SETTLED VIEWS:
CATHERINE BOOTH AND FEMALE MINISTRY

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Introduction

The Christian church is coming to terms with the subject of women in ministry, looking yet again at the scriptures, reexamining church history and doctrine, and discovering that there is nothing but custom and prejudice which have prevented women from preaching the gospel. It is certainly possible that the argument for female ministry would not be as advanced as it is were it not for the writings of Catherine Booth on this subject, as well as the witness of her own personal ministry and the ministry of thousands of women who followed her example in The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army.¹

This paper will examine Catherine Booth’s views of female ministry which were developed within the context of her own life, thought, and ministry of preaching. Three important aspects will be demonstrated. First, her views of female ministry were the result of a gradual evolution in her own thought and experience. Her initial concerns were with the traditional prejudices against women having any equality with men—social, intellectual, or spiritual. In due course, her thinking became more focused upon the specific issue of women’s equality with men in the pulpit.

Second, the issue of female ministry was so critical to Catherine Booth because she was convinced that this was biblically justified and mandated. She avidly defended her views from the Bible, and envisioned the use of women in ministry as an indispensable aspect of the stewardship of the gifts, talents, and abilities which God has graciously granted to both men and women in the church. For Catherine Booth, therefore, to deny female ministry was to deny the grace of God, and to do irreparable harm to the cause of the kingdom.

Third, Catherine Booth’s views were not aberrant as some have charged, but were shared and, indeed, institutionalized both within the practice and the functioning doctrine of The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army. It is true that Catherine Booth was the chief guiding force in formulating a clear biblical exposition for female ministry. However, it is a tribute, both to her persuasive power and to her personal ministry,

that many others, including her own husband, became convinced of the biblical truth of the topic, and that countless women followed what was often a suffering path of ministry for the sake of the gospel.

Developed Views

Catherine Mumford, born in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, on January 17, 1829, was reared by a godly mother in the Wesleyan Methodist tradition of nineteenth-century England. Many women were engaged as leaders in the class meetings and the Sunday School classes which were so integral to that tradition, and Catherine Mumford attended such meetings and classes. 1844 proved to be an important year as the family moved to London and settled in Brixton. There was a degree of contentiousness within Wesleyan Methodism at this time, and both Catherine and her mother found themselves in sympathy with the Reformers of the Wesleyan community, those who wished to accentuate evangelism, spiritualism, and separation from the world. They joined a chapel of the Reformers known as Binfield House, situated on Binfield Road, Clapham, “a nice little hall, holding some two or three hundred people. The services were arranged on the ordinary Wesleyan model, and were conducted in turn by different local preachers.” Here for three years Catherine Mumford taught a senior Sunday School class of fifteen girls ranging in age from twelve to nineteen, an auspicious beginning of what would later be a long public ministry of preaching and teaching.

In 1853 Catherine Mumford gave expression to heretofore private convictions about women’s rights. She entered public debate in a letter to her pastor, Dr. David Thomas, responding to his preaching about women’s moral and intellectual inferiority. Catherine defended women’s

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Bramwell-Booth erroneously attributed the attendance of Thomas’ church to a matter of convenience when she stated that “The Reform Chapel was at rather a distance, and walking there was often beyond Catherine’s strength, especially in the bad weather. This led to
“perfect equality” with men should women be allowed the same intellectual maturing as men. “Her training from babyhood, even in this highly favored land, has hitherto been such as to cramp and paralyse, rather than to develop and strengthen, her energies, and calculated to crush and wither her aspirations after mental greatness rather than to excite and stimulate them.”

To hold that woman was inferior to men by nature was both "unscriptural and dishonoring to God," and Catherine advised the minister to investigate this matter carefully and rationally: "Permit me, my dear sir, to ask whether you have ever made the subject of woman's equality as a being, the matter of calm investigation and thought? If not I would, with all deference, suggest it as a subject well worth the exercise of your brain, and calculated amply to repay any research you may bestow upon it.”

It is important to note that the subject of women in ministry was not a part of this argument, the main issue being that of woman's natural equality with men.

