



The Consequences of Sanctification on Gender Roles in the Early Salvation Army, 1865–1912

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Abstract: The early Salvation Army's theology of sanctification led them to theologically challenge and develop the assumed gender roles of its members. This paper argues that the early Army's understanding of sanctification, particularly the emphasis on empowerment and eschatological fulfilment, informed and affected its approach to gender roles. The Army's theology of sanctification had a real-term impact on the Army's understanding of gender roles. A deeper understanding of how the Army's theology of sanctification influenced its approach to gender roles will provide a more nuanced framework for interpreting the early Army's claims of gender equality.

Keywords: *Salvation army • gender • sanctification • household • female ministry*

Introduction

Since its beginning, The Salvation Army¹ fought for women's equality and recognised the status of female ministry. At the heart of that battle was the early Army's understanding of holiness, which contributed to its development of a nuanced understanding of gender roles. This paper argues that the early Army's development of gender roles for its members, particularly in the context of ministry, is due in large part to its understanding of sanctification. This argument will be made in four points. First, the Army's understanding of holiness between 1865 and 1912.² Second, the transformation of the public role of women. Third, the changing understanding of manliness. Fourth, the transformation of the family unit.

The Army believes that it is the privilege of every believer to be sanctified, regardless of gender.³ A person's social, economic, or gender position was secondary to the gift of sanctification. Since God sanctified women as well as men, women were equally equipped to minister the Gospel as were men. This did not change the social place of the person who was sanctified—they remained male, female, working-class, etc. However, it did transform their theological identity. Yet the transformed theological identity was still worked out through the cultural lens in which the Army operated.

¹ The Army from now on.

² This is the period when William Booth, and the Booth family more generally, were firmly in control of the Army.

³ <https://www.salvationarmy.org/doctrine/doctrines>

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At the first conference of The Christian Mission⁴ in June 1870, five of the thirty-three people who made up the board were women.⁵ At the same conference, it was decided that 'Godly women possessing the necessary gifts and qualifications' would be engaged as leaders, preachers, or any other office needed.⁶ Women were also allowed to speak and vote in the meetings of the Christian Mission.

The Army offered an opportunity for women, particularly working-class women, to be recognised in leadership positions and undertake evangelistic ministry. It also provided a way for working-class men to get involved in a form of Christianity that did not seek to 'feminise' them but rather exemplified spiritual struggle as a principle of discipleship by turning the leisure activities associated with masculinity into a weakness to be overcome.⁷

Salvationist Holiness in Summary

This is a much larger topic than is possible to do justice to in this work, and so this section serves as a summary of the early Army's theology of holiness. The early Army's understanding of sanctification was grounded in three main elements: personal agency, spiritual freedom, and eschatological promise. Whilst the general giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was important for the Army, Salvationist holiness theology emphasised total sanctification as the fullness of holiness.

A believer sought sanctification by consecration to Christ and claiming the blessing of the Holy Spirit.⁸ Sanctified believers had the roots of sin removed so they could resist temptation and live free from sin.⁹ Individual sanctification was in expectation of the coming millennium, which would usher in the return of Christ.¹⁰ This millennium would happen when everyone in the world was sanctified. The mission of the Army was to save and sanctify the world so that Christ would return. Sanctification was about the transformation of a person and then of society through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individual believers.

Personal agency was central to the early Army's approach to holiness. The individual had to seek and claim holiness through personal consecration and faith. For early Salvationists, this took a highly practical form. Railton wrote, 'To teach practical holiness is to teach abstention from drink, and tobacco, and showy dress, and worldly books and amusements.'¹¹ Holiness meant separation from the things of the world.

The experience of sanctification followed consecration. Brengle wrote that total sanctification is instantaneous: 'A man may grow in grace but not into grace.'¹² Anyone could be made holy. It was a gift from God to those willing to claim it. It did not confer a higher understanding of reality or grant special knowledge. Holiness set a person free from sin. Holiness meant spiritual freedom from the power of sin, enabling a person to resist temptation and live a life without sin. An example of the early Army's commitment to holiness as the end of sin in the life of the believer can be seen at the 1877 Christian Mission conference, where William Booth said:

There is another state, and that is without sin... The God of peace sanctified wholly and the whole body, soul and spirit is preserved blameless... Now I am free to confess that about this state, there may be difficulties and perplexities. I simply insist that it is described in the Bible and that the descriptions in the Bible have been verified by thousands of saints... We don't say that it is possible to be without imperfections, both

⁴ The movement which would become The Salvation Army

⁵ Walker, Pamela J. *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain*, (London: University of California Press, 2001), 104

⁶ Christian Mission Conference Minutes, Salvation Army Heritage Centre, 1870, n.p.

⁷ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 129

⁸ Brengle, Samuel Logan, *Heart Talks on Holiness*, Georgia: The Salvation Army Supplies and Purchasing Department, 1897, 31–35. Brengle was one of the principal writers and teachers of holiness theology within the Army. He was an American Methodist who studied at Oberlin College and who was already committed to a perfectionist understanding of total sanctification before joining the Army. His work forms the main body of work for the first 100 years of Salvationist holiness theology.

⁹ Booth, William, *Purity of Heart*, rev. ed. (London: Crest Books, 2007), 2.

