

# Women of the Flag

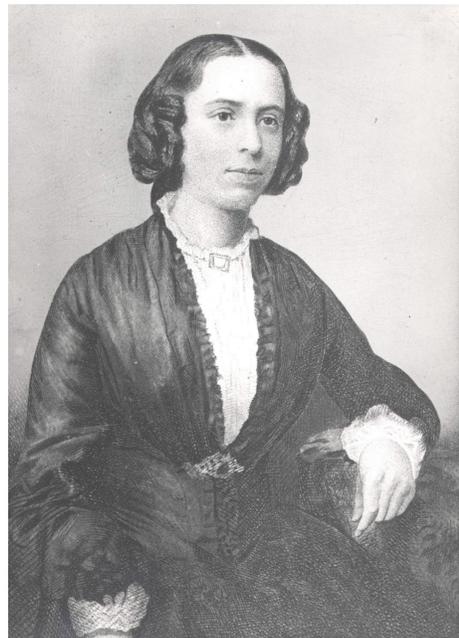
## Catherine Booth

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Catherine Booth, the mother of The Salvation Army, was promoted to Glory at the age of sixty-one years, on October 4, 1890. The Salvation Army as such was then only twelve years old, but so much of the foundations of our movement was built upon the character of this great woman and so much of her beliefs, methods, and teaching was woven into its early superstructure, that, though few Salvationists of the present day can claim to have seen or heard her, as 'the Army Mother' she still speaks and unconsciously guides her great family.

When my husband and I were stationed in South America, we realized with surprise how little our comrades of Latin countries knew of our Army pioneers. Desiring to help correct this loss, my husband asked me to write a brief life of our Founder for translation into Spanish and Portuguese. To prepare for this I re-read everything I could lay my hands on of the lives of Catherine and William Booth. As never before, I was thrilled as I contemplated the selfless flame in those two lives, fusing into one and, as a single torch, lighting up the dark places of the earth with the Evangel of Jesus.

In a new way my heart warmed to Catherine Booth - as child whose heart the Lord had opened, earnestly seeking and joyfully finding Salvation: as delicate girl, giving herself to the study of the Bible and other serious literature; as young woman, with powerful, clear-thinking mind, forming noble and exacting ideals of Christian life and warfare; as fiancée raising high standards of life and conduct for a minister of the Gospel; as wife and mother with one passion - to



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know and do the will of God. Living in a sinful world, she knew a mighty Savior, she would lift up Christ as the remedy for all the sins and sorrows of mankind.

Nor was she merely a brilliant religious enthusiast. The touch of God refined and disciplined her cultivated powers and she went forward under intimate Divine guidance. Her statesman's mind suggested wise rules and regulations for the infant Salvation Army. Her courage urged the Founder where his less adventurous nature might have hesitated to go. In storms of shameful criticism, or of threatening catastrophe, she stood like a rock. The floods came, the winds blew and beat upon her, but her soul remained unmoved. In her home, between household duties, she thought out and prepared mighty addresses, which held and moved congregations of thousands and still are standards for the Army platform.

But before and beyond public claims, the sacred duties of wife and mother were beautifully adorned. From childhood she set before her children the truth that the way of the Cross is the way of light. In their youth she gave them to the holy warfare. And all her service, private and public, was performed despite a frail, suffering body. Surely it was 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.' Rarely has the world witnessed a life of such pure devotion to Christ, such a giving of all and asking for nothing in return.

Catherine Booth's frail hand opened a door through which tens of thousands of women have marched to unrestricted service in the Kingdom of God; moreover she lifted aloft a new standard, calling men and women to co-partnership in the holy warfare.

If we glance at women's position in the world from early ages, we find that nations which held their women sacred and honored rose to eminence; whereas those which treated their women as chattels or inferiors degenerated

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in a nation's highest powers. Mother Eve, in her selfish Choosing of the pleasure of the moment, forfeited for herself and her sex a God-given place in life; indeed, she destroyed for herself, her husband and her race God's perfect plan for mankind. From that day onward woman suffered humiliation, until the Son of God came to redeem the world and restored to her her lost estate.