By 1851 Catherine had met William Booth after he had preached at Binfield House through a mutual friend named Mr. Rabbits, a Christian businessman and sympathizer of the Reformers. On May 15, 1852 Catherine Mumford was engaged to William Booth, and in 1854 William Booth was received as a minister in New Connexion Methodism. One of the benefits of that association was that Booth received permission to marry after only twelve months instead of having to wait the normal four years, which were considered probationary years before formal ordination. On June 16, 1855 Catherine Mumford and William Booth were married.

However, before this commitment in her life, Catherine had determined what kind of a man she would marry. He must be a Christian; he must be a person of common sense; he must be a total abstainer, a view which Catherine had inherited from her father and about which she was attendance at a nearby Congregational Church where there was an exceptionally good preacher, Dr. David Thomas" (44). The reason for her attendance, however, was theological and doctrinal, as Booth-Tucker hinted (1:99), and as Ervine stated outright when he noted that Catherine attended the church “in her search for a church in which she could find satisfaction....” (1:64). This view was supported by Murdoch in “Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth,” 349.


7Booth-Tucker, 118.

8Booth-Tucker.

unrelenting during her entire life; and finally there must be "oneness of views and tastes, any idea of lordship or ownership being lost in love. There can be no doubt that Jesus Christ intended, by making love the law of marriage, to restore woman to the position God intended her to occupy, as also to destroy the curse of the fall, which man by dint of his merely superior physical strength and advantageous position had magnified, if not really to a large extent manufactured."¹⁰

One essential meeting of the minds, as far as Catherine Mumford was concerned, had to go beyond the ideal of the equality of women to the practical issue of female ministry. Catherine was beginning to articulate her ideas along this line, and in a letter to William Booth dated April 9, 1855, she wrote:

If on that other subject you mention, my views are right, how delighted I should be for you to see as fully with me on it too; you know I feel no less deeply on this subject, and perhaps you think I take rather a prejudiced view of it; but I have searched the Word of God through and through, I have tried to deal honestly with every passage on the subject, not forgetting to pray for light to perceive and grace to submit to the truth, however humiliating to my nature, but I solemnly assert that the more I think and read on the subject, the more satisfied I become of the true and scriptural character of my own views....

Oh I believe that volumes of light will yet be shed on the world on this subject; it will bear examination and abundantly repay it.... I believe woman is destined to assume her true position, and exert her proper influence by the special exertions and attainments of her own sex.... May the Lord, even the just and impartial one, overrule all for the true emancipation of women from the swaddling-bands of prejudice, ignorance, and custom, which, almost the world over, have so long debased and wronged her.... Oh, what endears the Christian religion to my heart is what it has done, and is destined to do, for my own sex; and that which excites my indignation beyond anything else is to hear its sacred precepts dragged forward to hear degrading arguments.

Oh for a few more Adam Clarkes to dispel the ignorance of the Church, then we should not hear very pigmies in Christianity reasoning against holy and intelligent women opening their mouths for the Lord in the presence of the Church....

... If indeed there is in "Christ Jesus neither male nor female," but in touching His kingdom "they are one," who shall dare thrust woman out of the Church's operations, or presume to put my candle which God has lighted under a bushel?... Oh, it is cruel for the Church to foster prejudice so unscriptural, and thus make the path of usefulness the path of untold suffering. Let me advise you, my Love, to get settled views on this subject and be able to render a reason to every caviller, and then fearlessly incite all whom you believe the Lord has fitted to help you in your Master's work, male or female, Christ has given them no single talent to be hid in a napkin, and yet oh what thousands are wrapped up and buried, which used and improved would yield "some thirty, some sixty, yea and some an hundred fold."...

Catherine Booth and Female Ministry

If you gain anything by what I have writ, I should praise God on hearing it, otherwise I do not desire you to answer this.\(^{11}\)

Catherine Booth's earliest and most notable public defense of female ministry came as a result of an incident in 1859. Phoebe Palmer, an American Methodist holiness preacher, was speaking in England. The Reverend Arthur Augustus Rees of Sunderland, an independent minister, publicly attacked Phoebe Palmer's right to preach, citing "Reasons for not Co-Operating in the Alleged Sunderland Revivals." In a letter to her mother, Catherine Booth wrote that Rees' comments were originally "delivered in the form of an address to his congregation and repeated a second time by request to a crowded chapel, and then published!"\(^{12}\) She responded in a pamphlet entitled "Female Ministry; or, Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel,"\(^{13}\) incensed by Rees' "self-deprecating rubbish,"\(^{14}\) and moved to respond quickly by the rumor that Rees was going to publish yet another pamphlet on the same subject.