¹⁰ Booth, William, "Salvation for Both Worlds" in *All the World*, 5 January 1889, 2

¹¹ Railton, George Scott, *The Authoritative Life of General William Booth Founder of The Salvation Army*, (New York: Reliance Trading, 1914), 146

¹² Taylor, David, *Like a Mighty Army? The Salvation Army, the Church, and the Churches*, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 6

physical and mental. We still suffer, as the consequences of the faith, from disease and are liable to mistake and errors, although I am not going to limit in this respect the power of the Holy Ghost to guide into truth and keep us from error.¹³

The language of purity of heart encapsulated the possibility of living a life without sin.¹⁴ This can be seen in *A Ladder to Holiness*, where William Booth wrote:

From what I have read in the Bible, by what I heard from my comrades, and by the light God has given me by His Holy Spirit in my own heart, I now see and believe that it is possible for me to be delivered from all inward and outward sins, and that I can be made holy in this life. I believe that I can, as the Scriptures say, be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and be enabled to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.¹⁵

Purity of heart, the possibility of living without sin, was the constructive element within the eschatological hope that holiness represented. The eschatological hope of early Salvationist holiness theology was rooted in postmillennialism. William Booth wrote:

Without this inward purification – this root holiness – no matter how favourable the circumstances of men, outward rightness of conduct is simply impossible...for, unless the springs of action are clean, the conduct which proceeds from them cannot be pure. But in those days, by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, the purpose of Christ, which is the destruction of the works of the devil will be accomplished; men will be entirely sanctified, and the prophecy will be fulfilled which says, 'Thy people shall be all righteous'.¹⁶

For the Army, world transformation was possible only through holiness. All the social reform projects the Army undertook would only be successful if everybody in the world was sanctified. Otherwise, any system, structure, and progress would eventually be undone by humanity's continuing sinfulness.

Holiness was a gift from God, available to all people, regardless of their social or economic class, education, training, or gender. The holiness of believers began with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost on all the believers and was the establishing event for the Church. Holiness is a gift that makes no distinction between males and females. For the Army, the individual gift of total sanctification granted the authority to preach, teach, and minister. For the early Army, being able to testify to receiving the gift of total sanctification was necessary to qualify for officership.¹⁷ This is a key element to pay attention to.

For the Army, the only qualification required for ministry was sanctification, as it was through total sanctification that the Holy Spirit empowered the believer. The general outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost gave every Christian the capacity to fulfil the Great Commission, but it was the second blessing of total sanctification that gave an individual believer the power to act on behalf of Christ. All the education or training in the world could not replace the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Salvationism, sanctification is just as much about the believer's relationship with others as it is about their relationship with God. The Salvationist is saved to save and serve others, and sanctification is the gift given for others, just as being blessed by God means becoming a blessing to others. We know ourselves in Christ in relation to our love for the neighbour.

The personal experience of women who had been sanctified provided all the evidence necessary for female ministry. Catherine Booth is one of the most significant people for the development of female ministry in the Army.¹⁸

¹³ Hattersley, *Blood and Fire*, 228

¹⁴ Booth, William, *Religion for Every Day*, (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies Ltd. N.D.), 159–160

¹⁵ Booth, Bramwell, *Echoes and Memories*, Rev. Ed. (London: Salvationist Publishing & Supplies Ltd. 1926), 4

¹⁶ Booth, William, "The Millennium; or The Ultimate Triumph of Salvation Army" in *All The World*, 1890, 338

¹⁷ The General, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers*, London: The Salvation Army Publishing Department, 1908, 5–9

¹⁸ Known as the 'Army Mother', she was the wife of William Booth and worked with him in founding the Army. She was particularly responsible for ending sacramental practice in the Army and for providing the written theological work to support female ministry in the Army.

For Paul and Kay Rader,¹⁹ Catherine Booth was one of the most renowned preachers of her generation.²⁰ Her theological influence was key for the early Army.²¹ This extract from an address by Catherine Booth demonstrates the degree to which personal experience and testimony were taken as authority for public ministry:

Whether the church will allow women to speak in its assemblies can only be a question of time; common sense, public opinion and the blessed results of female agency will force her to as an honest and impartial rendering of the solitary text on which she grounds her prohibitions... Then, when the true light shines and God's words take the place of men's traditions, the doctor of divinity who shall teach that Paul commands women to be silent when God's Spirit urges her to speak will be regarded much as we should regard an astronomer who should teach that the sun is the earth's satellite.²²

We can see here that for Catherine, the idea that women should not preach was not taken as a divine command but only a human tradition. Further, it was a tradition that would come to an end when God's word took its authority. Catherine Booth defended Phoebe Palmer, a female preacher and part of the American Revivalist tradition, in her work "Female Ministry." Catherine also defended female ministry more generally. She wrote: "We commend to the consideration of all thoughtful Christians, that the public ministry of women has been eminently owned of God in the salvation of souls and the edification of His people."²³ For Catherine, the results of female ministry were evidence of its divine mandate. If people responded to female ministry and souls were saved through female agency, then that was all the necessary evidence for the role of women in ministry. Ultimately, Catherine drew on Galatians 3 for the claim that in Christ there is neither male nor female. As such, women were as empowered as men for ministry.²⁴

For Catherine Booth, the personal experience of a woman who has been sanctified, no matter how lowly in estate that woman was, counted more than all the education or biblical knowledge in the world. If God chose to sanctify a woman, then no one could argue. If someone thought the Bible said otherwise, their interpretation and understanding were flawed, not the claims to authority for female ministry.