The Lord Jesus was ever gallant to woman. Born of a woman, nursed by a woman, trained by a woman, when he came to manhood's estate and entered upon His life's work He accepted woman's ministry. He found her faithful. She stood beside Him in His agony on the Cross. She was first at the tomb on the morning of His resurrection, and to her he committed the greatest good tidings - Go, tell, I am alive. And so our Lord Jesus Himself spoke the word of woman's emancipation and put on her lips His glorious Evangel.

Women were amongst the company who waited for the fulfillment of 'the promise of the Father.' They were present in the Upper Room, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the early Church. Later they were amongst the 'evangelists,' and so

began their ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

In the Middle Ages we find spiritual leaders amongst women of many lands; to mention but a few, there were Teresa of Spain, Bridget of Sweden, Julian of Norwich, Madam Guyon of France. These women mirrored the life of Christ in their characters, and also displayed great powers of mind and administrative ability. Later amongst the Quakers arose notable women preachers, and still later the Methodists produced powerful and persuasive women leaders. But

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when we come to the years when The Salvation Army was but a thought in the heart of God, woman's voice was almost silent in proclaiming the glad tidings of the Gospel. In England, amongst the working classes, women were little better than slaves, and the educated almost as secluded as the women of the East.

Early in the nineteenth century - in 1829 - Catherine Mumford was born in Ashbourne, a little town in Derbyshire, England, This child was destined to be God's instrument to recapture woman's voice in public witness for Christ, and to apprehend and declare God's plan that men and women combine their powers in the Campaign for the Cross.

Spinal and lung weakness for years confined Catherine to her couch. During that shut-away period she gave herself to study. Her chief textbook was the Bible, which she read from cover to cover many times during her teens. She studied also English, history - secular and Church - and theology, and the while developed an analytical, clear-thinking mind and ability to express herself in direct, graceful English.

This serious girl's attention was attracted by the New Testament declaration that in Christ Jesus 'there is neither male nor female ... ye are all one .' Searching history for the evidence of the centuries concerning the position of woman, Catherine discovered that, when given opportunity to cultivate and express her powers, woman is by no means inferior to man. Gradually she gained a wide view of the blessings that could come to the Kingdom of God if men and women worked together with sympathy and understanding.

A few years later, Catherine Mumford met William Booth; then began one of the most notable love stories of history. The question of woman's status, particularly in relation to the Kingdom of God, naturally was included in their early

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discussions. William has views entirely opposite to those of Catherine. Now what would happen? Here were two souls with wills equally matched and principles equally firm. How would they compose their differences? Some men refuse to hear a woman argue. Deep down, the cause of this unwillingness may be found in an inferiority complex. If a woman's argument should prevail, such men feel that they would be placed at a disadvantage; so they do not willingly listen to a woman stating her case. This attitude is a survival of the barbarism which settled affairs with a club. On the other hand certain women reveal a vulgar fault in endeavoring to wear down a man's resistance for the purely selfish purpose of securing their own ends. Neither William nor Catherine Booth was of such timbre.

William Booth was always ready to listen to his sweetheart - later to his wife. In the correspondence of the lovers, a principle of Scripture which was to become one of the main planks of Salvation Army policy was emphasized. Replying to a letter of 2,500 words, in which Catherine discussed the subject, William says:

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



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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, although I should not like it. It is easy for you to say my views are the result of prejudice; perhaps they are. I am for the world's salvation; I will quarrel with no means that promises help."

The last sentence reveals the nobility of the young William Booth, though the letter as a whole reveals that he needed to go far before he became the champion of the Salvation Army woman which he definitely was in later years. William did read the long letter again, and the walls of prejudice began to yield.

Catherine, in her contention for the equality of the sexes, had not desire for a public life. One of shyest of women, she was not arguing for herself, but for a principle of which she was entirely convinced. When, after marriage, her husband begged her to take part in church life, the most public service she could be persuaded to undertake was a class to instruct women-Converts.

When William Booth was minister of a large Methodist church at Gateshead, Mrs. Booth passed through a searching spiritual experience. Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, American evangelists, were conducting remarkable revival services in England. Mrs. Phoebe Palmer, a humble, holy woman of distinguished gifts, was especially powerful in setting forth the doctrine and experience of Holiness. A methodist minister, incensed at this lady's public ministry wrote in a religious paper a bitter attack against women preachers. Mrs. Booth was moved to make a reply. Her husband was absent from home when she penned her protest - a letter which developed into a pamphlet: Female Ministry; or, a Woman's Right to Preach The Gospel. On William Booth's return, his wife asked him to read her letter. So heartily did he approve of it that he not only wished his wife to send it, but said that it should be published, and he himself copied it for the press.