It is important to note that Catherine Booth had not yet entered into a public ministry, and therefore was not defending her own personal right to preach, but the principle of women preaching the Gospel. She "does not apply the argument to herself. She is not claiming her own right to preach."\(^{15}\) Basically, there are three aspects to the pamphlet. First, she


\(^{12}\) Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth, The Mother of The Salvation Army*, 1:344. See also Bramwell-Booth, *Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves*, 155–156; Murdoch, "Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth," 352. The Booths had something else in common with Phoebe Palmer beyond the issue of female ministry. They also, like Palmer, embraced the Biblical and Wesleyan doctrine of holiness. There was a later official connection between Phoebe Palmer and The Salvation Army when Mrs. Palmer donated her home on East 15th Street in New York City to The Salvation Army, which became the Army's first home for unwed mothers in America. For further information on the relationship of Phoebe Palmer and the Booths, see Murdoch, "The Salvation Army: An Anglo-American Revivalist Social Mission," Part I, chapter I.


\(^{15}\) Bramwell-Booth, *Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves*, 155–156.
dealt with the fact that people confound "nature with custom." It is customary that women have not preached, and there was the admission at the outset of the article that "want of mental culture, the trammels of custom, the force of prejudice, and onesided interpretation of Scripture, have hitherto almost excluded her from this sphere." However, it would be wrong to assume that woman is not by nature fitted to preach. In fact, argued Catherine, "Making allowance for the novelty of the thing, we cannot discover anything either unnatural or immodest in a Christian woman, becomingly attired, appearing on a platform or in a pulpit. By nature she seems fitted to grace either. 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."

Secondly, Catherine responded to scriptural objections, which will be treated in the next section of this paper. Finally, the author cited many confirming witnesses of women in ministry from both the Bible and the history of the church, supporting her contention that the weight of such evidence will force the church once again to be faithful to the scriptural and historical witness. She wrote:

Whether the Church will allow women to speak in her assemblies can only be a question of time; common sense, public opinion, and the blessed results of female agency will force her to give us an honest and impartial rendering of the solitary text on which she grounds her prohibitions. Then, when the true light shines and God's works take the place of man's traditions, the doctor of divinity who shall teach that Paul commands woman to be silent when God's Spirit urges her to speak, will be regarded much the same as we should regard an astronomer who should teach that the sun is the earth's satellite.

The timing of Catherine's entrance into public ministry is critical. William Booth's appointment to the Brighouse Circuit by the Methodist New Connexion in 1857, "one of their most obscure and least successful Circuits," proved nevertheless to be advantageous to his wife's ministry, because it was at Brighouse that Catherine taught a "class among the female members who attended the chapel," and Sunday School. Likewise, her commitment to the temperance movement still firm, she delivered temperance addresses to the Junior Band of Hope which was connected with that chapel. In a letter to her father dated December 7, 1857, Catherine wrote: "If I get on well and find that I really possess any ability

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16Booth, "Female Ministry; or, Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel," 5. Note that all quotations from this source will be taken from the 1975 reprint.
17Booth, 5.
18Booth.
19Booth, 13.
20Ervine, God's Soldier: General William Booth, 1:212.
for public speaking, I don’t intend to finish with juveniles. If there is any reasonable hope for success I shall try at something higher. When we were in Cornwall, I went to hear a popular female lecturer, and felt much encouraged to make an attempt. If I could do so, I should be able to fit in with William’s efforts on his evangelistic tours nicely. I only wish I had begun years ago. Had I been fortunate enough to have been brought up among the Primitives, I believe I should have been preaching now.”

The time arrived a few years later for Catherine to “try at something higher,” and she entered into public ministry rather inauspiciously on Whit-sunday, 1860, in the Methodist New Connexion Bethesda Chapel, Gateshead, where her husband was now appointed. This was just a few months after writing her pamphlet on “Female Ministry,” and as one of her biographers noted, “She applied the pamphlet to herself.”