Female Public Empowerment

By the middle of the Victorian era, British women were pushing against the constraints and limitations of their societal roles. Walkowitz writes that British women 'repeatedly spilled over and out of their ascribed, bounded roles, costumes, and locales into the public streets and wrong parts of town, engaged on missions on their own.'²⁵ However, while some women pressed against their culturally established social boundaries, the sense of clear gender roles existed within Victorian society. Ruskin is a good example of this, where he writes about the difference between the male and female spheres, particularly emphasising the role of women in the home. For Ruskin, women were to be organisers, self-abnegatingly wise, and never set above their husbands.²⁶

When women reached beyond their previous boundaries, they drew upon their previous estates for their newfound authority. The dominant model of female authority was domestic. Deborah Valenze's work shows that working-class women used their experience of domestic labour and ruling the working-class household to justify their increasing public role in the early nineteenth century. Their religious activities were claimed to be an extension of their social and economic position as wives and mothers in labouring households. Their domestic and public roles

¹⁹ Paul and Kay Rader were Salvation Army officers. Paul was the 15th general of the Army between 1994–1999.

²⁰ Rader, Paul A. and Rader, Kay F. "Lest We Lose Our Legacy: Officer Women in The Salvation Army". *Priscilla Papers* Vol. 22, No. 3, Summer 2008, 19.

²¹ It is generally recognised that Catherine Booth was much better read than her husband, and that while William Booth may have been the General, she was the one who was behind the emerging theology of the early Army.

²² Catherine Booth, quoted in Sandall, Robert, *The History of The Salvation Army Volume II 1878–1886*, (London: Thomas Nelson, 1950), 28.

²³ Booth, Catherine "Female Ministry" in *Practical Religion*, 4th Ed. (London: Salvation Army, 1881), 118.

²⁴ Booth, Catherine "Female Ministry", 118.

²⁵ Walkowitz, Judith R. *City of Dreadful Delight*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 41.

²⁶ Ruskin, John, "From Sesame and Lilies", *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Prose 1832–1901*, eds. Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge. (Peterborough: Broadview, 2012) 132–141.

were joined together.²⁷ Working-class women extended their domestic authority into the public arena, whether in the suffrage movement, joining Socialist societies such as the Owenites or the Fabians, or even participating in the Bread Riots.²⁸ Salvationists supported Women's suffrage and the women's Social and Political Union took the Army as its 'main inspiration' for its 'revivalist methods, advertising, and management.'²⁹

The women of the Army did not consciously preach social gender reform. They did not necessarily understand the assumptions underlying their authority to preach and hold a public role. They wanted to save souls and rescue people from damnation. To do this, they wrestled with the sins of drunkenness, vice, and all kinds of degradation. But their daily ministry, the battles they fought, and their very publicly visible authority preached the lessons of social reform and feminism far more powerfully than if they had marched for suffrage. The practical and theological forms of femaleness they demonstrated carried their conviction to the people who most needed to see it.³⁰ They did not create equality between the genders, but they did develop the expected gender roles within their society.

Within evangelical religion, particularly within the Army, the idea and image of motherhood were integrated into the authority of church leadership. The mother was responsible for the salvation of her children and her husband, and her small income made the difference between surviving or facing the Poor Law. This responsibility was extended and expanded to justify an officer's spiritual and practical authority. Examples include Catherine Booth, who refused to become an officer and was instead called the 'Army Mother.' Her inspiration led to other female officers being called 'mother', a term of address for which no male equivalent existed.³¹ The Army never had 'fathers'. It only had 'mothers.'

In the 1860s and 1870s, a few educated, middle-class Evangelical women spoke by invitation in churches. An example comes from the *East London Evangelist*:

A few sisters, anxious to work for Jesus, have formed themselves into a Christian Pioneer Band, and meet together on Friday evening from seven to eight, to devise and carry out plans of usefulness. They have already established a cottage prayer meeting in one of our darkest streets in Bethnal Green. Other meetings will be added, and they will specially work among children.³²

However, these women remained outside the formal organisation of denominations, made no decisions, did not vote, and were not allowed to preside over baptism or communion. They did not receive leadership in a congregational or circuit position, were not given a permanent salary, and these opportunities did not lead to an established place in a denomination.³³ They had extended the role of the wife and mother into the public realm by taking on responsibility for prayer meetings and working with children. But they had not taken on a leadership role as part of their ministry.

The story was slightly different with the Army. Women were already involved in public ministry and leadership before the Christian Mission became the Army. Eliza Collinridge sat on the Croydon Elders' Committee in 1869.³⁴ In the 1870 Christian Mission circuit plan for Whitechapel, five of thirteen preachers were women, and nine of sixteen exhorters and prayer leaders were women.³⁵ In 1875, Anne Davis became the first woman to be appointed

²⁷ Valenze, Deborah, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), especially chapter two.

²⁸ Taylor, Barbara, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Virago, 1983)

²⁹ deVries, Jacqueline R., "Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Suffrage Movement" in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, eds. Beverly Mayne and Pamela J. Walker, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1998), 321.

³⁰ Strachey, Ray, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Britain*, (reprint of 1928 edition) (London: Virago, 1978), 216.

³¹ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 131. For example, the director of a training home was a 'mother' or the person in charge of a refuge or rescue home for sex workers was a 'mother.'

³² *East London Evangelist*, June 1869, 137.

³³ *The Revival*, 28 January 1869, 781, and 6 April 1865, 215.

³⁴ Croydon Elders' Meeting Minutes, SAHC, 1869-1871.

³⁵ Circuit Plan, The Christian Mission at Whitechapel, SAHC, 1870.

to run a mission station.³⁶ The women employed by the Christian Mission and later commissioned by the Army were predominantly working-class, although some lower-middle-class women also became officers.