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Though an able champion of woman's right to preach the Gospel, Mrs. Booth herself remained silent. One morning, alone in her bedroom, the Holy Spirit convinced her in insincerity. She had urged upon others a duty from which she herself shrank. At first she replied to this challenge as she had done before - that she was not able to speak, she was too nervous. But at last she prostrated herself before the Lord, promising that at some future time she would witness for Him in public.

One Sunday morning, as her husband's service in the church was drawing to a conclusion, a strong urge from the Holy Spirit came upon her soul to rise there and then and testify of God's dealings with her. Immediately she began to protest. She could not speak. 'Moreover,' whispered the Tempter, 'you have nothing prepared, you would make a fool of yourself.' Then all the latent courage and honesty in the woman arose. She told her quailing heart: 'I have never been willing to make a fool of myself for Christ; now I will' - and she walked up the aisle. Her husband, much wondering, bent toward her gallantly, inquiring, 'What is it, my dear?' 'I wish to speak,' said Catherine. William Booth announced his wife and sat down. Mrs. Booth told of her long disobedience to the heavenly vision and that now she was determined to obey God at all costs. There was a great breaking down in the church that morning. Afterward William Booth announced that his wife would preach at the evening service.

From that day, until Catherine Booth laid down her sword, she was no more her own. Calls for her to preach came from far and near. She became the foremost woman evangelist of Great Britain, perhaps of the world.

In the years from 1865 - 75, when The Christian Mission was finding its feet and spreading throughout the United Kingdom, the question of women-Evangelists became a vital one. Amongst the Converts were women whose souls were remarkably illumined by the Holy Spirit, wise-hearted in the things of God and

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able to speak with persuasive power. These women were appointed to assist married Evangelists, but as the need for more leaders became insistent the question of women's leadership came up in committee. The idea was strongly opposed by the men-Evangelists. Several amongst these had been saved from great depths of sin and were married to women of slight personality, spiritual illumination or public gifts. These men, thinking in terms of their own wives, could not credit other women with being capable; anyway, the idea of women leaders was not to be considered!

After much thought and prayer, William and Catherine Booth decided upon an experiment. We should remember with reverence the little woman, who was the subject of the venture - Sister Annie Davies, appointed in charge of the work in Barking, a London suburb. This woman was not an eloquent speaker, but she had a great love for her Lord and for souls, and possessed the gift of managing people.

The experiment proved an unqualified success. Many appointments of women - Evangelists in charge of Stations followed. They became known for their holiness of life, zeal, their wisdom, their faith, their endurance, their ability to manage great situations, their power to bring dead souls into touch with God. More had been accomplished than the meeting of an emergency; a principle had come into being and a policy been formed which recognized women as equal with men in the holy warfare.

The development of women's service in The Army now went forward apace. The expansion of the work created the necessity to train officers. Emma Booth, later Mrs. Booth-Tucker, was appointed first Training Home Principal.

Fallen women at the Penitent Forms called the Women's Social Work into being. To Mrs. Bramwell Booth was entrusted that new beginning. The Women's Social

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Work, conceived in the love of God, nursed and reared in prayer and faith and obedience, is today one of the most powerful and successful spiritual and social services in the world.

In the early days of The Christian Mission, Mrs. Booth had allowed her daughter Catherine to accompany her brother Bramwell in the leading of Meetings for children. Catherine was discovered to have remarkably persuasive way of speaking of the things of God. Later her mother heard of this young daughter standing on a box in a noisy street, surrounded by a crowd of rough men, and preaching to them. The mother in her cried out at the thought of the child being exposed to such conditions, to which Bramwell replied, 'Mama, God has called Katie just as He called you. I think you must leave her to God.' Catherine Booth again triumphed over her innate timidity, this time for her daughter, and allowed her to stand by the Cross of Jesus.



A few years later, France in its atheism and glaring sin was challenging Christianity. The Founder and the Army Mother sent this same daughter, Catherine to raise the Flag of the Blood and Fire in the gay city of Paris. This appointment of leadership was to no easy, protected post, but to preach Christ to dangerous criminals in a low part of the city, involving even physical danger.