Reflecting on the incident a few years later, Catherine stated that “I had long had a controversy on this question in my soul. In fact, from the time I was converted, the Spirit of God had constantly been urging me into paths of usefulness and labor, which seemed to me impossible. Perhaps some of you would hardly credit that I was one of the most timid and bashful disciples of the Lord Jesus ever saved. I used to make up my mind I would, and resolve, and intend, and then, when the hour came, I failed for want of courage. I need not have failed.”

The private controversy over this issue, faced again during a period of sickness just three months earlier, was resolved on that Sunday when, at the conclusion of her husband’s sermon, Catherine rose from her seat and walked to the front of the chapel where “about 1000 persons were present, including a number of preachers and outside friends.” Catherine stated that “My dear husband thought something had happened, and so did the people.” She then went on to recount the incident:

He stepped down to ask me, “What is the matter, my dear.” I said, “I want to say a word.” He was so taken by surprise, he could only say, “My dear wife wants to say a word,” and sat down. He had been trying to persuade me to do it for ten years. I felt as if I were clinging to some human arm — and yet it was a Divine arm — to hold me. I just got up and told the people how it came about. I confessed, as I think everybody should, when they have been in the wrong and misrepresented the religion of Jesus Christ. I said, “I dare say many of you have been looking upon me as a very devoted woman, and one who has been living faithfully to God, but I have come to know that I have been living in disobedience, and to that extent I have brought darkness and leanness into my soul, but I promised the Lord three or four months ago, and

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22Booth-Tucker, 305.
23Booth-Tucker, 358.
24“0ur Army Mother’s First Sermon,” Harbor Light (July 1899):223. See also Booth-Tucker, The Life of Catherine Booth, The Mother of The Salvation Army, 1:358–363; Bramwell-Booth, Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves, 156–159; Stead, Mrs. Booth of The Salvation Army, 156–159; “Our Army Mother’s First Sermon,” All the World 13 (June 1897):245.
26“0ur Army Mother’s First Sermon,” Harbor Light, 223.
I dare not disobey. I have come to tell you this, and to promise the Lord that I will be obedient to the heavenly vision.”27

She returned to the chapel that evening and preached her first sermon, “Be Filled with the Spirit.”

And so began a public ministry for preaching and teaching for Catherine Booth which lasted until her promotion to glory in October, 1890. After the founding of what would come to be known as The Christian Mission in 1865, “Catherine became the breadwinner for the family, preaching in West London and elsewhere and selling her writings, while her husband accepted no salary from his mission.”28 Norman Murdoch noted that “Not until 1881 did the family receive a dependable income apart from Catherine’s preaching.”29 In actuality Catherine Booth was far better known than her husband by the general public during their shared ministry of The Christian Mission. “It is possible to say that nine people out of ten who knew the name of Catherine Booth had never heard of William Booth’s work at Whitechapel.”30

She became a tireless evangelist and preacher, usually preaching for over an hour. Her last public address was given at the City Temple in London on Thursday, June 21, 1888.31 In addition to her preaching, Catherine Booth also wrote voluminously, writing books and articles for Christian Mission and Salvation Army publications. She, along with William, edited the first publication produced after the founding of The Christian Mission, which was entitled The East London Evangelist and which, after two more name changes, evolved into The War Cry.

Scriptural Support

Catherine Booth held to her views of female ministry, as far as she was concerned, because of the Bible and not in spite of it. She affirmed that could her conviction on this subject be demonstrated as forbidden in the Bible, she would gladly relinquish such a view. Her approach to the Bible on this matter in her 1859 pamphlet on “Female Ministry” was twofold. First, she dealt with the objections to female ministry generally cited by the divines. Second, she underscored those passages and stories in the Bible which not only supported female ministry in principle, but specifically provided legitimacy and vision for such ministry. While

27“Our Army Mother’s First Sermon.”
29Murdoch, 355, footnote 27.
Catherine Booth "did not break any new hermeneutical ground," she nevertheless brought the issue of female ministry to light once again within a specific set of circumstances, and she did so primarily by dealing with biblical texts.