By 1878, of the 91 Salvation Army officers serving in 'field' appointments, 41 were women.³⁷ The 1881 census, reported in *News of the World*, said that of the 1660 women employed as missionaries, scripture readers, and itinerant preachers, over 15% were Salvationists.³⁸ By 1884, the Army had employed close to one thousand women. The secular media noted the impact of female officers. In 1879, the *Darlington and Richmond Herald* commented:

It was incredible that two girls without friends, without learning, without great gifts of eloquence, without any of the elaborate machinery which the church regards as almost indispensable for its operations...should raise out of the gutter and dram shop a vigorous working church of nearly 200 members. The Bishop of Durham could not do it! All the ministers of the town could not do it!...It is cheering beyond expression to see demonstrated once more the power of a sublime thought to transform the hearts and revolutionise the minds of men, that what reason, self-interest, prudence, patriotism, the exhortation of the benevolent and the entreaties of friends utterly failed to effect has been effected before our eyes again and again by the simple proclamation of the simple Gospel.³⁹

The general lack of education among candidates for officership and the scarcity of examples of female authority in the churches challenged the development of female ministry in the Army.⁴⁰ As the Army developed in complexity, it was recognised that officers needed more formal education. In 1880, the Army established a training home for female cadets under the command of Emma Booth, one of the daughters of William and Catherine Booth. In 1881, 19 women aged 16 to 29 were in the home where they would spend six months learning basic accounting, Bible study, and evangelism methods.

Female leadership was not limited to being only an evangelist or a corps officer. In 1879, Captain Carrie Reynolds became the first female divisional commander for Ireland.⁴¹ Reynolds grew the work in Ireland with four other women in 1880. By 1886, she was the first female officer to be promoted to major and had been given a male officer as her aide-de-camp.⁴² In 1889, Major Isa Carter was promoted to Adjutant and appointed to oversee several London corps. In 1890, Major Polly Ashton was appointed as a divisional commander with responsibility for the Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire Division. Catherine Booth, the female founder of the Army who was bedridden with cancer at the time and near death, wrote to Ashton:

In my sick chamber I have heard of your promotion to the command of the division with great interest and with good hope that it may help forward that honourable and useful employment of my own sex in the Master's service, which I have so strongly desired and laboured for, and of which I have been enabled in some measure by the mercy of God, to be an example.⁴³

William Booth also wrote to Ashton,

All around the world, our female officers have, not only been the means of rescuing crowds of sinners from misery & Hell, but have led the way which has been followed by other organisations; & as a result, at this hour, women occupy a position in the Master's vineyard that she never before attained to in the history of the world.⁴⁴

³⁶ *Christian Mission Magazine*, July 1875, 193

³⁷ Sandall, *The History*, 6. Field appointments were officers leading corps. This was in contrast to the social, slum brigade, and the various headquarters and ancillary roles.

³⁸ Census information from *News of the World*, 14 September 1884. Information on Salvation Army women from *Pall Mall Gazette* 2 May 1884, 3.

³⁹ Quoted in Sandall, *The History* vol. II, 11

⁴⁰ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 112. Cadets sometimes required supplementary education in reading, writing, and mathematics. If a newly commissioned officer were not yet confident in reading and writing or in basic bookkeeping, then they would be appointed as a 'secretary' to an experienced officer to continue their education.

⁴¹ Sandall, *The History* vol. II, 50. A divisional commander is roughly the organisational equivalent of a bishop.

⁴² Sandall, *The History* vol. II, 17–19

⁴³ Catherine Booth Papers, SAHC, Letter to Polly Ashton 24 February 1890

⁴⁴ Letter from William Booth to Captain Polly Ashton, 24 Feb. 1890, SAHC PWB/1/6/39

It should be noted that if the promotion of women to senior leadership positions were common, then it would not have drawn the direct attention of both founders. It is the unusual that attracts attention. Both William and Catherine celebrated Ashton's promotion to divisional commander, although they approached it from different perspectives. For Catherine, this was the result she had been praying for. For William, this was a demonstration of the Army's exceptionalism.

The 1895 *Orders and Regulations for Salvation Army Staff Officers* explained that women should be recognised as suitable for any position within the Army's hierarchy:

...therefore be understood that women are eligible for the highest commands – indeed, no woman is to be kept back from any position of power or influence merely on account of her sex.⁴⁵

However, the early commitment to female leadership in ministry doesn't mean the women did not face opposition. *The War Cry* gives an example of how the prejudice of the educated lower-middle-class religious men directed towards the working-class women officers of the Army was countered by those officers:

"What does an ignorant girl like you know about religion?" he said. "I know more than you do; I can say the Lord's Prayer in Latin." "Oh, but" she replied, "I can say more than that; I can say the Lord has saved my soul in English."⁴⁶

Again, we see a dismissive attitude toward education or social position when compared to the work of God in the life of the believer. The Army responded to criticism of its methods and questions about the authority of women to preach with characteristic robustness:

They say it is quite improper for a woman to preach the Gospel. What is it proper for a woman to do? Is it proper for them to stand before the public for many hours a day in a shop? The universal practice says that it is...But has woman no better destiny than to stand or sit waiting upon man's bodily needs? Will any one find a reason why women should not stand before the public to offer them the bread of life, the wine and milk of the Gospel and the robes of righteousness?⁴⁷

The language used in this passage riffs on the themes of offering household provisions, which are recategorised into a spiritual dimension.⁴⁸ If it is good enough for a woman to be a shop girl, or a wife or mother, and tend to the temporal needs of people, then why should it not be good enough for that same woman to tend to the eternal needs of the public? It is specifically the public role which is key here. The transformation made possible through sanctification is not only a private transformation but one that dramatically alters the public role of the woman. However, there was also opposition from within the movement.

