were seen to possess separate characteristics: masculinity was centered around reason and authority, whereas femininity was associated with passion, persuasion, and sacrificial service to others. Apart from the pulpit, where reason and emotion might co-exist, the roles given to Army officers were determined mainly on the basis of gender. The only notable exception to this rule occurred in the Booth family, where blood or relational ties seemed to take precedence over sex. For the vast majority of Salvationists, opportunities for advancement and status depended on their gender rather than their abilities. Overall, an ideology of separate spheres pervaded the Army’s institutional life: men assumed commanding and decision-making responsibilities at the corps and administrative levels, while women looked after the needs of their own sex, young people, and the suffering.

Certain aspects of the Salvation Army’s evangelical heritage likewise worked against an egalitarian sharing of roles between women and men. Evangelical theology legitimized male rule over women. The notion of male headship was a case in point. The relative freedom that single female officers experienced during the 1870s and 1880s was generally lost once they were married, because it was believed that a husband was the final authority within a family. This patriarchal arrangement expressed itself in a number of ways throughout the period under review: 1) a married man was the commanding officer of a corps, his wife merely the assistant, 2) appointments were given to husbands, and only rarely to wives, 3) salaries, when available, went to the married man, and 4) a married woman derived her rank from her spouse. Men’s identification with power and authority was further reinforced by the Salvation Army’s language for God. Consistent with the evangelical tendency toward a literalistic reading of the scriptures, Salvationist
theology depicted the deity exclusively in terms of a ruling male. When placed within the context of power and authority, William and Bramwell Booth's fatherly roles in this religious organization bore a striking resemblance to God's fatherly role in the divine realm. God's masculine nature made male leadership in the Army appear normal and appropriate. Consequently, female leadership was exceptional at best, and inappropriate at worst. These evangelical motifs, whether operative within the domestic, public, or cosmic realms, resulted in women's subordination to men.

Any meaningful promotion of sexual equality within this Protestant denomination was hampered as well by its evangelical understanding of the human condition. Sin, for example, was cast solely in terms of male experience. Equated with selfishness, pride, and self-interest, the Salvationist definition of ungodliness failed to address the problems faced by women. Having been taught from birth to put the interests of others ahead of their own, female officers faced temptations of a different nature. What these women needed to guard against was self-abnegation and diminished agency - a failure to value and assert the self. Because the early Army demonized the self and deified self-denial, it unwittingly encouraged women to question their abilities and remain behind the scenes. The movement's Methodist doctrine of holiness, which emphasized the crucifixion rather than the actualization of the self, simply added to this troubling environment. In the end, the Salvation Army's theological anthropology was not conducive to the maintenance and expansion of women's modest gains within the organization.

Within the last few years the Salvation Army has attempted to deal with certain aspects of its ambiguous heritage. In 1992 the organization established a commission to
examine women’s poor representation in leadership and their limited opportunities for ministry, especially when married. This consultative body proposed that administrative roles be distributed more equitably between the sexes, and it recommended that married women be given appointments and ranks in their own right. The first proposal has yet to be implemented in any meaningful way, since female officers continue to occupy very few international, national, or regional commands. More positively, however, the commission’s second recommendation has been incorporated into the Army’s regulatory manuals. A married female officer is now recognized by her “rank, Christian name and surname, regardless of status ... [e.g.] Captain Mary Jones.” A further amendment to the Army’s Orders and Regulations states that “the skills, gifts and circumstances of both husband and wife will be considered when making appointments and the appointments of both officers will be issued simultaneously.” While much remains to be done, these latter changes are hopeful signs that Salvationists are beginning to redress the patriarchal features of their denomination.

If this process of gender reform is to prove successful within the Salvation Army - that is, significantly alter the male-dominated nature of its hierarchy - then the members of this religious body must avoid the pitfalls of their past. The preceding examination of the movement’s earliest women officers has something to offer in this respect. First of all, this study demonstrates that a theoretical commitment to equal opportunity within the public realm has little value if domestic inequities remain in place. Unless familial authority, housework, and child-rearing are shared equally by both spouses, then equality in public life is impossible to maintain. Second, this investigation underscores the fact that equality is tenuous at best if unaccompanied by a transformation of personal and
collective assumptions about gender, the human condition, and the deity. Each of these areas, when left unexamined, has the potential to undermine any progressive statements on gender relations. In other words, beliefs have concrete social consequences.

Ultimately, a positive climate for female ministry and leadership within the Salvation Army will only be possible once it comes to terms with the legacy of its earliest history, and reconstructs a more just tradition - one which takes into account the experiences of its contemporary women.

2. This Commission on Women did not receive a lot of coverage within the Salvation Army’s press, but it is referred to in “A Personal Insight into the High Council: The General talks to *The Officer*,” *The Officer*, 44, 3 (March 1993): 105-106; and Donna Ames, “Changing Women’s Roles: The Challenges of Implementing Equality,” *The Officer*, 47, 11 (November 1996): 511-514. The official minutes of this commission have not been made public.

3. Women comprise only 7% of the movement’s most senior positions, and only 1 of the United Kingdom’s 18 divisions is overseen by a female Divisional Commander. See *The Salvation Army Year Book 1998* (London: The International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1997).

4. Cited from Minute 1995/1A 20, issued on July 7, 1995 by the Salvation Army’s International Headquarters.

5. Cited from Minute 1995/1A 15, issued on May 1, 1995 by the Salvation Army’s International Headquarters.
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