She began by dealing with the two most common scriptural passages used by those who opposed female ministry. The first passage was encompassed in I Corinthians 11:4, 5, and 14:3, 4, and 31. Catherine Booth affirmed what the I Corinthians 11 passage asserted—that both men and women were praying and preaching in the Corinthian church in fulfillment of Acts 2:17. Paul reprimanded both the men and the women in the Corinthian church for their impropriety, and stipulated the proper way to pray and preach in that Greek cultural setting—men with their heads uncovered and women with their heads veiled. Catherine Booth then raised the question of how to reconcile chapter fourteen, where women were admonished to "keep silence in the church," with chapter eleven. This was done, she averred, by understanding that the speaking referred to in chapter fourteen was different from that referred to in chapter eleven. "Taking the simple and common-sense view of the two passages, viz., that one refers to the devotional and religious exercises in the Church, and the other to inconvenient asking of questions, and imprudent or ignorant talking, there is no contradiction or discrepancy, no straining or twisting of either." Without this understanding, one would have to draw the absurd conclusion that Paul was contradicting himself in I Corinthians—admonishing women to preach in chapter eleven, and forbidding them to do so in chapter fourteen. Scripture, for Catherine Booth, had to be understood in context.

The second objection to female ministry commonly came from I Timothy 2:12–13. Catherine Booth began her exposition by giving the passage a "fair and thorough examination" in spite of the fact that "we have never met with the slightest proof that this text has any reference to the public exercises of women." The teaching referred to in this passage, as far as Catherine was concerned, as both the context and the grammatical construct of the passage clearly implied, was to a domineering teaching done privately in the home, "which involves the usurpation of authority over the man." It is never warranted to interpret this passage as a prohibition of public preaching and teaching.

32 Murdoch, "Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth," 348. See also Janette Hassey, No Time for Silence (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1886), 99–100 where Hassey asserts the same thing, and compares Catherine Booth's pamphlet with Phoebe Palmer's Promise of the Father, written also in 1859.
33 Booth, "Female Ministry; or, Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel," 8.
34 Booth, 12
35 Booth.
36 Booth.
Catherine Booth's primary scriptural concern, however, was not with two so-called problematic passages, which could be clearly explained, but with the positive witness of scripture for women in ministry. Although she cited some important women in the Old Testament, such as Deborah, Huldah, and Miriam, to support her argument, her primary interest was with the witness of the New Testament, and with the many women who prayed, preached, and ministered in various ways—Anna, Philip's daughters, Priscilla, the Samaritan woman, Phoebe, Junias, Euodia, Syntyche, and others. However, there were three New Testament passages which provided the theological legitimacy and foundation for such ministry, and upon which Catherine Booth concentrated.

The first constituted the many Gospel references to Jesus' treatment of women, but specifically His commission to Mary Magdalene in Matthew 28:9-10. Here was the first public announcement of the resurrection, proclaimed to a woman, who was then to become the teacher of the rest of the apostles. Catherine Booth understood this as not coincidental, but intentional on the part of the Lord. Woman had been the first in transgression, but now she was "first also in the glorious knowledge of complete redemption." Acts 2:16-18 was a second passage critical to Catherine's argument, and as the fulfillment of Joel 2:28, this message by Peter at Pentecost was one of both promise and hope, that "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Catherine often referred to this passage.

The third, and the most important, was Galatians 3:28, the most often quoted passage in her defense of female ministry. Matters of racial, status, and sexual distinctions were, for Catherine, the result of the fall and a sign of sin. Likewise, the abolition of these distinctions was the great sign of redemption. Obviously dismissing the contention that this passage deals only with salvation, Catherine wrote, "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." In summary, Catherine Booth maintained that the witness of Scripture, far from constraining women, justified female ministry, and indeed envisioned women as well as men proclaiming the gospel as a sure sign of the breaking in of the kingdom of God, inaugurated with the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Christ. On the other hand, a mistaken and misled suppression of women in ministry "has resulted in . . . loss to the Church, evil to the world, and dishonour to God. . . ."

37 Booth, 16.
38 Booth, 17.
39 Booth, 20.
Institutional Witness

Catherine Booth was not the sole voice for female ministry after the inauguration of the East London Christian Revival Union in 1865. She had both personal and institutional support for her views on female ministry. Many people became convinced, doubtless due both to her persuasive rhetoric and her own personal example, of the truth of female ministry and the desirability of women in the pulpit.