The 1875 Conference of the Christian Mission passed a motion stating: 'the Conference cannot...obstruct the admission of females to any work or office in the Mission.'⁴⁹ There would not have been a need for this motion unless there had been obstructions to females taking up positions of authority and leadership over men. These problems did not disappear when the Christian Mission became The Salvation Army. One Salvationist woman recalls that when appointed as a corps officer, she was told by one of the members that women could only speak when invited. She wrote, 'When we told them...that we had been sent to lead, and were going to do so, they naturally kicked; but we just trusted in God, and went right on.'⁵⁰ This account highlights that while the Army's structures saw women as equal to men in ministry and leadership, its members needed a little more convincing.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Hill, Harold, *Leadership in The Salvation Army: A Case Study in Clericalisation*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 235.

⁴⁶ *War Cry*, 13 August 1880, 1.

⁴⁷ *Christian Mission Magazine*, April 1876, 84.

⁴⁸ It is important to note that in 1876, the Christian Mission still practised the sacraments, and women were given the authority to preside over them.

⁴⁹ Christian Mission Conference Minutes, SAHC, June 1875

⁵⁰ Railton, George Scott, *Commissioner Dowdle: The Saved Railway Guard*, (London: Salvation Army Publishing, 1901), reprint 1930, 56.

Another example comes from October 1886, when Captain Churchill and her lieutenant, Mary Ann Sawyer, were appointed to Barrow. When they arrived, they were told, 'the last officers were lasses and...we should go no further as the soldiers were determined not to have lasses again.'⁵¹ It is perhaps significant that the system of captain and lieutenant working together meant that it was very rare for a single woman to lead a corps on their own. However, the final fate of Captain Churchill's ministry highlights the difference between public and private roles that the Army gave to women. Captain Churchill resigned in 1891 because she married a non-salvationist. At that time, an officer could only marry another officer.⁵²

Railton reflected on how the change from the Christian Mission, with its committee and conference style of leadership, to the Army, with its autocratic and military-styled hierarchy, was central for women gaining the capacity to lead congregations:

I am not sure that we ever had an instance of women's successful management in association with a committee of men. A strong-willed man – any man, in fact, with sufficient ability and strength of mind to be successful as an officer, might override and impose his will upon a committee, without offending or driving them away; but no woman could do this without conflicts that would necessarily destroy her influence, and make her usefulness, on any extended scale, impossible. I could tell tales as to the struggles of some of those early heroines and elders and committees...They could never have been sent out with any prospect of success in a provincial city had they been saddled with that old machinery.⁵³

Railton was a powerful and valuable supporter of female ministry. However, he still assumed that women could not lead a committee of men. He saw the authority of men as combative and domineering, as opposed to the authority of women, which drew from the images of domesticity and motherhood. For Railton, women had to act like men to be able to lead men.

The Army's decision to place women in positions of authority and leadership over men, including over other officers, put those women into a very publicly visible role. They understood themselves to be in a battle for religious liberty, which had been taken away from women by a corrupt church that had jealously hoarded spiritual authority to itself. The religious establishment had stolen the freedom inherent in women to preach the Gospel and lead the church, responsibilities given by God and proven by sanctification, so that they could not be denied.⁵⁴ This led to a key moment in the Army when it had to decide what to do about sacramental worship.

The Christian Mission offered monthly communion in its mission stations, and the early Army continued that practice. Officers were instructed to provide communion monthly within their corps. This included female and male officers. However, the female officers possessed none of the qualities typically associated with sacramental authority. They were not male, they were generally not formally educated (and definitely not in any form of Bible or theological studies), they were not ordained, and they were (predominantly) working class.⁵⁵

There was some argument that women officers should not offer communion because they were women and so could not stand in the place of Jesus or could not have authority for sacramental worship. George Scott Railton said: 'In this, as in everything else, the Lord's own principle there being 'neither male nor female' in Christ Jesus is fully acted upon.'⁵⁶ In God's eyes, male and female officers were equal; if a man could offer communion, so could a woman. The Holy Spirit empowered a person for ministry, and if a woman was sanctified, then a woman could minister.

The authority to offer the sacraments was not determined by an ordination ceremony but by the ordaining of the Holy Spirit through sanctification. This is what underpins the possibility of women offering the sacraments.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Churchill Papers, SAHC, "My Life Story", 20-21

⁵² This is still the case in many parts of the international Salvation Army although it is no longer the case in the UK.

⁵³ Railton, George Scott, *Twenty-One Years' Salvation Army*, (London: Salvation Army, 1889), 105

⁵⁴ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 111

⁵⁵ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 117

⁵⁶ *Record*, 8 February 1882, 2.

But the theology also led to the ending of sacramental worship. Walker writes: 'Paradoxically, the very theological understanding that made it possible for women to offer communion also led Salvationists to believe that it was redundant.'⁵⁷ The sacraments were only an outward ceremony. They enacted no change in a person and conveyed no grace to the participant. The Holy Spirit alone could change the human heart and mediate Christ to the believer. There was no need for water baptism when the Holy Spirit baptised, nor for communion when the Holy Spirit lived within you.