On the occasion of her daughter's farewell from London, the Army Mother's charge was prophetic concerning the noble army of women who, since that day, on many shores, amidst differing races, have raised or maintained the Standard of the

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Salvation Army, all unconsciously earning for themselves the title 'Women of the Flag.' Said Catherine Booth:

"I consider it an honor in the name of our Divine Commander in Chief and in the name of the General of this Army to present you with the Flag as an emblem of the office and position you sustain and I pray that He may give you grace to uphold the truth which this banner represents. Oh that He may give you grace to carry it ... wherever there are lost and perishing souls and to preach under its shadow the everlasting Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that through your instrumentality thousands may be won from darkness, infidelity and vice to Him their Lord and their God. And in all hours of darkness and trial, oh may He encompass you in His arms of grace and strength and fill your soul with His love and peace that you may begin such a work as shall roll on to generations to come and ultimately sweep hundreds of thousands into the Kingdom of God."

The first overseas venture of The Salvation Army was about to be made to the United States of America. Commissioner Railton and seven young women Officers were chosen for this undertaking. So seven women to one man raised the Flag that today waves over Salvation Army activities in the North American Continent, from Alaska in the North to Texas in the South.

Our vanguard moved to its first missionary expedition - India. After the ground had been broken by Commissioner Booth- Tucker, with two men and a woman, a detachment of women was called for. Catherine Bannister, a refined, educated woman was chosen as the leader. Of her, one of the chapters of this book gives an impression; another deals with Hedwig von Haartman, pioneer leader of The Army in her native Finland. In Sweden, the Salvation Army Flag was planted by a Swedish woman, Hanna Ouchterlony. Through fierce persecution she established one of the finest expressions of The Salvation Army in the world.

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The Army's editorial offices needed the kind of writing that cultured, consecrated women could give. The first issues of *All the World* were brilliantly edited by a woman. Later Commissioner Mildred Duff became the Editor of Salvation Army publications for our young people, including the *International Company Orders*, and long guided The Army's youthful thinking.

Catherine Booth's daughters gave to The Army some of its most beautiful songs. Taking them at random, Catherine contributed that spiritual gem 'O Lamb of God, Thou wonderful Sin-bearer' - Emma, 'Blessed Jesus, save our children!' - Evangeline, 'The wounds of Christ are open' - Lucy, 'Lord, see me kneeling at Thy feet.'

Today in every department of Salvation Army work, a woman is serving with efficiency and devotion - as evangelist, administrator, doctor, nurse, teacher, journalist, accountant, secretary. Every position - not excluding that of Generalship, as the leadership of Catherine Booth's fourth daughter proved - is open to women.

Nor must the married women-Officers be omitted; indeed, they are honored in that they can claim kinship in a special way with the Army Mother, for it was as a married Officer that Catherine Booth gave all her Salvation Army service. And what an example she set!

When, upon marriage, a woman-Officer merges her powers with those of her husband she retains her officership. She is still included in the statistics of The Army. She wears the insignia of her husband's rank and is called by his title. The majority of married women-Officers hold their Officership sacred; and beyond their highest vocation - that of bearing and rearing and training a family - they are at their husband's side as 'continual comrade' in the holy warfare.

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What of today? Never during the life of The Salvation Army was the spirit that brought it into being more needed in the world than today. I pray that the Army's women-Officers shall be a re-expression of their Army Mother: in spirituality, faith, courage, unselfishness; as preachers of Salvation, teachers of Holiness, servants of all for Christ's sake.

And the future? Let us value our heritage as a sacred charge. Let us hold it high, hold it worthily - in our character, in our being, in our example. Our position in The Army was not gained for us, nor conferred upon us, to give us personal power or privilege, but to open to us the door through which we might go with Christ to seek the lost and by every means in harmony with His Spirit to extend His Kingdom.



To the men of The Salvation Army, the life of Catherine Booth has its own message. With her sons in the faith she would, I think, plead for a re-recognition of the vision God gave to her of men and women working together in sympathy and comradeship, neither seeking his or her own, but devotion every power of heart and mind to the holy warfare by which alone the world will be won for Christ.