The light dawned slowly for William Booth. He was an organizer, and did not have either the skill or the patience for the kind of analysis which Catherine brought to this and other subjects. He was neither by training nor by disposition a critical thinker. Initially, in correspondence with Catherine before their marriage, it was the practical aspect of the argument for female ministry by which he was most convinced, although such practicality was in conflict with his stubborn prejudice. In a revealing letter to Catherine on April 12, 1855, William wrote:

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 the power to do so. Altho', I should not like it. It is easy 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 to help.

However, there is every indication that William Booth was convinced on the theological and biblical level of the viability of women in ministry, was ultimately carried by the higher arguments for female ministry, and acted in a way which was consistent with his own developed convictions on the subject. After his marriage to Catherine, he encouraged her in the writing of the 1859 pamphlet, the teaching of class meetings and Sunday School classes, and the preaching of the gospel. When asked to address the Wesleyan Conference of 1880 and to outline the principles for the success of The Salvation Army, Booth stated the fourth principle as this: "And thei1 we employ women. And for this we have the authority of Mr. Wesley."
One of the most zealous workers of The Christian Mission, secretary to the Mission, and later the first to hold the rank of commissioner after the founding of The Salvation Army, was George Scott Railton. After joining the Mission, he lived with the Booths for eleven years, and there was great mutual admiration between him and William and Catherine. Like William, Railton's initial commitment to women in ministry was on the practical level—any legitimate means possible for the conversion of the world must be employed. "As soon as he saw that women were successful Missioners he was advocating that they should have equal place with men." 43 Bernard Watson, perhaps overstating his case, wrote 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." 44 This observation was seconded by Bramwell Booth who wrote that "Commissioner Railton, who was always ready for new departures, favored entrusting women with the responsibilities and authorities which we had given to the men." 45

Railton apparently continued to operate on the practical level of what was good for the Mission and the Army with a vision for the salvation of the world. However, as influential as Railton was in setting forth the doctrines of those organizations, his commitment was eventually grounded on the premise that equality in ministry was ordained by God and witnessed to in the scriptures. This he surely learned from Catherine.

It would be only a matter of time before the theology espoused by Catherine Booth and others would be translated into the theology of The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army. At the first Conference of The Christian Mission, held in 1870, the following stipulation was enunciated in Section XII, Female Preachers:

As it is manifest from the Scripture of the Old and especially the New Testament that God has sanctioned the labours of Godly women in His Church; godly women possessing the necessary gifts and qualifications, shall be employed as preachers itinerant or otherwise and class leaders and as such shall have appointments given to them on the preachers plan; they shall be eligible for any office, and to speak and vote at all official meetings. 46

44 Watson, 13.
46 Minutes, First Conference of The Christian Mission, held at People's Mission Hall, 272 Whitechapel Road, London, June 15-17, 1870, Microfilm Collection, The Salvation Army Archives and Research Center, New York, New York. The importance of female ministry was reasserted at the 1875 Conference. The 1876 Conference was very important. Booth-Tucker recorded that "The most revolutionary measure adopted by the Conference was the appointment of women evangelists to the sole charge of stations. Hitherto they had been attached to various places to assist the regular evangelist, as a sort of irresponsible co-pastor. But now for the first time their names were published in the annual list of preachers as fulfilling the ordinary duties assigned to the male evangelists. Annie Davis, afterwards Mrs. Colonel Ridsdel, was placed in charge of Bethnal Green. Mrs. Reynolds, subsequently a major in the Rescue work, was attached to the Whitechapel and Shoreditch circuit. Miss Booth was reserved for 'general evangelistic tours'" (2:143).
Sandall recorded that one Mrs. Collingridge was the first woman to hold office in The Christian Mission. She was at one time the superintendent of the Shoreditch Circuit and presided at the meetings. The number of women actively involved in The Christian Mission increased, as did their influence. The theological stand taken by The Christian Mission was not without its dissenters, and Begbie stated that "Many of the workers in the mission, between 1875 and 1878, left William Booth, and some of them none too fairly. He was criticized for setting women over men." Nevertheless, this was a matter of theological commitment for the leaders of the Mission, and Catherine continued to serve as the model for female ministry.