Salvationist women drew on their domestic roles as wives and mothers to establish their spiritual and political authority. But Salvationist women also drew from other images in a prophetic and interestingly transformative way. The image of the prostitute is significant for Victorian London. In some ways, the prostitute and the city went together. Prostitutes were associated with disease and death, the visible reminder of the sins of society, and acted as a totemic figure. They were considered 'seminal drains' through which all society's sinful social excretions were drained and washed away, ensuring the purity of society.⁵⁸ They had a sacral function. Salvationist women drew some of their public imagery from the drama and performance of prostitutes.

Salvationist women used displays and presentations of disorderly, chaotic, and ultimately socially transgressive women. One Salvationist woman, Eliza Haynes, unbraided her hair, put flowing ribbons in it, hung a sign around her neck saying, 'I am Happy Eliza', and paraded through Marylebone.⁵⁹ This socially transgressive behaviour brought attention and interest and demonstrated the freedom Salvationist women felt. Two Salvationist women in Hackney went through the streets in their nightgowns to announce a meeting to 'the immense sensation of the whole population.'⁶⁰ Two women in their nightdresses were obviously going to cause a scene in Victorian London, not least because this was often the dress of prostitutes.

Prostitutes were outside society and, as outsiders, were free to go into places where respectable women were not able to go. The same was true for Salvationist women. Salvationist women walked where respectable women would not go. Their distinctive uniforms and bonnets identified them with the Army, explaining their presence in the city's dark corners and allowing them to enter those places without being 'corrupted' or 'shamed'.⁶¹ The difference between the prostitute and the Salvationist was that while the perceived corruption and vice of the prostitute allowed them to transgress societal norms, it was the sanctification of the Salvationist women which gave them the freedom to go wherever the Gospel required them to be.

The images of disorder that the Salvationists drew upon allowed for greater contrast with purity. The image and figure of the prostitute were reversed in a prophetically transformative moment. Salvationist women were agents of purity and sanctification, purifying the pestilence and death of society's sins through their holiness rather than as 'seminal drains.' The Salvationist women combined the confidence they found in sanctification with the self-sacrificial commitment to serving those most in need, freely walking the streets.

Salvationist women claimed what was ordinarily denied to women. They claimed sacred and secular authority for themselves in the public sphere. They drew not only from the traditional sources of female authority, the household and motherhood, but also from socially disruptive and transgressive images. In doing so, they pushed the accepted norms of gender roles by drawing on already existing ideas of what it meant to be a woman. Those roles were transformed through sanctification, gaining a new meaning and power, which culminated in public leadership and ministry.

Women and men had equal authority in public as church leaders because the Spirit sanctified both women and men. Holiness makes everyone equal because everyone can be sanctified, and there is no distinction in holiness; no one is more or less holy than another person who has been sanctified. This point cannot be ignored.

⁵⁷ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 118

⁵⁸ Corbin, Alain "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Representations" in *The Making of the Modern Body*, eds. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas W. Laqueur, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1987), 209–19. See also Walkowitz, Judith R. *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)

⁵⁹ *Borough of Marylebone Mercury*, 26 June 1880, 3.

⁶⁰ William Booth Papers, SAHC, Bramwell Booth letter to William Booth 10 March 1893

⁶¹ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 133

The authority of women in leadership was not a matter of changing social expectations but because of the Army's theology of sanctification. The only authority a man had to lead, preach, or evangelise came from the Holy Spirit. As women could testify to that same experience, they shared that same authority.

New Manliness

Whilst it is something of a generalisation, it would be fair to suggest that many working-class men in Victorian London understood that what it meant to be a man was to be hard-working, hard-fighting, and hard-drinking people living in a hard world. They took pride in their hard lives and their ability to match up to that hardness. Many were seasonal workers, taking jobs wherever they could for a few months at a time, or day labourers in the dockyard or on building sites. Others worked in the factories and workshops, as sellers and hawkers, or as semi-skilled artisans. The skilled workers crafted, built, forged, and worked in shops.⁶²

Come Sunday, those men could be found in the streets in an almost exclusively male domain, where the only female intrusion came from prostitutes. They bought and sold pigeons for racing and songbirds for raising. They placed bets on fights and races, watched or took part in pugilistic bouts, and, above all, drank together. A moderate beer drinker could easily spend in a week the same amount which could feed a family of five or six for two to three days. These activities defined what it meant to be masculine and created a sense of masculine camaraderie that was at least partly determined by the lack of women. It was the working-class equivalent of gentlemen's clubs and masonic halls.

Ordinary religion, the religion of church services and household prayers, was women's business. Christianity taught people to turn the other cheek, to be meek and humble, and that love was the highest virtue. These were not things which aligned with what it meant to be male. Religious authority may have been grounded in masculinity, but manliness and clergy did not go well together. A docker in the London Basin was a different species from Oxford-educated Anglican clergy or zealous Methodist missionaries from the provinces.