The same commitment to female ministry was established after Catherine and William Booth founded The Salvation Army in 1878. *The Doctrines and Disciplines of The Salvation Army* included a section on women's right to preach the Gospel, and that work for 1885, stressing this issue as a vital theological matter, placed the idea of women's right to preach in section number twenty-seven, conspicuously between the sections on baptism and salvation. One reading the doctrine book could not miss the point—those who formulated the doctrines of The Salvation Army considered this to be an important *doctrinal* matter. The affirmation in that section was that the right of women to preach is clearly attested to in the scriptures. A favorite passage of Catherine Booth's found its way into that section, certainly not by coincidence. "The Holy Spirit, in Galatians 3:28 states that there is neither male or female, but that all is [sic] one in Christ Jesus, thereby affirming that, in the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of Christ's Kingdom, all differences on account of sex are abolished." 48

Those outside the Army could not fail to take notice of this decidedly radical step in the ministry of women. One British historian, Sir Walter Besant, in his voluminous work entitled *London in the Nineteenth Century*, wrote the following about the Army's stance on female ministry:

"One of the leading principles on which the Army is based is the right of women to an equal share with men in the great work of publishing salvation to the world. By an unalterable provision of our Founding Deed she can hold any position of authority or power in the Army, from that of a local officer to that of the General," says one of the official regulations, and male-staff officers are particularly ordered to set an example to the rest by "promoting women to all such positions of trust and power as they shall be able to occupy"—by rendering all possible assistance to women officers and by "regarding and treating women as being equal with men in all the social relations of life, whether it be as mothers, wives, sisters, or comrades." 49

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48 *The Doctrines and Disciplines of The Salvation Army* (London: International Headquarters, 1885), 93.  
All the Booth children (five girls and three boys) grew up to become officers in The Salvation Army of various ranks and titles, being reared in a home environment where the urgency of ministry was pressed upon the girls and boys alike. Thus, not only did the men of the family assume important institutional positions in The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army, but the women did also. Catherine (1858-1955), the eldest daughter, became a commissioner in The Salvation Army along with her husband, Arthur Booth-Clibborn (all the Booths' sons-in-law took the Booth name). They resigned from The Salvation Army in 1902. The second daughter, Emma (1860-1903), along with her husband Frederick de Latour Booth-Tucker, became the National Commander of The Salvation Army in America in 1896, and was tragically killed in a train wreck in 1903. Marian (1864-1937), the third, was an invalid all her life, but held the rank of Staff-Captain. Eva (1865-1950), who remained single, became the National Commander of the Army in America from 1904 to 1934, and was elected the fourth General of The Salvation Army in 1934, a position which she held until 1939. Lucy (1867-1953) was the youngest daughter, and in 1894 Commissioner Lucy Booth married Colonel Daniel Hellberg. They retained their separate ranks, and were sent in charge of the work in India and Ceylon. She was the Territorial Commander and he was the Chief Secretary.

What was true for the daughters of the Booths was also true for their daughters-in-law and for countless other women who were nurtured and trained by Catherine Booth and her successors with an eye to female ministry. In many cases these women became the agencies for the Mission station work, the Corps work, the social ministry, and the administrative ministry of The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army. During the time of transition from The Christian Mission to The Salvation Army in 1878, a list of stations for The Salvation Army in September, 1878, reveals that out of ninety-one officers in the field, forty-one were women. In May,

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50 Murdoch noted in "Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth" that "The dynasty grew through advantageous marriages of Catherine's sons to women who shared their mother-in-law's zeal for female ministry. In 1882, Bramwell (1856-1929) married Florence Soper (1861-1957), daughter of a Plymouth physician, after Mrs. Booth advised Dr. Soper that it was of no avail 'to fight against what God has ordered.' In 1886, Ballington (1857-1940), their second son, married Maud Charlesworth (1865-1948), daughter of a London Anglican rector who continued to fight the organization which stole his daughter, attacking the Army in The Times. The third son, Herbert (1862-1926), in 1890 married Cornellie Schoch (1865-1919), a woman from a Dutch family already connected to the Army" (356-357).

In an interesting article in All the World in September, 1900 entitled "What Has The Salvation Army Done for Women," the writer noted not only that "a woman leads the Army's forces in Canada," but that "in many other countries the women . . . stand beside their husbands as our Territorial Commanders" (508). See also Flora Larsson, My Best Men Are Women (New York: The Salvation Army, 1975), and John D. Waldron, comp., Women in The Salvation Army (Oakville, Ontario: The Triumph Press, 1983).
1884 the organized social ministry of The Salvation Army in England began at the initiation of a woman soldier by the name of Mrs. Cottrill. Out of compassion for the prostitutes in the East End of London whom she took into her own home, she opened a rescue home for prostitutes on Hanbury Street, Whitechapel. From evidence gleaned from the operation of that home, and with the encouragement and support of the journalist W. T. Stead, the Booths and the Army became involved in 1884–1885 with the issue of the white slave trade and prostitution in England, and were influential in raising the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen with the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885.51

Equally important for the movements of The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army was that women were given equal opportunities in the area of administration as well as in the preaching and social ministries. It has already been noted that both Emma and Frederick Booth-Tucker became the National Commanders of The Salvation Army in America in 1896. They followed Maud and Ballington Booth who had held the position of National Commanders since 1887. The first women Divisional Commanders in England were Captain Polly Ashton, Staff-Captain Rebecca Chatterton, and Staff-Captain Annie Bell.52 In a letter dated February 24, 1890 to Captain Polly Ashton upon her appointment as Divisional Commander, Catherine Booth wrote:

My dear Captain: In my sick chamber I have heard of your promotion to the command of a Division with great interest, and with good hope that it may help forward that honorable and useful employment of my own sex in the Master's service, which I have so strongly desired and labored for, and of which I have been enabled in some measure, by the mercy of God, to be an example.

I lie here in a corner of the battlefield, helpless to do more than send out a counsel or two, and give my blessing, and cry to my Father that His presence may be with those who are in the thick of the fight.

I am sure He will be with you and make you a great power for good.

Never forget that He is almighty to save and to keep in the darkest hour. He keeps me through my suffering hours and when the battle is over and the everlasting morning breaks I will meet you at His feet.

Yours forever in His love, Catherine Booth.53


53I am indebted to Mrs. Colonel Roy Oldford for giving me a copy of this letter, as well as a copy of a letter from William Booth to Captain Ashton. The original letters were found by Mrs. Oldford at the U.S.A. Eastern Territorial School for Officers' Training while Colonel and Mrs. Oldford were stationed there.
However, in spite of advances made by women in The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army, and in spite of leadership of women in preaching, social ministries, and administration, there was evidently the gnawing fear by Catherine Booth that the Army would not continue with this commitment of female ministry. At an Officers' meeting on the night after Catherine Booth's funeral, William said, “She called me up at four one morning in the week she died, to give me a solemn message. It was that she feared the women of The Salvation Army were not going to rise up to take the place she wished for them.”

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to demonstrate the importance of female ministry in the life, thought, and teaching of Catherine Booth. In order to do that, three things have been articulated. First, Catherine Booth was a person in whom there evolved an understanding of female ministry. She demonstrated as early as 1853 that she believed women and men to be naturally equal in every way, while acknowledging that custom, tradition, and training had prevented women from their right of equality in society.

This she knew to be wrong, and eventually she applied her reasoning specifically to the issue of female ministry. Although Catherine herself did not preach her first sermon until 1860, she defended women's right to preach the gospel in her tract on “Female Ministry” in 1859. After entering the public ministry in 1860, she spent the next nearly thirty years as an evangelist, preacher, and teacher of the gospel, as well as an author and editor. She reared her eight children, both the girls and the boys, with a view toward ministry.

Secondly, it was argued above that Catherine Booth did not believe in female ministry in spite of the Bible, but because of the Bible. She answered so-called biblical objections to women in public ministry, and brought to the fore supporting scriptural evidence, from both the Old and the New Testaments, which provided both the clear biblical rationale for female ministry, as well as the biblical mandate for such ministry.

Finally, it was also argued that the views of Catherine Booth were not held in a vacuum, but were shared by people like William Booth and George Scott Railton, were institutionalized in official pronouncements of both The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army, and were put into practice by countless women in those organizations. Many women, including her own daughters and daughters-in-law, took part in the ministry of The Christian Mission and The Salvation Army. Their ministries ranged from pastoral and preaching functions to social and administrative responsibilities, and was one factor which accounted for the growth and

development of those organizations. Catherine Booth intentionally, through her own personal influence and example, encouraged women in ministry, and did so because of an intellectual, spiritual, and personal commitment to the biblical hope and vision that “In Christ there is neither . . . male nor female.”