Working-class men were not noted for their piety or for taking an interest in religious institutions. The religious institutions tried to reach out to the working poor through 'muscular Christianity.' Organisations such as the Boys Brigade and the YMCA had tried to bring a manly Christianity to the working class.⁶³ They drew upon the ideas of Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley, who built an ideal of Christian manliness on the principles of physical vigour, emotional restraint, and an ethic of service to others.⁶⁴ These ideals were first articulated as a response to the appeal of the Oxford Movement, with its ritualism and aesthetic splendour, to society's elite. However, the methodology of the middle-class attempts at reaching the working class with religion did not translate easily to the working class, which was separated from the religious establishments.⁶⁵

The Salvation Army understood that 'Religion will not conquer either the admiration or the affections of men by effeminacy, but by strength...The spirit of religion is the spirit of great power.'⁶⁶ Working-class men would not respond to a religion which told them to adopt what they considered to be feminine qualities. The Army told men they could be warriors for Jesus, fighting a good fight against supernatural powers that were an even greater foe to conquer than any they had previously met in the streets. Walker writes:

Salvationists never attempted to nullify or transcend a bodily sense of masculinity or femininity...they strived to convince men that this faith offered them the possibility of achieving a true manliness.⁶⁷

⁶² Patterson, Michael. *Life in Victorian Britain: A Social History of Queen Victoria's Reign*, (London: Robinson, 2008) 66–67

⁶³ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 119

⁶⁴ Vance, Norman, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

⁶⁵ Reed, John Shelton, "Ritualism Rampant in East London: Anglo-Catholicism and the Urban Poor." In *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 3 Spring 1983, 375–404

⁶⁶ *Christian Mission Magazine*, March 1874, 71

⁶⁷ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 120

This was achieved by redefining the things which had previously defined manhood. Drinking, gambling, fighting, and seeing prostitutes were no longer the things which a hard man would do. Instead, these were things that made men weak. They trapped you and made you dependent. They made you less manly. A man who became drunk and wasted his money on gin and beer was weak. A man who had to fight to feel like a man was less of a man than one who could endure persecution and stand up to a baying crowd and preach the gospel. Rejecting the trappings of a culture which had previously said, 'This is what it means to be a man,' meant becoming more manly, not less manly. They had fought and overcome weakness and dependency, defeated temptation and beaten sin in the hand-to-hand combat of prayer and sanctification. A preacher asked the question: 'Do you think now religion unmans me? Do I look any the worse for being a Christian?'⁶⁸ The Salvationist religion did not feminise men but made them manlier.

A reporter from *The Daily Telegraph* wrote about his experience of a Salvationist meeting in 1879:

He [the preacher] lost not a moment in shilly-shally, but seized Satan by the horns at once, and commenced abusing him in a tone and at a rate which must have convinced the Evil One that he was in the hands of a person who not only had no dread of him, but was hot and eager to rouse him to a fury, and then give him battle to the death. The preacher was a short, thickset man, with short cropped hair, and no shirt collar, and his coat was buttoned over his breast. His gestures were prodigiously energetic, and the consequence was, that before he had preached ten minutes he had worked his wrists well through the coat cuffs – wrists of a size that matched well with his ponderous fists, which except when engaged with the prayer book, were tightly clenched.⁶⁹

The whole imagery was of a man locked in combat with a foe of prodigious power, but one being fought with every expectation of defeating that enemy. The reporter describes the preacher like they might have described a prize-fighter or bare-knuckle boxer. The thick wrists and heavy hands of a labourer thrust out through his coat as his arms waved in the air with fists clenched for combat. This is a demonstration of how male Salvationists understood their faith. They were fighting the devil with their preaching, entering the arena to battle evil. They were not weak, not unmanned, but were more manly than they had been in their previous life.

The persecution faced by the Army only added to this sense of combat. Preachers had to face down jeering crowds and hold their ground in the face of physical confrontation. Salvationist marches through the streets were met with thrown mud and bricks. Salvationist men were not only fighting against the devil and sin but against the powers of the world which were set against them. They were in a battle where turning the other cheek had the same power as an artillery bombardment, and loving their neighbour meant a bayonet charge across no-man's land.

Walker writes: 'When the Salvation Army urged men to forgo sin, it inevitably induced a shift in gender relations, particularly men's relationship to competing notions of masculinity.'⁷⁰ The Army redefined what defined manliness by reframing what had previously identified working-class men as hard men – drinking, fighting, and gambling – into making them weak and dependent. Resisting and overcoming the sins of drinking, gambling and fighting took more effort and strength than giving into their weakness. To be manly meant to be a Christian soldier in the Salvation War.

The Priority of the Family

While women expanded their domestic roles into the public sphere and men redefined what it meant to be manly, the Army kept the family front and centre of social interactions. However, this family was to be refashioned according to Salvationist principles and in keeping with the newly redefined gender roles that sanctification made possible.

Men may have been expected to lead the household but in a very different way from the Victorian working-class norm. Violence was part of life for many working-class men, including violence at home. Wife-beating was to be

⁶⁸ *Christian Mission Magazine*, September 1874, 245

⁶⁹ Quoted in *Christian Mission Magazine* October 1871, 159

⁷⁰ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 78

expected. The community would condemn it only if it went too far. The Law would only get involved in the case of severe harm or death.⁷¹ The man was expected to maintain order and discipline in his home, and when he was likely to be drinking most days, this made the situation worse. The use of violence in the home was outlawed for Salvationist men.

The need to turn to violence was a mark of weakness, of giving in to sin. It was a moral failing. But even more remarkably, Salvationist men were expected to be gentle and avoid violence with their children as well. In their previous culture, fathers were entitled to use force to control and maintain their household. A husband who beat his wife and child was more typical than one who did not. The 1882 Articles of War state:

I do declare that I will never treat any woman, child or other person, whose life, comfort, or happiness may be placed within my power, in an oppressive, cruel or cowardly manner, but that I will protect such from evil and danger so far as I can, and promote, to the utmost of my ability, their present welfare and eternal salvation.⁷²

The expectation that a man should never treat a woman or child in an oppressive, cruel, or cowardly manner was a fundamental shift in the relationship between men and women in a marriage. The man was to lead the household by being its servant and protector, ruling through love and example, not force and control. This builds on the changed understanding of manliness for Salvationists. A testimony given in a Salvationist meeting offers evidence to the change in a man's relationship with his family when he became a Salvationist:

If you want to know what God has done for me, go and ask my poor wife, whom I have beaten in my maddened fury until I have endangered her life, and smashed everything I could lay my hands upon.⁷³

The domestic life of a Salvationist family could be radically altered through the changed understanding of gender roles. An example is a daughter's recollections of her Salvationist parents. The couple were young officers when they met, got married, and then had two children. The husband's old workmates talked about a woman who had just given birth to her tenth child. His old friends began to tease him because he only had two children. The young Salvationist said he would sooner castrate himself than subject his wife to such misery. The man was also known to don an apron and cook the midday meal every Sunday so his wife could attend services.⁷⁴ Just as women's domestic roles were expanded to include the public, men's public roles were extended to include the domestic.

For Salvationists, marriage was not only for the purposes of happiness and children. It was part of the grand scheme of salvation of the world. Walker writes: 'In principle, marriage was neither discouraged nor encouraged, but it was a regulated part of Army life and very much part of the mission of an Army officer or soldier.'⁷⁵ The married couple were to work together, uniting their talents and time for the growth of the kingdom of God and to better support the mission of the Army. But the Army was not uncritical of marriage. In a somewhat Pauline move, the Army said that marriage, especially for women, could end up meaning that they were not able to be as effective for the mission of God. William Booth said at the 1878 annual Conference:

Elizabeth Agnes Pollett and Ellen Hall have changed their names and their places of abode. I recommended them not to get married but they did not take my advice. They are still with us and willing to do all they can to help. They are not lost and I suppose somebody says in each case they are found. They were good before marriage and they ought to be a good deal better after.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor*, ed. by Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2008), 61.

⁷² SAHC, *Articles of War 1882*, 4.

⁷³ *Christian Mission Magazine*, October 1875, 264

⁷⁴ Quotes in Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 125

⁷⁵ Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 124

⁷⁶ *Christian Mission Magazine*, July 1878, 167

William Booth thought it was better for women not to get married. He acknowledges that they will still be of use, but there is a hint of belief that they should not have married. Eason comments that Booth's policies in appointing women to positions of authority were often openly discriminatory.⁷⁷ Booth believed that marriage created distractions from the mission, especially for women who had to maintain the household and raise the children. This was particularly the case for female officers. It was the rule that an officer could only marry another officer. The *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers (1886)* made clear the concern over women officers getting married:

Female officers ought to be very careful in this matter, seeing that to marry other than an officer removes them from a position of great usefulness and honour, such as they will probably never have the opportunity of obtaining again. And if they are really seeking to spend their lives in that manner which will bring the most glory to their Master, and the largest numbers of souls to His feet, they ought to be very careful not to sacrifice so important a position for any seeming advantages of worldly position, ease, or comfort. Let every female officer who entertains the temptation to take such a step, beware, lest for gratification of earthly feelings, lawful perhaps for others, and lawful for her in different circumstances, she should enter into relations which would drag her down from this honourable and Christ-like career to spend her life looking back on what she has sacrificed with bitter regret if not absolute despair.⁷⁸

The male Salvationist was called to change his behaviour towards his wife and children, including taking on more of a role in the household. Still, the female Salvationist was reminded that it would be better for them not to marry at all if they wanted to be an officer unless they were going to marry an officer. Even then, they were encouraged not to marry because the burdens of being a wife and mother would distract them from their ministry. The changing gender assumptions of men and women affected the marriage, not because the way men and women related in marriage changed, but because women's roles had expanded beyond the household.

For a woman to choose marriage over officership was, in some way, a failure. The man had to adjust how he oversaw the household because understanding what it meant to be manly had changed from physical to spiritual strength. The woman had a dual role as spiritual leader for the home and helper and support for the husband. The Salvationist household displayed a complex interweaving dynamic of gender roles, which highlights the way the Army redefined what it meant to be male and female.

Conclusion

The Salvation Army's commitment to sanctification as the ministry's defining feature fundamentally altered its perception of gender roles. Sanctification transformed the roles that men and women were to perform, but did not destroy the structures and systems within which men and women moved, lived, and had their being. Gender roles were not transcended, but instead extended and refined, considering the changing understandings of maleness and femaleness, rooted in the focus on sanctification. What it meant to be a man or a woman had to be understood in the context of the empowerment which came from sanctification.

What it meant to be manly was no longer marked by physical strength, drinking and fighting, and being 'hard' in a sense recognised by working-class culture. Men were considered manly because they resisted temptation, fought against Satan in spiritual hand-to-hand combat, and took responsibility for their actions in the home, including a commitment to gentleness and love.

What it meant to be female was expanded beyond the domestic. Their domestic roles as homemakers and mothers were redefined from the household into the public sphere. They were recognised as having the authority to lead, preach, and teach because they had been blessed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, which conveyed an authority that mere mortals could not question. Just as men could testify to the blessing of sanctification, which empowered uneducated and unrefined men to preach, so too could women.

⁷⁷ Eason, Andrew Mark, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army*, (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2003) 52

⁷⁸ The General, *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers 1886*, 55

Sanctification meant that women could extend their spiritual authority over the home into the public sphere because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They could challenge and lead men because of what the Spirit had made them. However, the family still had its particular dynamics to navigate, to the extent that it was often better for a woman not to marry and be subject to her husband.

The Salvation Army redefined gender roles for men and women by redefining what it meant to be male and what was allowable for women. This was because the Army believed in sanctification as the ultimate source of authority for life and ministry.

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